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Performing Ideology
Theatricality and Ideology in Mass Performance
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Topic of research
From national day parades, to sporting events and carnivals, most societies have certain events where a large amount of these societies’ inhabitants participate either because it is fun, because they have always done so, or because they feel obliged to do so. Mass performances can be organized by the government, or they can be the result of local or amateur initiative. Whether mass performance takes the form of a parade, carnival, sporting event, musical concert, or other performative event that attracts the masses. What mass performances have in common is that they gather a large amount of people, and they represent the societies in which they occur.

In this dissertation I have chosen mass performance to be my topic of research. However, since the concept of mass performance is so vast and includes performances of such a diversity of form and function, I have had to choose two performances to be my main area of focus. I have chosen two very different performances that appear in very different surroundings geographically, thematically, ideologically, and theatrically, but have in common that they are both regarded as mass performance, and both relate to the ideological sphere of the society in which they occur. The first performance that will be discussed is the Arirang performance that frequently takes place in the North Korean capital Pyongyang, and the second is a reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg, staged in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania every year on the anniversary for the historical battle of 1863.

Both these performances are connected to the ideologies of the societies they appear in, and express this ideology through theatricality. The discussion of the relation between theatricality and ideology in mass performance will be central to the discussions of this dissertation. I will investigate and discuss how this is done, and how this relationship is expressed and experienced.

1.2 Motivation
When I, in 2006, finished my master thesis on the relation of theatricality and ideology in Russian theatre from 1917 to 2006, I was left with a feeling that I was not quite finished with the subject.¹ In the thesis I concluded by saying that in Russian theatre

history theatricality as an aesthetic feature had been presented and expressed in theatre in opposition to the ruling regimes. I saw how this was apparent in early revolutionary theatre, during and after Stalin’s rule, and finally also in Vladimir Putin’s post-Soviet Russia.

However, sure as I was in my conclusions, I soon saw after the completion of my thesis that theatricality was not only an element of opposition and revolution, but had definitely also been an element of Soviet mass performance. I acknowledged how forms of theatricality had been present in Soviet mass performance from great military parades to mass stagings, and popular feasts. During the field work for my master thesis in 2006, I spent Victory Day (Den’ Pobedy), which falls on the 9th of May, in Moscow. Victory Day is a celebration marking the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Here I saw what I meant were the effects of theatricality at play in popular mass performance. The celebration could in many ways be said to be a celebration of the new Russian regime, which also marked a continuity of Soviet greatness, and being present I saw how theatricality was used in order to transmit this message. Theatricality, here, became part of the ideological celebration. Being present at this celebration I saw how theatricality was not only used on stage as a form of artistic opposition, but how it could also be found in mass performance celebrating current national ideology, a topic I decided to investigate further.

My interest for mass performance in general also germinated in this project. When researching the theatre following the Russian revolution in 1917, I also focused on the mass performance and theories of the Russian theatre theorist and director Nikolai Evreinov, and his contemporaries. After being inspired to continue working on the relationship between theatricality and ideology at the Victory Day celebration in Moscow in 2006, I wanted to go deeper into mass performance and its impact on national ideologies. From a very early point, I was interested in researching both contemporary and historical mass performance. One of the aspects of Russian and Soviet theatre history that had fascinated me when researching the questions of ideology and theatricality was the use of theatricality in totalitarian expressions. In my investigation of the scenic theatricality of Russian theatre history, theatricality had been an element of freedom in stark opposition to totalitarian rule. Nevertheless, I had a notion that this was not the only aspect to theatricality, and I wanted to look into the use of theatricality in totalitarian mass performance. I need to state, though, that although I traveled to the DPRK for the full totalitarian experience, I also learned a lot about
Korean culture and history, not only as it related to the cruel Kim-regime, but also as it relates to a beautiful people and a complex culture. All this will be taken into consideration when discussing the example, and my trip in chapter five.

I have attempted to write a dissertation on mass performance, theatricality, and ideology in general, not in terms of one or two performances in particular. I therefore needed more than one case study, and although I had become fascinated by a totalitarian application of theatricality in mass performance, I did not believe that theatricality in ideological mass performance could only be found in the mass performance of countries with a totalitarian leadership. I therefore chose to include an example of mass performance from a large liberal democracy as a counterbalance, for the purpose of shedding light on the complex structures of mass performance. My choice of example was made after watching a television documentary about Civil War reenactments in the USA, and seeing how the performance was presented as an event of fun and games that still considered American history and national belonging as central to the game of make-believe and dressing up. Every year there are hundreds of battle reenactments and other Civil War reenactment events in the USA. I decided on the 148th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg because historically, the Battle of Gettysburg was an important battle in the American Civil War. The location of this reenactment in particular has a great tradition, because from very early on, commemoration events were staged in the proximity of Gettysburg. It is also one of the most famous and larger of the Civil War battle reenactment events in the USA. Here I saw how the national narrative of the Civil War was transformed into an event of play and freedom while still clearly presenting what I saw as American ideology.

Although I have wanted to use two different examples in order to reach conclusions concerning mass performance in general, I have not attempted to come to any conclusions regarding mass performance in the world as a whole, as the concept of mass performance is too big, too universal, and too intricate, and if this had been my goal I would never have been able to finish my task. However, I have attempted to generalize somewhat on the basis of the two case studies I have done, and the fact that these two cases are very different may lead to a possibility of being able to apply my theories to other forms of mass performance.
1.3 Current research on the field

Upon embarking on this research project I will, of course, rely on previous research in, and adjacent to, the field of performance theory. A discussion of theatricality and ideology has not, to my knowledge, previously been attempted, but discussions of theatricality have held an important place in theatre research for the last 20 years. In regard to research on theatricality, it may be fruitful to mention in particular the 2002 edition of *SubStance*, a special edition that discussed theatricality. Here many of the central problems associated with the term were considered, and the edition was instrumental in establishing a discourse on theatricality, and included, among others, discussions by Josette Féral that have become important to my understanding of theatricality.

The discourse surrounding the term ideology belongs to a different field completely. As will become clear in chapter three, the philosophical discussion of the term is old, and the critique of ideology following the theories of Karl Marx has been influential, and has been of major importance to contemporary discourses. In chapter three I will discuss the foundation of this discourse, and present different views on the term. Relating ideology to theatricality has, however, not been common in either field, and I hope this dissertation can contribute to seeing both terms in a new light by presenting them parallel to one another in the discussion of mass performance.

The term *mass performance*, which will be discussed in chapter seven, has, to my knowledge not been used previously in the discourse of performance, theatre or ritual. This does not, however, mean that the concept I refer to as mass performance has not been discussed. Many fruitful and interesting contributions have been made. I will especially mention the German theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte’s book *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual* which has been a great source of inspiration for my work. Another scholar I would like to emphasize is the American anthropologist John J. MacAlloon, who has worked extensively on performance, and his work on the Olympic Games. I would also like to emphasize the work of the American anthropologist working on performance, Laura Adams, and her work on mass performance in Uzbekistan, which I

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2 *SubStance*, Issue 98/99 Vol. 31, Number 2&3, Special Issue: Theatricality (2002)
think to a large degree proposes some general lines for understanding mass performance in the cultural and ideological sphere in a new and interesting way.\textsuperscript{6} In regard to this it is also necessary to mention the work done by the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR) working group on theatrical events led by the Swedish theatre scholar Willmar Sauter and their publications *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics Frames*\textsuperscript{7} and *Festivalising*.\textsuperscript{8} Both of these publications have made important and broad contributions by presenting and discussing the vast field of cultural performance of that kind that contains a large amount of people and impacts upon the societies in which they appear.

Surprisingly little research has been done on the cultural expressions of the DPRK. A very important contribution in this respect comes from the American-Korean theatre scholar Suk-Young Kim’s book which was published in 2010: *Illusive Utopia. Theater, Film and Everyday Performance in North Korea*.\textsuperscript{9} This book is, to my knowledge, the only published work on the vast field of North Korean performance and popular culture, and should therefore be regarded as an important contribution to the understanding of North Korean culture that has not previously been studied closely from the field of theatre and performance studies.

Neither have performance scholars done much research on the field of American war reenactments, where most of what has been done, has been done within the field of anthropology. The American performance scholar Rebecca Schneider has, however, written an important contribution where she looks at the concept of reenactment performances from an aesthetical perspective in her 2011 book, *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*.\textsuperscript{10} In this book Schneider sees American Civil War reenactment in connection to the American performance scene and discusses the concept of *reenactment*.

1.4 Research problem

Upon commencing this research project my aim was to find out how a concept of theatricality is used or presented in, or through, ideological mass performance, and how

\textsuperscript{10} Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011)
ideology is presented within the expression of theatricality. This discussion will, then, rely on how we understand theatricality, and the term will be discussed at length in chapter two. With this as a basis I will go on to discuss the perception of theatricality, and its relation to ideology and mass performance. My main question in this dissertation will be how theatricality as a theoretical term can be used to contribute to defining and discussing ideological mass performance. Answering this question will lead me to illuminate the dissertation’s main focus, which will be on mass performance in an ideological sphere, and a discussion of how the events described and analyzed relate to the use of theatricality.

In addition to discussing the theoretical implications of theatricality and ideology, the dissertation will discuss theories of performance. Here I will focus on a discussion of ritual and performance, based on the theories of Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. The term communitas will here be especially emphasized. Another question that will follow this discussion will therefore be: How important is the aspect of communitas to mass performance and to the discussion of theatricality and ideology in mass performance?

One of the things I became most interested in finding out after finishing my master thesis was to what degree mass performance and theatricality could be used in order to present ideology. My final question, therefore, is how and to what degree is mass performance an effective form for the (re)presentation of ideology?

1.5 Outline of dissertation

In order to answer the questions presented above, I will start out with discussions about the theoretical approaches that are applied in the dissertation. The first theoretical approach that will be presented is the theories of theatricality. Theatricality is a vast term without any clear limits, different theoreticians and theatre practitioners with different aims and backgrounds have been using it for a long time. In chapter two, I will present some of these fields of usage of the term both in a historical perspective related to theatre practice, and in theory before I use this foundation to shed light on how I understand the term theatricality, and how it will be used in the rest of the dissertation, and the discussion of the cases which will follow.

In chapter three, I will follow up with the rest of the theoretical foundation of the dissertation, starting with the concept of ideology. The term Ideology has in common with theatricality an ability to move around in a vast theoretical landscape, whilst
lending itself to different implications that are dependent on who so ever may decide to use it. Therefore, I also will present some aspects of this landscape in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the term, and propose a reading of it. Contrary to theatricality, ideology is a purely theoretical term that has not been of interest to theatre practitioners to any large degree. My discussion of the concept will therefore be of a purely theoretical form. I will start by discussing a traditional Marxist concept of ideology, and ideology critique, before I move over to seeing ideology as a narrative structure, and finally discussing ideology in the light of the theories of the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek who will become important for my analyses. My main focus will be on Žižek’s use of the terms jouissance and the Real, terms that have originated in the works of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.

In the second part of chapter three, I will discuss performance theory. In this chapter I will also include a discussion on ritual. As mentioned above, the theories of performance scholar Richard Schechner and especially anthropologist Victor Turner will become important. It is also in chapter three that I will present Turner’s use of the term communitas, liminality, and the liminoid and structure/anti-structure: these terms will follow me throughout the dissertation.

After having presented and discussed my theoretical foundations, I will, in chapter four go on to give a brief discussion of my methodological foundations, and the methodological point of departure for the case studies that will follow. Chapter four will show the different backgrounds of methodological approach at play in my study, and I will emphasize what I understand to be a circular structure alternating between different backgrounds and approaches in what I will propose as an approach fitted for my research specifically. I will show how I will rely on textual analytical tools, and on my personal experience of the performances in question when conducting my analysis.

In chapter five and six, I will present my two main analyses of two different case studies. Chapter five will primarily present and discuss the North Korean Arirang performance, which is a great demonstration of mass gymnastics, where the megalomania style of it appears very strange and foreign to us in Europe. In chapter five, I will, however, show how the genre of mass gymnastic performance has European roots, and start out with the first organized movement of gymnastics in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century. In tracing down the roots of the Arirang performance in order to provide some context to the interpretation, I will also focus on mass gymnastics, and
what I will call cultic performance in Nazi Germany, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and China before discussing the North Korean case more specifically.

When discussing the Arirang performance it will also be necessary to discuss North Korean ideology. North Korean ideology is very different from ideologies that are more familiar to us, and I will, therefore, present the ideology, and what is called the *juche* philosophy and describe how this so-called philosophy impacts the everyday life of the North Korean people. I will also present my own visit to the DPRK in September 2010 since the trip in itself has theatrical characteristics, and can be used to understand the culture in which the performance takes place. Finally, in this chapter I will discuss the performance and North Korean ideology in relation to Žižek’s theories of *jouissance*, and propose a reading of a North Korean *Real*.

In chapter six, I will move on to discussing my second case study, the 148th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg, which I attended in the first weekend of July 2011. Also in this chapter, I will begin with providing a context for understanding the event I attended. In the USA presenting history through performance has long traditions. On the basis of this, I will also discuss the tradition of living history, and use as a contextual example, a visit I made to the living history museum Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia in June 2011, right before I traveled to Gettysburg. Here, I will discuss how theatricality is used within the framework of a museum in order to provide an image of a historical epoch, and the problems with presenting historical truth, before I move on to discussing the direct forerunners of today’s battle reenactments, and the 148th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg. In chapter six the term *authenticity* will be important, and will be discussed at length in relation to the theories of theatricality and ideology as I have presented them. I will also connect this term of *authenticity*, which is so important, to the reenactment community to Žižek’s concept of the *Real*.

In chapter seven, I will attempt to connect most of the loose threads, and attempt to tie the threads presented in previous chapters together. Here I will propose some theoretical views on how we can understand mass performance, and how theatricality and ideology can be understood to work together in the realm of mass performance. I will focus on the theories presented in chapter two and three, and use the term *communitas* in relation to theatricality in order to understand what, theatrically speaking, is going on when attending a mass performance. In chapter seven I will also propose *ritualistic theatricality* as means of understanding mass performance, and relate
this to the concept of ideology discussed in chapter three, and to Žižek’s concept of *jouissance*. After discussing the vast structures I have set up throughout the dissertation in chapter seven, I will endeavor to gather any remaining loose threads, and conclude my questions in a summarizing epilogue in chapter eight, the last chapter.

My dissertation relies on many different fields of discourse, approaches and angles, and many of these approaches have not previously been seen in connection. I start out in the tradition of European theatre history, with a discussion of theatricality gathered from theoretical theatre studies. In the discussion of ideology I rely on a Marxist theoretical tradition, and in my reading of Slavoj Žižek, I will also rely on his reading of psychoanalytic theory, and the theories of the French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan. In my discussion of performance and ritual I am dependent on the tradition of performance studies, the work of Richard Schechner, in particular, which also relies on the anthropologist Victor Turner, and his theories of ritual and its connection to performance. Here, I also rely somewhat on work done in religious studies. So at the same time as I rely on a vast material of research and discourse, I have also prepared my own way through this material, and included new connections and viewpoints, and hopefully contributed to both existing and new discourses on theatre, performance, theatricality, ideology, ritual, and mass culture. The different backgrounds and approaches, on which I depend, will be elaborated upon further in chapter four.

1.6 Last remarks before embarking
Theatricality and ideology might seem to be terms that do not fit together, as terms that exist in different realms all together. My motivation for embarking on this research project has been to show how this is not the case; it is to show how theatricality and ideology, or aesthetics, performance, and social structures exist together in a greater structure where they are mutually impacting on each other. I also want to show how theatricality becomes a part of a social ideological structure, and can be used to strengthen the status quo and emphasize, and legitimize existing social structures. It is my opinion that this will probably be a factor whether or not one believes the existing social structures in a country to be good or bad. I therefore have not attempted to critique the regimes I have visited, but I hope it becomes immediately clear that my lack of explicit critique of the North Korean regime does not make me a supporter of this terrifying and cruel form of rule. I do, however, believe that it is important to show and discuss other elements of North Korean society and life besides the political and violent
expressions of the rule of the DPRK in order to achieve a better understanding of what goes on in the country.

Theatricality is a wide term, and I believe that the drive of make-believe, play and performance, can be found in every culture. I also believe that theatricality in many of these cases is, in one way or another, related to an ideological consciousness and knowledge of the social structures within which one lives. One of the reasons for this is the social impact of theatricality, where theatricality, in most cases, can only be experienced within a collective, and will therefore become part of the society in which it is expressed. This is my initial view of the relation of theatricality and ideology, which will be discussed at length in the chapters to come.
2.0 Approaches to theatricality

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present different theoretical and historical approaches to the term theatricality. As will soon become evident, the term has had different and partly conflicting meanings for different people. Consequently, theatricality is a slippery term. Its meaning has been much debated, but despite, or maybe because of, all the discussions the term remains many faceted. Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis discuss in their introduction to their book on theatricality, how defining the term brings on several difficulties:

Deciphering its possible meanings has become a major challenge, because this expansive idea engages some of the most pressing issues of our age: the aspects and nature of performance, the history of aesthetic styles, the means and modes of representation, the communicative power of art and artistry, the formation of subjectivity, and the very operations of public life.

What can be deduced from this quote is that the discussion on theatricality has often started out as a discussion on the specificity, and nature of theatre and performance. The discussion has been concerned with what it is about theatre and performance that distinguishes itself from other cultural expressions, and also in some cases how this specificity can be used as a concept outside the specific theatre arena.

Although it might be futile to find out when or where this discussion first appeared, we can state that the term theatricality appeared in the beginning of the 20th century as a concept of aesthetic styles. The term theatricality was at first related to the formalist discourse within modernist studies of literature and their notion of literariness, and through the theoretical and practical work of the Russian theatre director Nikolai Evreinov, the term became a separate concept used within the field of theatre. This original concept was a quest for the particularity of theatre at the same time as it coined a specific aesthetic feature. This specific historical aesthetic feature was manifested through the work of the Russian and German avant-garde, in particular through the work of Georg Fuchs and Vsevolod Meyerhold, whose theories and practices that will soon be discussed at length.

In a more theoretical usage theatricality has in more recent times been discussed as a mode of perception based on a personal rather than a communal experience. This discourse has been strictly theoretical, contrary to the already mentioned perspectives

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11 Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, “Theatricality. An Introduction” in Theatricality, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2
that have also had practical origins. The different theoretical approaches also have different foundations and starting points, for example including both semiotic and phenomenological approaches. Nevertheless, the main subject of interest has, in these cases, been the interpretative and perceptive mode of experience of performative events. This theoretical approach has in most cases had traditional theatre as its case study, but has also moved out of the theatre and applied theories of theatrical experience on quotidian action and spaces. I will show below that this is the case in Josette Féral’s theories. In this case theatricality seems to be something located strictly within the spectator or perceiver, but in many cases it is also a result of what Davis and Postlewait in the above quote call the communicative power of art.

Since the term has both practical and theoretical origins, the examples that are to be given in this chapter will necessarily be collected from both practical and theoretical realms. In addition to this they will be collected both from theatre history and from more contemporary events, but it should be noted that they have all been picked to give an extensive description of the term at the same time as I will narrow it down so that similarities and specific traits can be located. The perspectives on theatricality that I have chosen to present here will be perspectives known to the discussion of theatricality, and which have often been cited in discussions on the theme, in addition to more original examples selected to illustrate the width of the term’s usage.

In my review of the term in this chapter I will start where the term itself started, in Russia and Germany in the beginning of the 20th century, and what was to be called the era of retheatricalization. The term retheatricalization originated from a common wish to use elements from historical European and traditional Oriental theatre in creating a theatre for a new era. Although it was conceived as revolutionary in its artistic mission, it also became indebted to the political revolutions of the time, and therefore deeply connected to the political perception of theatre. When discussing theatre and politics I will also present the theories of Bertolt Brecht before I move on to the modernist avant-garde in Russia and Germany to see how theatricality can also be located outside the theatre building and reflect on the belief in theatricalizing life. I will follow this up by a closely related theme of theatricality in carnival and revolutions. The last examples I will present are derived from a strictly theoretical viewpoint originating in the field of art history and the writings of Michael Fried, which gives an important perspective to the totality of the discussion on theatricality. After my discussion on the
different forms of theatricality, I will sum it up by proposing an understanding of theatricality based on different forms of duality.

2.2 Perspectives of theatricality

2.2.1 Retheatricalization and politicized theatricality

As a term, theatricality came into being during what has been called the period of retheatricalization in Europe, at the beginning of the 20th century. Much of the discourse surrounding retheatricalization relates to the vibrant theatre life of Russia, mainly Moscow, in the years surrounding the Russian revolution. However, the term retheatricalization originates in Germany and the writings of the German theatre theorist Georg Fuchs, who in his work *Die Revolution des Theaters* from 1909, argued in favor of a new theatrical theatre.12 The most important factors of Fuchs’ new theatre were the introduction of the rhythmic actor and inclusion of the audience in the event. One of his main concerns was to create confrontations between actors and spectators, and the most drastic action was the removal of the division of stage and auditorium. The physical gap between actors and audience was to be minimized so the spectators could feel as though they were participating in the event. Fuchs claimed that: “According to their nature and their origin, player and spectator, stage and auditorium are not in opposition. They are a unit.”13 The aim of the unity of stage and auditorium was to create a total event where all participants were regarded as equals.

The inspiration came, to a large degree, from folk and carnival events where these distinctions had been less dominating. Fuchs’ relation to the folk theatre was a romantic one in which he saw a quest for the original. It is interesting to note his interest in carnival, since carnival and ritualistic theatricality will play a significant role later in this dissertation. Fuchs’ terminology and focus on changing scenic communication led to the term *retheatricalization* being used on the general movement of inspiration from the theatre of previous times in the creation of something new.

The German theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte claims in her article “From Theater to Theatricality” that retheatricalization meant a change in scenic communication.14 She gives a vivid description of the more than century old theatre performance *Sumurun* directed by Max Reinhardt in 1910, and recognizes a paradigm shift in the act

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13 Ibid., 46
14 Erika Fischer-Lichte, “From Theater to Theatricality” in *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre. A European Perspective* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997)
of communication. The shift, claims Fischer-Lichte, is a shift from language to body. Whereas language and the written word had dominated the Western theatre since the renaissance, Fischer-Lichte recognizes that the superiority of language as semiotic system lost its dominant position over body in European theatre at the beginning of the 20th century. Although Fischer-Lichte simplifies theatre history here to address her argument, since there are diverse examples of theatre from this long period not dominated by the written word, retheatricalization did mean a turn away from the focus on the written word, which had been especially common in the period leading up to retheatricalization. This definition of retheatricalization is easily seen in relation to what Fischer-Lichte in her 1983 book The Semiotics of the Theatre defines theatricality as signs of signs.

Theater (…) not only interprets the signs generated by culture, but in turn uses as its own precisely those signs made available by culture, utilizing them as the theatrical signs of signs. If, for example, a human body is used as a sign of a character – perhaps a demon, a mythological figure, an animal, a spirit, an ancestor or another person – then this process not only interprets the body as sign: nature becomes a sign, existence becomes meaning.\footnote{Erika Fischer-Lichte, The Semiotics of the Theatre, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 140}

With this she means that theatricality is the basis of all theatre, and that this basis is the ability to use signs as signs. This theory is used in a general sense, to include all theatre, where what Fischer-Lichte means is specific for the theatre of retheatricalization is that these signs are bodily signs, and that the hierarchy of signs was changed from a linguistic to a bodily domination. For Fischer-Lichte retheatricalization meant that the use of signs on stage became an explicit act to underline that what the audience was witnessing was theatre, and that the objects and people on stage were acting as theatrical signs.

The ‘retheatricalization of theatre’ as proclaimed by the twentieth-century theatre world can be described as the attempt to deconstruct the traditional system of semiotic systems employed in Western culture and restructure the whole system as well as its sub-systems in order to open up possible solutions to this crisis.\footnote{Fischer-Lichte, “From Theater to Theatricality,” 62}

The crisis Fischer-Lichte locates in the culture of the time is the disintegration of language as the main bearer of meaning. This disintegration led to, according to Fischer-Lichte, a crisis of perception and cognition. Retheatricalization, and its use of the body as a sign of meaning, was a reaction to this. She further discusses that this paradigm shift in scenic communication led to the audience changing their techniques of perception. She uses the term theatricality to denote this new technique of perception:
The role of the spectator was no longer to recognize and understand one representation of reality but, instead, to create their own reality. As a consequence, theatre was no longer to be defined through its representations but through the processes of construction which it triggers. Since this capacity is not restricted to the theatre (or art in general), yet is explicitly focused and marked by it, I call it theatricality.\(^\text{17}\)

Here she defines theatricality as a process, a process of perception, or construction as she calls it, which activates the spectator to a larger degree than previous theatre had. This results in the communicative act of theatre becoming an act that demands more of the spectator and makes the actor an active part of this act.

In Russia, the concept of retheatricalization spread quite quickly, and the prerevolutionary theatre of the Russian theatre director and theorist Vsevolod Meyerhold clearly reflects Fuchs’ theories of retheatricalization.\(^\text{18}\) Meyerhold’s relationship to his teacher Konstantin Stanislavsky is a well-known polemic of theatre history, and through the inspiration of Fuchs and the concept of \textit{retheatricalization} Meyerhold opposed the naturalistic theatre of Stanislavsky. As with Fischer-Lichte’s theories of a movement from language to body in the age of retheatricalization, Meyerhold expressed a wish for a theatre that sees beyond the actor’s face and the spoken word, and focuses on the actor’s physicality. Also to him, this meant going back in time:

Clearly, the naturalistic theatre regards the face as the actor’s principal means of conveying his intentions, ignoring completely the other means at his disposal. It fails to realize the fascination of plastic movement, and never insists on the actor training his body; it establishes a theatre school, yet fails to understand that physical culture must be a basic subject if one has any hope of staging plays like \textit{Antigone} and \textit{Julius Caesar}, plays which by virtue of their inherent music belong to a different kind of theatre.\(^\text{19}\)

Meyerhold had worked with Stanislavsky over a period of several years, and in this quote one can see how he distances himself from his teacher’s methods, and wants to create a new theatre. To Meyerhold the break with Stanislavsky’s illusionary theatre and naturalism meant a turn towards a focus on the body.

For Fuchs too, theatricality was related to bodily movement. Fuchs believed theatre originated in dance, and that the theatre should focus on the rhythmic actor: “Dramatic art is, in its own way, dancing, that is, rhythmic movement of the human body in space.”\(^\text{20}\) Theatre is first and foremost bodily movement; the dramatic text is, for Fuchs, secondary.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 70  
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 24  
\(^{20}\) Fuchs, \textit{Revolution in the Theatre}, 39
It is a mistake to suppose that the face is the most important area of expression. If the bourgeois device of opera glasses could be eliminated, actors would no longer strive to make “characteristic” grimaces. They would expand their means of expression to fill a larger space.  

The body is more than the face, and Fuchs wanted a fundamental bodily presence rising above the focus on intellect and facial emotions. Following Fuchs’ concept of retheatricalization, Meyerhold searched in the theatre of past times to find an original theatricality that could be used as foundation for the new theatre. Meyerhold found inspiration in the theatre of ancient Greece, and Elizabethan England in addition to the traditions of Oriental theatre. He argued that the theatre of ancient Greece was a free theatre where, because they were not yet affected by modern stage machinery and techniques, they could appreciate the creative and rhythmical actor. Meyerhold wanted to revive this actor. “By giving diction and movement a rhythmical basis, it hopes to bring about the revival of the dance. In such a theatre, dialogue can easily merge into melodic declamation and melodic silence.” He therefore believed that by reducing the technical elements of the stage, the actor’s body would gain a greater creative power.

In addition to looking to ancient Greece, Elizabethan England and Oriental theatre traditions for inspiration, Meyerhold saw great theatricality in the Italian tradition of commedia dell’arte and its Russian counterpart balagan. In his prerevolutionary years he considered the folk theatre and its playfulness to be the essence of theatricality. He therefore called for reintroduction of the cabotinage in the theatre. Meyerhold first used the term cabotinage after reading a critique of the contemporary theatre critic Alexander Benois who criticized a performance at the Moscow Art Theatre for containing too much cabotinage, in the sense of bad and popular acting which resembled folk theatre. Meyerhold on the other hand, saw exactly this cabotinage as the foundation of theatre and theatricality: “Perhaps it has always been so: if there is no cabotin, there is no theatre either; and contrariwise, as soon as the theatre rejects the basic rules of theatricality it straightway imagines that it can dispense with cabotin.” Although Benois, according to Meyerhold, uses the term cabotinage as a derogative term, Meyerhold sees it directly linked to the street theatre and to commedia dell’arte. “The cabotin is a strolling player, the cabotin is a kinsman to the mime, the histrion, and the juggler; the cabotin can work miracles with his technical mastery; the cabotin keeps alive the tradition of the true art of acting.”

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21 Ibid., 50  
22 Meyerhold, Meyerhold on Theatre, 62  
23 Ibid., 123  
24 Ibid., 122
In October 1917 Russia witnessed a revolution that introduced a new, Bolshevik regime, and led the country into civil war. Meyerhold quickly sided with the Bolsheviks, which also meant new methods for a new theatre in a new world. In his post-revolutionary theatre Meyerhold developed further the prerevolutionary ideas of retheatricalization, but gave it a revolutionary context and created several new features for the new era. Contrary to a backward looking theatre practice, the post-revolutionary theatre of Meyerhold looked forward to a brand new aesthetic for a communist world. The focus was no longer to revive ancient and renaissance theatre in a modern suit but to make a completely modern, communist theatre.

### 2.2.2 The Magnanimous Cuckold

As example of retheatricalization I will here present Meyerhold’s 1922 performance *The Magnanimous Cuckold*. It was a performance that applied techniques which were new for the time, but where the principles of older theatre were mixed with a strong belief in the modern world. To me this performance represents the ultimate theatricality of the revolutionary theatre in Russia. One of the main focuses in the performance and its style was the human body and bodily rhythm, but the human body was no longer to be perceived just as an artistic body but also as a productive body. This becomes clear through Meyerhold’s work with *biomechanics*. Meyerhold developed biomechanics as a study of bodily movement, and was deeply affected by studies of productivity done on the movements of factory workers, which I will come back to below. The other main focus of Meyerhold’s post-revolutionary theatre was constructivist set design. According to the principles of constructivist set design the stage should consist of construction built over different levels, staircases and catwalks. This was most successful in Ljubov Popova’s stage design for the staging of Fernand Crommelynck’s play *The Magnanimous Cuckold* in 1922. The Russian theatre historian and Meyerhold expert Konstantin Rudnitsky points out that the construction in itself was meaningless; it was created with the sole purpose of giving working space to the actors.²⁵ As in the prerevolutionary theatre and the theatre of Fuchs, the stage was constructed to emphasize the bodily rhythm of the actor. In contrast to this, however, the constructivist stage contributes, to a larger degree, to the complete aesthetics since both biomechanics and constructivism reflects the need Meyerhold felt for the aesthetics of the machine age.

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The Serbian theatre scholar Silvija Jestrovic links the theatricality of Meyerhold and the Russian avant-garde to Russian formalism and Viktor Shklovsky’s term ostranenie, which most commonly is translated into estrangement.26 In his article “Art as technique”27 from 1917 Shklovsky coins art as a technique for making the familiar strange, and Jestrovic recognizes the explicit self-referentiality in the theatricality of the retheatricalization movement precisely as making the familiar strange. She finds that estrangement applied in theatre involves the same breaking of theatrical illusions as in the main concepts of the theatricality of the retheatricalization movement, and in the Russian avant-garde in particular.

Shklovsky emphasizes the importance of the process of perception in the experience of art. “The technique of art is to make objects “unfamiliar,” to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.”28 Estrangement leads to a prolonged process of perception since we do not, when exposed to estrangement, perceive by habit as we do in ordinary and familiar situations, but instead see ordinary objects and situations as if for the first time. “After we see an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it – hence we cannot say anything significant about it. Art removes objects from the automatism of perception in several ways.”29

We can recognize elements of these estrangement techniques in Meyerhold’s staging of The Magnanimous Cuckold. A simple thing, such as removing the backdrop and foot lights and the creation of a non-representational set design increased the unfamiliarity of the scenic expression. The windmill that the main protagonist Bruno and his wife Stella live in is represented by a windmill sail, but the design does not resemble a real windmill. The design was a wooden construction consisting of several wheels, stairs, slides, and revolving doors, and was constructed to accompany the actors. For instance, the wheels turned clockwise and counter clockwise to illustrate Bruno’s increasing anger and jealousy with increasing speed as the rage got heavier, and with sudden stops and starts depending on what was happening among the characters on stage. In this way everything that happened was underlined and accentuated, which further prolonged the

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26 Silvija Jestrovic, Theatre of Estrangement. Theatre, Practice, Ideology (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006)
28 Ibid., 12
29 Ibid., 13
process of perception since everything that happened was given a greater meaning than
the farce in itself would have achieved. In her discussion of the performance,
Meyerhold scholar Alma H. Law describes how the use of props was set to a minimum,
and that the few props that were used were of exaggerated size and that the rest of the
characters’ personal belongings were mimed.\(^{30}\) This is another example of how simple
estrangement techniques could be, and still have, great effect. Choosing not to use
props, and instead miming them, or having props in exaggerated sizes again underlines
the existence of these objects even though they are not actually there. Hence the props
have a greater influence on the performance than if they had been incorporated as actual
realistic objects.

Jestrovic emphasizes that all the theatre forms Meyerhold drew influence from
such as commedia dell’arte, and other folk theatre forms in addition to Oriental and
Elizabethan theatre all had one thing in common: “the dominance of theatricality and
artificiality over illusionist elements, and the dominance of performance over written
text.\(^{31}\)” The core of Meyerhold’s theatricality is the dominance of theatre and play over
realistic illusion and the dominance of body as performative instrument over the written
text and human mind. When Fischer-Lichte emphasizes a switch from a focus on
language, and text as performative sign to the body as sign in the age of
retheatricalization, it is also a recognition of the rejection of realism and a general
introduction of greater sign systems, specifically turned to the human body.
Meyerhold’s biomechanics is a good example of movement and bodily rhythm as sign.
Nick Worrall describes in his analysis of *The Magnanimous Cuckold* how the characters
moved in the staircases of the construction, and how the act of walking was exaggerated
to image the movement: “The action of climbing the steps is accompanied by arm and
leg movements which are a mimetic replaying of the activity of the legs and plastic
imaging of the pattern of the steps.”\(^{32}\) Shklovsky speaks of how art can make the stone
“stony”, and in this performance of movement, Meyerhold accomplishes to make
walking “walkingly”, and hence increases the perception that surrounded the act of
climbing staircases.

Meyerhold’s post-revolutionary theatre clearly reflects the communism of the
revolution. In addition to reflecting historical theatre periods, the bodily focus in


\(^{31}\) Jestrovic, *Theatre of Estrangement*, 45

biomechanics reflected the revolutionary view of man as machine, and a utopian belief in the laborers that led to an aestheticized working human body. With the revolution came a new world view where the human being primarily was perceived as its working body, not as a spiritual mind. As mentioned above, Meyerhold developed biomechanics as a study of bodily movement, and was deeply affected by studies on productivity and movement carried out on the movements of factory workers to secure the largest possible productivity. His main source for these studies was the American Frederick Winslow Taylor and his movement practice *Taylorism*. Meyerhold compared the work of the factory worker to the work of the actor and saw that they were both dependent on bodily rhythm in their work.

If we observe a skilled worker in action, we notice the following in his movements: (1) an absence of superfluous, unproductive movements; (2) rhythm; (3) the correct positioning of the body’s centre of gravity; (4) stability. Movements based on these principles are distinguished by their dance-like quality; a skilled worker at work invariably reminds one of a dancer; thus work borders on art.  

Here we see clearly how the belief in the new world view was explicitly formed to create a new form of aesthetics based on a political foundation. Meyerhold’s theatrical opposition started as an opposition to bourgeois aesthetics that transcended into an opposition to bourgeois ideology and way of life, keeping this opposition in a theatrical form.

2.2.3 Brecht and theatricality

The German theatre director and playwright Bertolt Brecht regarded, as Meyerhold, theatre as a political tool. Central to Brecht’s theories is, as is well-known, the effect of *verfremdung*, which he coined in 1935, and which was translated into English as *alienation effect* by John Willett in 1964. Brecht developed the concept *verfremdung* from Shklovsky’s term *ostranenie*, and I will therefore use the term estrangement also about Brecht’s intended effect. The purpose of Brecht’s effect of verfremdung (v-effect) is to prevent the audience from totally identifying with the theatre event. Brecht wanted a theatre that encouraged the audience to reconsider society’s laws. “We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible

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33 Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, 198
34 The term *ostranenie* is derived from the Russian term *stranno*, which means strange, and I am therefore of the opinion that *estrangement* is the correct translation from the Russian term. The German term *verfremdung* should not be confused with *entfremdung*, the term used by Karl Marx when describing alienation, and gives further reason to translate Brecht’s *verfremdung* as estrangement. Estrangement has also today become the most commonly used term when translating both Brecht and Shklovsky.
within the particular field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.”

For Brecht the theatre should be used as an explicit instrument in changing society and making the public aware of their situation. To achieve this Brecht sees the introduction of the v-effect as a solution.

As for Meyerhold the main means of estrangement had to come from the actor, and for Brecht it was important that the actor did not show the situation that was played as though it was realistic but held a distance to the situation played, which in turn increased the feeling of unfamiliarity. “The new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today.” As with Meyerhold, Brecht was also opposed to the techniques of Stanislavsky, and inspired by Oriental theatre, made a call for a new form of acting. For Brecht it was important that the actor not identify with the character on stage. “In order to produce A-effects the actor has to discard whatever means he has learned of getting the audience to identify itself with the characters which he plays. Aiming not to put his audience into trance, he must not go into trance himself.” This is a comment on the illusionary theatre and Brecht’s perception of the theatre of Stanislavsky, and the naturalistic theatre that also had great hold in Germany where identification with the character played was one of the most important techniques. This trance was, for Brecht, important to avoid if the theatre was to have a political aim.

Brecht himself did not use the term theatricality in his writings. However, his theories of estrangement and acting have similarities to the theories of both Shklovsky and Meyerhold, and the most important feature of this theatricality, the focus on fiction on behalf of realistic illusion, is maintained in Brecht’s theories. When the actor on stage uses his body to show that what is happening on stage is theatre, either by for example exaggerated movement or self-referential acting, which is the case with both Meyerhold and Brecht, theatricality occurs. For Brecht the aim of theatre is not to mask social reality or to give social reality an artistic view, Brecht’s purpose is rather to make the audience aware of their social conditions, and in that way inspire change. The only way the performance can make the audience aware of the injustices of life is through the use of estrangement/verfremdung techniques. This means that representation of social

56 Ibid., 192
57 Ibid., 193
reality is an important part of Brecht’s theatre aesthetics. The social reality presented on
stage is supposed to be recognizable; it is the techniques of presenting it that makes this
reality unfamiliar. “A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize
its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar.”

Meyerhold and the other enthusiasts of retheatricalization had in common with
Brecht a focus on an underlining of theatre as theatre, and explicitly banning scenic
illusions. Within the retheatricalization this was expressed mainly through bodily
communication while Brecht focused on narrative techniques in addition to letting the
actors communicate directly to the audience. Especially in Brecht’s theatricality, but
also in the political elements in the revolutionary theatre, the spectator’s perception
becomes the main goal of the theatre since the theatrical techniques are applied in order
to change the perception of society. For Brecht, theatre would therefore not be success-
ful if it had not been for the impact the theatricality was to have on the audience.
Meyerhold, Fuchs, Brecht and others among them wanted to theatricalize theatre, for
Nikolai Evreinov and the avant-garde artists in Europe the task was bigger, they wanted
to theatricalize life.

2.2.4 Theatricalizing life

One of the most important representatives for theories of theatricality as part of life is
the Russian artist, director and theorist Nikolai Evreinov. He was also a pioneer of mass
performance, which makes his view of theatricality especially interesting in this context.
Although in a different way than Meyerhold, he was also influenced by the Russian
revolution, and his biggest attempt on theatricalizing life was his 1920 staging or
reenactment of the October revolution, The Storming of the Winter Palace. On November
7th 1920, exactly three years after the historical October revolution, he staged the
revolution all over again. The Storming of the Winter Palace was the biggest mass
performance in Soviet history and was staged as a commemoration of the historical
revolution of 1917. The performance was played out at Uritsky Square in front of the
Winter Palace in Petrograd, and started with a single gunshot in the night. The British
theatre critic Huntley Carter travelled to the Soviet Union to research the new theatre of
the times after the revolution, and was present in Petrograd for the performance. His

38 Ibid., 192
39 Different sources say different things about when it started, but most likely it started sometime between
10 pm and 10.30 pm.
account of it is one of few remaining eyewitness accounts to the event. According to Carter, two large platforms were erected on the square, one for the Red forces and one for the Whites. They were connected in the centre by an arch bridge.

In Carter’s eyewitness account we can read that a search light was placed on top of the Alexander Column in the middle of the square and alternatingly lit up the platforms, and later also the palace. On the bridge an orchestra played The Marseillaise, a song associated with the provisional government, which was set up after the February revolution. The White platform, on which one could see the provisional government of Kerensky holding a meeting and deciding to continue Russia’s participation in the 1st World War, was illuminated. Sound was heard from the Red platform:

The searchlight was turned on to the Red stage. There one saw workmen and women, children and cripples reeling home tired from the factories; maimed soldiers toiling up under the bridge because the order had been issued that new armies were to be formed. At the same time on the White stage capitalists pushed sacks of money with their bellies towards Kerensky’s throne, and ministers jumped for the ministerial bench and collected all the valuables in a heap, whilst from the dark side the cry of “Lenin” rose above the murmurs, at first indistinctly, then louder and louder.

On the White platform there were twenty-five Kerenskys, all played by ballet dancers, who read a speech three times. The Marseillaise, which earlier had been played strongly, was now out of tune, and the listeners’ movements became more chaotic. More people came on to the Red platform and crowded around a red flag while they sang The Internationale loudly. This continued until the participants on the Red platform attacked the white by crossing the bridge while carrying a giant red flag. The number of Lenins on the Red platform outnumbered the number of Kerenskys on the White platform by five, so a total of thirty Lenins received a great response from the workers on the platform accompanied by frequent repetitions of The Internationale.

Subsequently two cars drove in to the square from a side street and evacuated Kerensky and his ministers, and moved them into the palace followed by armed red soldiers and workers. While the fighting on the bridge continued, the Winter Palace was illuminated for the first time in the performance. Shadow fights were visible through the illuminated white shades. A cannon was fired from the battleship Aurora on the

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41 Ibid., 106-109
42 Ibid., 107
nearby river Neva, 40,000 people were singing *The Internationale*, and red stars were projected by light on to the palace. One comic event still remained, the flight of Prime Minister Kerensky in women’s clothing, before a parade and fireworks:

A hundred thousand was now approaching the Winter Palace. The immense square was crowded with marching, running, singing, shouting people, all pressing towards the Winter Palace. Rifle shots, the rattle of machine guns, the terrible thunder from the “Aurora” – all this was awful, arresting, almost indescribable. Then came rockets to announce the end. The guns of the “Aurora” became silent, the shouting died down, and the mass melted in the night.46

According to theatre historian Robert Leach it is unclear exactly how many participants there were on the Red platform, but there were probably more people than on the white one.47 According to theatre scholar Frantisek Deak there were 2685 participants including 125 ballet dancers, 100 circus artists and 1750 extras on the white platform. And when we know how many performed on the white platform, and that there were even more on the red platform, we understand that the total number of performers were huge.48 As we see in the quote above, a total of 100,000 people, including spectators, participated in the event, a lot more than had been present for the historical revolution of 1917, which resembled a coup d’état more than a peoples uprising. What Evreinov actually achieved with this mass performance was to reenact the historical revolution as theatricality, making the revolution theatrical. By doing this he accomplished two things; he made the people of Petrograd a part of the revolution in a greater way than the historical revolution had been able to, and he theatricalized life by creating a total realm outside of the everyday.

Although Evreinov created the biggest remembrance event of the revolution, he did not agree with the political and revolutionary foundation of it. Four years after the staging of *The Storming of the Winter Palace* he immigrated to France along with several other Russian artists who did not embrace the revolution. The American Evreinov researcher Spencer Golub asks how Evreinov, who was obviously opposed to the new government and a strong believer in individuality, could stage this enormous mass performance in honor of the Bolshevik revolution.49 This is an interesting question when discussing *The Storming of the Winter Palace* in a theoretical perspective, and in relation to Evreinov’s theories of theatricality since Evreinov considered theatricality to be a pre-aesthetic instinct common to all human beings. According to Evreinov theatre

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47 Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre*, 46
48 Deák, “Russian Mass Spectacles,” 16
49 Golub, *Evreinov*, 200
can appear whenever and wherever you like, and is often a personal and individual experience.

The most paradoxical in Evreinov’s theories in comparison to staging the mass performance is his opposition to theatre as a communal event. This was in great opposition to the dominating concept of communality in post-revolutionary Russia. Contrary to dominating beliefs he maintained that the collectivity of ritual signified primitive man, and that it was time for modern man to explore the theatre of one-self. “The collectivistic principle becomes sometimes a real dictator of life, a genuine autocrat oppressing and suppressing individuality, all privacy of man’s spiritual life.” Evreinov, contrary to most other theatre practitioners and theorists, actually wanted theatre to be a private affair. Golub suggests that although Evreinov’s theatricality is a personal subjective experience, it could easily be experienced in a crowd. However, more probable is the notion, also discussed by Golub, that Evreinov in this event finally “found a life-sized canvas he could paint, possessed of spirituality and a cosmic scope (…).” This canvas made it possible for him to actually merge theatricality into life.

The main element of Evreinov’s theatricality is the element of unfamiliarity. The theatrical instinct implies the ability to transform nature into something else. Evreinov looks to primitive man and compares life without theatricality to food without spice.

Without the zest of theatricality life would be to him like tasteless food, like sufferings and privations without a beam of hope. As soon, however as he begins to theatricalize, it acquires a new meaning, it becomes his life, something that he has created. He has transformed the life that was into a life that was different. Hence, he is the master of life, not its slave.

The Storming of the Winter Palace was, in every way, the zest of the revolution. As mentioned, the October revolution was not a mass uprising, but more or less a Bolshevik coup d’état. In addition to this the revolution happened at a time when Russia was still at war with Germany and it preceded a four year long civil war. These were not happy times in a war and poverty ridden country. To make the people believe in the revolutionary cause it was important to create “a beam of hope”, and to make the people feel as though it was their revolution, not something they were slaves to. Evreinov provides the revolution with theatricality, and allows the participants, both audience and performers, to theatricalize for themselves. The point was not to reenact the revolution exactly as it had been played out three years earlier, but to make a theatricalized version

51 Golub, Evreinov, 201
52 Evreinoff, The Theatre in Life, 27
of it. *The Storming of the Winter Palace* was large scale theatricalizing but theatricalizing may appear in all scales, something Evreinov was a faithful supporter of. The biggest difference between Evreinov’s theatricality and the theatricalizing executed by the central European avant-garde, which will be discussed next, was the political manifestoes supported by the latter.

### 2.2.5 Theatricality of the avant-garde: Futurism and Dadaism

In the years surrounding the First World War, new theatrical practices appeared all over Europe through movements like the Dada in Switzerland, Germany, Spain, and the USA, and the futurists in Italy and Russia. They wanted life to become like theatre and through this a theatricality of daily life appeared. The American scholar of visual culture and Slavic studies, Anna Lawton, points out how the futurists wanted to merge theatre and life:

> (T)he hallmark of Futurist performance was the Futurist “evening”. It consisted of a wild “happening” in which the Futurists declaimed their verses, read manifestos and lectures, performed concerts of “noises”, and exchanged verbal and even physical abuse with the audience. The idea of the evening was to expand the stage, to go beyond the boundaries of the artificially limited performing space, to turn the whole city into a stage and life into a performance.\(^{53}\)

They stayed mainly indoors in the early years of the movement, staging evenings for an interested public but the aim was always the same, decreasing distinctions between art and life, and theatricalizing ordinary life.

The Italian futurists stayed indoors in cafés and galleries through most of their actions, but the Russian futurists, according to RoseLee Goldberg, soon got tired of the cafés and moved their futurism outside to the general public: “(T)hey walked the streets in outrageous attire, their faces painted, sporting top hats, velvet jackets, earrings, and radishes or spoons in their button-holes.”\(^{54}\) Jestrovic links the outdoor performances to carnival, and points out that the Russian futurists “theatricalized reality by means of carnival.”\(^{55}\) She sees how they defamiliarized reality by adding carnivalesque atmosphere. “These elements of carnival became means of defamiliarization, turning everyday existence, where the prevailing norms and conventions were normally acted out, into a place of play, buffoonery and freedom.”\(^{56}\) The Russian futurists took the


\(^{54}\) RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art. From Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 32

\(^{55}\) Jestrovic, *Theatre of Estrangement*, 52

\(^{56}\) Ibid.
principle of harlequinade through play and placed it on the street, at places people went on an everyday manner in their daily lives. What they did was give life an artistic dimension, hence making the social reality of daily life playful.

Also the Dadaists moved their performances from closed arenas to public space. Erika Fischer-Lichte shows how the Berlin Dada infiltrated bourgeois arenas for their performances. For instance Johannes Baader attended a church ceremony just to interrupt the priest and shout out questions about how much they actually cared about Jesus. The performance did not last very long since Baader was arrested quite quickly. Baader also visited the Weimar government where he interrupted the proceedings and handed out Dada pamphlets.

The theatrical actions of the Dadaists at the original sites of bourgeois ritual such as the church and government thus exposed the rituals themselves – religious service, parliamentary session – as theatrical processes. In that theatre was introduced into life this way, life was denounced – or discovered? – as theatre. What the futurists and Dadaists did when they brought their unique form of performance out into everyday places, was interrupting familiar events, which gave the everyday places and events, with the words of Evreinov, a spice of theatricality.

The Dadaists created several forms of theatrical events taking place both inside and outside. Of the events taking place inside one of the most famous is Hugo Ball’s 1916 performance of the sound poem Karawane at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich. In this performance, Ball was dressed in a big, colored costume made of cardboard:

I had made myself a special costume…. My legs were in a cylinder of shiny blue cardboard, which came up to my hips so that I looked like an obelisk. Over it I wore a huge coat collar cut out of cardboard (sic), scarlet inside and gold outside. It was fastened in the neck in such away that I could give the impression of a winglike movement by raising and lowering my elbows. I also wore a high, blue-and-white-striped witchdoctor’s hat.

Dressed in this costume Ball recited a sound poem consisting only of sounds so it did not constitute any meaning. In this performance Ball did not represent anything outside himself although he took a different form than he would have outside of the performance situation. By dressing in this outrageous costume he recreated the space he occupied. The Cabaret Voltaire was not a traditional scenic space but nevertheless it had a small raised platform that functioned as a stage.

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59 Melzer, Dada and Surrealist Performance, 61
As in the previous examples, the theatricality of Hugo Ball’s performance includes an element of estrangement and defamiliarization. In addition to this, Ball’s usage of the space he performs in becomes important for the theatricality of the event. The Canadian theatre scholar Josette Féral argues for the importance of space in theatricality and emphasizes that theatricality occurs in the spectator’s gaze in this space. “More than a property with analyzable characteristics, theatricality seems to be a process that has to do with a “gaze” that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other, from which fiction can emerge.”

The process Féral speaks of here resonates the process of perception emphasized by Shklovsky. To Féral a virtual space is created through the spectator’s gaze that gives room for the experience of theatricality. “Space seems fundamental to theatricality, for the passage from the literary to the theatrical is first and foremost completed through a spatial realization of the text.” Theatricality occurs through the alteration of space, either through the performer’s reallocation of quotidian space or through the spectator’s gaze that frames the quotidian space he does not occupy.

Féral describes how the spectator creates a clivage, in which theatricality emerges, a term I will use throughout the dissertation. The clivage is a result of the spectator’s perception of space, which means that how theatricality is experienced depends on how space is experienced. Ball recreated the space he occupied by becoming an unfamiliar part of his, and the spectators’ surroundings. This made it possible for the spectators to perceive a division between him and them, which changed the way the space was experienced by the audience. It is the presence of Ball in his special costume that constitutes the theatricality of the event in the meaning that he recreates space, which again creates a cleft of perception. By reading the sound poem he succeeds in increasing the perception in time, hence increasing the theatricality of the event as experience.

Ball’s performance distinguishes itself from the other Dadaist and futurist events mentioned here, and from Evreinov’s reenactment because it, to a greater degree, keeps to a traditional performance setting. However, they resemble each other in the way that their goal is to transform life in an unexpected way. Their events are staged and planned within the realm of the ordinary, but their mission is to transform and recreate the

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61 Ibid., 96
62 Ibid., 97
ordinary as something different, something more exciting. Here, theatricality is recognized by its technique of creating breaches of the ordinary.

2.2.6 Carnival, revolutions and theatricality

Evreinov, the Dadaists and futurists staged events where everyday social life was transformed into events of theatricality. In carnivals, on the other hand, theatricality is inherent in the events, which are distinguished from the ordinary completely. Another thing that distinguishes the theatricality of the events above from the theatricality of carnival is that the theatricality of carnival is recognized by its total lack of division between stage and audience. Elements of carnival were also prerequisite for theatricality during retheatricalization, and both Evreinov and Meyerhold were deeply influenced by this when they tried to remove the distance between actors and audience.

In his book on Rabelais written in 1940 and first published in 1965, the Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, emphasizes the element of participation in medieval carnivals:

> In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom.63

Although we know today that the removal of footlights would not destroy a theatre performance, Bakhtin here shows how carnival becomes an aesthetic event incorporating everyone participating in the same manner. Freedom is a central concept of carnivals, and the actions of overturning hierarchies for a limited amount of time belongs to the basis of this freedom. Freedom means being relieved of the rules and norms of normal society, and this becomes clear when the people who participate in the events fill the roles as both spectators and actors. Carnivals have traditionally been temporary feasts following the ceremonies of the church, and in most cases marked the first days before Lent. Bakhtin describes the carnivals as a parallel life where the rules of everyday life did not exist:

> They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside

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officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year.®

Here we can see how the parallel life was communal in the sense that the whole society collectively left the regular world behind for a different world bordering on art. “It belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play.”® If we use the terminology of Evreinov it is easy to see that the theatricality of carnival also is a result of a wish for theatricalizing life, and that this theatricalizing of life is what happens when one applies what Bakhtin calls a pattern of play.

As performance scholar Richard Schechner points out in the article “The Street is the Stage”, life structured as a pattern of play in between art and life is not just a characteristic of the pre-Lenten carnivals of Medieval and Renaissance Europe, elements of carnivalesque behavior can be found in several similar events across the world. He points out that “Revolutions in their incipient period are carnivalesque”® The two important common features of carnivals and revolutions is the lack of distinction between actor and spectator, in the sense that all participants are equal, and that everyone participates in the same degree, and the creation of a second social reality. Among other examples of street theatre Schechner emphasizes the revolutionary carnivalesque atmosphere during the time of the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989.

I find the fall of the Berlin wall especially interesting when discussing theatricality and revolutions because of its carnivalesque form and far-reaching political implications. The unrest started spreading throughout the German Democratic Republic (DDR) during the autumn of 1989, but when the authorities, on November 9th, opened its borders in to West Berlin they launched what was to become the beginning of the reunification of Germany. Thousands of people came out into the streets of Berlin, several hundred climbed the wall and the celebration started on both sides. Schechner points out how the Berlin Wall changed its symbolic status, and what had been a sign of repression, now became a sign of change and freedom:

On 9 November, in a flash, the Berlin Wall’s symbolic value was reversed. What had been avoided or surpassed became the chosen place of celebration. Because it has been such a terrifying barrier it was now where people wanted to act out how totally things had changed. People couldn’t wait to climb it, sit on it, pop champagne and dance on it, and chip away souvenir chunks of it.®

® Ibid., 6-7
® Ibid., 7
®® Ibid., 69
As with carnivals inequalities between people were non-existing for a period of time. East and West Germans were united in their common Germanness, and met each other as equals in the same celebration. On the west side of the border westerners were welcoming their eastern neighbours “with champagne, cheers and hugs.” On the American television channel NBC’s coverage of the happenings of what they named Freedom Night one can see the reporter standing in front of the wall surrounded by euphoric Germans actually tearing the wall down. From the top of the wall one can see champagne bottles being opened and hear the sounds of singing, cheering and the chisels meeting the cement. On the voice-over the reporter says: “It looks as if the entire city of Berlin, east and west, was in the streets, a street party that hasn’t stopped for 36 hours. The euphoria is catching, dancing down the main streets, East and West Berliners who can’t get enough of their unity.”

The surprise expressed by the reporters and the carnivalesque behavior surrounding them is a result of sudden changes and a breach of the ordinary. When NBC calls the festivities of the night Freedom Night it is of course a part of American rhetoric insinuating that the people of communist DDR now could walk in to the free west. Although it might not have been the intention, NBC and their freedom also relates to the Bakhtinian freedom, the freedom that depends not on lifestyle or political views or indoctrination, but on the time limited carnivalesque freedom, which will eventually be overtaken by the restoration of regular social order. And when the same reporter says: “It’s like New Year’s Eve, only better here because it’s not been celebrated in so many years,” it is exactly this upheaval of the regular social order and carnivalesque atmosphere he is referring to. In the same way as the Bakhtinian carnival the Berlin revolution presented a second world outside officialdom, a completely different world where everyday politics and human relations were overturned. This is also seen in the footage of people embracing people they had never met.

The order in Berlin was, as in all carnivalesque events, restored again. However the coming year was a time of change before the two Germanys were reunified in October 1990. On New Year’s Eve 1989 the American celebrity David Hasselhoff performed his number one hit Looking for freedom while standing on top of the partly

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68 In chapter three I will discuss Victor Turner’s term communitas and will look more closely into the concept of the lack of hierarchies in liminal times.
69 Schechner, “The Street is the Stage,” 70
71 Ibid., 4.11
72 Ibid., 3.58
deconstructed Berlin wall, and was seen by audiences on both sides. The event that some weeks earlier had been compared to New Year’s Eve had now been restaged for the holiday. Once again unity was emphasized on the wall. This can be seen in relation to Schechner’s view presented above about how places change meaning as they become spaces of performance within the city, and the revolutionary event, and how the Berlin wall, which once had symbolized division now symbolized the complete opposite, that is, unity. Hasselhoff increased the atmosphere of unity by performing a song for a divided people. Since the audience was standing on each side of the wall while he was performing the division was clearly still there, but the event became an event of unity and a restaging and remembrance of freedom night two months prior.

When David Hasselhoff performed on the top of the Berlin Wall in 1989 his actions, in many ways, resembled the ones of Johannes Baader and the Berlin Dada. They both entered constructions built for power purposes, and used to legitimate the state, and transformed the constructions through changing the foundation of what could be seen as social reality and “ordinary life”. They had different forms of expression and perhaps different purposes of action, but they both theatricalized society and its social structures through the events they participated in.

Both carnivals and revolutions can be seen as festivals where life is recreated or transformed and appears as a life less ordinary, as a second form of social life. In the same way as the European avant-gardists found aesthetic ways to explicitly ornament life and present ordinary life as dull, the mass risings of carnivals and revolutions transform the ordinary completely for a limited but all-embracive period of time. In the carnivals one can also see the presence of elements of defamiliarization as characteristic of theatricality. In many ways this form of theatricality can seem to distinguish itself greatly from the theatricality of retheatralization and more traditional performance settings because of the lack of break between actor and spectator. In Féral’s theatricality it is the distance that appears through clivage that becomes the main prerequisite for theatricality. As discussed in the example of Hugo Ball, he, in his weird costume and gibberish words, distanced himself physically and mentally from the people watching him, and within this distancing, theatricality was manifested. Although there is a difference between the theatricality of Ball’s performance and carnivals and revolutions, this does not mean that a distancing does not occur in carnivals and revolutions. The

distance to quotidian life is still an important prerequisite, and theatricality occurs precisely because there is a mental distance to the events that people participate in.

2.2.7 Theatricality and perception
We can find yet another approach to theatricality in the theories of the American art historian Michael Fried. In his article “Art and Objecthood”, where theatricality is discussed as a characteristic of minimalist art, what Fried calls literalist art. Fried recognizes how theatricality may occur in the encounter with objects. The works Fried discusses are huge shapes, where shape and size constitute the main factor. “The shape is the object: at any rate, what secures the wholeness of the object is the singleness of the shape.”

The reason these big objects can be understood as being theatrical is, according to Fried, the way the beholder encounters it. Theatricality for Fried is a negative term. He uses it to describe what is wrong with literalist art, and distinguishes it from art he finds to be of a higher degree of objective quality. Literalist art is theatrical because the art appears within a situation, in a situation that occurs in space between the object and the beholder.

Literalist sensibility is theatrical because, to begin with, it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work. (...) Whereas in previous art “what is to be had from the work is located strictly within (it),” the experience of literalist art is of an object in a situation – one that, virtually by definition, includes the beholder. When the object only can exist as art in the presence of a spectator, the work becomes a work of theatricality. Theatricality then, we can say, occurs in the encounter between the spectator and the object, and according to Fried, these objects cannot exist as art without this encounter. This was not the case with earlier art work where the artfulness of the work was placed strictly within the work as an objective quality.

In my reading of Fried I understand the theatricality of these works as dependent on the fact that they are big. The size is vital for theatricality to occur. It leads to the encounter being more of a communicative act of interaction than if you encounter a smaller object. This is because, as Fried points out, the huge size of the objects in question distances the spectator from the object both physically and psychologically, and the feeling of distance increases the feeling of theatricality. “It is, one might say, precisely this distancing that makes the beholder a subject and the piece in question…”

74 Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” in Art and Objecthood. Essays and Reviews (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,1998), 151
75 Ibid., 153
an object.”\textsuperscript{76} The size also leads to another factor for the occurrence of theatricality; the largeness of the object creates a non-personal and public mode that is harder to find in smaller art works. Although the encounter with the art work is a personal and individual experience, the experience takes place in a public space and the encounter becomes public because of its largeness and degree of presence in the public space the object occupies.

The encounter also elicits action from the spectator. To grasp the largeness of the work and be able to interact with the wholeness of it, the spectator has to move around and see the object from different perspectives. This also increases the amount of time needed to view the object and creates a process of perception dependent on time: “\textit{(T)he experience in question persists in time(.)}”\textsuperscript{77} This is in accordance with Shklovsky’s notion of estrangement and Féral’s notion of theatricality as a process “that has to do with a “gaze” that postulates and creates a distinct, virtual space belonging to the other (…).”\textsuperscript{78} As Fried, Féral finds that it is theatricality within the beholder’s gaze that persists in time. The object takes up a large physical space, which the beholder, through the encounter with the object and the physical space it constitutes, distances the beholder physically and psychologically but also, to use Féral’s term, creates a spatial cleft, a \textit{clivage}, where the object constitutes a space of the other.

Although Féral mainly recognizes elements of theatricality within staged events, she concludes that the nature of theatricality does not lie within the event but within the spectator, and the reason that theatre exists in the first place is the spectator’s ability to create a spatial cleft, a \textit{clivage}, and through that cleft allow theatricality to emerge. One of the artists Fried discusses is the American artist Robert Morris. In his installation at the Green Gallery in New York in 1964, Robert Morris created a work of art that transformed the whole room it occupied. He placed plywood structures around the room, some in the ceiling, some on the floor, and some standing out from the wall. Previously Robert Morris has also worked extensively with dance, and the room he created in 1964 may remind one of constructivist set designs, as the one Meyerhold used in \textit{The Magnanimous Cuckold}, just waiting for the performers to appear. In her discussion of theatricality Féral proposes the possibility of experiencing theatricality in a traditional theatre space before the performance starts where the anticipation that

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 154  
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 166  
\textsuperscript{78} Féral, “Theatricality,” 97
something will happen on stage creates an experience of theatricality. Through this experience of spatial theatricality one can argue that theatricality also can be seen as a concept of anticipation, where the expectations of the theatrical space increase the experience of clivage.

In the case of Robert Morris’ installation nothing is going to happen, there is nothing more to the work of art than what you see when you come into the room, still it clearly has a feature of theatricality. Although the work of art is big, something that is important for Fried, it does not, as many of the other works sighted by Fried, distance the spectator physically in order to grasp the totality of the work. On the contrary, here the spectator has to walk into the work and become a part of it in order to grasp it. If you take a step back, you will leave the room and not be able to inspect the work at all. The work demands incorporation of the spectator. Thus, an element of interaction occurs.

What you as spectator get out of the work of art you are witnessing depends on your ability to communicate with it, to let yourself be a part of the work in question. Although the spectator is incorporated into the work, distance, psychologically and/or physically, is still a prerequisite for theatricality. The distance here is established by the spectator’s almost intrusive walk into the work. Robert Morris’ artwork does not exist without the relationship to the spectator, but on the other hand the spectator intrudes upon the work of art already placed in the room, and in the awareness of this intrusion a distance, and theatricality appears. Another thing this work accomplishes is to create a room that differs widely from the quotidian, and frames the room as different. Through the framing of the room, the room suddenly belongs to the work, not to the spectator. To use Shklovsky’s term, the spectator is estranged from the room, and in this perception theatricality occurs.

In Allan Kaprow’s project Fluids, executed during a three day period in November 1967, several rectangular constructions of ice were built around the Los Angeles area. The constructions were 30 feet long, 10 feet wide and eight feet high and consisted of 650 ice blocks per structure.

If you were crossing the city you might suddenly be confronted by these mute and meaningless blank structures which have been left to melt. Obviously, what’s taking place is a mystery of some sorts; using common material (at considerable expense) to make quasi-architectural struct-

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79 Ibid., 95
tures which seem out of place amid a semi-tropical city setting. In fact, their very blankness and their rapid deterioration proclaims the opposite of significance.\textsuperscript{81}

In this project Kaprow goes right to the core of theatricality, as seen according to Fried. The constructions are huge thus distancing the spectator from the structure. It does not constitute any meaning or refer to anything outside itself, and it does not exist outside the situation, or without the spectator. Most of all this work of art, more than any of the works cited by Fried, persists in time. The objects’ deterioration over time is vital for its existence, and however you perceive the object it cannot be perceived without its deterioration being taken into account. In addition to this, the structures are placed in spaces in which they do not belong. Ice structures do not belong in California. It is then, to return to Féral, necessary to point out that the ice structures create spatial clefts in the environment they occupy. It actually estranges the surrounding space because of its awkwardness in the hot climate. But again, the hot climate is vital to the project. Without the warm weather the structures would not have melted as quickly, and the melting in itself would not have played such an important part in the art work as such, making the work less successful since the time limit would not be as pressured. As in the objects of art Fried discusses, the actual shape is the object in Kaprow’s work, but the shape changes, and in this process of change theatricality is increased.

The theatricality that occurs in the meeting with Object Art resembles what Michael Kirby, in his book about happenings, calls nonmatrixed performing. Kirby uses this term about performance that avoids information structures and narratives but focuses on the performative event.\textsuperscript{82} Kirby emphasizes that nonmatrixed performing does not immediately mean that the object or performer in question does not symbolize anything, he in fact means that it might refer to something outside the performance for the spectator. However, the symbolization the spectator might find, will, in the encounter with nonmatrixed performing always be personal. As a spectator you might find connotations in the work you are witnessing, but they do not represent collective symbols intended for collective interpretation.\textsuperscript{83} This resembles the interpretation of an encounter with Object Art. Robert Morris’ installations could definitely have connotations to something outside the installation. But the installation in itself does not refer to anything outside the work.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 154
\textsuperscript{82} Michael Kirby, Happenings (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1965), 16
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 20
Here theatricality occurs when through perception a space of the other is created through size, misplacement, strangeness and/or other elements that transform the space it occupies. Having stripped away confusing elements of imaginary spheres, only the pure act of perception and communication remains. The element of communication is recognizable through Fried’s discussion on how objects of minimalist art are anthropomorphic. He recognizes that many of them are pneumatic structures, and because of this hollowness, they have anthropomorphic qualities. He does not, however, mean that this is a negative quality in art in general, but that anthropomorphism in minimalist art is hidden, and that “the hiddenness of its anthropomorphism (is) incurably theatrical”84

I believe that in the experience of what Fried describes as anthropomorphism lies an element of experience of communication, and the fact that it is hidden strengthens the uneasiness of how to interpret the situation, thus increasing the experience of theatricality. The encounter with a structure with humanoid qualities will increase the feeling that it is trying to tell you something. The structure is not actively and explicitly communicating anything and it does not represent anything outside itself, but the encounter with it may still arouse a feeling of misplaced communication. In this way it is possible to argue that this form of theatricality is not a non-communicative theatricality, but that the act of communication lies more within the spectator’s interpretation, than with the work of art in itself.

This form of theatricality is not only applicable to experiences of objects, but also to performative situations involving a performer. When Hugo Ball dressed up as a statue-like figure at the Cabaret Voltaire, the same mechanisms of theatricality were applied. Through the non-representational costume and gibberish sound poem it became nonmatrixed performing. He increased his own size with his costume so that he had a greater effect on the room. The hat made him taller and the cape made him wider. Not only is his size increased by the costume, but it also made him look non-human. Ball even emphasized himself that the costume made him look like an obelisk. He recreated himself as a space defining object. Through this objectness he accomplished to change the room, and distance himself from the audience in a way a regular human actor or performer would not. He became a pneumatic structure, and much like the objects discussed by Fried, he communicated through existence. Although the fact that he was alive was important, the theatricality did not communicate anything outside non-relational existence.

84 Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 157
The theatricality attacked by Fried distinguishes itself from the other forms of theatricality discussed here in the sense that theatricality, for Fried, appears when something in the artwork is seemingly aware of its spectator. In this opinion theatricality becomes an independent quality in the artwork itself and not an experience constituted mainly by the spectator. I have argued that what Fried recognizes is that the work of art communicates with its beholder in a way that creates a distancing effect. This effect is an effect of duality. In the following section I will argue how theatricality is to be seen as a result of several dualities interacting with each other.

2.3 Theatricality as duality

2.3.1 The common denominator of duality

In this chapter I have presented different actions, events, and art forms where a concept of theatricality can be used as a common denominator. I will propose that the aspect that unites them is a foundational duality, a duality that characterizes and defines the events explicitly or implicitly, and the way they are perceived. In representational theatre there is always a duality in the act of representation, between the role played and bodily manifestation of it, or if seen semiotically, and in accordance with Fischer-Lichte, between the signifier and the signified. In the theatre of the retheatricalization this duality is explicitly strengthened, while in representational theatre there was an aim to remove the visibility of the duality to create a suspension of disbelief. When Fuchs proclaimed that the theatre should no longer be a place of separate realms but a place where actors and spectators were a unit, he wanted to dispel the duality, seeing unity as an opposite. However, he also increased the duality within the actor and the relation between the representational act and the performing body, a form of duality we can also find with Brecht. The duality between signifier and signified in representation is not limited to traditional theatrical space, but is to be found in every event including role play in some form or other.

Other dualities are also possible to locate both in the spectators’ experiences and in the communicational or artistic act. In this chapter I will propose three dualities that I mean are central to the understanding of theatricality. I have chosen to focus on three forms of duality, dualities of life/art, space and communication. They all exist side by side and interfere with each other, and are not to be seen as separate entities. Probably more dualities exist within the concept of theatricality, but I mean that these three are appropriate approaches because they are wide enough to include additional forms of
duality at the same time as they are poignant enough to explain the mechanisms of
duality within theatricality, and will function as a helpful tool when discussing the
concept of theatricality in general.

2.3.2 Theatricality and art
The first duality that I will argue to be present in theatricality is the duality of art and
life. When using ubiquitous terms such as art and life within theatrical and cultural
events, the terms necessarily become a bit vague since neither are complete categories.
However, this vague dichotomy functions to show how the duality exists through
ongoing interplay and not as separate entities. Theatricality differs from ordinary social
life at the same time as it cannot be the opposite of life. Although theatricality is not the
opposite of life, it is different from quotidian life, and its appearance is quite recogniz-
able as something, be it an event or situation, distinguishing itself from quotidian life.
The American theatre historian Marvin Carlson relates theatricality to the Greek term of
*mimesis* and how Plato saw art as an imitation of life.85

As is well known Plato used the term to show how art was a degenerate form of
reality and something, by definition, worthless in relation to nature and real life. Alt-
though the discussion surrounding mimesis did not continue as a discussion on art’s
degenerateness, it became an influential term for separating art and life, and defining art
as something belonging to a different realm. Carlson sees theatricality as closely related
to mimesis in the way that both concepts have built into them “a doubleness, or a play
between two types of reality.”86 He finds theatre to be the mimetic double of life, but
not in the sense that theatricality imitates life, but that it celebrates life. Theatre is rather
a different version of life, “a heightened, intensified variation of life, not so much a
mirror as exploration and celebration of possibility.”87 Carlson’s view on theatricality
relates to life as a process or narrative form and that theatricality is a technique that can
comment on this form by resembling it in an artistic manner. Carlson also emphasizes
the artistic elements in his understanding of theatricality by linking theatricality to
human achievements in performance. Carlson continues to relate theatricality to an
artistic process on a parallel track, never actually interfering with life, just resembling
and commenting on it. Carlson points out some interesting facts on the dualities of

Issue: Theatricality (2002): 246
86 Ibid., 243
87 Ibid., 246
theatricality and life, and the notion of mimesis that he relates to shows how deeply this opposition between art and life is felt.

By relating theatricality to mimesis, Carlson applies the experience of a different world within theatricality, what I will call here a theatrical “as if.” This theatrical “as if” also includes a notion of play and make-believe, the creation of a realm of fantasy and difference. I will argue that this encounter with the theatrical “as if” contains a certain aspect of anticipation and excitement, and that the experience of theatricality in many cases will also include emotions of interest, anticipation, anxiousness, excitement, and eagerness. The reason to this is, to a large degree, the inclusion of aspects of presenting something different, something not familiar to the audience.

In the examples presented above in relation to Meyerhold, Brecht, Shklovsky, and others, the techniques of defamiliarizing were created by increasing the duality of art and life. In my discussion on the retheatricalization movement I showed how Erika Fischer-Lichte in her 1995 article “From Theatre to Theatricality” argued that the retheatricalization meant a turn in semiotic signs from language to body. She argued that this was a characteristic of the retheatricalization in general and in Max Reinhardt’s Sumurun in particular. In her book The Transformative Power of Performance from 2008, Fischer-Lichte follows up this claim by showing how this turn to the body as sign, and then mainly to the material coexistence of the body, deepens the theatrical duality by focusing on the material body.88 The body does not belong to a different realm but is physically present and coexisting with the bodies of the spectators. As the body of the performer is at once physically present within the narrative presented on stage, and within the physical communication with the body of the spectator, a duality appears where the “real” body executes “real” actions but still within the framework of art. I would also like to add that the body, presenting itself as a sign and in unfamiliar ways compared to daily ordinary behavior, in itself as self-referential sign, acts as a defamiliarizing element distancing itself from ordinary life. This defamiliarizing element is the same form of estrangement, as I have shown in relation to Meyerhold and Brecht.

As presented in the chapter on carnival, Bakhtin related carnivals to a pattern of play. This pattern is also possible to locate in the theories of Evreinov who wanted us to live a life that allowed us to play, and to use elements of play in our ordinary life. In this recognition of his theatre of the everyday and pattern of play we can also point out that

Evreinov’s experience of theatre and theatricality resembles the Dutch cultural scholar Johan Huizinga’s term of play. Huizinga defines play as “a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and that it is “different” from “ordinary life”.”\textsuperscript{89} Play is free but limited; it exists only within a limited and secluded time and space. “We found that one of the most important characteristics of play was its spatial separation from ordinary life. A closed space is marked out for it, either materially or ideally, hedged off from everyday surroundings.”\textsuperscript{90} Another important factor of play is that all play has its rules, which all involved must follow if play is to be fulfilled.\textsuperscript{91} Although play is related to fun and games, it does not mean that play cannot be serious.

Evreinov’s theatricality resembles Huizinga’s definition of play in many ways. It has fixed limits within time and space, and is related to feelings of joy and tension. And most importantly, it differs from ordinary life. One thing that differs is that the rules are not as important in theatricality, as they might be in play. In play the players often follow explicitly or implicitly communicated rules that everyone knows and has to follow for the play to be accomplished. In the case of theatricality one might say that most of the rules are carried out by the performers, but that the most important rule is the common understanding of something as theatricality.

\textbf{2.3.3 Theatricality and space}

The second duality I will claim as being vital for the experience of theatricality, is the duality of space. This includes the old discussion on the separation of stage and auditorium. Meyerhold, Fuchs, Reinhardt, and others tried to remove the physical separation between stage and audience in their theatre. They rearranged the stage rooms, moved the actors, and placed more of the action outside the traditional stage frame. The goal was to diminish the separation and create total events where every participant was equal. This was a part of their search for an increased theatricality, which implied that the experience of what the audience participated in was in fact theatre, and that this was to be increased, and a focus on play and presence was to be heightened. The impact of bodily presence as argued by Fischer-Lichte in the previous paragraph is one of the

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 19
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 8-10
results of this apparent removal of separation. A total removal of separation is, however, not possible in a performance situation made up of performers and spectators, a separation between them is necessary for the event to happen.

In several theories of theatricality the distance is a prerequisite for the theatricality to occur. This, I have already shown, is the case with the theories of Josette Féral who claims the appearance of clivage between the spectator and the object, or event which is to be perceived as inherent of theatricality as a prerequisite for the occurrence of theatricality. Féral argues that in situations of theatricality a space of “the other” is created. Theatricality “is an act initiated in one of two possible spaces: either that of the actor or that of the spectator. In both cases, this act creates a cleft in the quotidian that becomes the space of the other, the space in which the other has a place.” This means that theatricality is dependent on a cleft in space to occur, this could be a cleft created solely by the spectator’s perception in the encounter with quotidian events differing from the ordinary, or it could be produced by the actors in a more traditional theatre setting, but again the theatricality would rely on the perception of the person experiencing the theatricality. This view of theatricality makes the spectator a more active participant in the creation of theatricality than theatricality seen solely from the actor’s viewpoint. The duality of space occurs, according to Féral, because of the spectator’s semiotization of space or a “framed theatrical space”, which, if we see in relation to the already discussed duality of art and life, the spectator chooses to perceive the event as a realm of art, and therefore creates the space of the other. Here we see how the two dualities interact with each other.

Since theatricality, as presented in my argument here, relies on a division between the spectator and the space of the other, difficulties arise when discussing theatricality of carnival and carnival-like events where the aim is to remove this distance between actor and spectator. However, the theatricality is clearly visible in public mass performances like carnivals, revolutions, and other popular performative events. One way to see this is that it is not so much the distance as the transformation of space that becomes important in the spatial understanding of carnivals. However, not everyone participates in carnivals to the same degree, so a total removal of the separation of actor and spectator is not possible, although it is the event’s aim. This can also be seen in the fact that most carnivals or carnival-like performative events have events within the event that constitute a more traditional performance factor, and where the separation

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92 Féral, “Theatricality,” 98
of spectators and actors is more common. The mental clivage as argued for by Féral will also be present because of the spectator’s/participant’s encounter with a world distinguishing itself so clearly from the quotidian. Here we can see that a clivage will appear between the subject and the other.

In both cases the duality of space is a duality between performative and quotidian space. And in carnivals both spatial dualities exist at once, both the one that establishes a separateness of actor and spectator, and the ongoing transformation of quotidian space to a space of play and theatre. The transformation is easier because of the huge amounts of people participating. When “everyone” is a part of the event the transformation is complete because there for the moment nothing exists outside the transformed space. Here one can again see a link to the duality of life since the transformation is dependent on transforming itself in space from the quotidian and into something separate from the ordinary. In political events, the spaces of performance are changed in meaning. I demonstrated this in relation to the Berlin Wall, but it can also be argued that the places of revolutionary performance are transformed permanently in other revolutions as well, as for example the Tahrir square in Cairo after the revolution in 2011, or the Tiananmen square in Beijing after the uprisings in 1989. When David Hasselhoff performed on the Berlin wall he transformed space in several ways. As presented in relation to Schechner, the monument previously used as a manifestation of power, now became a symbol of unity. Now, this was not Hasselhoff’s accomplishment, but his performance transformed the wall into performative space, it created a distance of theatricality to his audience, and both united and separated the audience on both sides of the wall. Hasselhoff’s performance thus becomes an example of an event within the event, separating and uniting at the same time.

The duality of space is in many cases a duality of time. Shklovsky argued, when discussing estrangement, that estrangement was a technique increasing the duration of the perception process. If we see estrangement as a prerequisite for theatricality we see that duration in perception caused by the presentation of the unfamiliar is an important element in the perceptive experience of theatricality. However, a different time frame is important, and that is the duration of the event. Here one can see a duality of perception time and event time. The time the event takes is crucial to the understanding of the event as something not ordinary, and that the event recreates space for a limited period of time, and therefore constitutes the event as an event. This is of course most apparent in the carnival events which are calendrical events taking place at fixed times every
year, and linked to the cyclical events of the year. The time frame of the carnival is, however, important because of the participants’ ongoing knowledge of that the event will end at a given time known to all. Here, time and space integrate with each other in creating a realm outside the ordinary. On a smaller scale this can also be seen in other events of theatricality where the interplay of space and time becomes important in constituting the difference and lack of ordinariness within the events.

However easy transforming space with the help of thousands of people may be, space can also be transformed in smaller arenas, as was seen in my discussion on Hugo Ball’s performance at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich. Here it is the physicality of Ball that transforms the space as is argued for in the theories of Michael Fried. In the case of Allan Kaprow’s * Fluids* the space is transformed through the physical changing of it by introducing a giant construction.

2.3.4 Theatricality and communication

What I will call a duality of communication is based on the duality of performers and spectators, and the distinction between stage and auditorium. Both the two already discussed dualities exist within the communication and are prerequisites for the appearance of communicational duality, or maybe the other way around. The different dualities invoke each other, and they exist side by side, and within each other. The Swedish theatre scholar Willmar Sauter defines theatricality as communication: as actions and reactions. He emphasizes that “theatricality is not something which is produced by the performer alone, but is established through the interplay between performer and spectator.”\(^93\) The theatricality is dependent on the communication between actors and spectators, and Sauter locates the theatricality somewhere in between them, within the communication itself. This resembles Fischer-Lichte’s emphasis on what she calls the *autopoietic feedback loop*. Fischer-Lichte describes how performance always is, to a certain degree, improvisational, and only exists in the present, never being able to be repeated because of its dependence on the feedback loop.

\[^94\] Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 38
Although Fischer-Lichte does not use the term theatricality in this book, it lies close to Sauter’s definition of theatricality as communication, and refers to what lies in between the actor and spectators, and to performance and theatrical events as collective events where this ‘in between’ is necessary for the theatricality to occur.

One way to measure audience reaction is of course applause and calls of bravo, but because theatre performances are often subjected to strict norms of behavior, the reactions are seldom spontaneous and rather follow the required norms. However, applause is often the most visible form of audience participation in the feedback loop because the audience here get to have a say. When Sauter and Fischer-Lichte describe communication as necessary in the performance it is, however, an emphasizing of the events’ reliance on both parts throughout the event for theatricality to occur, or more precisely the knowledge that what one is participating in is a communicational event. Sauter describes how boredom in the audience is felt and reacted to on stage. In my view communication as theatricality is the dual knowledge that one performs or experiences an event in a communicational setting at the same time, and that this knowledge of performative action creates a duality in itself. Theatricality is a result of a communicational duality because the theatricality is located between the actions and reactions.

In The Semiotics of Theater from 1983 Fischer-Lichte argues that theatrical communication must be constituted by a specific cultural code. Within certain cultures certain elements of the communication will give specific meaning to those spectators that are familiar with the cultural code. The most important thing the cultural code expresses is, however, that what is communicated is theatre, or if we are to follow Fischer-Lichte’s semiotic interpretation of the theatrical code, that everything presented from within the code is a sign presented as a sign. The most important communicational action, to use Sauter’s term, is the action of presenting the total amount of actions as actions of theatre. As Sauter also points out “the performer has to be defined as a performer.” The audience’s reactions relies directly on the actions, and it is necessary for the reactions that they know that what is being communicated in the first place is communicated as theatre. If someone gets beaten up as part of a theatrical performance the audience might react to it as a part of the communicational duality, but they would not interfere, something that would rather be the case if the communicational code was not communicated properly or the spectators were not familiar with the code. A good example of a situation when the misunderstanding of code became serious was when

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95 Fischer-Lichte, The Semiotics of the Theatre, 137
96 Sauter, The Theatrical Event, 63
Chechen terrorists in October 2002 stormed the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow and took the audience hostage. The spectators did not at first understand that what was happening was “serious”, and not part of the performance they were watching. This led to their reactions not being panic but confusion. The reason was that they continued perceiving within the theatrical code, was because they were unaware that the terrorists were acting outside of it.

The theatrical code is dual because it is a contract, agreed on by two separate parts. The actions and reactions described by Sauter are agreed on before the performers perform, in most cases as a result of a spatial duality, and both performers and spectators agree that a coded performance is taking place. Within the coding of actions lies a reference to all the dualities, and to the inherent concept of duality that lies within the experience of theatricality. When the terrorists in Moscow interfered with this contract between stage and auditorium they broke the code and the contract, something that took some time for the audience to understand. This is a reaction to the strict cultural effect the theatrical code has. When reading theatricality as a result of communication, the theatricality is located within the communicational event in itself, between actions and reactions. Theatricality then becomes a result of a dual event constituted by two equal partners. This dual event is at the same time a prerequisite for the communicational act, and a result of it. Communication is often the part of theatricality one would take for granted because it is omnipresent in all the other aspects of it. Theatricality is, however, only possible if communication is present.

2.3.5 Separates and unites

In the presentation of these three dualities, the duality of art and life, space and communication, I have shown that theatricality is dependent on internal opposition, but that the opposition(s) can take different forms and exist simultaneously side by side, and that the experience of duality is in a large degree an experience of perception. It is the subjective experience of perception that defines it as an experience of theatricality. However, the dualities and internal opposition(s) are also an integral part of the nature of performance and theatre as such, as is especially clear in the duality of communication, where the theatricality is defined in the communicative agreement defining the theatrical founda-

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tion through action and reaction. It is therefore, in most examples, also a question of presentation in addition to perception.

The experience of estrangement as presented in regard to Meyerhold, Brecht and Shklovsky is an experience of duality and inherent opposition. I will propose that one, in this opposition, can experience a form of positive incompletion because the subject cannot achieve becoming one with the event since one always will be estranged and distanced from it. It is exactly in this inherent incompletion, or what I later on will call a failure of totality, one can find the estrangement and wonder, which is central to theatricality. This is how I understand the experience of clivage as explained by Josette Féral, a term I will use throughout the dissertation to explain the experience and perception of duality and estrangement.

The internal opposition(s) of theatricality separates audience from actors, the realm of art and fantasy from the quotidian, and divides the spatial sphere in two. However, what makes this opposition and division an effect of estrangement is that it also attracts and unites, and here we find the source of estrangement. The impossibility of completion does, nevertheless, have a force of attraction in which both spectators and performers unite within what Fischer-Lichte would call the bodily copresence of the performative event. Brecht and Meyerhold’s estrangement was about distancing, and the same effects of distancing can be seen in the Dada and Futurist events. However, this does not mean that they did not simultaneously crave unity with the spectators, as was also the case for the retheatricalization movement through the removal of footlights, and the former strict physical division of stage and audience, which was also a main point for Fuchs. In Hugo Ball’s strange performance Karawane, it was essential that the performance took place in a small space, bringing the audience close to him. What he performed, however, was all about distancing the spectator through estrangement. Here separating and distancing effects alternate with attraction in order to emphasize distance. The spectator is attracted to the performance both through the physical proximity, and by its strangeness at the same time as the strangeness creates a spatial cleft, a clivage.

During retheatricalization, theatre forms that, to a larger degree than what had become common in Europe in the late 19th century, included the spectators in the event were seen as ideal. Carnivals and ritual were a great source of inspiration. In carnivals, festivals and revolutions theatricality takes a more uniting form than in more theatrical stage performance, however it is the dual existence with the quotidian world that makes
it attractive, and the opposition to this quotidian world that makes it attractive while uniting the people and the worlds in which they live. Theatricality, thus, can be said to be an effect that simultaneously separates and unites through duality and opposition to the world, life, art, space, communication and audience.

Theatricality unites all participants, both performers and spectators participate in the same event and even though they constitute different roles within the event, they participate as equals and are united in their common presence within the event. At the same time the distinction between what is communicated and the way it is communicated in, and the receiver’s separateness from the event of communication, the event also separates. The unique thing of theatricality is that it is both a uniting and separating act. It unites spectators and performers at the same time as it underlines the existence of difference. Theatricality appears in the uniting of the separated and the separation of the united as an ongoing interplay within the process of perception.

2.4 Summarizing remarks on theatricality
In this chapter I have shown and described several theories and acts of theatricality. Some of the approaches I have presented have their foundations in artistic expressions, while other approaches have theoretical origin. Starting with the movement of retheatricalization and ending up with theatricality in art without human interaction through the discussion of mass performance of different forms, I have attempted to describe the equivocal usage of the term while simultaneously arguing for the events’ similarities and common characteristics which make them all events of theatricality. I have discussed how all examples relate to a set of dualities, and that all events inherent in their theatricality can be said to relate to the dualities life, space, and communication, and the dualities’ inherent oppositions.

Theatricality is mainly located in the act of perception. It is the spectator’s meeting with the communicational act and perception of this act that lies as foundation of the experience of theatricality. This argument finds support in the theories of Michael Fried and Josette Féral where an object or space can be perceived as theatrical without traditional human communicational action, and the occurrence of theatricality therefore is located within the perception and experience of object or space. However, theatricality is not only located in perception, but needs the support of the communicational act. Between perception and communication a necessary duality appears, and it is this duality we see existing in different forms in the discussion above.
This duality is, together with the dualities of space and art/life, central to the understanding of theatricality. It is in the dualities that we can locate what Josette Féral calls *clivage*. To Féral *clivage* is mainly a spatial mental category, but I will argue that it is just as poignant to use the term of physical dualities when this duality leads to an experience of estrangement and theatricality. As I will discuss more in chapter seven, the dualities are inherent of an opposition, and the tension of opposition strengthens the experience of *clivage*. 
3.0 Approaches to ideology and performance

3.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will discuss two terms, ideology and performance. As seen in the chapter on theatricality, performance and theatre do not exist in a vacuum but are aesthetic forms closely related to politics, society and most definitely, ideology. Theatricality and performance are in no way synonymous terms. Since theatricality is a form related to an aesthetic and performative expression, theatricality is to be seen as a device possible to use or perceive within a performance.

In order to discuss ideology it is necessary to start with the Marxist tradition, and the notion of false consciousness. The notion of false consciousness was not elaborated on by Marx or his partner Friedrich Engels, but has had a major impact on later writings, and has had an impact on most views of ideology. Karl Marx himself used the term ideology mainly to explain economic conditions in early capitalism, but theorists following him have made use of the theories he introduced. Another concept originating with Marx that has had an impact on the understanding of ideology, which will be discussed in this chapter, is the notion of commodity fetishism. Again, to Marx this is a concept used purely to describe economic alienation, but to his followers, as I will show in the discussion of György Lukács, it has also been used to explain ideological alienation.

Another central term that will be discussed is the notion of hegemony as developed by the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci and his followers Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, and their use of the term articulation. Following my discussion of hegemony, I will discuss the French Marxist Louis Althusser’s use of the terms ideological state apparatuses and interpellation. Gramsci and Althusser have in common that they use a Marxist foundation to analyze the use of structural domination in a class society. In the discussion of structural domination I will also discuss Roland Barthes’ term of mythology, a term that will become useful in my later analyses of the use of national narratives.

My discussion on the Marxist perspective of the term will serve as a foundation when I move over to psychoanalytic theory, and the theories of the Slovenian theorist Slavoj Žižek. The reason I call Žižek a psychoanalytic theorist is because he leans heavily on the theories of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. However, it must be stated that Žižek also has a Marxist foundation in his work, and his discussion on
ideology is also a discussion on the Marxist understanding of ideology. Žižek and Lacan use a multiplicity of terms in their theories, though the central terms I will take with me from them are the terms jouissance, the Real, master-signifier, and to some extent the objet petit a. I will especially take note of Žižek’s use of jouissance, a term that will be of importance throughout the dissertation.

After approaching the discussion from the theoretical discourses of Marxism and psychoanalytic theory, I will move on to an anthropological approach to ritual and the impact it has had on performance studies. Here I will discuss the theories of Victor Turner and his terms structure and anti-structure, communitas, and his discussion of liminality. Turner had a deep impact on the work of performance scholar Richard Schechner and I will therefore also focus on Schechner’s definition of performance. The relation of performance and society has been discussed in anthropological discourses, and I will also present the approach of the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz and his use of both ritual and cultural performance.

3.2 Ideology as a Marxist concept: False consciousness

To be able to discuss ideology it is necessary to first explain the most common discourse on the term, this being its Marxist background. As mentioned in the introduction, one of the most common and most used definitions of ideology is that it is a form of false consciousness; that ideological belief is an illusion and does not relate to the subject’s real terms of existence. The claim of false consciousness is related to Marx and a Marxist worldview, although the term is not to be found in Marx’s own writings but in a letter written by his colleague, Friedrich Engels, to Franz Mehring in July 1893:

I ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence he imagines false or apparent motives. Because it is a process of thought he derives both its form and its content of pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors.98

According to Engels, ideology is therefore a set of thoughts created by a thinker but on false premises, because he himself is not aware of the real motives of his actions, and because the consciousness of man is dependent on his real conditions of life. Through this claim one could say that man’s problem is that he is not aware of his real conditions, not that he acts without consciousness, or out of stupidity.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels use the terms *ideology* and *consciousness* almost synonymously. Ideology is a form of consciousness but since both ideology and consciousness is dependent on the real relations of man to society, the terms end up as expressions of the same knowledge and interests. Marx and Engels show how, contrary to what they mean had previously been common in German philosophy, consciousness is not derived from heaven to earth but from earth and upwards, and that which constitutes the consciousness of man is human beings’ own relations to the material structures of society.99

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour.100

This means that, for Marx, consciousness is not given by God, it is neither common to all men nor dependent on any higher spirit outside the material conditions, be it religious or philosophical, but relies only on the material conditions of the existence of man. Man is not guided by a higher form of consciousness that determines his life, but his consciousness is determined by his life. In the same way as consciousness is not given by God, consciousness is not to be seen as a separate or autonomous entity, but as a notion dependent on the material conditions of man. Consequently, when ideology is discussed as being false it does not mean that it is not real, it is just that the subject misconceives his real relation to society:

Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men in their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.101

This view is just as real as anything else but it does not reflect how the subject ‘really’ relates to the material conditions of society. According to Marx, the consciousness of man is a result of the material base, and the misconception will therefore only be a misconception of a real existing base. The material forces of production define the consciousness of men. However, these ideas seem to be cut loose from their material social foundation so that they may appear autonomous, and this becomes a reason for man’s alienation from his real conditions.

100 Ibid., 47
101 Ibid.
In the preface to *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, Marx points out that consciousness is located within a *superstructure*, but its expression relies wholly on the economic and material base:

In the social production of their existence men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.\(^{102}\)

This means that material conditions and consciousness are, for Marx, linked together, and the consciousness of man is inevitably a result of the real conditions of production. Ideology belongs to the *superstructure* through legal, political, religious, artistic, or philosophic forms. If the material conditions in the base change, the *superstructure* changes with it.

The discussion of ideology and false consciousness is also a discussion of ideological rule, this view that the ruling ideas of a society are the ideas of the ruling class. “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time the ruling intellectual force.”\(^{103}\) The ruling class, for Marx, is the bourgeoisie.\(^{104}\) The reason they are the ruling class is because they control the means of production and the material forces of society, and since the ideology in the superstructure is dependent on the material base, the ideology will be characterized by the material means controlled by the bourgeoisie. It is in the interest of the bourgeoisie that both base and superstructure remain as they are. Here I should also mention the Marxist notion of the *division of labor*. The industrial revolution and the introduction of capitalism meant a division of labor, a division between town and country, and between manual and intellectual labor. The laborer, then, no longer has a complete picture of the material processes, and without knowledge of the material means of production, the laborer does not see the connection between the base and the superstructure. This also results in *commodity fetishism*, a term that will be elaborated on below when I discuss Lukács’ theories of ideology.

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\(^{103}\) Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 64

The class that rules the material forces, here the bourgeoisie, also becomes the intellectual force of society in order to continue ruling. The ruling class must make their ideas universally valid if they are to maintain their position. The bourgeoisie is divided between the creators of the ideas, like philosophers and historians, and the managers of the means of production. The ideologists within the bourgeoisie create the ruling ideas of the society, but because they misconceive the real relations of society, their ideas are false.

Whilst in ordinary life every shopkeeper is very well able to distinguish between what somebody professes to be and what he really is, our historians have not yet won even this trivial insight. They take every epoch at its word and believe that everything it says and imagines of itself is true.\(^{105}\)

The bourgeoisie is just as alienated from the means of production as the proletariat, however, it is in the interest of the bourgeoisie to continue ruling, and consequently they keep ruling in accordance with their own misconceptions, and make these ideas the universally valid ideas in the society as a whole.

For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, expressed in the ideal form; it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones.\(^{106}\)

This, as per my understanding of Marx, is the reason for the upholding of bourgeois rule. Through their dominance of the material forces of production in addition to their dominance of the intellectual forces that naturalizes the concept of bourgeois rule, they keep ruling. The bourgeoisie believe in their own ideas, and these ideas are founded on their real conditions, but for all that, Marx and Engels consider these ideas to be false and delusional on behalf of the proletariat.

### 3.3 Lukács and totalities of consciousness

While Marx and Engels place false consciousness mainly in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the Hungarian Marxist George Lukács proclaims it has an ubiquitous trait, although it takes different forms in different classes.\(^{107}\) Lukács’ theories can, however, seem simple, and a bit outdated. Nonetheless, I have chosen to include Lukács here because I see him as a classical representative of Marxist ideology critique, and because his theories of totality and partiality can illuminate some ways of understanding ideology.

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\(^{105}\) Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 67

\(^{106}\) Ibid., 65-66

Lukács argues that since consciousness is a result of material conditions, and of the relation of the different classes to production, it can be said that consciousness differs according to class. For Lukács consciousness is false in the sense that there exists, in comparison to the capitalist reception of society, an objective truth. If society is to change, the proletariat needs to unveil this truth and perceive the totality of society. This also means the abolishment of class society as such. The grasp of totality is the only way for the proletariat to rise through revolution.

By relating consciousness to the whole of society it becomes possible to infer the thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were able to assess both it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society.

Ideology and false consciousness is formed when society is perceived in partiality. To Lukács the only way to liberate the people from ideology is by teaching them to see society in its totality. The reason the people do not understand the totality of society is explained by Lukács as alienation through commodity fetishism. Commodity fetishism denotes the concept that people are alienated from the modes of production through misconceiving the relations between people as the relation between things. The worker produces products, but this product does not, for the worker, have any value before it is exchanged. Compared to pre-capitalist times there is no longer any objective relation between an object’s use-value and its exchange-value.

For Marx the worker’s labor time reflects only the exchange-value of the product produced, not the production value. When the laborer produces a product, or parts of a product, he does not see any direct relation between what he produces and the money he earns. Through this process the laborer will have a hard time understanding how the society is built, ending up only perceiving parts of it. This is the Marxist understanding of commodity fetishism.

Since the producers do not come into social contact until they exchange the products of their labour, the specific social characteristics of their private labours appear only within this exchange. In other words, the labour of the private individual manifests itself as an element of the total labour of society only through the relations which the act of exchange establishes between the products, and, through their mediation, between the producers. To the producers, therefore, the social relations between their private labours appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things.

For Lukács, Marx’s understanding of this misconception becomes the foundation of the understanding of consciousness within capitalism, and constitutes false consciousness.

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108 Ibid., 51
by increasing the alienation from the social means of production. Lukács uses the term *reification* in order to define the misconception of the world through conceiving our relation to objects as the real relation to the world, and defines the way we relate to the world through objects rather than through its real relations. This misconception is related to class, but all classes are subjects of misconception, it just has a different impact on the different classes depending on the class’ relation to the means of production. While this, for the proletariat, means a false consciousness within capitalist society that they must seek to overcome, and it is, at the same time, the reason for bourgeois rule. The consciousness is equally false for all classes, but for the bourgeoisie the falseness supports their interests.

### 3.4 Ideology and the superstructure

When placing the word *superstructure* in the heading, it is not because the theorists discussed here are unique in locating ideology within the superstructure; as shown above Marx himself distinguished between base and superstructure, and placed ideology within the superstructure. However, what I attempt to explain here by linking ideology closer to the superstructure is the movement away from ideology’s inevitable dependence on the base. Here ideology achieves a more autonomous trait, being used within the field of domination not only as a result of an exploiting base, but also as a conceptual and structural tool. The Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci used the term *hegemony* to denote the use of ideological consciousness in terms of domination. For him domination does not just appear because of the control of the means of production, but also through the control of the *superstructure*. Discussing superstructure becomes important when discussing performance because performance is often to be seen as a superstructural element, and as will become clear in this work, it may also represent ideology directly, and therefore effects the superstructure in several ways.

Gramsci distinguishes between *direct rule* as exercised by the State, and *hegemonic rule* exercised by the dominant group throughout society within civil society, in a more private sphere.\(^\text{110}\) Control is therefore carried out in two ways: through domination, and through hegemonic rule, what Gramsci defines as “intellectual and moral leadership.”\(^\text{111}\) Hegemonic rule is ruling by consent. Consciousness is therefore not only dependent on modes of production, and controlling the economic means of production,

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\(^{111}\) Ibid., 57
as proclaimed by Lukács, but also on hegemony and the control of the intellectual and moral forces and the establishment of popular consent.

The discussion of hegemony has also traditionally been a discussion of class struggle. According to Gramsci, all classes of society have intellectuals. The dispute of hegemony is therefore also a dispute of which forces society should be ruled by. Although the hegemony of class rule may change, one class will still be ruling, and the hegemony of ideas will still be an important part of the act of leadership. The Belgian theorist Chantal Mouffe emphasizes, in her 1979 article on Gramsci and hegemony, the link between intellectual and economic rule in Gramsci’s writing, and points out that Gramscian hegemony is to be regarded as “a complete fusion of economic, political, intellectual, and moral objectives which will be brought about by one fundamental group allied to it through the intermediary of ideology (...)”¹¹² For Mouffe ideology is regarded as the medium of rule, while hegemony is the form of rule. Ideology as medium is also the content of consciousness, and Mouffe follows this up by defining what she, in Gramsci, sees as a hegemonic class: “it is a class which has been able to articulate the interests of other social groups to its means of ideological struggle.”¹¹³ By this she relates to the Gramscian importance of consent of the hegemonic rule, and that the ideological struggle of the ruling class is legitimated also as the struggle of the ruled classes. It may be possible also to say that what Mouffe calls to articulate interest can be seen as the medium of ideology, and the way that this ideological struggle of the classes is articulated as ideology is the reason that makes hegemonic rule as consent possible.

In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Mouffe, together with fellow post-Marxist Ernesto Laclau, deepens the understanding of articulation and sees it as a “practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice.”¹¹⁴ In my view this is to be seen as a structural totalizing practice, and Laclau and Mouffe point out that a structured totality, which they call discourse, will be the result of such a practice. The fragmentation of society is, through a totalizing practice, gathered within a hegemonic societal structure expressing and consenting to the interest of the leadership.

¹¹³ Ibid.
¹¹⁴ Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau: Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 2001), 105
The term ideology is not frequently used in Gramsci’s writings and not explicitly linked to hegemony either, however, both terms are clearly placed within the superstructure. For Gramsci ideology is apparent in all parts of the superstructure as “a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity, and in all manifestations of individual and collective life.”\(^{115}\) He also defines ideology as a “terrain where men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle etc.”\(^ {116}\) In my view ideology consequently becomes a structure, or, as with Laclau and Mouffe, an articulation of consciousness rather than consciousness as such. There is therefore no reason to question the reality or falseness of consciousness, but to question the use and reasons for it. In my view this means that the discussion of ideology becomes a discussion of function rather than of false consciousness or dogma.

The French Marxist Louis Althusser has in common with Gramsci a focus on the superstructure as the location of domination. In his famous article “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, Althusser sees that all production, also domination and rule, is dependent on reproduction in order to continue its ruling.\(^ {117}\) The superstructure, therefore, is not only a result of the base but also has an autonomous function within securing the status quo in both base and superstructure. This does not mean that the superstructure is suddenly independent of the economic situation, but that it has a relatively autonomous role within the upholding of class domination. To explain this Althusser shows how the superstructural level may persist for a long time although important changes have occurred within the base.

In his article Althusser introduces a new superstructural mode of domination within the state, what he calls ideological state apparatuses (ISA). In addition to the more classical versions of domination through repression as found in the government, army, police, courts, and prisons among others, Althusser points out that domination also is expressed through ideology. Within the ideological state apparatus, Althusser places all arenas for the expression of ideology; schools and educational systems, the family, law, political parties, trade-unions, media, and cultural events including art. He focuses especially on schools to demonstrate how they, through education, teach children to become ideological beings, who in turn reproduce the means of ideology, thus upholding rule. In his understanding of ideology, Althusser assumes a Marxist

\(^{115}\) Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 328
\(^{116}\) Ibid., 377
worldview where a misconception of the real relations to their conditions of existence leads to ideology. However, Althusser does not believe the reification of consciousness to be the foundation of ideology. Rather, ideology is an unconscious and omnipresent system of lived relations.\footnote{118} Althusser is not of the opinion that ideology is formed on the basis of alienation within the mode of production, but through the misconception of the \textit{relations} to the real conditions of existence. Ideology exists within this relation itself. “It is this relation which is at the centre of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the ‘cause’ which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world.”\footnote{119} This relation is by nature an imaginary relation. The reason that this relation is imaginary is the material existence of it through ISA which in the end exists for the function of upholding rule. In this way Althusser proposes an interesting contribution to the discussion of ideology because he, through this, deepens the understanding of \textit{ideology as action}. This means that ideology is expressed, upheld and renewed by action, and the \textit{function} of ideology is to be a structure of action. The group of individuals’ understanding of its reality is expressed through action. Ideology is the lived relation to existence, and is, because of this, strengthened through the actions of everyday life including rituals and civil actions. I will discuss the concept of ideology as action more thoroughly when I move over to the psychoanalytic approach, and the discussion of Slavoj Žižek’s perception of the term.

Another important contribution of Althusser to the discussion of ideology is his concept of ideological subjects or \textit{interpellation}. Althusser maintains that ideology speaks to us directly, that all people are ideological subjects, and that this is a result of interpellation. To explain the concept of interpellation, Althusser describes how we as individuals in different ways exist as subjects in society, and how we are recognized as individuals and subjects in the meeting with other subjects in society. However, this is mainly an illustration of how subjectness is expressed in daily life; the most important aspect of being an ideological subject is that we recognize, and are recognized by and within, the system of ideology. Moreover, ideology as a system must uphold itself through the act of interpellation manifested within the ISA.

In \textit{For Marx} Althusser emphasizes that ideology is a system: “(A)n ideology is a system (with its own logic and rigor) of representations (images, myths, ideas or
concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society.” This system and its content is clearly what are propagated through ISA and functions in order to gain consent of rule. Here one can see how Althusser’s concept of ideology as a system, articulated in order to gain consent and uphold rule, is in accordance with Gramsci’s concept of hegemony where the main goal is also to gain consent in order to rule. They both distinguish between repressive and ideological rule, and between base and superstructure at the same time as they emphasize the relative autonomous function of ideological rule. In the next paragraph I will follow up the autonomous function of ideological rule and focus more on the content of the quest for consent through the founding of myths, images, and concepts. This discussion becomes important when analyzing traits of specific ideologies, and shows how ideology is perceived as a structural system of society. In this structural system of society social narratives play an important role, and in the following I will discuss this form of narrative more closely.

3.5 Ideology as narrative and mythological system

In order to achieve hegemony through consent it is necessary to have a common ideological platform that transcends class belonging, but which is still able to secure the status quo of rule. In Roland Barthes’ essay “Myth Today” he cites the importance of narratives as a legitimating factor within society. Barthes calls this narrative myth, and to him, most importantly, myth is a type of speech. Barthes sees the system of modern mythology as a system of language and relates it to semiotics and theories of language. However, this does not mean that mythology is equivalent to language, but that it is a form of language.

To Barthes myth is a second-order semiotic system, which means that it relates not to an existing signified, but to a system of language in itself. The myth is pure form and exists because of, and through this form. In many ways the form itself becomes the signified of the myth as sign. This means that the myth is empty. “When it becomes form, the meaning leaves contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains.” As system of language myth evolves from an ordinary language system and into myth, and through this evolvement it transcends its own content and becomes pure form.

120 Althusser, *For Marx*, 231
The main reason that the myth ends up empty is that it has a naturalizing effect. Myths are tautological in the sense that they are defined through their own existence, the content of the myth is true because the myth says so, and through this tautological form the myth moves from history to nature.

In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexities of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves.122

Within the discussion on naturalization, Barthes also emphasizes that the naturalized speech functions as depoliticized speech. When myth morphs from history to nature, it also places itself outside political speech in the sense that it exists as truth and therefore is not debated or belonging to any special political agenda. The myth exists as nature in itself, as itself, and because of itself.

Barthes’ definition of myth is wide. He finds myths in all realms of society; he is especially fond of women’s magazines, French Elle in particular, but also in other forms of popular culture, including the culture of culture of food and drink. He cites the French obsession with French wine as myth, and compares it to the British myth of tea. “Wine is a part of society because it provides a basis not only for a morality, but also for an environment; it is an ornament in the slightest ceremonials of French daily life, from the snack (plonk and camembert) to the feast, from the conversation at the local café to the speech at a formal dinner.”123 Wine works as an image of French society and culture, drinking wine is equated with being French and therefore becomes nature. Wine is also a drink for every Frenchman independent of class. Another interesting myth cited by Barthes is the one concerning astrology and the horoscopes one can read in women’s magazines. He notes that horoscopes are quite realistic, and do not in any way represent a dream world, but rather a world totally recognizable to its audience. “What then is the point of this pure description, since it doesn’t seem to provide any compensation in the form of fantasy? It serves to exorcise the real, by naming it.”124 According to Barthes, reality is objectified here without being demystified and therefore supports the reality of the reader’s experience. In these mythologies described by Barthes, myths function as structuring narratives, and as symbols of a known social reality.

122 Ibid., 170
123 Ibid., 67
124 Ibid., 115
Seen in this way Barthes’ myths, to a large extent, are suited to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s description of symbolic power. For Bourdieu symbolic power is expressed through the superstructure, and is also an element of language and knowledge. The language of domination and power is a structuring language exercised for the purpose of domination. “Symbols are the instruments par excellence of ‘social integration’: as instruments of knowledge and communication (…), they make it possible for there to be a consensus on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order.”¹²⁵ The use of symbolic language and narratives secures consent of the rule of society. The narrative becomes depoliticized speech and nature, and when it is not questioned it achieves precisely this form of consensus, in other words securing hegemony. The symbolic language of mythology is secured by formally being included in the superstructure. Structural symbolic knowledge is taught in schools and civil society, and through recognition of, and belonging to this knowledge as form, we are interpellated as subjects by the system it produces.

This brings us back to the discussion of ideology and false consciousness. If symbolic narratives structure our consciousness, and present it as nature through domination and consent, and this narrative structure is empty, a signifier without a signified, the narratives all seem to be an illusion. However, naturalized narratives are not necessarily untrue. As shown by Barthes’ monthly horoscopes, the narrative, to a high degree, relates its stories to the relations of society known to its female readers. And instead of luring the audience of the horoscopes into a false consciousness or illusion, it communicates the reality and “exorcizes the reality by naming it.” Neither is it an illusion that French people enjoy their wine, or British people their tea, but making it a structuring element of how we perceive ourselves in the world and the society we live in is a misconception of the real relations; it is an empty structure in which the society in which we live, and our perception of it is structured. In the coming paragraph I will look closer at the structuring elements, and the psychoanalytic discourse concerning ideology and reality.

3.6 Ideology and the unconscious: ideology and jouissance

3.6.1 Slavoj Žižek and understanding false consciousness

When defining ideology, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek in his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology* starts out in the Marxist tradition with the notion of false consciousness. But instead of seeing false consciousness as a misunderstanding of the real relations of society on the background of bourgeois domination, he sees false consciousness as an illusion constructed through internal processes:

(I)deology is not simply a ‘false consciousness’, an illusory representation of reality, it is rather this reality itself which is already to be conceived as ‘ideological’ – ‘ideological’ is a social reality whose very existence implies the non-knowledge of its participants to its essence – that is, the social effectivity, the very reproduction of which implies that the individuals ‘do not know what they are doing’. ‘Ideological is not the ‘false consciousness’ of a (social) being but this being itself in so far as it is supported by false consciousness’.126

What Žižek does most importantly in this quote is that he places ideology within the subject, and makes it a case for the subject itself. He gives ideology a psychoanalytic foundation when excluding false consciousness from a cruel and cunning purpose of domination and placing it within the subject. However, he does not shut the door on external domination completely when he claims that the subject is ideological if it is supported by false consciousness. This false consciousness may still have an external origin, but it exists because of the subject’s perception.

This means that ideology is dependent on an element of non-knowledge from its subjects in order to be upheld. To explain this non-knowledge Žižek uses the Marxist concept of commodity fetishism as an example, although his view differs from the original Marxist one. Instead of seeing commodity fetishism as an element of alienation that upholds bourgeois rule, Žižek uses the concept to show how we choose to misrecognize our own relations to the means of production. We know that money in itself does not have value but we act *as if* the value of money is fixed and timeless. This acting *as if* constitutes the non-knowledge of ideology. So when he, in the above quote, says that ideology is the reality itself as long as it is perceived ideologically, it is precisely this element of non-knowledge that creates this ideological perception. It is this individual non-knowledge that makes Žižek place the ideological within the subject’s perception of society.

In the introduction to *Mapping Ideology* Žižek argues that external conditions and necessities has an effect on the ideological processes that leads to an internalization

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of the external, and claims that ideology also has an antithetical function, as an externalization of the internal process.

In this precise sense, ideology is the exact opposite of internalization of the external contingency: it resides in externalization of the result of an inner necessity, and the task of the critique of ideology here is precisely to discern the hidden necessity in what appears a mere contingency.  

Here ideology has a double feature, both as an internal necessity that is externalized and as a reading of the external presuppositions that become internalized. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology* Žižek provides an explanation of how we overlook what we already know by using the well-known quote from Marx’s *Capital* “They do not know it but they are doing it” and turning it around: “they know very well what they are doing, but, still, they are doing it.”

The very concept of ideology implies a kind of basic, constitutive naivété: the misrecognition of its own presuppositions, of its own effective conditions, a distance, a divergence between so-called social reality and our distorted representation, our false consciousness of it.

This ideological misrecognition is located within our actions, not as a breach in our knowledge. We know that money is not the same as relations between people, but we act as if it is. The misrecognition of the real relations is therefore an action, not a passive mistake based on the fact that we do not know better.

We are aware of the reality of society, but keep acting as if we are not. This acting in opposition to reality structures the society, and becomes the illusion we act according to:

What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity. They know very well how things really are, but still they keep doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality.

We keep acting in a certain way although we know better, and these actions create an illusion which we continue to act according to. This means that when illusion is placed within action and not within knowledge, ideology is upheld as long as we keep acting according to it. What we know does not have an impact on the illusion as long as we continue to act according to it. “For example they know that their idea of Freedom is masking a particular form of exploitation, but they still continue to follow this idea of

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128 This is the quote that in the beginning of this chapter was quoted as “They do this without being aware of it”, according to the Penguin addition of *Capital*.
129 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 24
130 Ibid., 30
freedom.\textsuperscript{131} Illusion as a result of action structures our own social reality, and that this illusion structures our social reality is an illusion we overlook. Here we see that the illusion is double. Žižek calls this double, overlooked and unconscious illusion an \textit{ideological fantasy}. Ideological fantasy is a level of understanding that consists of overlooking the illusion. The belief in the actions exists on the level of ideological fantasy.

Žižek’s placing of ideology within the subject does not mean that he ignores the localization of ideological processes in the superstructure. Ideology is inherent in the internalizing process existing side by side with an externalizing process, and is expressed thoroughly in the sign systems of the superstructure. It may also be argued that the superstructure places itself on the level of ideological fantasy where the actions of ideology are legitimated in a common expression of an ideological field, which also means that it is possible to achieve ideological hegemony through the use of structural systems. To Žižek an ideological field is made up of a wide spectrum of signs and sign systems structuring the ideology, which presents itself as a total structure. With Laclau and Mouffe’s terminology we can say that this totality is a discourse, and the spectrum of sign systems is \textit{articulated} into a structure suturing the elements into a signifying totality. Žižek follows their terminology and especially takes notice of their use of their concept of \textit{nodal points} following Jacques Lacan (\textit{points de capiton}). Žižek sees a nodal point as an ideological structure that quilts floating signifiers, and fixes their meaning in a greater signifying structure. An element becomes ideological when it is identified as such in the realm of the final structure.

Žižek points out that an inversion occurs when an expression is transformed into ideology when identified through an existing structural ideological system. As an example he uses the well known Marlboro advertisements where cowboys ride into the sunset while smoking cigarettes. The advertisement is not ideological per se, and it does not, as such, express Americanism.\textsuperscript{132} The quilting, claims Žižek, does not occur before Americans themselves start identifying with the advertisement and start seeing the Marlboro country pictured there as America. It is when this happens that the advertisement is quilted into the already existing structure of Americanism. “The effect of “quilting” takes place when, with a sudden reversal of perspective, what was a moment

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 106
ago still perceived as defeat appears as victory.” Ideology, therefore, is not only a personal and internal misrecognition, but is to be found in an external sign system where the common ground of misrecognition rests.

The floating signifiers quilted together in a unity of the ideological structure all relate back to a common denominator through which all the elements are quilted. In all ideologies there are signifiers that all the floating signifiers are quilted in with. For this all-quilting, for the final signifier Žižek uses the Lacanian term master-signifier, a signifier without a signified. The master-signifier is pure ideology, the ultimate ideological truth quilting the structural field into a totality. The master-signifier or nodal point is what constitutes the expression of the superstructure, and is, according to Žižek what in Althusserian terminology interpellates the individual as ideological subject. The subject is sewn into the signifier and is in this way turned into an ideological subject.134

One of the great questions remaining, with regard to Žižek’s concept of ideology, is why we choose to overlook the illusion structuring our reality, why we choose to act according to the illusion and dive into the realm of ideological fantasy. As an answer to this question Žižek provides us with the Lacanian term of jouissance. Lacan distinguishes between pleasure and jouissance or enjoyment, and sees jouissance as the ultimate desire we are prohibited from seeking and which is in essence related to pain. Jouissance is a desire we would not dare to seek, but which still becomes all-empowering in our search for pleasure. The pleasure principle functions as a limit to enjoyment, it prohibits us to enjoy too much, and jouissance denominates the level of enjoyment we prohibit ourselves from seeking. Transgressing the pleasure principle for the sake of jouissance is an act of pain.135

3.6.2 Žižek, jouissance and the Real
To Žižek jouissance is the kernel of enjoyment that keeps us away from terrifying knowledge. Seeking the truth means going beyond enjoyment hiding behind the illusion of misrecognition. Giving up this kernel of enjoyment to seek knowledge is therefore a painful process. Here we can see why jouissance is used to explain the reasons of ideology. Although we know better, we continue to act according to the ideological

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133 Slavoj Žižek, For They Know Not What They Do. Enjoyment as Political Factor (London: Verso, 2008), 78
134 Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 112
illusion structuring our reality because giving up this misrecognition is a painful process causing us to lose our safe kernel of enjoyment.

In psychoanalysis, knowledge is marked by a lethal dimension: the subject must pay the approach to it with its own being. In other words, to abolish the misrecognition means at the same time to abolish, to dissolve, the ‘substance’ which was supposed to hide itself behind the form-illusion of misrecognition. This ‘substance’ – the only one recognized by psychoanalysis – is, according to Lacan, enjoyment (jouissance): access to knowledge is then paid with the loss of enjoyment – enjoyment, in its stupidity, is possible only on the basis of certain non-knowledge, ignorance.¹³⁶

It may be said that this is exemplified by Dr. Relling’s iconic comment in Henrik Ibsen’s The Wild Duck: “If you take the life-lie away from the average man you straight away take away his happiness.”¹³⁷ In order to maintain an illusion of a good life, man needs to believe in his own illusionary life structures. It is not that man is not aware of the life-lie, as he has constructed it himself, but to maintain his happiness it is important for him that he believes that society believes, and that he himself believes that he believes. This is Žižek’s definition of ideology as result of jouissance. Ideology is upheld by enjoyment, by satisfaction, and what the discussion of jouissance in the final sense shows us, is that ideology exists only in itself, for itself. Ideology serves only its own purpose, and this is, according to Žižek, the precise Lacanian definition of jouissance.¹³⁸

Žižek claims that in all signifying chains there is always a surplus resisting symbolization. This remnant of the signifying process is what he, with the help of Lacanian terminology, calls the Real. It is what is left when all the signifiers are quilted together. The Real is a hard kernel resisting symbolization, and it is also a traumatic kernel; Žižek points out that the function of ideology is to mask this traumatic kernel: “The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel.”¹³⁹ This means that what we fear the most is an internal trauma, and therefore we mask this trauma by constructing a social reality that makes sense to us. We are relieved from having to face our own truths.

¹³⁶ Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 73
¹³⁸ Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 92
¹³⁹ Ibid., 45
As remnant of the signifying process the Real functions as a truth without kernel. Žižek explains the Real as a MacGuffin, a fictional term borrowed from an anecdote by the film director Alfred Hitchcock:

(T)wo men are sitting in a train, one of them asks: ‘What’s that on top of the luggage rack?’ ‘Oh, that’s a MacGuffin.’ ‘What’s a MacGuffin?’ ‘Well it’s an apparatus for capturing lions in the Scottish Highlands.’ ‘But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands.’ ‘Well, then that’s not a MacGuffin.’

The main significance of the existence of the MacGuffin is that it has importance for the characters discussing it. It exists because the people think that its existence is of a vital significance. The MacGuffin is “a pure nothing which is none the less efficient.” So, the Real exists at the same time as it does not. It is a creation, a myth, but it still resists symbolization, and structures our concepts of reality. The Real is not a fantasy-construction but a traumatic kernel we wish to cover up with fantasy. Ideology is the fantasy-construction masking the void of the Real and supports our own reality, the illusion we act according to. God, freedom and true love are examples of the Real. They do not really exist but structure our reality and our experience of it through their existence as superior and fundamental structural objects.

In Lacan’s theories the Real is a psychic structure or order which is distinguishable from the two other orders, the imaginary and the symbolic. To Lacan the unconscious is structured like a language. This can be seen in both the imaginary and symbolic orders. The Real, on the other hand, is to Lacan that which resists language completely, the Real is that which exists outside language and resists symbolization. As with Žižek, here, the Real is a hard kernel resisting symbolization. It has also been proposed that the Lacanian Real is a Kantian Ding an Sich, existing in an order of ultimate reality. In developing his own theories of the Real, Žižek largely follows Lacan, but where Lacan’s Real exists outside language all together, the Žižekian Real as explained in the example of the MacGuffin is nothing but language, existing exactly in the structure of language and knowledge, but on a level of language and knowledge that resists symbolization. This means that where the Lacanian Real is unfocused and terrifying in its non-structural existence, the Žižekian Real can, to a larger degree, be...

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140 Ibid., 183
141 Ibid.
144 Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 190
concretized, but it becomes terrifying in its lack of the signified, in existing only in language without the kernel to go with it.

Towards the end of his book Žižek pronounces that “The Real par excellence is jouissance.”145 Earlier in the book Žižek defines jouissance as what keeps us believing in our own ideological illusion. The element of enjoyment is the motivation of ideology. The reason we keep acting in accordance with our illusion is because it is related to enjoyment. If we are to realize that the illusion that keeps structuring our reality is not true, this will result in the loss of enjoyment. Something that would be a painful experience, and is therefore something we seek to avoid. It may feel like a tautology that jouissance is the kernel, an empty void, nothingness, and at the same time the motivation for masking this same void. What it tells us is rather that jouissance becomes the raison d’être of our structures of illusion, the reason we hold on to it so tight is to mask the terrifying voids of knowledge, but once it is established it becomes the kernel in itself. “The Real is therefore simultaneously both the hard, impenetrable kernel resisting symbolization and a pure chimerical entity which has in itself no ontological consistency.”146 It is at the same time a remnant of the signifying chain and the kernel of the same chain. What this eventually shows us is that the non-existing kernel is a remnant of the signifiers, and therefore the nodal point of the quilting process exists only as jouissance, as our own traumatic ideological kernel masking its own inexistence. There is no other reason for acting than the factor of enjoyment, but we keep acting just because of it, to avoid the painful truth that the kernel is non-existent Something we, according to Žižek, know, but choose to ignore in order to avoid the unpleasurable experience of truth.

Ideology is also a result of our desire. Žižek explains this desire with another Lacanian term, objet petit a. Objet petit a is the object-cause of our desire. This means that it is simultaneously the cause of our desire, and the object of the desire. The a is short for the French word autre, other, and the objet petit a is the desire of the other. The objet petit a is the object causing the desire, because the desire of the external object is caused by an internal lack within the subject. As object-cause of desire and desire of the other, the objet petit a is a desire that both interpellates the subject into the societal quilt, and at the same time becomes the object of desire of society itself.

An object becomes desirable when it enters the framework of fantasy, but on the other hand fantasy clarifies the desire’s inherent impossibility. The objet petit a is “the

145 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 184
146 Ibid., 190
chimerical object of fantasy the object causing our desire, and at the same time – and this is a paradox – posed retroactively by this desire; in ‘going through the fantasy’ we experience how this fantasy-object (the ‘secret’) only materializes the void of our desire.”

Objet petit a is the remnant of the Real eluding symbolization, what is left over when the Real is structured in a symbolic order. This is how it becomes the embodiment of surplus-enjoyment. Where the Real par excellence is jouissance, the objet petit a embodies the left-over of jouissance, the surplus of enjoyment. According to Žižek, Lacan evolved the terminology of surplus-enjoyment from the Marxist notion of surplus-value. And just like capitalism reproduces itself through the production of surplus-value, surplus-enjoyment is the structure that reproduces enjoyment itself. Enjoyment emerges through the already existing surplus.

Objet petit a shares several characteristics with the Real, they both represent a non-existent void. What this shows us is that the objet petit a as object-cause of desire is not a desire for a concrete object but a desire for the void, which in the final sense is the desire for jouissance, the factor of enjoyment which is at the same time a desirable void, the Real par excellence, and an element upholding ideological fantasy by masking the impossible void.

3.6.3 The Sublime and jouissance

Žižek’s title The Sublime Object of Ideology presupposes a sublime factor within ideology. For Immanuel Kant, the sublime, as beauty, is an aesthetic judgment. This judgment is a quality that the subject possesses, and is a matter of taste and judgment exercised by the subject when regarding an object or phenomenon. An object or phenomenon is experienced as sublime when its size or vastness makes it problematic to grasp in its totality. As opposed to the sublime, beauty is a quality that fills the subject with appreciation, pleasure, and attraction. The sublime, on the other hand, alternates between pleasure and repulsion. Kant states that the sublime contains pleasure, but that it is just as much a feeling of admiration and respect, and should therefore be characterized as a negative pleasure. The experience of the sublime is an experience of pain and terror that arises through the imagination’s inadequacy to grasp the phenomenon in its totality, but at the same time an experience of pleasure and relief because the subject understands that rationally, the totality is possible to grasp.

147 Ibid., 69
148 Ibid., 54
Žižek forms his view of the sublime through a reading of G.W.F. Hegel, who in his writings on aesthetics opposes Kant’s view of the sublime as a wholly subjective experience. As already mentioned, the sublime, in Kant’s view, is the incapacity of the human being of grasping the totality of a work of art or natural phenomenon, and thereby is to be defined as an experience within the self. Hegel, on the other hand dismisses Kant’s view of the sublime as merely a subjective experience, and places the sublime object within an incomprehensible absolute. Žižek’s view of the sublime has clear similarities with Hegel’s view, although given a Lacanian twist. In Hegel’s view the sublime is a category related to the beyond, to the sacred, and the image of God. Here God can be perceived as an outside Other. Not being as interested in the experience of natural phenomena as aesthetic experience as Kant was, Hegel focuses more on textual art and symbols. Hegel thereby sees aesthetic expressions as being inadequate in regard to presenting or expressing the sacred, and in this inherent lack, one can locate the sublime. Paul de Man states in his discussion of Hegel’s sublime that the sublime for Hegel is “the moment of radical and definitive separation between the order of discourse and the order of the sacred.” Following de Man we can argue that the sublime object for Hegel is not the beyond, or sacred in itself, but the lack of the sacred and the impossibility of presenting it within the artwork. To de Man this artwork is primarily textual, but we can easily apply the argument on performance.

We find resonance for this argument in Žižek’s theories when he says that the sublime object is an object masking the non-existent. According to Žižek the sublime object is “an ordinary, everyday object which, quite by chance, finds itself occupying the place of what he calls das Ding, the impossible-real object of desire.” Žižek does not frequently use the Lacanian term das Ding, but the term is closely related to objet petit a, and denotes the object of desire outside of ourselves that also becomes the cause of desire. In Ethics of Psychoanalysis, Lacan places the mother as example of das Ding, she is the first object outside of ourselves that we encounter, and therefore desire, but this still creates the void of desire within ourselves. This, we see, resembles the argument of the objet petit a as the object-cause of desire. Obviously it has a great deal in common with the objet petit a and the Real. The quote therefore shows that the sublime object is that which masks the impossible-real kernel, the void. If, for Hegel, the

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151 Paul de Man, Aesthetic Ideology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 110
152 Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 221
sublime is what, through failure of presenting the absolute, is discovered in the artwork in relation to the beyond, for Žižek it can be said to be the object that masks the beyond while nonetheless keeping the aspect of failure present.

To Hegel, art should represent totality. And truth is only present within totality.\textsuperscript{153} Totality is truth. Where the world in itself is made up of dialectical processes, truth is present in a pure totality. However, it also might seem that the pure totality would be inherent of its own dialectical negation showing the impossibility of a pure totality. This negation of totality would reveal the non-existence of the complete and total whole, and could be seen as an internal failure. In the chapter on the sublime in art in the \textit{Lectures on Aesthetics}, Hegel states about the sacred beyond:

This outward shaping which is itself annihilated in turn by what it reveals, so that the revelation of the content is at the same time a supersession of the revelation, is the sublime. This, therefore, differing from Kant, we need not place in the pure subjectivity of the mind and its Ideas of Reason; on the contrary, we must grasp it as grounded in the one absolute substance qua the content which is to be represented.\textsuperscript{154}

This quote can be used to argue that the sublime is revealed in the representation of the whole when the whole shows its inadequacy, but that the “outward shaping”, the object of the absolute is, at the same time, revealed to be inadequate, the inadequacy is thus not only something present in the representation but revealed to be the case of the thing in itself.

Žižek relates the sublime to \textit{jouissance}: “In short, the Sublime, is ‘beyond the pleasure principle’, it is a paradoxical pleasure procured by displeasure itself (the exact definition – one of the Lacanian definitions – of enjoyment \textit{[jouissance]}).”\textsuperscript{155} When characterizing the sublime object as an object of jouissance, the sublime object achieves a double feature, both as a kernel and as a veil masking that the kernel is a void. It both becomes the beyond of the pleasure principle, the innermost object of desire that we seek at the same time as it terrifies us, and the factor of enjoyment we cling to in order to keep our ideological beliefs and actions. Jouissance then becomes sublime because of its terrifying though appealing effect, its alternation between pleasure and displeasure. It terrifies as kernel, but provides pleasure as the safe haven of a masking device of the terrifying but still exciting and desirable kernel. And, as with the sublime for Kant, what terrifies us the most is acknowledging that we cannot grasp the totality. Seen in a

\textsuperscript{154} Hegel, \textit{Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art}, 363
\textsuperscript{155} Žižek, \textit{The Sublime Object of Ideology}, 229
perspective of ideology, this resembles a traditional Marxist view, exemplified with Lukács, where we only grasp the world in partiality, and the idea that we cannot grasp the world in its totality scares us into creating ideology. Here we see that Lukács resonates Hegel when he claims totality to be the ideal transgressing the dialectical and fragmented everyday reality. When seen from Žižek’s viewpoint, the kernel as master-signifier and its quilt of lesser signifiers constructs an ideological totality, what scares us is the notion that this totality is non-existent, and therefore the fact that we cannot grasp the totality in the way we would like to believe. At the same time our own desire is terrifying. That we desire the kernel and its lack of substance is such a terrifying concept, we would rather turn around and seek pleasure in the comforting master-signifier. This shows us how ideology can be understood as an internal feature, but what the kernel exists of, what our desire is constructed by, is an external feature made out by the quilting process and master signifier. How these signifiers are constructed is more often than not a matter of social structures and rule.

The sublime object of ideology is that which in its terrifying features masks what is even more terrifying. The reason the sublime object is terrifying in the first place is that it will necessarily fail to present totality, and a lack of complete totality will lead to an experience evoking emotions of terror. When relating it to mass performance the sublime object will be central in analyzing how mass performance and theatricality express ideology, and how this ideology of the performance is perceived. In chapter seven I will discuss these concepts of ideology more thoroughly, and the impact of the sublime object in mass performance. However, in order to do that later on, it will be necessary to continue with a discussion of the theories of performance and ritual now.

3.7 Approaches to discussions of performance, ritual and ideology

3.7.1 Performance, structure, anti-structure and the liminal

In his book *Performance Theory* first published in 1988, Richard Schechner introduced a new understanding of the term *performance*. Influenced by the anthropologist Victor Turner, Schechner started to see *performance* more as a term embracing different forms of cultural interaction than being limited singularly to traditional theatre. Schechner starts *Performance Theory* by stating that performance should be seen as an inclusive term. Within the inclusive term of performance he places, for example, play,

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ritual, theatre, sporting events, and games. The relation between these forms of performance is non-hierarchical, and Schechner states that he has a horizontal view of performance. In this he also implies that he sees no reason to discuss the evolution of performance, or say that theatre evolved from ritual. Schechner would rather view performance horizontally, where the spectrum of forms one can find within the term are viewed as equal forms of performance. Although Schechner is quite decisive in which forms to include in the broader term of performance, I do not think that he means to exclusively lock down the forms, rather, I believe he means that other forms may also be called performance.

What all forms of performance have in common, according to Schechner, is that they exist in a realm of fun distinguished from the actions of ordinary life. Interestingly, Schechner places performance psychoanalytically within the pleasure principle: “In psychoanalytical terms, the world of these performance activities is the pleasure principle institutionalized.” He also connects it to a sphere of make-believe, play and fun, and to what Victor Turner called the subjunctive mood, which will be discussed below. Performance, therefore, is about play and fun, but as we remember from Huizinga in chapter two, play does not mean that it cannot, at the same time, be serious action.

In his broad discussion of the term performance, theatre scholar Marvin Carlson, in the introduction of his book Performance. A Critical Introduction, states that performance always is recognized by a self consciousness of action: “The difference between doing and performing, (...), would seem to lie not in the frame of theatre versus real life but in attitude – we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think of them, this brings in a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance.” He therefore argues that performance will always have an audience, even though the audience might only be one self. In this view of performance one finds proximity to the concept of theatricality discussed in chapter two, in that a duality appears within the action because of the consciousness of action, and the notion of a spectator. Nevertheless, I will argue that performance is a much broader term, and while theatricality often is present in performance, and theatricality can be a characteristic common to performance, it is not necessary for an event to be regarded as performance nor are the terms inseparable.

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157 Ibid., 8
158 Ibid., 7
159 Ibid., 14
What Schechner found in his investigation of performance is that performance is related to the anti-structure of ritual. Schechner argues that performance takes place in a realm of the unordinary, and it is here we find the connection to the theories of Victor Turner. To Turner the term anti-structure denotes the ritual time that deviates from ordinary life, from the regular social structure. Anti-structure is a period of liminal time, a term derived from the Latin term limen, or threshold. The term liminal is used in the meaning that a liminal time is a passage from one state to another, a time of marginality.

According to Turner a liminal phase is a period where the persons going through this phase are bereft of their worldly comforts, and where hierarchies are turned around. In this period regular social structures do not exist, and the subjects of the ritual in this limited period of time exist in between regular social structures.

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions.\[161\]

The liminal period is accordingly a period of transition or passage, from old structure to new structure, or from old structure and back. Turner’s examples range from initiation rites in African tribes, where he spent several years doing fieldwork, to Franciscan monasteries, the hippie movement, and western holidays.

It is in the initiation rites Turner finds the foundation of liminality. The subjects of these rituals are in most cases separated from their communities for a certain period of time to be reintroduced to society during a ritual that awards them a new societal status. This is particularly common in puberty rites. When Turner uses the hippie community as an example it is in order to say that liminality might become a more or less permanent state if the state in nature distinguishes itself from the regular structure of society, something that was important to the hippies. While liminality has several characteristics, like the reversal of hierarchies, the dismissal of worldly properties, and the formation of a special community that Turner calls communitas, a term I will discuss more thoroughly below, it is the existence as anti-structure that is the superior category incorporating the other characteristics. In From Ritual to Theatre Turner proposes that there is a subjunctive mood at play in the liminal phase, a world of “as if.” This “as if” as an anti-structural characteristic becomes interesting when seen in relation to theatricality. This will be elaborated on in chapter seven.

When discussing liminality and performance I find it interesting to discuss carnivals because of its role as being oppositional at the same time as it secures the hegemonic rule. Carnivals are originally, and in many places still are, seasonal rites marking the passage from winter to spring. As I mentioned in the previous chapter on theatricality, Bakhtin defines carnival as a feast occurring in a period of time “sharply distinct from the serious, official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials.” To Bakhtin the Catholic Church and the feudal rule were representatives of structure, a structure also characterized by its own forms of ceremony and ritual, but the people itself created an anti-structure of laughter and play expressed through carnival. “(C)arnival is the people’s second life, organized on the basis of laughter.”

By describing carnival as a feast that occurs in a period of time distinct from officialdom, it becomes quite clear that for Bakhtin carnival occurs in a liminal time. In carnivals traditional hierarchies were suspended and turned upside down. Bakhtin also emphasizes that carnivals celebrated a temporary liberation from the official structure. By reading carnival as liberation one can also see it as being in opposition to the current structure, and within it the rules and laws of society. For a limited period of time the regular hierarchies that held medieval man down were suspended, and for a limited time they could live as though they were not repressed. However, this opposition, which is also to be seen as an opposition to the ruling ideology was, by nature, only temporary. When the liminal period was over, regular order was reintroduced.

As mentioned above, an important trait of liminality is the occurrence of communitas. To Turner, communitas is an unordinary state of social community that occurs within the liminal realm, a special form of egalitarian fellowship dependent on the anti-structure of liminality. Communitas is a temporary state of community strictly connected to the liminal state of anti-structure.

Communitas breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or “holy,” possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern the structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency.

When Turner describes communitas as something connected to the sacred or holy, it is mainly because he also connects it to a sphere of the socially religious and accordingly,
sacred. But what also is expressed through this is the connection of *communitas* to something outside of the ordinary, something elevated from the ordinary structures of society that are suspended during the liminal time where *communitas* occurs. In the example of carnival, we can see how *communitas* is manifested through the suspension of traditional hierarchies and inclusive social fellowships and camaraderie. These are traits common to all forms of *communitas*.

Turner distinguishes between three forms of *communitas*: *spontaneous communitas*, *normative communitas*, and *ideological communitas*. Spontaneous communitas denotes the sudden and temporary existence of belonging and unity among people. Normative communitas is a society’s way of organizing its resources through ritual by organizing the spontaneous communitas in a way that makes it a lasting system of society. Ideological communitas resembles normative communitas in that they both structure the spontaneous communitas, but in addition to being a structuring model of communitas, ideological communitas relates to utopian models of society based on spontaneous communitas.\(^{167}\) Turner places normative and ideological communitas closely to each other, and argues that ideological communitas is a modern expression of normative communitas, which he connects to preliterate and preindustrial societies. Ideological communitas is related to a belief in a utopian structure, and Turner defines this form of communitas as a structure claiming utopian ideals for its community. This means, as I read Turner, but he is not clear here, that one can either use a utopian future communitas as structural concept, or that one can claim utopia within current structures. This is understandable in the sense that many ideologies use the narratives of utopian communities in their ideological structure. This can, for instance, be said to be the case in German Nazism and Soviet socialism, however, compared to the discussion of ideology I have presented in this chapter, it comes forward as a narrow concept of ideology. It is apparent that communitas as a structural system may be used ideologically, but the ideological structure that communitas may offer does not necessarily need to be connected to utopian structures of communitas.

### 3.7.2 Efficacy and the liminoid

In *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play*\(^ {168}\), Turner invents the term *liminoid* as a derivative of *liminal*. *Liminoid* denotes events that are distinguished from

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\(^{168}\) Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*
ordinary life and social structure, but that are not inherent to the same transforming holiness as the liminal. The greatest difference between the *liminal* and the *liminoid* is that the *liminoid*, which Turner relates to post-industrial societies, is voluntary and optional while the liminal, related to agrarian societies, is mandatory. However, both the *liminal* and the *liminoid* may exist in the same society. The *liminoid* therefore becomes a not-so-serious version of the liminal, one might say a watered down version. But, the term *liminoid* also provides an opportunity to say something about leisure activities such as play, entertainment, and aesthetics that emphasizes the communal and serious sides of these activities.

It is through this view of the liminal/liminoid that Schechner develops his performance term. Schechner uses much space to discuss his own work as a director, and to explain and discuss how these theatre projects are part of a liminoid sphere, as events outside of the ordinary, transforming regular social structure, and consequently achieving ritual-like qualities. Performance, to Schechner, becomes a tool of political anti-structure commenting and transforming the ordinary social structure.

Much of the post-World-War-II avant-garde has been an attempt to overcome fragmentation by approaching performances as part of rather than apart from the community. Sometimes this community is of artists making similar works. This has been the pattern in New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, and other cities where artists form a distinct group. Sometimes, as in the general uprisings of 1968, art is joined to larger political movements. Sometimes, as in black, Chicano, women’s, and gay-movement theaters, artists identify with – and even help form – ethnic, racial, gender, sexual or political unity. The community-related avant-garde is not only a phenomenon of the industrialized west and Japan, but also of countries that are undergoing great changes in social organizations by means of modernization.\(^\text{169}\)

According to Schechner, the groups belonging to the minority, use performance to avoid fragmentation and create their own unity, although this unity is to be regarded as an anti-structure compared to the majority social structure.

Seen in relation to Schechner’s article “The Street is the Stage”, discussed in the previous chapter on theatricality, actions of performance become crucial in times of change and transformation in society, truly liminal times. Schechner points out that the goal of “such performance” is *communitas*, and that performance is supposed to be an “experience of collective celebration.”\(^\text{170}\) Schechner defines *performance* as a presentation of action located within a braid of efficacy and entertainment where ritual is, to a large extent, inherently efficacious, and theatre is mainly perceived as an expression of entertainment. For Schechner, efficacy in performance is a contrast to the entertainment

\(^{169}\) Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 154-155

\(^{170}\) Ibid., 156
factor of popular theatre, and efficacy is a trait he connects to ritual and performance that induces some form of transformation or change. The efficacy/entertainment braid is not exclusive, the different elements and poles of the braid affect each other, but in ritual the elements of efficacy will be clearer than entertainment, and in theatre entertainment clearer than efficacy.

The whole binary continuum efficacy/ritual – entertainment/theater is what I call “performance.” Performance originates in impulses to make things happen, to entertain; to get results and to fool around; to collect meanings and to pass the time; to be transformed into another and to celebrate being oneself; to disappear and to show off; to bring into a special place a transcendent Other who exists then-and-now; to be in a trance and to be conscious; to focus on a select group sharing a secret language and to broadcast to the largest possible audience of strangers; to play in order to satisfy a felt of obligation and to play only under Equity contract for cash. These oppositions, and others generated by them, comprise performance: an active situation, a continuous turbulent process of transformation.171

What becomes apparent to me in my reading of Schechner and his performance term is that it has surprisingly great similarities with the historical avant-garde. Already in Fuchs’ theatre theories, the diminishing of the division of stage and auditorium, a fascination for ritual-like performance, and what Turner and Schechner call communitas, are apparent. Performers and spectators were to unite in the same event, as a community. Schechner in some way believes that the liminal or liminoid factor of performance can be a liberating action, in opposition to structure, an anti-structure created as a liminoid structure of opposition. By placing his theories within this opposition, we can see that Schechner’s term of performance resembles Meyerhold’s view of theatricality where he wanted to unite spectators and performers through architectural means and by removing the foot lights, yet still remind the audience that what they were experiencing was theatre.

As I have just discussed, carnival is a ritual part of a typical liminal realm. The hierarchies of ordinary social structure are suspended; there is a typical occurrence of communitas, it takes place in a realm outside of the ordinary, and it opposes the ordinary subjugations of society by focusing on the leaders’ temporary lack of power. Revolutions are also a kind of carnival, as we have seen explained by Schechner in “The Street is the Stage.” Through ritualizations of society and performative events the revolutionary realm introduces a new rule, a rule of the people rather than of the rulers. What occurs is a feast outside of the ordinary social structure, an anti-structure imposed to change the structure for good. In chapter two I showed how this was apparent in the days surrounding the fall of the Berlin wall, but it may be said of many revolutions, and

171 Ibid., 157
other similar events. The main characteristic is the huge appearance of *communitas*, and the feeling of the creation of a real egalitarian structure. These forms of anti-structure have in common that they oppose to the regular structure, a characteristic I believe can be found in a great deal of anti-structural behavior. Opposition to the ordinary social structure is an inherent characteristic of anti-structural behavior, and consequently the reason why the beholders of ideological hegemony might fear the anti-structure. Seen through Schechner’s performance term which he places closely to avant-garde theatre and performance, the liminoid actions of staged anti-structure places itself on the threatening side of anti-structural behavior.

Although liminal expressions of performance and ritual are concepts that are possible to perceive as threatening to the social structure of a society, liminality may also be used to secure the status quo. As we already know, most liminality is temporary, and even in Turner’s example with the hippie community in the USA and their permanent liminality, it never ceases to be in the margins, it never becomes structure. Carnivals are always taken over by the ordinary social structure again, often by lent, an even stricter structure than the one existing before the carnival time. It can be read as a breathing space where opposition is legal for a limited period of time, but this limited and legal opposition does not become a new structure either for the carnival participants or for the hippies. In revolutions this may be seen differently, the structure may change, but the liminal period is always overtaken by structure, either as a reintroduction of an old structure, or as a new social structure. The revolution never continues to be a revolution. This can be seen in the Russian revolution and the theatrical expressions made during the liminal period of revolution and civil war that was stopped with the introduction of a new structure.

### 3.7.3 Ritual, performance, and symbols

The view of ritual as an expression securing social structure can be found through reading the theories of the American sociologist and communication scholar, Eric W. Rothenbuhler. Rothenbuhler focuses on the communicative aspect of ritual rather than on community and togetherness. The interesting thing about Rothenbuhler’s term of ritual is that ritual becomes something that is communicated from one part to another, not as the common experience of a community that characterizes both Turner’s and Schechner’s views on ritual and performance. Rothenbuhler defines ritual as an open term: “Ritual is the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behavior to
symbolically effect or participate in the serious life. " Already in his internal definition we see how differently Rothenbuhler views ritual compared to Turner. To Rothenbuhler ritual is a voluntary activity, and therefore has little to do with Turner’s discussion on liminality, although Rothenbuhler agrees that liminality is a characteristic of certain forms of ritual. It might be seen more according to the liminoid, but Rothenbuhler’s term is even broader and includes all forms of patterned communication, everything, as he says himself, from “handshakes to coronations.” In my opinion this definition becomes too wide because of the clear lack of communitas in a handshake, an everyday handshake seems to me as more of a custom than a ritual. However, what I find interesting in Rothenbuhler’s use of the term is that by using his definition we can perceive ritual as an articulation of hegemony.

However one views ritual, ritual is communication, an act of communication between several parts participating in the ritual in different capacities. In Rothenbuhler’s view the communication is always presented from one part to the other and back, not as a common experience of communitas. This, we may say, resembles more traditional performance and theatre, where one part is always more responsible for the communicative act than the other part. In a traditional semiotic fashion, Rothenbuhler sees all communication as a language composed by signs. The signs of ritual are distinguished from other communicative signs by being condensed. By this Rothenbuhler means that symbols presented in a ritual context are thicker, filled with more meaning, than they would have been outside the ritual context.

Compiled symbols explode with meaning when released in the ritual situation. Ordinary objects like flags, uniforms, crosses, and vestments expand to fill their situations with meaning. They flood consciousness, reducing the significance of ego as it is washed over by what is experienced as the inevitable flow of meaning. 173

If we see this according to Laclau and Mouffe’s theories of articulation that were discussed above where articulation is the practice of creating structural nodal points of hegemonic meaning, ritual here becomes an articulating practice where the signs and meanings are modified and condensed because of the practice. The ritual meaning is a thicker and more expansive version of ordinary meaning, and totalizes the different meanings into one articulated discourse.

173 Ibid., 17-18
The ritual is presented as a totalized and unified expression just as relevant for all participants. As Rothenbuhler discusses later on in his book, ritual is always serious, and ritual participation cannot lie. “Participants may or may not believe in a ritual, but their participation in it cannot be a lie; their disbelief does not undo what was accomplished by their participation.”174 The action of participation is also an action of accepting the signs, and according to Rothenbuhler the participant in ritual “willfully submits to an external order of signs.”175 The articulation of hegemonic sign systems, such as ruling by consent, becomes apparent through this will. Consciously or not, the participants consent to the signs and the use of signs as a totalizing practice. They consent to the hegemony presented through the ritual, and the ritual form works as a way of securing the status quo through discourse. Consequently, we can perceive ritual and performance as a breathing space from status quo, sometimes in clear opposition to, and transforming the status quo, but also as a form that can be used to strengthen and evolve the existing structure of rule.

The American social anthropologist Clifford Geertz discusses culture as structural systems. Geertz’s term of culture is therefore closely connected to what above was called superstructure and to Rothenbuhler’s symbolic sphere of society. According to Geertz, every culture has its own structural system. In his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, he discusses both religion and ideology as examples of cultural systems. He defines culture as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”176 Discussing religion as a cultural system he gives more weight to the symbolic and structuring function it has in a society than to personal consciousness and knowledge, or individual acts of worship. Religion is, for Geertz, a system of symbols establishing moods and motivations, and through formulating these conceptions making them realistic.177

As a result of the focus on religion as a concept structuring society through a system of symbols, ritual becomes an important part of the concept of religion. According to Geertz, it is through ritual that the concepts of religion are verified. Through ritual action, social concepts of religion are made ‘real’. The life that is lived in society

174 Rothenbuhler, *Ritual Communication*, 62
175 Ibid., 129
176 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Fontana Press, 1993), 89
177 Ibid., 90
meets in ritual its imaginary social reality, and these symbols together strengthen the veracity of the symbol and legitimate its structure. “It is in some sort of ceremonial form (...) that the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another.”\(^\text{178}\) The everyday life, the common-sense relationship to this life, and its imaginary notions are fused through ritual into religion. Accordingly, ritual in itself becomes a structuring element of life, belief, culture and society and a model for both how the society is and how it should be.

All ritual involves this symbolic fusion of lived life and the imaginary, but Geertz points out that it is mainly in more elaborate public events that the people’s spiritual consciousness is formed. These events he appropriately chooses to call \textit{cultural performances}. And, as he goes on to say that all \textit{cultural performances} are not necessarily religious, and notes that personal belief is not of utmost importance in this discussion, it is possible to read Geertz’s term of \textit{cultural performance} more as a culture structuring event that might as well be recognized as ideological. When discussing ideology as cultural system, Geertz does not give weight to the notion of ideology being true or false, but emphasizes the structural function and the way ideology reinforces societal strains through symbolic forms. An interesting side of Geertz’s argumentation is his focus on the metaphor as an aspect of ideology.\(^\text{179}\) As Žižek meant that people are aware of the illusion on which they base their ideological consciousness, but choose to act according to the illusion because it provides the most comfort, Geertz sees ideological expressions as maps of poetry. Everyone knows that these “maps of poetry” are only metaphors exaggerating the facts, but still they choose to act accordingly. Seen in relation to Žižek, we can say that although we know that the metaphor is a seductive exaggeration, we choose to act as if the metaphor is an expression of our real life relations. The metaphors and symbols function to pattern and structure life, according to Geertz, creating maps and patterns for how to live, organize, and understand the processes of life. Here the “as if” resembles Turner’s subjunctive mood and shows how the duality of art and life and a breach in the quotidian becomes important in ritual and cultural performances.

Structuring life and fusing social reality with the imaginary is also, in an ideological sense, best done through cultural performance. In Geertz’s famous essay on Balinese cockfights he recognizes how cockfighting, and all its rules, mirror society’s

\(^{178}\) Ibid., 112  
\(^{179}\) Ibid., 210-211
structure. Not only are social hierarchies repeated within the cockfights, but the cocks represent their men, and one always bets according to strict cultural rules. As cultural performance, the cockfights mirror society and its differences, but at the same time it establishes these differences and makes them ‘real’. “The slaughter in a cock ring is not a depiction of how things literally are among men, but, what is almost worse, of how, from a particular angle, they imaginatively are.”180 The cockfights emphasize the class differences of Balinese society, a completely ideological fact that becomes the accepted rule of society because of the way it is played out over and over again in a cultural performance where everyone knows their place. The cockfight consequently functions both as a model for how the society is, and for how it should be. In Rothenbuhler’s sense, the cocks become condensed symbols that function as part of a totalizing practice. The fragmentation of classes in Balinese society is totalized through the cockfights, and the cocks become the utmost symbol of this totality. The strongest cocks are owned by the most powerful men, and each man’s rooster symbolizes his right to power. And through cultural performance, the relation between man and rooster becomes naturalized, and people consequently act as though the power is given naturally, not a result of social structure.

To Geertz both ideology and religion are cultural systems. Both systems provide a structure for the symbolic presentations of society, and presented as different systems the structures are also presented differently whether one talks about religion or ideology. However, the systems do not function in completely different ways. The American scholar of religion, Catherine Bell, points out that ideology is not a system of belief, but she cites Gramsci, when she argues that it is rather a system of consent.181 If ideology is a structure of consent to dogma and action according to it, religion might consequently be a system of personal belief. However, as Bell argues at a different place, religion might just as well be a system of actions. What makes you religious or gives you a religious identity can, in many cases, be attributed to your living in accordance with the rules of the religion, and carrying out the religious and ritual duties.182 This means that an action does not stop being religious even though it may not be founded in a personal belief. Having the discussion of ideology and action in mind, the concept of religion might also in some instances be more of a discussion of consent to a system, and of acting accordingly, more than a personal spiritual conviction. Religion and ideology

180 Ibid., 446
181 Catherine Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 190
182 Catherine Bell, Ritual. Perspectives and Dimension (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 191
share many structuring notions. As Robert N. Bellah argues in his article “Civil Religion in America”, religion can effectively be used as part of ideology and the ideological mythological framework.\footnote{Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” \textit{Daedalus}, Vol. 96, No. 1, Religion in America, Winter (1967)} Religion and ideology may therefore overlap, and the passage from the one to the other may sometimes be opaque.

However, I think it is important to point out that religion is, to a large degree, connected to spiritual belief, and although it may include an expression of consent and action, the spiritual belief or dogma is presented as part of the actions. Ideology on the other side is connected to state structures more than personal social structures. It would not, however, be possible or expedient to make a clear differentiation between religion and ideology since both are deeply connected to consciousness and desired knowledge, and may have similar relations to ritual and performance.

When Žižek discusses ideology as action and stresses that we know how things really are, but still keep acting according to the ideological illusion, he is thinking of all types of action: everything from shopping to dressing and working might be seen as ideological actions. However, when seen in relation to Geertz’s term of \textit{cultural performance} it becomes clear that performative action, in some cases, becomes more ideological, denser in its cultural expression, than shopping for groceries. Žižek’s example is of commodity fetishism, we know that money is only a symbol, and to use Geertz’s term it seems appropriate to call money a metaphor, for the relations between men, but we act as though money has a fixed value. Through the actions of cultural performance these ideological illusions are verified and made true. They become the Žižekian \textit{Real}. In the cockfight explained by Geertz, cultural performance has the ability to reinforce the hierarchical class system of Bali, and make it true.

As explained by Geertz, this hierarchical social structure is an important and ubiquitous trait of Balinese society. We might say that it is a social kernel. And although it might be taking it too far calling this kernel non-existent, as is Žižek’s definition of the \textit{Real}, it is a social symbolic structure, and the relations between men rely on this structure, not the other way around. This structure is, in my reading of Geertz, created, initiated, and reinforced through the cockfight. The ideological structure goes from metaphor to \textit{Real} in cultural performance. The same can be said of the Bakhtinian carnival. The temporary upheaval of hierarchies functions as a valve letting out all the social pressure, but at the same time the play on hierarchies is naturalized through the cultural performance, and accordingly this play strengthens the existing
hierarchies. The hierarchies become nature through an act of exorcism, to paraphrase Barthes.

3.8 Summarizing remarks

In this chapter I have presented two different theoretical approaches with different epistemological traditions. The theories of ideology presented at the beginning of the chapter belong to a tradition of Marxist theory and ideology critique, and European structuralism, while the theories of performance and ritual belong to a tradition of American performance studies, social anthropology, and religious studies. Both terms, however, are central when wanting to understand the position of mass performance in society.

Ideology critique originally represented a quest for the truth and the decoding of the structural illusion created by the class in rule, either consciously or unconsciously. When applying Žižek’s theories to this tradition I have shown how ideology has been developed into a term that characterizes how our knowledge of society is structured and experienced, rather than purely as a tool for deception and rule. Ideology, thus, becomes a complicated structure of desire and knowledge, masking the lack of totalities of consciousness while still being what reminds us that the totalities of consciousness are actually non-existent. In my use of the term ideology, ideology is also a system of national rule, although maybe not necessarily in the same exploitive way as argued by traditional Marxist theorists. Ideology is to be seen more as the system of consciousness and knowledge that structures society and upholds the national status quo, and the reasons for adhering to these forms of knowledge and consciousness.

Performance theory is greatly indebted to ritual theory and views of ritual emphasizing the performative communications and actions within ritual rather than purely religious belief. In this chapter I have presented how theories of ritual demonstrate the effect forms of performance can have on communities. This I have shown through Victor Turner’s terms structure/anti-structure and the liminal and liminoid but also his term communitas which I will use extensively throughout discussions later on, especially in chapter seven. Other terms I will take with me from this chapter are Richard Schechner’s use of the terms efficacy and entertainment, and the placement of these terms in a braid or continuum. In all these terms we can see the relation and common impact of ritual, theatre, and performance, and in my further discussion I will
see how these concepts work in connection to mass performance, ideology and theatri-
cality.
4.0 Perspectives of research and methodology

4.1 Introduction
In this chapter I will discuss the methodological background of this research project and ponder the methodological problems I have met during the course of the work, and how the problems have been solved. I will start out with introducing the case studies briefly, and the main discussions of these will follow in chapter five and six. In this chapter, I will only point out how the field work was carried out, and discuss methodological approaches in my work. I will discuss this work and present my choices in comparison to what I have chosen not to do, and discuss some problems of performance studies, and the problem of researching ephemeral objects, which is so familiar to this discipline. Theatre and performance research does not have a long tradition for methodological discourse. This chapter has therefore taken into account approaches from different disciplines, and will attempt to formulate an approach fitting my research of performance.

In chapters five and six I will present the two main case studies and place them within a historical and social context. Historical examples and background information was also presented in chapter two in my discussion of theatricality. In the second part of this chapter I will focus on how and why these historical examples are presented, why have I chosen to focus so much on historical examples, and what kind of problems historiographic research gives rise to in relation to theatre. Since this dissertation is based on a theoretical discussion of two main case studies, I will follow up with a discussion of my theoretical approach in this work. How has the theoretical approach colored my work, and how has theory helped illuminate the problems presented in the previous chapter? Here I will also attempt to place my own research within the already existing theoretical landscape that I present in my discussions.

Finally, my methodological discussion will end in a broader discussion of the relation between personal experience, as per my own encounter with the performances in question, and a theoretical perspective and discussion. How are we to put words onto a bodily experience of performance, and how does this help us understand the realm of performance? These are the main methodological problems that I will attempt to clarify in this chapter.
4.2 Introduction to field work experiences

The research done in this dissertation is based on two main examples of mass performance, which I have experienced during the course of my research. As mentioned in chapter one, the first case study is a mass gymnastics performance in the capital of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Pyongyang, and the second is the reenactment of the battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, USA. As will become clear in my detailed discussion of my visit to the DPRK in chapter five, traveling to the DPRK is not like traveling anywhere else, as your trip is strictly organized by the Korean International Tourist Company (KITC) while you are in the country. I organized my travel arrangements through a Swedish tour operator called Koreakonsult. Through them I signed up for a five-day trip which was intended to include the 2010 Pyongyang International Film Festival (PIFF). The organized tour started immediately upon landing in Pyongyang after a flight from Beijing, and the tour group consisted of seven individuals who were complete strangers to one another. In addition to the film festival, the tour included the 2010 Arirang performance.

After my five days in the DPRK, which were spent mainly in Pyongyang, I traveled to Seoul in the Republic of Korea (ROK), after a stopover in Beijing, to conduct further research. I spent nearly three weeks in Seoul where most of the time was spent in the Information Center on North Korea at the National Library. During this period I watched a collection of videos documenting North Korean performance, both mass performance in stadiums and parades, and traditional performance including revolutionary operas, children’s performance, and North Korean comedy. Here, I quickly found my insufficient knowledge of the Korean language to be a problem. I received a great amount of help by an English speaking librarian who found the videos and English summaries of the operas for me. My stay in Seoul was very helpful in that I was able to more closely study the development of North Korean mass gymnastics in general, and in the Arirang performance in particular. In addition to this, I also achieved a broader understanding of North Korean popular culture which is not the focus of this research project but which has given me a better foundation for understanding North Korean culture and performative expressions. This material will be valuable for further research at a later point. In April 2012, for the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung’s birth,

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184 http://koreakonsult.com
185 For more about the trip to the DPRK, see chapter five
186 As I will show in chapter five, the Arirang performance is performed up to four times a week during a period lasting approximately two months. My analysis is based on one of these performances, which I witnessed when I visited the DPRK in September 2010.
I traveled to back to the DPRK. This trip will not be analyzed in detail in this dissertation since I was not present at any mass performances during this trip, but I will use my experiences from it to comment some of the changes that have happened in the DPRK after Kim Jong Il’s death in December 2011.

My research trip to the USA was conducted in June and July 2011, in Virginia and Pennsylvania, USA. On this trip my partner joined me. The first place I visited was Colonial Williamsburg, a living history museum in Williamsburg, Virginia. The reason for this visit, as will become clear in chapter six, was to look into the background of historical reenactment and pursue the study of the different forms of staging history for an audience, and give some perspectives on the staging of history as it is found in the reenactment community. We spent two whole days at the museum and participated in all the main activities, with the main point of interest in the performances at the museum. After a stopover in Washington D.C. and Philadelphia we traveled on to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in order to experience the 148th anniversary reenactment of the battle of Gettysburg. The event will be thoroughly explained and described in chapter six.

Both case studies have been dominated by a wish to use my personal experience as a point of departure. I have not conducted any interviews, and one of the reasons for this is that I wanted to analyze more properly my own experience, rather than the experience of other participants already familiar with the ideological message, which I will relate to Althusser’s term of ideological subjects below. Another, more practical but just as important, reason is that in the DPRK I could not talk to anyone but my guides, and conducting interviews would have been impossible. When I traveled to the DPRK I did not mention that I was traveling as part of my research project, stating only that I was traveling as a tourist. This was a ploy to avoid having problems in regard to getting a visa, but it did contribute to making it impossible to conduct interviews. Lastly, I would like to point out here that I have attempted to do an aesthetical analysis rather than an ethnographical one, analyzing the performance I have experienced as artworks combined with an account of a personal experience of communication and ideology. The final result might, however, be a mixture of these two approaches, something that will be elaborated on below.

A common and continuing problem within the study of theatre and performance is the fact that the performance ends. The object of research is thoroughly ephemeral, and by the time the research findings are to be formulated, the object of research is non-
existent. This is a part of the nature of theatre and performance, and is not to be apologized for; it is also what makes performance so exciting. However, it does result in some concerns particular to performance research. In this dissertation the experiences accounted for are mine entirely, but I have also considered the written accounts of other, similar, performances. At the same time as I have attempted to see the performances as unique acts of communal communication, I have, where possible, broadened my perspective through the eyes of others.

4.3 Theoretical approach

My main aim in this dissertation is to examine the nature of mass performance in general, and the two presented case studies in particular, but also to use these two examples to outline a theoretical framework for the theatricality of mass performance, and its relation to ideology. This has given me the opportunity to study different forms of theory thoroughly; I have shown this in the two previous chapters, and my end discussion will be a result of this. My theoretical foundation in the present text is an evolvement of previous work where some connections and arguments have been presupposed from the time when this project was only a rough draft, but where much has also been developed during the course of the work.

Theoretical analysis is based on textual research, and seen through such a classical hermeneutical understanding it is clear that both presuppositions and developments with newly found understandings have been important to my analyses. While this is important in all textual analysis, I would like to enlarge on my own theoretical development more specifically. In my master thesis both the terms theatricality and ideology were used as the basis of the discussion.187 Seen as a hermeneutical circular development the theories presented in this dissertation are illuminated through my different case studies, providing a different result than what other cases would have provided. The theoretical result, thus, is provided by a circular interaction between theories, case studies, and my own theoretical development.

As mentioned in chapter one, the theories I have used belong to very different epistemological traditions. Roughly we can divide the theoretical foundations into three theoretical directions, the first being developed from a European tradition of theatre history and the aesthetic and analytical tradition of theaterwissenschaft, the second from Marxist ideology critique and European structuralism and post-structuralism, and the

187 Amundsen, Teatralitet og Illusjon
third evolving from American performance studies as represented by Richard Schechner and his view on American anthropology through his cooperation with Victor Turner. The European tradition of theatre history as the early work of Erika Fischer-Lichte is a good representative for, can in this discussion be seen most clearly in the chapter on theatricality and the discussion on retheatricalization, and early twentieth century theatre and performance in Russia and Western Europe, mainly Germany. It is interesting to note that most of the discussion on the term comes from theorists relating to this tradition. The European tradition can also be seen in relation to a tradition of textual analysis, and the belief in the theatrical sign as unique in comparison to a linguistic sign which has been important to theatre research of the 20th century. This viewpoint is very clear in the early work of Erika Fischer-Lichte and her concept of theatricality as a result of sign presented as sign and the development of a unique theory of semiotics for theatre analysis.

The second theoretical viewpoint mentioned is the one found in the discussion of the term ideology and its relation to Marxist theory, and to some degree what we call post-Marxist theory. As became clear in the discussion on ideology in chapter three, the starting point of the discussion was a classical Marxist notion of ideology as false consciousness. Žižek’s theoretical foundations are diverse, and he is open about where his approaches and angles originate, although he gives it a personal twist. He is a devoted Hegelian, and his relation to Hegel’s dialectics is prominent, he is also a trained Marxist in addition to being explicit on presenting a Lacanian legacy.

On the other hand he has no problem with discrediting those directions he believes he does not belong to, and is especially harsh on post-structuralism. The reason for this harshness is that he sees the common poststructuralist view of everything being signs connected to other signs as resulting in arguments for concepts of non-existence. And, where Žižek, undoubtedly, argues for non-existent kernels of understanding, he steps away from the poststructuralists in arguing that the non-existent kernels in fact do exist, although as a Lacanian symptom, and are therefore not to be seen as just signs in a system of other signs. Žižek’s theories were discussed in chapter three and will be discussed further in chapter seven, here I will just state that where Žižek is clear that his theories are not expressions existing in a vacuum or flux, the contemporary theories of

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188 This is of course not true of Michael Fried, but as became clear in the discussion in chapter two, his use differs from the European perspective and does not have a performance studies foundation.
189 The greatest contributors to the post-Marxist tradition mentioned here come from Laclau and Mouffe, both together and individually.
190 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 78
the poststructuralist branch of theory has also had an effect on Žižek’s work. My study of Žižek has, although centering on my reading of The Sublime Object of Ideology, necessarily also allowed for a reading of the three-legged legacy that Žižek represents. This will become evident especially in my discussion in chapter seven.

Placing myself and my work theoretically within this realm is not the easiest task. My background and training is from performance and theatre studies with a gravitational center-point in theatre history and theatre analysis. Both in my encounter with the case studies discussed, and with the theory I have chosen to use to approach my subject matter, I have wished to use my background in theatre analysis as one of my main methods. Here I am close to the European tradition of theaterwissenschaft, a tradition that also has a strong hold in theatre research departments at Norwegian universities. Nevertheless, my objects of research are not traditional theatre performances, and accordingly my approach is closer to a contemporary branch of performance studies. Through the course of research my current work has become a mixture of semiotic theatre analysis based on theatrical presence and critical theory, dialectical and ethnographical foundations, and a clear fascination for psychoanalysis. In the following I will attempt to outline how this background will be used in the meeting with the actual performances that I have chosen to examine.

4.4 Historiographical approach

The ephemeral nature of performance results in a more complicated relation to historical sources than would be the case in researching other forms of art as literature, fine art, or music where the object in question is easier to retrace and analyze. I will base my accounts of the historical aspects of the performances on written sources in addition to video and pictorial material gathered from the internet and from the archive of the Information Center on North Korea in Seoul. Although video is clearly a secondary source compared to being present at a performance, the existence of video documentation makes the research of the postwar era in Europe, for example, much easier than researching earlier periods. The use of video material was, as you will see, most helpful for the study of the history of mass gymnastics and cultic mass performance in Europe and the DPRK, while in the historical accounts of the reenactment and living history museums I had to rely mainly on written accounts. My main problem when researching early reenactment events and living history presentations was that the accounts were often biased or based on clear presuppositions of how the presentation of history
through performance was supposed to have been done. To me it was also an issue that very little has been done within the field by theatre or performance scholars, so the accounts of performances had to be recontextualized to give meaning in my performance theoretical context.

Since my main departure and goal of analysis has been to research the relation of ideology and theatricality, the ideology surrounding the performances in question have been very relevant. This is one of the reasons for giving both case studies, and the chapter on theatricality, a large amount of historical and illustrative examples. However, this necessitates a viewing of the historical performances within a greater perspective. Here it can be useful to use Willmar Sauter’s concept of a theatrical event.¹⁹¹ The term theatrical event takes into account the social, political, and communal contexts the performances occur in, seeing the response to the performances as a result of more than purely the communicative act presented from stage to audience.¹⁹² Sauter understands the term theatrical event as being greater than the performative situation occurring in the encounter between spectator and performer. “The theatrical event is not only constituted by the interaction between the performer and the spectator during the period of performance. The theatrical event must be understood as a process as much as it is a specific occurrence.”¹⁹³ Attempting to understand performance in a historical context, thus, makes it necessary to understand also the social context in which the performance occurs.

We can find an argument for the necessity of social context in Thomas Postlewait’s historiographical article “Historiography and the Theatrical Event: A Primer with Twelve Cruxes.”¹⁹⁴ Postlewait’s use of the term theatrical event from 1991 closely resembles Sauter’s use of the term from 2004 that I discussed above.¹⁹⁵ The reason for focusing on performance as theatrical event is, for Postlewait, that understanding the historical performance also relies on understanding the circumstances surrounding it. A performance does not exist in a vacuum; neither does our interpretation of it.¹⁹⁶ Postlewait also maintains that our interpretation of historical theatrical

¹⁹² Ibid.
¹⁹³ Ibid., 7
¹⁹⁵ In the article (although not in the title) Postlewait prefers the term theatre event rather than theatrical event. For my discussion of Sauter’s use of theatrical event see chapter two.
¹⁹⁶ Postlewait, “Historiography and the Theatrical Event,” 174
events exists in a dialectical relationship to the present, where our interpretation is illuminated by other historical occurrences and our own time.\footnote{A version of this article is also included in Postlewait’s book \textit{The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)}

In the article he uses the first staging of Ibsen’s \textit{A Doll’s House} in London in 1889, and the sources existing from this performance, as an example. This performance must be seen in light of its time. Postlewait’s main concern is how we can understand theatre history based on existing sources. He researches written documents and photographs in order to discuss how this historical performance can be understood. Here the main issue is, of course, the ephemeral nature of performance which leaves us with only a few points of secure reference to navigate from. The question we are left with is how are we to know something concretely and securely about the performance of the past, and how are we to interpret the ephemeral past and present it.

Many of the problems Postlewait outlines are problems I also have met during the course of my research. Although most of what I have researched has occurred in the not so distant past, and the material has therefore been more extensive, problems related to the use of sources and interpretation have had to be taken into account. In Postlewait’s review of these problems, he outlines the different struggles he has had with how to understand the sources. What is their relation to the performances and the text upon which that specific performance was based, and how are they to be understood in a British cultural and sociopolitical context? In my work on the mass gymnastics of totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia, one of the main problems I encountered was that all the sources are official. I have relied almost exclusively on photographic sources including video, as I have not been able to take into account the viewpoints of directors, performers, or audience. If this material had been available it would, needless to say, have provided me with some different perspectives, but in challenging myself to make an aesthetic analysis of content and development I believe I have sufficient material to work with in order to give a fruitful description of the development of a performance genre.

My sources were of a different kind in my research of the historical development of the reenactment and living history movement in USA in general and at Colonial Williamsburg and Gettysburg in particular. With these, I rely mainly on various kinds of written sources. This has led to a different set of problems than that encountered in the first case study, mentioned above. First of all some of the accounts I read, as will become clear in chapter six, are obviously biased, and secondly the critical research that
has been done, was, to a large degree, anthropological. Such research does not take into account aesthetical or performative perspectives, and is therefore less descriptive of the events portrayed than I could have wished for.

My motivation for including the historical background and context for both case studies has been to increase the possibility for interpreting the performances in question as theatrical events as per Sauter’s and Postlewait’s understanding of the term. If we are to understand mass performance both generally and specifically it is necessary to see the social and historical implications this form of performance has had. Nevertheless, my emphasis on the historical and contextual examples has resulted in the historical aspects being seen in light of the contemporary events. This means that not only will the historical examples shed light on the events I have participated in and observed, but they will also be seen in connection to these contemporary events even though this could not have been possible in the historical interpretation and understanding of the events. My interpretation and understanding of these parts of performance history, thus, is a result of my understanding of present-day performances.

4.5 Experiencing critically: Spectatorship as method

In my meeting with the objects of research my role has mainly been as spectator. In the theories of theatricality presented in chapter two, spectatorship is central to the experience of theatricality. Even in the examples of theatricality being used as aesthetical concept, the result of theatricality was placed within the spectator and the spectator’s perception. This can be seen in the theories of Josette Féral where the spectator’s gaze becomes the central aspect of the act of theatrical communication. In my meeting with the performances it was my gaze and my role as spectator that would be determinate for the research, it was my experience of theatricality and my relationship to the theatrical event that would dominate the course my research would take. Since I was traveling to places I had never visited before, in countries and ideological spheres to which I did not belong. Furthermore, I might add that I also became a spectator of the culture and country in a broader context. My spectatorship became double; I was primarily a spectator of the performances, but I was equally a spectator of the culture that was presented to me.198

198 In chapter five I discuss North Korean ideology and my trip to the DPRK as a theatrical experience. This experience clearly differs from the experience I had at Gettysburg where the presentation was not really staged for a foreign audience.
The American sociologist John Urry discusses tourism and states how tourism can be seen as a different form of gaze.\footnote{John Urry, \textit{The Tourist Gaze. Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Society} (London: SAGE Publications, 1990)} What we encounter when we are traveling to new places is different from what we experience in our everyday life. I will discuss Urry more in connection to my trip to the DPRK in chapter five, here I will just state that the journey in itself opens up a \textit{clivage} or experience of estrangement from the new surroundings, and that this experience of estrangement is one of the reasons that tourism is so popular and desirable. Seeing that the experience one can have of foreign surroundings, both in the meaning of different nationality and of what is unfamiliar or alien in character, can be seen as a form of \textit{clivage}, it would mean that one could also be a spectator to this foreignness. This might lead to methodological problems because the understanding of the event in question would be a result of the experience of meeting the foreignness, and the understanding would therefore be fused with subjective experiences rather than more objective knowledge.

In chapter three I presented Louis Althusser’s theories on ideological state apparatuses and ideological subjects. Every person who lives within an ideology, everyone living in a state or nation, becomes an ideological subject of the ideology of that society. This is a result of ideological state apparatuses such as schools, churches, and cultural expressions, and through these means every subject is \textit{interpellated} by the ideology. This means that I am interpellated by a Norwegian ideology, I am a Norwegian ideological subject, and distancing myself from the ideology in which I have been raised can be a difficult task. However, on the other hand, it would be difficult to fully understand ideological emotions in an ideology to which I am not subjected. My choice of case studies arose out of a conscious choice to focus on performances outside of a familiar ideological realm, and rather focus on examples that I would need to be a spectator of. The reason for this was that my distance to the event would give me the opportunity to experience ideology more objectively while at the same time experiencing the performance subjectively. This method has had an impact on my research.

In “From A Native’s Point of View”: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding”, Clifford Geertz discusses the problems of anthropological research.\footnote{Clifford Geertz, ““From the Native’s Point of View”; On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,” \textit{Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences}, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Oct. 1974)} Although I have not attempted an anthropological approach, Geertz points raises some general questions about the exercise of trying to understand what we experience and this
makes his article interesting also when discussing other methodological approaches. In his article Geertz’s proposes that there is a close connection between interpretation from within and interpretation from without. Geertz sees how one needs to see a case study from both the inside, locally, and the outside, globally. He proposes to meet the case with a “continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously.” From Geertz’s anthropological viewpoint this means that one can never become a naturalized part of the field work’s surroundings, but that it should neither always be a goal since opening up for the global view is equally important for understanding.

Interestingly Geertz sees this movement from local to global as a hermeneutical circle. “Hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts which actualize it and the parts conceived through the parts that motivates them, we seek to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion, into explications of one another.” This, as Geertz himself quickly acknowledges, is a hermeneutical circle, and to Geertz this circle is just as relevant in anthropological research as it is in textual research. In my work here the questions of research have oscillated between understanding the social implications and relations of the performances in question, what might be seen as a more objective mode, and in experiencing them, trusting my personal experience as related to my physical presence at each event. This has resulted in my research being impacted by my knowledge and non-knowledge of the performances in addition to my physical experience and the estrangement I felt when not being interpellated by the event, but still attempting to understand both mine and the interpellated spectators’ reactions. This research could not have been carried out in this way without my physical presence at the performances in question. My approaches to the performances of reference gathered from historical investigation and theoretical context are therefore very different from the approach conducted in the two main case studies where my physical presence has, to such a large degree, colored my experience and interpretation of the performances.

Experiencing performance presupposes different forms of approaches because of the magnitude of expressions of meaning and experience. Theatre phenomenologist Bert O. States argues, for instance, that a phenomenological approach does not necessarily

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201 Ibid., 43
202 Ibid.
exclude a semiotic approach. Although States does little to hide his preference for phenomenology, his article shows how different forms of approaches can help when researching theatre and performance. When I state that my interpretation of the performances relies on my physical presence and experience, it is exactly this phenomenological approach I depend on. However, in my analyses in the next two chapters, the semiotic approach is present to a large degree in my analyses of ideological expressions. In the North Korean Arirang performance, I will show how every backdrop image becomes a symbol of the eternal president Kim Il Sung, and that every sign has a direct relation to a clearly defined signified. At Gettysburg, as I will show in chapter six, the ideological sign structures were very much present in the flags, uniforms, singing, and pledging. The realm of ideology is fused with symbolism and sign structures. This can be seen in Rothenbuhler’s theories of ideology that were presented in chapter three. To understand ideology and the content of the performances the semiotic approach of interpretation of signs has been significant. On the other hand, as States proposes, performance is also a phenomenon. This is why I have chosen to analyze my personal experience of the events together with analysis of the signs I met to an overwhelming degree. Broadly speaking one could say that there exists a form of circular movement between a semiotic and phenomenological approach in my analyses.

In the beginning of The Theatrical Event Willmar Sauter presents a distinction between perception and reception. He connects perception to a phenomenological approach based on physical experience, and reception to “cultural studies and the analysis of social values and mental worlds.” When analyzing performance as theatrical event, and as both communicative action and reaction, and as a performative expression connected to a social whole, applying methods of perception and reception simultaneously or alternatingly becomes useful. My role as spectator, thus, becomes an act of analysis and experience. When participating in the events I participated on my own premises, and enjoyed it in a non-hierarchical sense. This means that I was free in my own interpretations and actions rather than being led by the message of the event. I was not subjugated to a hierarchy of other spectators, or in relationship to the performances themselves. In my view this was, at least partly, a result of not being interpellated by the events. My behavior did not need to follow presupposed rules of action, for except from explicit rules of safety and conduct I did not know how I was


204 Sauter, The Theatrical Event, 5
expected to behave. Of course I did do my best to behave courteously and correctly, but in terms of spectatorship, I experienced a feeling of freedom.

As already mentioned I was also spectator of my surroundings. In both the meeting with the performances and with the surroundings, a sense of clivage appeared. The appearance of clivage would mean that I was estranged in two ways, both ways can be said to be good and bad. I could, for instance, never become an actual reenactor, but the estrangement in itself had an important theatrical quality. Had I, for instance, been able to understand the Arirang as North Koreans understand it, I would not have been able to understand it as I understand it, or in a broader international context. What I mean by this is that my estrangement also functioned as method of understanding and experience. The clivage between me and my surroundings and the performance made the object in question an object of research and interpretation. The experience of clivage is a physical experience based on my perception of the performance in question. When the heading of this section states spectatorship as method, it is this physical experience of clivage leading to interpretation I have in mind. This physical experience as method is, nevertheless, dependent on an analytical mindset taking into account the message presented and the structural causes present on stage, auditorium, arena or field, wherever a performance might take place.

4.6 Hermeneutic and performative understanding

When having already stated that Geertz’s alternation of global and local interpretations can, according to Geertz himself, be seen as a hermeneutic circle, a hermeneutic approach needs to be elaborated on. As is well known, one of the main aspects of hermeneutic theory is the hermeneutic circle. In addition to using my physical presence and experience as point of departure, as outlined above, this research project has a theoretical foundation and aim, and therefore relies heavily on textual research and my reading of texts and theory. In this theoretical foundation and point of departure, a hermeneutical approach becomes important. The hermeneutic approach is, however, also applicable to research of performance based on the physical presence discussed, as I shall show below.

Geertz cites Wilhelm Dilthey and his work on the hermeneutic circle from the 19th century when emphasizing his use of it. Dilthey’s aim was to bring the aspect of lived life into the interpretation of literature and distinguish the disciplines of humani-
ties from the natural sciences.\textsuperscript{205} What characterizes the disciplines of humanities is that they all research and interpret parts of what it is to be human, parts of the whole of what is human nature.\textsuperscript{206} And by this Dilthey coined the now well-known hermeneutic circle of alternation of part and whole in the course of interpretation. Although Dilthey speaks broadly of the disciplines of the humanities, his main object of interpretation is textual, he wanted to see the text as a part of the whole and to raise the context of text into the realm of interpretation. How literature is to be interpreted is, according to Dilthey, not only a question of the words on the pages but of the reception of the readers and the individual reader’s psychology. The hermeneutic circle therefore can also be seen as to include an alternation between the implicit and the explicit, that is, between text and context.

Most of the hermeneutical tradition is based on interpretation of text. The textual reference as foundation of the hermeneutic approach is also evident in Hans-Georg Gadamer’s extensive work on hermeneutics. In his discussion of language as the medium of hermeneutic experience, he explicitly states that hermeneutics is concerned with understanding texts.\textsuperscript{207} To Gadamer, hermeneutic understanding and interpretation is a result of language, of verbal interpretation.\textsuperscript{208} However linguistic and textual hermeneutic interpretation is, I am of the opinion that my analyses of performance have clear hermeneutic traits, and will argue for how hermeneutics can be applied on performance in general, and how and why I mean to have done so in this dissertation. First I will give a very brief presentation of Gadamer’s theories of interpretation.

Gadamer’s main contribution to hermeneutics is the introduction of prejudice as a crucial element of interpretation. When the reader reads a text for the first time the reader will always be influenced by former understandings when attempting to form a new understanding of the text in question. This means that the personal experiences and understandings of the reader will influence the understanding of the text whatever the intention of the writer has been. Gadamer states that we preconceive an objective wholeness of the text, a “fore-conception of completeness.”\textsuperscript{209} With this fore-conception we expect a wholeness, but we sooner or later understand that this is not the case and start interpreting in light of its parts, and further into a circular movement of under-

\textsuperscript{205} Wilhelm Dilthey, “Avgrensning av åndsvitenskapene,” \textit{Hermeneutisk lesebok}, ed. Sissel Lægreid and Torgeir Skorgen (Oslo: Spartacus Forlag, 2001)
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 216
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 398
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 293/294
standing. Into this circular movement our prejudices and fore-understandings are introduced and they influence our attempt at complete understanding. The process of understanding appears in the alternation between the text and the reader. “It is in the play between the traditionary text’s strangeness and familiarity to us, between being historically intended, distanciated object and belonging to tradition. The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between.”210 It is in this in-between we also need to understand Gadamer’s notion of horizons of interpretation. To Gadamer a horizon consists of our sphere or limits of knowledge. This horizon is always with us when attempting new understanding, and when meeting a text with our understanding a fusion between our understanding and the text occurs. Within the horizon will also the history of effect of a work be included. Since much that is read is not read for the first time, the reader will be effected by earlier reading and common conceptions of a text.

My reason for including Gadamer’s theories in this chapter is that I mean that these are general issues of interpretation, both when exercising interpretation of textual and non-textual expressions. Nevertheless, a hermeneutics of performance would take a different form than traditional textual hermeneutics. Although both text and performance can be considered acts of communication, the form differs. One way of applying hermeneutics to performance would be to perceive theatre and performance as text, as Erika Fischer-Lichte did with theatre in 1983 in The Semiotics of Theatre.211 She sees theatre as a complex structure of signs, and the reading of this complex structure of signs would resemble the reading of a linguistic text. When discussing how this performative text can be interpreted hermeneutically, Fischer-Lichte realizes that there are great differences in the method of approach to linguistic text and performance.

In my opinion perceiving theatre and performance as text understood hermeneutically is a too narrow approach, however, I must admit that I have applied a version of the approach on parts of my research. My analysis of the Arirang performance is, to a large extent, an interpretation of the symbols of Kim Il Sung. I explicitly analyze the images of the backdrops and the symbol made by the performers as signs in a sign system all relating back to the master-signifier, the eternal president and father of the nation Kim Il Sung in one way or the other. I show how these individual symbols are parts of a bigger whole and how Kim Il Sung represents the completeness and whole of the North Korean nation, presenting an analysis that sees the performance as a sign structure where the oscillating relationship between part and whole is at the core.

210 Ibid., 295
211 Fischer-Lichte, The Semiotics of the Theatre
In the analysis of the 148th anniversary reenactment of the battle of Gettysburg, my use of semiotic analysis is less explicit, but still a foundation of the analysis. As discussed in chapter three and mentioned briefly above, Eric Rothenbuhler argues that symbols are condensed within a ritual context. In the battle reenactment performance I have focused on national symbols as national anthems and flags, and seen how these elements are condensed in meaning in the realm of the battle reenactment and make out central parts of the whole of the performance, and that the whole strengthens the understanding of the parts.

What is important in bringing Rothenbuhler in here, is that I neither in the analysis of the Arirang performance nor of the battle reenactment see all the signs of the performance as equal. If I was to follow the 1983 version of Fischer-Lichte on this, I would have to include everything going on in the performances as signs. However, Fischer-Lichte proposes, with the help of A. J. Greimas, that there are several levels of understanding in what she calls the theatrical text, ranging from singular gestures to the level of totality. I, consequently, propose the possibility of choosing on which level some elements are to be treated as signs. Although everything should be taken into consideration in interpretation, not all actions or images have the same relevance for the interpretation of the totality. In my analyses the signs are not treated equally as signs. This does not mean that I have not considered all elements of the performances I have participated in as a spectator, but that I have seen that some of the elements presented have been more important as condensed signs than other elements. I also acknowledge that some signs are presented as signs deliberately, and other elements, which can be equally important for the experience of performance, are not thought of as signs in the same degree. This emphasizes actually the importance of seeing the parts in light of the total and the total in light of the parts when deciding which elements should be interpreted as condensed signs, and which elements are not to be, equally, regarded as condensed.

What this method implies is that seeing performance as a structural semiotic sign system is not a sufficient method of interpretation. Neither do I think that Fischer-Lichte would mean so, judging from her own methodologies in later writings. In The Semiotics of Theatre, Fischer-Lichte bases herself mainly on theatre founded in a literary tradition. In chapter two I presented her argument of the retheatricalization movement, and how she saw a shift from linguistic to bodily signs in the theatre of the beginning of the 20th

212 Ibid., 214
century. This shift also exemplifies a shift in how to interpret theatre, and a movement from the focus on theatre as signs of language resembling text to interpretation relying more on the communicational act of performance. The same shift has been seen in theory, in the so-called performative turn. Although I will not elaborate much on the performative turn here, I will just state that this turn can be seen in different disciplines ranging from speech act theory and anthropology, to performance studies. The main concept is the study of performative action rather than words, moving away from a linguistic foundation towards a performative and communicative one.

Using Fischer-Lichte as an example and point of departure here is very fruitful because she also has made this journey, this turn from the linguistic to the bodily performative aspects of performance. This is clear from her emphasis on what she calls the autopoietic feedback loop that was briefly presented in chapter two. Interpretation of performance is more an interpretation of a communicational act than an interpretation of a structure of signs. The autopoietic feedback loop in many ways can be said to resemble Willmar Sauter’s concept of theatricality as action and reaction. In Understanding Theatre Sauter together with Jacqueline Martin argues that there are several levels of communicative actions in the complex structure of performance. These levels, the sensory, artistic and fictional level, have several aspects in common with the ones presented above in connection to Fischer-Lichte’s levels of sign structures. What this shows is that what can be read as sign in one way can, in another, be read as an act of communication, and that these elements are closely intertwined in the interpretation of performance.

In my analyses these two approaches might be said to coexist in a circular structure oscillating between my personal experience of communication, and the interpretation of signs, both approaches making up parts of the totality I attempt to propose. I say attempt because I do not believe that I could ever present a totality, the totality will again become part, and will always be evolving. This circle between an approach of semiotic analysis and an approach of communicative and performative experience resembles Geertz’s circle that was presented above, and the one I related to Bert O. States. In my approach(es) I have attempted to see the events in question both from an internal and an external point of view, the main gravitational point has been my

213 Willmar Sauter and Jacqueline Martin, ed.: Understanding Theatre. Performance Analysis in Theory and Practice (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1997), 78-84

214 In The Theatrical Event (Sauter, 2004) Sauter moves away from the term fictional instead presenting it as one of the three levels, where the fictional is the symbolic level.
experience of the two main case studies, but in order to present and explain these cases I have provided a horizon for understanding the events in question.

4.7 History of effect and horizon

In this dissertation I have presented historical examples related to the main cases I have discussed in order to show how these performances are related to a web of other performances, and do not exist in a vacuum. This can be seen as a history of effect that contributes to the understanding of the performances I have participated in as spectator, and the way in which I understand them. Before I traveled to the DPRK and USA, I spent time reading and researching the contexts of the events I was going to visit. I read about the countries, and their history. I read an introduction to the American Civil War, and books on the Korean conflict. This contributed to the horizon of understanding I possessed when participating. However, most of the research on the historical performances cited in chapters five and six was completed after I came home, and I have therefore been effected by this after participating as well. This has subsequently contributed to the development of my understanding and the analyses of my participation, and the presentation I have provided has also been affected by this. In addition to this, both performances are popular events which people all over the world have opinions about. This is especially true of the Arirang performance, but also the American reenactment community is subject to ridicule and diverse opinions also in Europe and Norway. This was a part of my horizon when I started out this research project, and has had to be taken into account when I have attempted new understandings of the performances in question.

My main goal in this dissertation is to present a theory of mass performance. In order to do this I have found it necessary to discuss different forms of what I call mass performance so that the concept of mass performance can be discussed from different angles. The choice of case studies was commented on in chapter one. The fact that the examples chosen are so different geographically and ideologically has also impacted this research project and affected the result. I never intended that this dissertation to be a purely comparative project based on pointing out clear differences and similarities in two different cases. When discussing mass performance more generally in chapter seven, however, comparative statements have become necessary in order to present my

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arguments. Seeing the two performances in light of each other has opened a complex space of interpretation. In one way it might be argued that the comparative method results in too narrow an interpretation, which does not lend adequate weight to either case study, and that being seen in light of each other prevents the possibility of the research resulting in single totalities. On the other hand I have already argued that the notion of totalities can be problematic. I will therefore rather argue that my partly comparative approach in chapter seven contributes to shedding light on the two examples in question, and provides them with new horizons, one might even say it represents the fusing two very different horizons in a new way. These horizons have helped me in developing a discussion of the concept of mass performance, theatricality, and ideology.

4.8 Summarizing remarks
In this chapter I have presented some questions of methodological approaches related to my work. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, methodology has traditionally not been at the center of the discourses of theatre and performance research. The approaches discussed in this chapter therefore, in addition to theatre and performance research, have also originated in other disciplines such as anthropology, or literary and textual research. While lack of research on methodology within the discipline is one reason for gathering methods from other disciplines, another reason is that research in theatre and performance is taking both social and aesthetical implications into account and that opening up for inspiration from other disciplines has been necessary in order to shed light on the vast field of research that I have focused on.

My main approach follows a notion of a circular movement mainly alternating between the personal physical experience of performance, and an aesthetical analysis based on a somewhat more textual approach to the performances in question where I have analyzed the use of symbols and narratives expressed. In addition to these two different analytical approaches, the circle includes a theoretical foundation. My method can therefore be said to be a result of a hermeneutical circle oscillating between several different approaches. The circle even includes the historiographical approach I have focused on in this chapter which represents the basis of the work I have done on historical performance in both chapter five and six. This will be the foundation of the chapters to come.
5.0 Mass gymnastics, DPRK, and Arirang.

5.1 Introduction
The mass performance Arirang was staged for the first time in April 2002 for the 90th anniversary of Kim Il Sung’s birth. It was staged again in 2005, and from 2007 it has been staged every year, approximately four times a week, for a period lasting from late August to early October. The term Arirang denotes a pan-Korean folk song that exists in a multitude of versions, and is popular on both sides of the demilitarized zone (DMZ). The song has national importance, and was used by the Koreans as a resistance anthem during the Japanese occupation in the early 20th century. When I use the term Arirang performance here it is to distinguish it from the Arirang song. The term Arirang performance will be used about the whole concept of performances, while my analysis below will be based on one specific performance I attended.

The Arirang song has also become a national symbol both in North and South Korea. And it is its function as symbol that has made it the subject matter for the mass gymnastic festival performed in DPRKs capital Pyongyang every year. In chapter three I discussed ideology and performance and used the term symbol according to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and explained how he saw symbol as a form of language located in the superstructure with the function of securing consensus of rule. I also discussed how symbols are used in ritual and how the American ritual scholar Eric Rothenbuhler argued that ritual symbols are distinguished from other communicative signs by being condensed. This means, in Rothenbuhler’s terms, that symbols explode with meaning in a ritual setting. Seen in accordance with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe I thereby argued that ritual symbols can be perceived as expressions of articulating hegemony, creating certain nodal points of ideology. A symbol is a superstructural image or sign, which in a ritual context functions to secure consensus and articulate hegemony. This is how my use of the term symbol is to be understood in this chapter.

The Arirang, with its subtitle of “Grand mass gymnastic and artistic performance,” consists of several performative expressions and elements, and is therefore not only perceived of as mass gymnastics, but also as an artistic and aesthetic performance. The mass performance is performed at the largest stadium in the world and includes 100 000 performers every night. In this chapter I will start out with discussing the

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history of the mass gymnastic tradition, looking at how it started in Germany in the early 19th century, and moved through different totalitarian regimes before ending in the megalomaniac North-Korean project, which will be the main object of analysis in this chapter. The mass gymnastic movement was an important in several European states in the 20th century. It has its background in the romantic era in Germany, and was used by dictatorships of different political ideologies throughout the 20th century. It is important to note that although today it has been made famous as a North Korean form, it has roots in the earlier European movements, and I will provide an analysis of these historical expressions before moving on to the North Korean form of it.

Since the Arirang is not only indebted to the mass gymnastic movement, this chapter will also discuss other forms of mass performance that are relevant to its analysis. I will continue by analyzing the North Korean ideology, and the theatricality of the North Korean society as I experienced it during my visit. After analyzing the ideological foundation I will continue with an analysis of the 2010 version of the Arirang based on my experience as a spectator at the event in September 2010.

After having visited the DPRK and witnessed the Arirang, I was utterly confused. I did not know how to understand what I had experienced, or if what I had witnessed was ‘real’. In this chapter I will discuss my experience in regard to my visit in general, and of the performance, and use the theoretical apparatus presented in the previous chapters to explain, in an attempt to understand what the performance is all about. This will lead to a discussion of the theatricality of the event, and how this theatricality is possible to locate in the presentation of the North Korean jouissance. But first I will begin where mass gymnastics started, with a brief historical background, and the first inspirations of the German nationalist, Turnvater Jahn.

5.2 Mass gymnastics and the historical foundations for the Arirang
5.2.1 Germany 1811 - 1933

The first traces of organized gymnastics can be found in Germany in the early 19th century when the movement’s pioneer leader Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, who is still known by the name Turnvater Jahn, in 1811, founded the first gymnastic organization. Jahn was a Prussian German nationalist, and his gymnastic movement was deeply connected to his belief in nationalism and the German nation. In 1811 Germany was not a united nation, and according to the German born American cultural historian George L. Mosse’s account of mass events in Germany, Jahn believed that a focus on bodily
strength could lead to a strong German nation.\textsuperscript{218} Jahn wanted to create festivals that focused on the Germanic heritage and, in a cultic fashion, represented the German\textit{ Volk}. Jahn wanted gymnastics, and through it a focus on the healthy and strong male physique and manliness, to play a part in\textit{ Völkisch} festival events.\textsuperscript{219} In his account Mosse focuses deeply on the\textit{ cultic} side of the events. He sees how Jahn wanted to create mass discipline through “sacred acts”, and how Jahn himself believed his performances to be sacred events. Although Mosse does not define the term\textit{ cult} in detail, it, in my view, becomes clear that he sees the cultic part of the events as that which focuses on the collective actions, that is, bodily presence in especially designated areas with sacred significance fused with symbolism and ritual.

Mosse’s use of the term\textit{ cult} is in accordance with how ritual scholar Catherine Bell defines the term. Bell describes a\textit{ cult} as a religious group that is established in opposition to traditional religious groups and society as a whole, but emerges independently without connections to other religious groups. This is what distinguishes a cult from a sect which tends to be more schismatic in their relation to traditional religious groups.\textsuperscript{220} In the cults there is a basic focus on collectivity and of being a “family”. It is also important to note that cults, as described by Bell, are often based on a relation between leader/teacher and people. This became especially clear in Nazi Germany, but also Jahn was presented as a great teacher. Bell also points out that the cultic societies should be seen as, in Turner’s terminology, liminal antistructural experiences.\textsuperscript{221} In my view it must also be possible to say that Jahn’s events, taking place at designated times and places outside the realm of regular life, and creating a special focus on a bodily communitas, are liminal. The\textit{ cultic} is thus to be understood as liminal events taking place in designated places at designated times and with a clear focus on symbolism and ritual.

Since the festivals were supposed to relate deeply to German history, Jahn’s festivals took place at anniversaries for historical events in areas of historic significance that were formed into sacred areas. According to Mosse, the events were accompanied by holy flames and signal trumpets, increasing the cultic surroundings.\textsuperscript{222} Jahn focused on fundamental human emotions like love and beauty in his festivals, and described his

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movement of gymnastics as “love of the fatherland through gymnastics.”

When it comes to beauty it was largely male bodily beauty that was emphasized. Jahn even invented a special gymnast’s uniform that was designed to make the body and its movements especially visible. Sociologist Berit Elizabeth Dencker gives a good account of the militaristic side of the gymnastic movements in Germany after the revolution in 1848, and shows how the male physique was presented as an object of beauty, but that this beauty was also connected to strength, and one of the founding aims of the movement was to train the body for the means of military practice.

The organization Jahn founded quickly increased in popularity. According to Mosse, there existed several hundred gymnastic organizations in Prussia in 1818 with about 6000 members. This was only in Prussia, in addition there were many similar organizations in other German states. The political message of the movement, which was clearly nationalistic and had an anti-French sentiment, had a great appeal for the German people who longed for a united Germany. From the foundation of the movement by Jahn, and during the years leading to the German revolution of 1848, the gymnastic movement was an oppositional political movement. Its membership numbers were increased exponentially throughout the period leading to the unification of Germany in 1871.

Jahn’s gymnastics were performed by a group of men in specially designated areas with cultic surroundings, but were still more centered on the individual than what became the norm in the gymnastics that would follow after the revolution of 1848. Gymnastic apparatuses as the parallel bars, horizontal bar, and vaulting horse, were extensively used in Jahn’s gymnastics, an element that was, to a large degree, removed in the period between the revolution and the unification, making room for free and order exercises that did not involve apparatuses. According to Dencker, the model of free and order exercises was developed by Adolf Spiess in the 1840s for use in schools, and is characterized by all the participants doing movements synchronically without apparatuses, whilst following the instructions of a leader.

The gymnastic organization played an important role as a political force right from when it was founded, and until the German unification. When Germany was unified much of the cause withered, and the great political impact withered with it.

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223 Ibid., 128
225 Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses, 129
226 Dencker, “Popular Gymnastics and the Military Spirit in Germany,” 505-506
Nevertheless, according to Mosse, parts of the movement did not feel that unification had been successful, and to some degree the gymnastic organizations continued to play a political role after 1871. Although the political environment changed, the gymnastic movement remained popular and became a part of the national German narrative. The meadows that had been used for the festivals were now upgraded to include festival halls built to house the national gymnastic celebrations. During the late 19th and early 20th century, the gymnastic movement became increasingly critical to the regime while still emphasizing the cultic nationalism proclaimed by Jahn 100 years earlier. As is well known, nationalism took a hold of the German community in the early 20th century, especially in the aftermath of the First World War, and as I see it, this strengthened the gymnastic movement. Jahn’s gymnastics and its nationalistic and cultic aspects made it a fitting expression for the nationalistic right wing which had increased its support in the years following the First World War. However, gymnastics was not only an expression of the nationalistic and right-wing bourgeoisie. In an article from 1977 Henning Eichberg shows that when the bourgeoisie did not allow workers in their gymnastic groups, the workers created their own gymnastic league which also held large events of gymnastics across Germany. These events also included mass theatre performances with social democratic themes. The existence of the workers’ league shows how gymnastics and the idea of strength for the nation embraced people of different political and class backgrounds.

5.2.2 Nazi gymnastics and cultic mass performance 1933-1945

After unification, the German gymnastic movement saw itself as standing above all political parties. The main gymnastic organization remained critical to the new German regime and had ties with the conservative German National Party, and to a lesser extent, the national socialists in the Nazi party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei/NSDAP). Mosse points out that many local leaders in the movement joined the Nazis, and in 1932 the leader of the national movement, Edmund Neuendorf, himself joined NSDAP. As a result of the Versailles treaty, Germany of the Weimar republic was prohibited from developing their military. The Nazis strongly opposed this prohibition, and wanted to create other arenas for the development of strong men to

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227 Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses, 131
228 Ibid., 131-132
230 Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses, 135
defend their country. They found the gymnastic movement especially fruitful to this aim and encouraged it as an alternative to military training. The connections between the NSDAP and the gymnastic movement therefore already existed when Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933.

Hitler embraced the movement, and used it to his own advantage. Video documentation from 1933 shows us that he was present at a gymnastic performance in Stuttgart on July 30th 1933 which ended in the participants and spectators greeting him with a Nazi salute. In the video clip from the event in Stuttgart we can see thousands of men in white uniforms doing free and order exercises. They all stand in place waving their arms and moving synchronically from side to side, which may mean that they had moved away from Jahn’s apparatuses. Mosse explains how Hitler disbanded the gymnastic organizations in 1938. This was, however, not because Hitler disliked the movement. He did actually sympathize with it. The disbandment was, as I see it, probably not because he held any antipathies for the movement, but because he wished to gain national control.

The disbandment did not mean that gymnastics were closed down, or forbidden. Mostly it just meant that the control of it was nationalized. The nationalism that had been portrayed in the first gymnastic displays, and had been an important motivational factor for Jahn in the early days, was then carried on by the Nazis and used effectively in their events. In his account of the Nuremberg Party Rallies, Hamilton T. Burden points out that when Hitler founded the Storm Troopers of the NSDAP or Sturmabteilungen (SA) in 1921, it was as a gymnastics and sports division. So it is, in my view, quite apparent that the beliefs in strength, as presented by Jahn, were popular within the Nazi movement.

In photographic documentation from 1938, the same year as the disbandment of the organization, we can see that Hitler attended a sports event in the German town of Breslau, which is now the Polish town of Wroclaw, where different gymnastic performances were held, and included both men and women. Germans from all over Germany, and in German areas outside the Reich, gathered for processions in addition to the gymnastic events. Among the events that were held, there were gymnastics with

233 Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses, 135
234 Burden, The Nuremberg Party Rallies, 13
apparatuses, acrobatic events, and other sports events of track and field. They even showed performances with roller skating. There was also a parade with soldiers and flag bearers in the city greeting Hitler with Nazi salutes. From the pictures we can deduce that the main event seems to be a mass gymnastic show held on trade union day. Both men and women participated, but not at the same time. Most of the pictures show free and order gymnastics in rows, but they also moved in formations. The gymnastic events held during the 1930s have a less cultic expression than the events of Jahn and his followers.

Although the gymnastic movement focused less on cultic expression during the 1930s, cultic nationalism played an overall important part in the official expressions of Nazi Germany. In the early years of the regime the cultic was presented in a new performance genre called the Thingspiel. In her discussion of mass performance in the interwar period, Erika Fischer-Lichte gives a detailed account of the Thingspiel movement from a performance studies perspective, and focuses on the Thingspiel as a collective and liminal theatre form. The Thingspiel performances were played at arenas inspired by the amphitheatres of Ancient Greece, and included choirs. One of the main inspirational sources for the Thingspiel was the ancient Greek theatre, and it was therefore important to include choirs in the way that the Germans believed the choirs had been used in ancient Greece. This ancient form was used to tell stories from recent German history. Although the Thingspiel movement did not focus on bodily strength and beauty in the same way as in the gymnastic movement and the party rallies, which will be discussed below, it is worth mentioning because they were instrumental in developing the cultic aspect of the official and theatrical life of the Nazi era. The Thingspiel movement had a very short life; after its initial popularity in 1933, which peaked in 1934, the term Thingspiel was prohibited by Goebbels in 1935.

In the short life the genre was to have, it gathered a large amount of participants, and one of its main aims was to include both professional actors and local amateurs. The term Thingspiel originates in the ancient Germanic assemblies that were called Thing, and followed, according to German theatre historian Gerwin Strobl, a trend of open air pageants that had been popular in Germany in the years before the Nazi seizure of power. The idea behind the movement was to build open air arenas similar to

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236 Fischer-Lichte, Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual, 122-158
237 Ibid., 144
ancient Greek amphitheatres all across Germany. It was supposed to be a Völkisch event, and the themes of the plays were most often about death and resurrection, about German losses during the First World War and the Versailles treaty, and its resurrection through strength in the present.

This aesthetic, which drew lines from ancient Greece and the German Volk has similarities with Fuchs’ early theatre of retheatricalization, which was discussed in chapter two. The gap between audience and actor was diminished, for some even removed completely because of all the amateurs that were participating on stage. Strobl points out that the actors and audiences were linked by a so-called Sprechchor, which resembles the choirs we know from ancient Greek drama. This Sprechchor was the most important aesthetic feature in the Thingspiel. In this aesthetic principle I clearly see a resemblance to Fuchs’ theatre of the retheatricalization. As in Fuchs’ theatre the actors entered and exited the stage through the auditorium, and were consequently perceived as being closer than in traditional bourgeois theatre. Compared to Fuchs, the ritualistic aspect was, in the Thingspiele, increased by there being a great focus on the symbols of fire, death, and life.

More than forty arenas were built across Germany, although around 400 had originally been planned. Many of the arenas, called Thingplätze, were constructed at special sites of remembrance, and in that way resembled Jahn’s first sacred places for gymnastics. The Thingspiel movement was at its height of popularity in 1934, but after the completion of the first arenas the interest for the movement and genre declined. In its heyday thousands of people could participate in the events. According to Strobl, the staging of a play called Germany on the March (Aufbricht Deutschland) included approximately 17 000 performers and 60 000 spectators. Exactly why this movement, that had been so popular and attracted such a great number of spectators at its peak, suddenly declined and was frowned upon by the political leadership, is hard to say. Strobl points out that the use of laymen in the performances led to a degree of amateurism that resulted in poor quality. There was an official list of plays written for the Thingspiel, in 1934 it included eight plays, but four of them were never performed, and in 1935 an additional six were added to the list. The theme of the plays was always

239 Ibid., 59
240 Thingspiele is the plural form of Thingspiel
242 Strobl, The Swastika and the Stage, 59
243 Ibid., 79
Germany’s decline after the First World War, and its resurgence in the Third Reich with a spiritual and cultic foundation.

According to Fischer-Lichte, Goebbels himself complained about the quality of the plays written for the Thingspiel, and proposed that as an explanation for the lacking interest for the movement. However, as Fischer-Lichte consequently points out, there are several examples of mass performance that were successful despite bad texts. Both mass performances in Russia immediately after the Russian revolution, and the German social democratic events before the Nazi era show that a successful event was not dependent on a good text, rather a successful event manages to achieve a unity of spectators and performers in a common community, to unite in the performance independent of text. Nevertheless, the Nazis believed in the superiority of the word over collective action, and explained the event’s lack of success on textual imperfection. Still, Fischer-Lichte’s argumentation shows that there was more to the lack of success than bad texts.

Both Strobl and Fischer-Lichte also point out that Hitler never seemed to care especially for the Thingspiel movement, and that the ideological foundation was in conflict with Hitler’s main object of ideological worship, the Führer cult. In the Thingspiel plays the Volk community is presented as the main object, not the Führer, something that was in conflict with Hitler’s view on the new society. In the Thingspiele the Volk community was presented as an embodied mind, as a community who in the spirit of the Volk could lead as one. This did not harmonize with the Führer principle’s main point of having Hitler lead the Volk community. When, additionally, the Thingspiele had a quasi-religious focus on spirituality and a play on catholic faith, it is hardly a surprise that Hitler did not favor the genre. The enthusiasm in the audience also waned quickly from its initial popularity.

Seen within a performance and ritual theory perspective, as explained in chapter three, Fischer-Lichte explains this by proposing that the Thingspiel movement was a liminal phenomenon, and the greater hold the NSDAP and Hitler got on the people, the lesser the interest for the revolutionary content was among the people. The open form of the genre, and its necessary relation to the enthusiasm of the people no longer had the support it needed. The genre played openly on ritualistic aspects and on already existing spiritual and religious sentiments in the people, the hierarchies were, as they often are in these cases, torn down, and everyone could participate. This may be the reason for the

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244 Fischer-Lichte, Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual, 144
245 Ibid., 150-151
movement’s early fall. After the banning of the term and movement in October 1935, a few Thingplätze were completed, and at the opening of the 1936 Olympics in Berlin a performance that in many ways resembled the Thingspiele, Das Frankenberger Wurfelspiel, were performed. The reason it is not called a Thingspiel is that it does not deal with recent German history and the aftermath of the First World War, but with an historic event from the early 17th century. Additionally, it was performed after the decline of the movement, and is therefore not directly connected to it. However, I think it is interesting to note that just as the social democratic mass theatrical events were performed in connection to the workers’ gymnastics and sports events, the Nazis performed a form of Thingspiel for the Olympics. This performance was the last to be played in a Thingplätze; after 1936 there was nothing left of the movement.

In the article by Henning Eichberg cited above, Eichberg proposed a view on Thingspiel that supports the argumentation of a lacking Führer cult at the same time as there was a widespread enthusiasm for the cultic. Eichberg’s main argument is that the Thingspiel had roots in the proletariat’s mass events before the Nazi seizure of power, and that the genre of sprechchor and themes gathered from the trauma of the First World War and the succeeding years of depression, originated in the social democratic mass plays of the workers’ leagues. It is very interesting to note that these plays were performed in connection to gymnastic and sporting events, which I also showed above, and that the connection between the cultic drama genre and the physical expression, was important both ideologically and in the performative form of the events. Obviously, the political foundation of the social democrats did not include the embodied mind of a strong leader or a Führer cult, which may be one of the reasons for the lack of it in the Thingspiele. Bearing in mind that Hitler closed down the bourgeois gymnastic organizations in 1938 to secure full control of the movement, and even though he sympathized with several aspects of its expression, it makes sense that he around the same time, closed down the Thingspiel movement. Through this, and by banning what might be left of leftist sympathies, he secured complete control of cultic and theatrical expressions. This also supports Erika Fischer-Lichte’s claim that the closing of the Thingspiel movement showed the end of liminal time in Nazi Germany.

246 Eichberg, “The Nazi Thingspiel”
5.2.3 Ideological mass performance of physical strength: Party rallies at Nuremberg

After the Thingspiel movement was closed down the cultic still played an important role to Hitler’s ideological expression, but he moved it elsewhere. The cultic expression is an apparent and present part of the party rallies of the NSDAP held in Nuremberg, and I will discuss it here to illuminate the relation of cultic performance and ideology that will be discussed further in chapter seven. Hamilton T. Burden gives a detailed account of all the rallies held by the NSDAP. According to him, the NSDAP held their first rally already in 1923, and started holding the rallies in Nuremberg in 1927, but it did not become an annual event before they had seized power in 1933. The early party rallies were held at two separate fields in close proximity of Nuremberg, the same locations were used in the great rallies of the 1930s but now the outdoor areas were developed into gigantic arenas for staging the events. Many of the grandiose plans were never completed, but the NSDAP built two arenas in the 1930s, the Zeppelinwiese and the Luitpold Hall, one with room for 150 000 participants and 50 000 spectators in 1934 and the other with room for 350 000 spectators was built to the rally in 1933, its capacity was later increased to hold 400 000 people. In 1934 they even built a railway station close to the largest one, Zeppelinwiese, to make the infrastructure easier. They also built a seventy-two feet wide boulevard to use for parades.247

The arenas were embellished with large swastikas, eagles, flags on high flagpoles and speech stands. Through these numbers and sizes the megalomaniac grandiosity of the party rallies becomes clear. 400 000 party members attended the first major national rally in 1933. Special trains had to be set in to bring the large amount of people to Nuremberg. The party rallies consisted of different forms of performance, both indoor performances for the official delegates, and large mass performances outdoors on the huge arenas.248 In 1933 two outdoor spectacles were staged on the second day of the rally, one for the district leaders of the party, and one for the Hitler youth. Both events included a ritualistic parade of flags and a speech by Hitler.249

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247 Burden, The Nuremberg Party Rallies, 59
248 In John J. MacAloon’s terminology, which will be discussed in chapter seven, the rallies can be seen as a ramified performance type.
249 Burden, The Nuremberg Party Rallies, 70
The rally of 1934 has become the most famous one because of Leni Riefenstahl’s film from the events: *Triumph des Willens*. The film emphasizes the spirit of the masses and Hitler’s grandiosity and power in meeting the masses. According to film historian David Welch, Leni Riefenstahl herself stated that “the ‘triumph’ depicted in the film was twofold: the triumph of a strong Germany, and the triumph of the will of the leader.”

It is exactly this duality of roles that is presented through the film. There are two main characters, Hitler and the masses. The film starts with footage of Nuremberg from the air, before we understand that it is a plane in the air carrying Hitler on his way to Nuremberg. As a godlike leader he is presented to the people through the air, as a *deus ex machina* introducing the event instead of solving it, he is presented as a saviour. Although the event also included smaller political meetings, Leni Riefenstahl managed in her film to make it all about the great participation of the masses both in town and at the huge arenas outside town. The masses became a symbol in itself and were fused with strong nationalistic German symbols as fire, blood, history and strength. Several of these symbols were, as showed above, important to Jahn in his early gymnastic festivals and in the Thingspiele.

According to Burden’s review of the 1934 party rally, the rally included six huge mass performances outdoors. The first one was the *Review of Labor* at the Zeppelinwiese on the third day of the party rally. 52 000 workers from all over Germany are greeted by Hitler, and synchronically reply “Heil, mein führer!” In Riefenstahl’s film we can see all the men carry spades on their shoulders as though they were guns. They repeat that they are soldiers of the nation because of the work they do on the fields and in infrastructure. The use of spades resembles the use of different forms of sticks and staffs by the more militarized gymnastic organizations after the revolution of 1848.

In the film, the *Review of Labor* is directly followed by a nightly SA (Stormabteilung) and SS (Schutzstaffel) ceremony held at the Zeppelinwiese. Here the symbol of fire plays an important part. In the clip we see participants holding torches, according to Burden lit with magnesium so that it would look better on film, and SA-leader Lutze speaking to his men. In the end we see a great fireworks display.

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250 *Triumph des Willens*, directed by Leni Riefensthal, 1935: 
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHs2coAzLJ8&list=FLj7hpma-nOUhPkJGwV1g&index=1&feature=plpp_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHs2coAzLJ8&list=FLj7hpma-nOUhPkJGwV1g&index=1&feature=plpp_video), accessed December 13, 2011


252 Burden, *The Nuremberg Party Rallies*, 83

253 Dencker, “Popular Gymnastics and the Military Spirit in Germany”

254 Burden, *The Nuremberg Party Rallies*, 97
Fire is a symbol used in connection to the German volk also before Nazism, and was also a part of Jahn’s early festivals.

The youth rally, taking place in the youth stadium, which was smaller than the Luitpold Hall and the Zeppelinwiese, is presented as less choreographed with youthful vigor and happy music. Still, while Baldur von Schirach, the leader of the youth movement, and Hitler speak we see the youth standing in huge square formations all over the stadium. While Schirach is speaking to the Hitlerjugend who have come from all over Germany, the camera is moved over the youth at the stadium and the audience. Here we can see a group of young girls in the audience dressed in white and making out the letters of their home place Saar, a tradition we will see became important in gymnastic displays of Europe and Asia after the Second World War. Also here the roles are split between Hitler and the masses. Before Hitler starts his speech waves of heil-greetings are yelled out by the youth, in a staged spontaneity of youthful ecstasy. They are presented as a unity without individual traits while Hitler is their opposite, their leader, father and spiritual cause. He is what is leading them into the ecstasy, and their soft expression of emotions, is contrasted with his hardness and rationality. As in the gymnastics of Jahn there is a focus on the bodily presence of the young men. The bodily expression is one of sexuality and chastity all at once. In this section of the film, the Führer cult becomes apparent. Hitler is the mind, and the masses the body, and as a rational leader he leads the irrational body strictly and morally towards the common goal. I will discuss further how this relationship continued to play an important role in the mass gymnastic performances in Europe below.

The meeting of the political leaders of the NSDAP is a huge flag parade in the dark at the Zeppelinwiese. According to Burden 180 000 party members and 250 000 spectators attended the event. With his back to a giant eagle, lit up by light and facing the thousands of men carrying tall swastika-flags, Hitler gives a speech to the political leaders. Although it seems choreographed more strictly than the youth rally, the function of the event is much of the same. Hitler speaks to the masses, and their simultaneous reply is one of unity and ecstasy. In this section darkness and fire is, as in the earlier described nightly events, highlighted and functions to increase the cultic spirit of the event.

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255 Riefenstahl, Triumph des Willens, 0.44.53
256 Riefenstahl, Triumph des Willens, 0.53.00
257 Burden, The Nuremberg Party Rallies, 85
The film goes directly over to the visually most megalomaniac outdoor event of the rallies, the meeting of the SA and SS. The symbols are the same, the eagle, the swastika, burning flames, flags, life and death, and Hitler’s relation to the masses, are all highlighted. The event starts out with Hitler paying respects to a monument for the fallen soldiers of the First World War. The SS and SA members stand in geometrical lines, and big squares, and one big ally for Hitler to march in is made between the geometrical hoards. The SA and SS-event turns into a parade through town with marching soldiers and public participation. The till now finely choreographed events are now given more of a spontaneous charm when the people of Nuremberg are allowed to watch and take part in what happens.

The use of symbols and the focus on both physical and military strength, reminds me of Jahn’s mission, just in a grandiose and megalomaniac style not seen before. Its cultic and ceremonial style combined with grandiosity and warmongering, gives it an aesthetic and performative form which had not previously been presented in the same way. The inspiration from the gymnastic movement is quite apparent, and becomes even more so when we get to know that there were traditional gymnastic events within the party rallies. Although not part of Riefenstahl’s film, Burden points out that one morning of the 1934 rally, there was an entertaining act of gymnastics by the newly founded Strength through Joy group (Kraft durch Freude). “Four groups of 200 people each, of all ages and both sexes, demonstrated gymnastic exercises on the big stage of the Congress Hall. Many in the audience climbed on the stage and joined the show.”258 This shows us how the gymnastic foundation of German nationalism continued to play a part after the Nazi seizure of power, and how this foundation and expression continued to play an important part in developing the cultic expressions of the new society.

The cultic aesthetics of German performances of different genres and aims were deeply founded in the belief in the strength of the body. This made mass gymnastic events and similar events suitable expressions for the strength of the nation. One would, however, think that after the defeat of the Nazis in 1945, postwar societies where Nazism had been fought had frowned upon expressions of performance resembling the Nazi events. This was not the case. In the following chapter I will show how the mass gymnastic events were developed and used in the Communist Eastern Europe after the end of the Second World War.

258 Burden, The Nuremberg Party Rallies, 89
5.2.4 Mass gymnastics in Eastern Europe 1862-1991

To understand how the aesthetics of mass gymnastics could find support in Eastern Europe after the Second World War it is also necessary to investigate the historical position of gymnastic events outside Germany. Although Jahn’s gymnastics was founded in German nationalism it inspired gymnasts all over Europe. In the second part of the 19th century Czech nationalists created their own gymnastic tradition with a probable inspiration from Jahn and his followers. In his review of the mass gymnastic displays in post-war Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe, the Czech historian Petr Roubal focuses on how the early Czech gymnastic tradition came to play an important role for the post-war communist gymnastics in Czechoslovakia.\(^{259}\) He argues that in the Czech lands, at that time a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the development of the legacy of Jahn resulted in the foundation of a separate system. They even had their own turnvater, called Miroslav Tyrš, who founded a gymnastic movement in Prague in 1862.

Tyrš was professor of aesthetics and wanted to create a gymnastic form that was more artistic than the German version. He kept the nationalistic aspect, although he turned towards the Czech cause. The artistic and Czech nationalistic aspects are exemplified by the name he chose for the movement, Sokol, the Czech word for falcon. The gymnastic events he called Slet, which in Czech means the flocking of birds.\(^{260}\) By choosing a strong and beautiful bird as symbol of the national gymnastics, I believe that Tyrš achieved to keep the focus on physical strength that had been applied by the Germans while at the same time adding a poetic aspect and linking the movement to art. Here one can see a distinction from the German term turn, which has a distinctly more technical ring to it.

Although Tyrš shared many of the fascinations of gymnastics of his German predecessors, he moved away from the strict Völkisch foundation. Roubal points out that Tyrš let both Germans and Jews participate, and he opened for female participants very early on. His main motto: “Every Czech a Sokol”, embraces the idea that the movement was for everyone.\(^{261}\) In the aim of creating an artistic expression of gymnastics, Tyrš included music and emphasized geometrical formations. He also gave costumes higher importance, and created costumes inspired by Czech history. The


\(^{260}\) Ibid., 6

\(^{261}\) Roubal, “Politics of Gymnastics,” 5
Sokol movement was all-embracing in more than one sense. It was a movement that followed the members in every capacity of life, and practice and involvement in the movement were common activities, something it had in common with the German *turners.* The Sokol movement became very popular across the Czech lands, and a part of creating a Czechoslovak identity after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the First World War. The Sokol movement was Pan-slavist, and therefore not nationalist in the same sense as the German *turners.* Sokol organizations were established in several Slavic countries, including tsarist Russia. A relation we will see later became important for the development of Soviet gymnastics.

Vanda Thorne, who has written a thesis on the theories of the masses in communist Czechoslovakia, points out that although the Sokol movement was created to be a unifying organization for the whole population, it was conceived of as bourgeois. And, just as in Germany, the workers created their own gymnastic organization in the late 19th century and organized their own mass gymnastic displays they called *Spartakiada* named after the Roman slave Spartacus that led a rebellion against the Roman Republic in 73 B.C.. The first communist Spartakiada was held in Prague in 1921. After the communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Sokol movement was quickly closed down, and the Spartakiada took over.

Thorne points out that there were several similarities between the Slets and the Spartakiada. This relies mainly in that the aesthetics of gymnastics that had been developed by Tyrš was in a large degree kept in the Spartakiada. Nevertheless, she emphasizes the differences in how the individual was perceived in the Sokol movement and in the Spartakiada. Where the individual in the Sokol was raised to an important part of the collective, the communist individual was more or less non-existent, and only a nameless part of the collective performance. The biggest difference, however, is the difference in the role the performances played in their respective societies. Where the Sokols had played a political and structuring part in society through the year, the Spartakiada only existed for the performances. The participants were not conceived of as groups of people with a common goal and belonging, but were more or less random people performing together for the great event. Roubal points out that although both the Czech bourgeois nationalist gymnastic events and the communist events emphasized

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262 Vanda Thorne, *Ideologies and Realities of the Masses in Communist Czechoslovakia,* (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2005)
263 Ibid., 114
264 Thorne, *Ideologies and Realities of the Masses in Communist Czechoslovakia,* 123-130
the body, the nationalists stressed the ideal shape of the body, while the communists stressed the ideal function.\textsuperscript{265}

The first post-war Spartakiada was held in Prague in 1955 as a commemoration of the victory over the Nazis ten years earlier. Succeeding events were held every five years at the Strahov stadium in Prague, with an exception of 1970 when the event was cancelled due to the Soviet invasion. The last event was held in 1985. The 1990 Spartakiada was planned but not held due to the Velvet Revolution, which Roubal dryly characterizes as the revolution’s only victim.\textsuperscript{266} The Spartakiada was an all-embracing event including people from all across Czechoslovakia, men, women, children, families, youth, students, workers and soldiers. They practiced locally, and met for the final event in Prague that was held over two days. This can be seen in the account of the 1975 Spartakiada in the international journal \textit{Olympic Review}. Here it is claimed that for the 1975 Spartakiada 88,486 gymnasts performed on the first afternoon, and 91,524 on the second.\textsuperscript{267} This review also shows the ambivalent relationship the Spartakiada continued to have to the Olympic Games, on the one side seeing itself as a part of the same tradition, on the other side as a different event defining its role in opposition to the Olympics.

The performances at the Spartakiada consisted of several parts where the different groups mentioned above performed at different times. The different participants wore different costumes. In the sections of traditional gymnastics the women generally wore red or purple gymnast outfits, in the sections for men the young men wore nothing except small white shorts. In a film from 1980 showing parts of the 1980 version of the Spartakiada one can see how the young tanned men in their next to nothing costumes ended up soaked in mud from the sandy stadium floor.\textsuperscript{268} This expression of sexuality but chastity resembles the bodily focus of Jahn’s early gymnastic events and the Nazi party rallies. The big difference from the Nazi events is the clear lack of the Führer to which this chaste sexuality is targeted. In the film we can also see how the women who performed together with their children in the Spartakiadas wore practical blue velvet overalls while dancing with their children also dressed in overalls. This section was more playful and not as strictly choreographed as the sections with adults or young

\textsuperscript{265} Roubal, “Politics of Gymnastics,” 15
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 19
\textsuperscript{268} Spartakiada 1980, \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxzYAJdHSO&feature=youtube_gdata}, accessed online January 18, 2013
adults. The choreography in the different events did not widely differ. Through my study of photographs and videos showing different Spartakiadas, it seems fair to assume that the expression used in 1955 Spartakiada was kept throughout the period with only slight alterations, and that the legacy of Tyrš was kept. The gymnastics displayed consisted of free and order exercises performed without apparatuses, and in some sections the gymnastics was more like mass dance.

The main focus was on mass formations, creating different forms of the people. In color photographs taken at the 1955 Spartakiada I have seen how the participants made out letters of the abbreviations of the Czech and Slovak communist republics already in the 1955. Music played an important role in the Spartakiada, which increased the resemblance of dance. This also becomes clear when watching videos from the late post-war events. Compared to the mass gymnastic expressions in the rest of communist Europe in the post-world war era, as we shall soon see, the Spartakiada kept a strictly choreographed expression without distracting elements. The expression was clean and emphasized the bodies and the masses without other distracting propaganda messages.

The idea of mass gymnastics spread throughout the communist bloc but with local differences. This can be seen in the video documentation of the different events of the region. The events were usually held on local holidays or anniversaries, on the international Labor Day, May 1st, or as opening ceremonies of larger sports events. Many of these events are thoroughly video documented, probably so that the people in rural areas could watch the parades on film. In Yugoslavia they hosted mass gymnastic events every year on Tito’s birthday on May 25th which was also called “The Day of Youth.” Roubal points out how the country’s youth on this day performed for their leader in an attempt to symbolize the youthful vigour of the power of the leader. The older the leaders got, the younger the performers became. This culminated after Tito’s death when the young performers continued to perform the vitality of their dead leader. Similar celebrations were also found in for example Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria in addition to the German Democratic Republic (DDR) and the Soviet Union. Later on we will see how these elements are used in the North-Korean mass gymnastic displays today.

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270 Ibid.
271 Roubal, “Politics of Gymnastics,” 17
Although the pre-communist Czech gymnastics of the Sokols had an enormous impact on Slavic Europe, the expressions used across Eastern Europe did not, however, always copy the Czechoslovakian form. In the DDR they held sports events in Leipzig every other year that were opened by a mass gymnastic display. In Germany the “turn- und sportsfest” had roots back to imperial times and the events held by Jahn, and subsequently by the Workers movement. As referred above events like these were also held in the Nazi regime of the 1930s. The first post-war event in Leipzig was held in 1954, one year before the first post-war Spartakiada was held in Czechoslovakia. It is therefore probable that the Leipzig event had more in common with the prewar German events, than what was to come in rest of the Communist bloc. Judging by a video from the 1954 event, it seems to be an event in Jahn and Spiess’ spirit keeping to simple gymnastic movements and not making out letters or pictures. It consists of free and order exercise, but the movements are not aesthetical in the way as had been common in Tyrš’ gymnastics. The movements are rather simple, and resemble more a part of an exercise routine than the mass events in Czechoslovakia where music, dance and formations played such an important role. This changed, however, in the two years to come.

In the events held two years later, in 1956, the expression was altered and consisted of a massive spectacle including flip boards used by participants sitting in the arena to make out great images on the background, mainly words of propaganda. What I call flip boards are colorful placards held by a group of people sitting in the stadium and changed in order to make out messages and images. Flip boards were never used in the Czechoslovakian Spartakiada, and not to be found in any of the documentation of the events, but became an important part of the Deutsches Turn- und Sportsfest throughout the history of DDR and can be seen in the video documentation from the last event in 1987. This video also includes references to the old German gymnastics and Jahn. Flip boards were also used by neighboring countries in their national events, including the Soviet Union, and as we will see later it was, and still is, used in mass gymnastic events in Asia.

So, why did the flip boards suddenly appear in 1956? Petr Roubal explains that a German delegation had become inspired after visiting a sports event in Moscow in 1955.

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where flip boards had been used to create backgrounds. The Soviet flip boards had appeared in order to create visually unified backgrounds, not only made out of the colors the audience happened to wear. This element had not been a common trait in Stalinist mass displays, but is used in the opening of the Soviet Spartakiada in Moscow in 1956. It may therefore have been used the year before too, as argued by Roubal.

Although the Germans found inspiration to the use of backgrounds in Moscow where the Russians claimed to have invented it themselves, Roubal also points out that similar traits had been used in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Having in mind the girls from the Saar under the youth event in the Nazi rally in 1934 dressed in white to make out the letters of their home place, it might be possible to argue that this might not have been an uncommon trait in Germany before the war. Although the Germans noticed what was going on in their neighboring countries like Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, they still held the tradition from Jahn high. In a film from the 1956 Deutsches Turn- und Sportfest in Leipzig, a museum for bodily culture is featured showing information about Jahn. This film and its featured exhibition emphasized a direct relation between the 1956 gymnastic event and Jahn’s gymnastic events. It is therefore also possible to assume that although the German expression shows inspiration from Czechoslovakian and Soviet events, they saw the necessity of connecting it directly to the German history of gymnastics. And the expression, as it evolved in the DDR in the postwar period, staging their last event in 1987, was a great source of inspiration for other nations. After 1956 the use of flip boards, movements resembling dance and impressive acrobatics were common features in most Eastern European mass displays.

5.2.5 Mass performance in the Soviet Union and China
In the immediate post revolutionary era Soviet mass performances resembled staged carnivals. As showed in the chapter on theatricality, Nikolai Evreinov was one of the masters of mass stagings, and in his staging of The Storming of the Winter Palace exactly three years after the October revolution, which I discussed in the chapter on theatricality, history was theatricalized in order to illustrate the recent historic events.

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276 Roubal, “A Didactic Project transformed into the Celebration of a Ritual,” 97
The event did not resemble the real revolution that had been more like a coup d’état than a carnivalesque mass performance, but by theatricalizing the revolution Evreinov added aspects of the carnivalesque in an attempt to make the revolution embrace its subjects.

Mass performances like these were not uncommon in the early years of the Soviet Union, and *The Storming of the Winter Palace* was just one very successful event among many. The events were held at anniversaries and national holidays like the anniversary of the revolution on November 7th, and international Labor Day on May 1st. The events’ themes were connected to the newly created apparatus of Soviet mythology and carried names like *The Mystery of Freed Labor, In Favor of a World Commune* and *The Blockade of Russia.* As *The Storming of the Winter Palace* all these performances were performed at public places and acted out revolutionary content with caricatures of the bourgeois enemy, displays of military grandeur, and heroic workers. They were strictly choreographed and planned with a clear distinction of performers and spectators, but were mainly created to be fun and uniting events with a revolutionary content. After the conclusion of the Civil War and securing of Bolshevik power, and the introduction of NEP (New Economic Policy), we could say that after the end of liminal times, the movement died out.

As also mentioned in the chapter on theatricality, the terms for theatre and other art forms in the Soviet Union changed after Lenin’s death in 1924 and culminated with a ban on formalism made by the Writer’s Congress in 1934. The aesthetic expressions were changed, and the rules for these expressions became stricter. In my interpretation of the mass performances, this turn can also be said to have been applied to mass performance, which were now choreographed as a tribute to the leadership, in this case, Stalin. The Soviet Union did not have a deep tradition for gymnastics, though soon after the revolution they wanted to make an ideological claim to sports. The Czech Sokols had come to Russia before the revolution where they had had some impact. The inspiration from the Sokols continued as inspiration from the Czechoslovakian interwar communists, and their alternative events which were called Spartakiada already in 1921.

At the same time as the Soviets gained inspiration from Czechoslovakian communists, they declined participation in the international Olympic movement that had been formed to the first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896. According to the sports historian G.A. Carr the Soviets founded their own sports tournament opposing

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278 Deák, “Russian Mass Spectacles”
the Olympic Games which they perceived as bourgeois, and used the same name as the Czechoslovakian communists had used for their mass gymnastic displays, Spartakiada. The first all-union summer Spartakiada was held in Moscow in 1928, and as a point of interest, I can mention that the first winter Spartakiada was held in Oslo the same year.279 These events included all forms of competitive sports, both individual exercises, and team sports. However, the Soviet Spartakiadas also included mass gymnastic events. And although the Soviet Union later was included in the international Olympic Games they kept their tradition of Spartakiada, and continued to include mass gymnastic events.

In addition to using mass gymnastic events as part of the Spartakiadas, the Soviets utilized it as a part of parades for different holidays. The main holiday of sports and gymnastics was The Day of Physical Culture (Den’ Fizkultura) that was held every year, but not always on the same date, and was marked by a parade of athletes on the Red Square in front of the leaders who always stood on top of the Lenin mausoleum. In the video documentation from the events I have seen how the parade included traditional marching, but that in addition to marching there were more performative parts where the gymnasts stopped on the square to perform a mass gymnastic routine. While the Day of Physical Culture was the holiday that mainly focused on mass gymnastics, similar events were also staged as part of parades on other national holidays like the international labor day, May 1st.

According to video documentation we see that the Soviets started out with their mass gymnastic displays already in the late 1920s. The form of gymnastics was, as mentioned, initially inspired by the Sokol movement.280 Many different elements were united, and a lot of work was given to the creation of formations. The aesthetic was light and gracious, something that can be affiliated with the early work of Tyrš and his colleagues. The Soviets, however, developed the gymnastic form to fit their own purpose, which included more impressive acrobatics, and a development of formations. For instance, it seems as though the Soviets introduced the formation of letters by the participants on the floor of the stadium. This element was used in the 1955 Czechoslovakian Spartakiada in Prague, but was probably not a traditional element in Czechoslovakian mass gymnastic displays before the war. The words made out were

always a political propaganda message. The Soviets also introduced impressive pyramids of acrobats, creating a whole new dimension and taking the expression of mass gymnastic displays further, elements of which the original gymnastic nations, Germany and Czechoslovakia, borrowed back. However, the Czechoslovaksians were quite conservative and stopped borrowing from the Soviets after the 1960 Spartakiada, instead holding true to the tradition of Tyrs. Elements like the flip boards, human letter making, and human pyramids, which were commonly used in the Soviet Union, were later to be seen in much of the Communist world.

The concept of mass gymnastic displays became popular all over the world in countries with connections to the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, and also in Asia. In addition to North Korea and China where we shall soon see that it was further developed, they also performed mass gymnastic displays in Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia. When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in China in 1949 and founded the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the leaders were quick to introduce a style of rule based on the Soviet model, though without making room for a liminal time, or revolutionary activities resembling the expressions of the early years of the Soviet Union. The Hong Kong based historian Chang-tai Hung points out, in an article on parades in early PRC, that the parades were formed after the Soviet model, and having in mind how fast the parades arrived at their final form and expression after Mao came to power, one can suppose that they did not have time to find a unique Chinese expression, but made the experiences created by the Soviets useful. The same can be said of the mass gymnastic events.

As showed above, the different communist countries of Europe applied the use of mass gymnastic displays in a fashion that fitted the needs of the country. Some used it for national holidays, others as part as sporting events, and some used it as an event in itself. In PRC mass gymnastic displays has mainly been used in the opening ceremony of the National Games, a form of national Olympic Games with only Chinese participants. National Games had already been held in the republican period with competitions in western sports, but the first National Games of the PRC was held to mark the repub-

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281 Roubal, “A Didactic Project transformed into the Celebration of a Ritual,” 98
lic’s 10th anniversary in 1959, and included a grand mass gymnastic display. The American anthropologist Susan Brownell gives an analysis of the 1987 opening ceremony where it becomes clear that it resembles the Soviet and DDR events of the same time, but included typical Chinese symbols such as a dragon dance finale. Large Chinese objects and symbols, including the great wall, are presented by thousands of people holding flip boards, which create very impressive backdrops for the action going on in the foreground. The images presented by Brownell from the 1987 opening ceremony of the National Games are quite remarkable, also compared to contemporary expressions in Europe. After the fall of Communism in Europe, the Chinese expression was altered, but this tradition is still possible to recognize in China, although watching the opening ceremonies of today, it is easy to see that the expression is more popular and westernized, resembling contemporary Olympic opening ceremonies.

5.2.6 The mass gymnastic body
The mass gymnastic form and its derivatives in the political world of cultic performative events based on movement have been used by different regimes for more or less the same purpose since it was established by Jahn in the early 19th century. All these expressions have some elements in common. First of all, the expressions described in this chapter are all founded in a performative focus on the body as movement. The body is, in all the examples, presented as strong, and in the immediate presence of the other participants and spectators. The movements differ, but they are always connected to the way the body is perceived. In the early gymnastic displays where the movements relied more on apparatuses than what became common in Eastern Europe after the Second World War, the collectivity was, as I see it, fused with the strong individual body, and the skill of the individual. Later, in Eastern Europe, the body was perceived as collective and all the movements were completely synchronized and presented as masses of bodies rather than series of individuals.

In the cultic events of the romantic era in Germany the liminality of the events was presented as an immanent part of the events’ nature. Jahn’s, and his followers’, events were oppositional both politically and ideologically, and they found it necessary to seek a liminal ideological realm for the nationalistic events. The German turner movement was a deep part of the participants’ life, and the liminality of it can be characterized both in the way Victor Turner interprets the liminality of life in the

American hippie-movement, and as a ritual liminality occurring within the special gymnastic events. The respectful worship of a leader, present in Jahn’s gymnastic, and later used in a far more extreme way by the Nazis, and which is a characteristic of the cultic according to Bell, also disappeared in later Eastern European events.

Following the legacy of Tyrš, Eastern European events focused on artistic elements. Artistic elements can be said to be the increasing use of flip boards, colors, music, and dance. Costumes played a greater role, and different costumes could be used for different sections of the performance, they were no longer just practical outfits stressing the functional body, but contributions to a complete artistic image. To start with, in the German events, only men participated. Later women were allowed to perform in their own events. In Eastern European events after the Second World War, men, women, and children performed together, although often in different sections. In Czechoslovakia children always performed together with their mothers. In the sections where women and children or whole families performed together, they often wore different costumes and acted out different movements, more like a magnitude of couples dancing than traditional gymnastics, which increased the artistic elements. By including both genders, and children, the events achieved to present the events as representative for the whole society, making every participant a subject of the mass events. One can say that every participant became a symbol of the citizens, and in Geertz’s terminology, mirrored the society through performance.

What all the events described here had in common was a prolific use of symbols. As explained in chapter three, and referred to in the introduction to this chapter, I have defined symbol as a sign or image, which when used in ritual settings are condensed and function to articulate hegemony and secure consensus of rule. In the early cultic events in Germany, fire was an important symbol: a symbol that I have demonstrated was also used in later German nationalism, and by the Nazis. The events were characterized by using contrasts of light and darkness, and focusing on life and death. When the ideology changed, the symbols changed with it, and different symbols were used in the Eastern European events than had been used in Germany before the Second World War. The symbols were now more official, connected to the ruling party, and the symbols of the party. Nevertheless, the main symbol, used in all the described mass events, was the body. The body as symbol becomes a condensed representative of the devoted citizen, the strong citizen, the functional citizen, and the ambitious citizen.
5.2.7 Why mass gymnastics?
As I have just established, the form of mass gymnastic displays has been applied by regimes all across the world. Why has this expression suited them all, and how come they all found this slightly megalomaniac and resource demanding performance appropriate to the ideology? Mass gymnastics is inherent of some fitting ideological aspects, but the concept of mass gymnastics also places itself within a discourse of political ideologies. First it is necessary to investigate what is inherent in the form of mass gymnastic displays that makes it an effective form for totalitarian states. The original content and form revolved around the use of body or bodies: what the legacy following Jahn named *Körperkultur*.

It is, in my view, apparent that the relation of body to its function is central to the understanding of mass gymnastic displays. An able body symbolizes a strong nation, and a strong leader. A healthy body symbolizes a healthy nation, which again means a nation that is well taken care of by their leaders. A healthy nation means a nation that has enough food for everyone, and it symbolizes a wealthy nation because a healthy and strong population can produce more than a nation in bad health. In addition to this, a strong and healthy nation means, as also expressed by Jahn and his early followers, a militaristic nation that has the ability to protect itself. Since the bodily focus of mass gymnastics, whether we are discussing fascist or communist rule, can be precisified as being a focus also on the chaste body, it symbolizes a nation where people’s minds are set on a righteous path, politically and physically, rather than a decadent and misguided one. The body is therefore a very important and significant symbol in the use of mass gymnastic displays that all totalitarian regimes can find useful in their fight for legitimacy. As I showed in relation to the Nazi Führer cult, the relationship between the leader and its citizens, the masses are set against one individual, and the masses in the performance symbolize the great masses of the people, the citizens that belong to the nation, who are the nation’s ideological subjects. At the same time as they are presented as the nameless faces of the masses, they are subjectivized by the ideology as individual subjects belonging to the masses.

The concept of mass gymnastics where strong and healthy citizens represent their nation is also a way of including thousands of people physically at the same time. In the discussion of ideology as action, the action of the participants here surpasses other ideological action. In mass gymnastic displays ideology is pure action, and this action is ideology. This action places itself within a narrative structure which contains
the vague concepts of youth, fitness, strength, and health that become structural social concepts through action. In chapter three I described how Žižek defines ideology as action. Žižek’s example is of commodity fetishism. We know that money in itself does not have a fixed value, but despite this we still act as though it does. In Žižek’s definition several forms of action become ideological. Primary everyday actions like going shopping and choosing one product over another may, in Žižek’s view, be an ideological action. In my opinion the ideological action will, however, be strengthened through performance. In the mass gymnastic displays the ideological action is pure in the sense that it serves no other function than the ideological. Shopping for food is a necessary primary action, although it results in being ideological. Displaying bodies in gymnastic events in a condensed symbolic frame becomes pure action, not presented as inherent of a societal function outside the pure action.

One of the reasons that the expression of mass gymnastic displays has had a function fitting totalitarian regimes is that it is an event of physicality and movement that is non-competitive. The Sokols were originally very skeptical to participating in competitive events, and did not approve of the Olympic movement. Since mass gymnastic displays often were used as part of greater events that also included competitive sports, there may not be disunion between the displays and the concept of competition in sports. However, where the competitive events show the heroes of the nation, and stress individual strength as a result of the collective nation, the mass gymnastic displays function as an image of collective strength, as a miniature society of structure, control, and physique. The strictness that is applied to the displays also contains a great deal of play. Although it is strictly choreographed as structure, most events present it as playful action. Through this playfulness, the theatricality of the event becomes visible. The happy music, the bodily presence, and impressive acts fused with strictness and hard physical routines create a duality that unites through its happy spirit, but divides through the hardship that both explicitly and implicitly lies in the actions performed.

The totalitarian regimes of Europe and Asia used mass gymnastic displays to present theatrical versions of utopian miniature societies. In a controlled fashion spectators and performers achieved participation in the unity of utopia. Representatives of the whole society performed as professional athletes, and happy children performed break-neck stunts. Today most of the countries and former countries that staged these events have discontinued them. In China the events have changed, and are no longer displays of mass gymnastics. In the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), on the
other hand, the tradition is bigger than ever. In the following section I will see why, and how, the DPRK still performs a form of performance that disappeared from the rest of the world more than twenty years ago.

5.3 The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

5.3.1 The Land of Juche

If we are to understand how they act in the DPRK and why they do it, it is important to analyze the ideological foundation that the country rests on first. When the so-called Dear Leader Kim Jong Il died of a heart attack, allegedly while aboard a train on his way to do field guidance, in December 2011, many reports about the country surfaced calling it communist or Stalinist. However, seeing the country as a state resembling the Soviet Union and its satellite states, ignores the reasons why the DPRK did not collapse when the other states did, and why it might not collapse for a good time yet. There is much more to the DPRK than what can be told by studying how things worked out in Russia or China. This is mainly because the DPRK is neither communist nor Stalinist. If it at all belongs to an –ism named after a dictator, we might want to call it Kimilsungism. The term the DPRK itself uses to denote its ideology, is Juche. Juche means self-reliance, and is often misinterpreted as a North Korean version of Marxist philosophy, although it is clearly nationalistic, not internationalistic, and its main point is that the DPRK is independent of the rest of the world. According to the American historian Bruce Cumings, the term first emerged in the 1950s, but did not become a part of the common vernacular before the mid-sixties.285

As the official name of the ideology, it is also the name of the Kim Il Sung-philosophy, and many of the official North Korean texts are Juche-texts. However, it is not a well-developed philosophy, and exists more as a symbol of the total ideology, which includes a vast narrative structure. To show its vacuity, B.R. Myers, in his analysis of the Juche-ideology, calls it “the show-window doctrine of Juche Thought”286 “So-called Juche Thought functions at most as an imposing row of book-spines, a prop in the personality cult”287 It is mainly created as vacuous theory allegedly written by Kim Il Sung, and it is to be understood as a personality cult, as a cult of Kim Il Sung. The role Kim Il Sung plays in the ideology will become apparent in my discus-

285 Bruce Cumings, Korea’s Place in the Sun (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 413
287 Ibid., 17
Kim Il Sung was born April 15th 1912, and the American historian Bruce Cumings points out in several places that it was the same date as the Titanic sank, although making any further comparisons there seems futile. Kim Il Sung may be dead, but he is, as the ship was not, unsinkable. His death in 1994 did not end his term as president of the DPRK, rather he became The Eternal President. His son Kim Jong Il never took on the title of president but remained the general secretary of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP), and supreme commander of the army among other titles with the popular title The Dear Leader until he died in December 2011. This does not in any way indicate that Kim Jong Il did not possess a supreme power, or was not in full control of the country, but was a step in securing the cult surrounding his father. Neither is the new leader Kim Jong Un president, but he, like his father, is the general secretary of the KWP and supreme commander of the army, among other titles.

The person cult surrounding Kim Il Sung has similarities with the cults surrounding Stalin and Mao, and several elements in the Kim Il Sung-myth are gathered directly from China. Myers explains how Kim Il Sung copied many of Mao’s actions and made them his own. One of the elements that was copied, according to Myers, is Mao’s Long March, which was conducted by the Chinese communists to evade the nationalist army in the 1930s. Since Mao had led his partisans on what, in China, they called the Long March, there was also a myth created about Kim Il Sung having led his troops on a similar one, which they called the Arduous March. The term Arduous March is now also used metaphorically about the great famine of the 1990s. Kim Il Sung rose to power after the liberation from the Japanese in 1945, when he, with help from the Soviet Union, took control of the northern part of the nation. And although he was a strong leader in the years of the Korean War and the immediate post-war years, the person cult did not reach its peak before the early seventies when a huge bronze statue of him was constructed in the center of Pyongyang. Since then it has only continued to increase. The statue was built as a physical image of Kim Il Sung while he was still alive, and today the statue’s function is one of physical presence and physical grandeur. The statue provides physical comfort at the same time as Kim Il Sung’s presence through the statue is one of greatness and strength. Kim Il Sung rose to power
through guerilla fights against the Japanese, but he is never presented as fierce or fighting, rather he is presented as the ubiquitous parent who is good, caring, righteous, and loving. In April 2012 an equally large statue of Kim Jong Il was erected next to Kim Il Sung, making the image complete with two loving but dead fathers. After Kim Jong Il died he has been elevated to the realm of eternity, and is now the eternal general secretary of the worker’s party. He is also now much more present in public space. In addition to the huge new statue, he is, to a greater extent than prior to his death, included in the numerous murals and paintings one encounters everywhere around the country. When I visited the DPRK for the first time in September 2010 Kim Jong Il was a minor figure compared to his father, and Kim Il Sung was presented as the primal leader. This has changed after Kim Jong Il’s death in 2011.

During my 2010 visit, Kim Il Sung’s presence was everywhere. His presence was still omnipresent when I went back in April 2012, after Kim Jong Il had died, but by then Kim Jong Il had received a new position, and his presence was notably increased. In 2010 every room was decorated with Kim Il Sung’s and Kim Jong Il’s portraits, and every North Korean adult wore a small pin with Kim Il Sung’s portrait just above the heart. There are mainly two portraits of Kim Il Sung that are seen in the DPRK, one when he is young, and one when he is old. The interesting thing with these two portraits is that he is only smiling in the one where he is old. I interpret this as endowing the young leader with a connection to his guerilla beginnings, while his older self is presented as the parent leader, or, although he is never called by that name, more like the grandparent leader. He is smiling, and conveying an impression of possessing great empathy. The portrait with of the old man is the most common one. In the task of making him the parent of the nation, state affairs were connected to him as a person. For example the North Korean people always receive gifts from him on his birthday, April 15th, which makes the people’s clothing and food, direct gifts from their parent Kim Il Sung.

Bradley K. Martin gives an account of a story from the official mythology of the early days of Kim Il Sung’s regime that gives a clear picture of the parent leader comforting his subjects:

Stories the regime disseminated included one about a visit to a village, at the time of land reform, when Kim peeled hot, boiled potatoes and offered one to an old man. “Old Pak Jang-ban, given the first potato, held it in his hands, sobbing, and bowed his white-haired head deeply. Suddenly he buried his head on the Leader’s chest and began to cry loudly.” All his life the old man “had been treated like a slave and used like a horse or a bullock. Now he was treated for the first time like a human being – by no other person than General Kim Il-sung, the great, Respected and Be-
loved Leader!” As Kim departed, he used a brush to write Pak’s name on the gatepost of the best house in the village, making the old man the new owner of the former landlord’s residence. Afterward Pak “would tell everyone he met: ‘Since the creation of the world, has there ever been anyone like General Kim Il-sung?”

This story shows how Kim cares for his subjects, and it is a form of care giving that also has maternal traits. With a great deal of warmth, he secures food and housing for the old man Pak. It is also interesting to note that Kim, and in many stories like this one, is physical in his warmth and loving solicitude, as here where he lets the old man rest his head on his chest.

When discussing North Korean ideology, B. R. Myers cautiously calls Kim Il Sung a parent instead of father because he claims that Kim Il Sung also is attributed a great deal of maternal characteristics. He stresses that as a nation, Korea has always been seen as a motherland rather than a fatherland, and that the mother is a more important character than the father in Korean thought and mythology. He argues that the Korean people have traditionally seen themselves as a pure and chaste people, with the naivety of a child, and therefore in need of a caring parent, and that because of the focus on the maternal, Kim Il Sung is primarily referred to as the Parent Leader. The state consequently becomes a family state where the father leads and cares for his children.

The most famous ideological actions connected to Kim Il Sung are his legendary, in North Korean terms, “on-the-spot” field guidances. In the countless murals that decorate the city of Pyongyang, and much of the countryside, many of them show Kim Il Sung, with or without his son, conducting field guidance at a factory or farm. The stories are many, and many places in the DPRK are equipped with placards that say when he was there. The tradition of guidance was continued by his son, who even allegedly died on the train on his way to conduct more field guidance. This tradition shows how the leaders are in touch with the people, where they check up on them in almost the same way a parent might make sure a child is doing their homework.

In the discussion of Juche and the Kim Il Sung-cult several comparisons have been made to religion. Most commonly this is located in identifying a relation between the parent cult and Confucianism. Bruce Cumings, for instance, defines North Korean

290 Myers, The Cleanest Race, 73
291 Ibid., 105
ideology as an expression of Neo-Confucianism. Others make a point out of the fact that Kim Il Sung was born into a Christian family, and that traces of this can be found in the official mythology. Religion, in the traditional sense, is banned in the DPRK. Still, the system of ideology remains a deep system of faith. Eun Hee Shin leans towards a foundation of Confucianism in North Korean thought and argues that Juche thought can be analyzed as a religion. One of her main arguments is that in Juche the individuals are conceived of as members of a sociopolitical whole, that is, led by a leader who is an expression that transcends the masses, and who is a concentration of the people’s will rather than an autocratic dictator. This view supports the view of the family state. The leader is the leader of a great family, with the family’s best interest is on his mind, and this is presented as a result of the will of the masses. “In this context, the leader cannot be viewed as a totalitarian dictator but instead constitutes the totality of sociopolitical life; he is a powerful agent of relationality, in which multitude of individual lives are integrated into a structured coexistent whole.” Shin defines this interconnectedness as a trait of a special North Korean variety of religion or spirituality.

Shin argues that the interconnectedness of people and leader is also connected to the party, which together creates a trinity of people, party, and leader. In my opinion, one can find several equal trinities in the use of symbolic narratives in the North Korean belief system. The three major power centers, army, party, and nation, frequently appear in the symbolic expression. The army is represented by a star, the party by the hammer, sickle, and brush, and the nation by the national flag. An important part of the post-Kim Il Sung political ideology of the DPRK, is the concept of “military first” which means that the people must sacrifice themselves for the strength of the army. This creates a relation between the people and the army. The national flag often appears together with portraits of Kim Il Sung. He is a representative of the nation, which has a kinder and more caring aspect to it. Through this one might argue that the trinity of army/party/nation is a reflection of the trinity of people/party/leader. And, although many argue heavily that the family state and its focus on the father is a result of Confucian filial piety, seeing how the use of trinities is evident in the North Korean ideology, and having in mind that Kim Il Sung had a Christian upbringing, I cannot fail to notice that

294 See Bradley K. Martin’s account of Kim’s Christian childhood: Martin, Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader, 11-28
296 Ibid., 522
there also exists a trinity of the father, the son, and the “holy ghost”. In my view this shows similarities between North Korean ideology or beliefs and Christianity.

Although Kim Il Sung is still the reigning president of the DPRK even after his death, it would not be fair to say that anyone believes that he lives on as a god in a different realm, but he is the center of gravity for a belief system that sets him as the highest human being ever lived, and showers him with godlike qualities. His son is less of a god, although he has achieved a new and more godlike position now that he is deceased. Nevertheless, Kim Jong Il was in his lifetime his father’s most devout worshipper. This is presented as one of the reasons that Kim Jong Il could take on the task of leading the country, he had been taught the philosophy of Juche from the source, and had a special connection to the scripture, both intellectually and physically. It might be going a bit too far, talking of a holy ghost in the North Korean belief system, but, as Shin also noted, the leaders are only the leaders because they are connected to the people, as a concentration of the people’s will. As an important and all-embracing factor of the North Korean ideology, one might be able to compare it to a “holy ghost.”

This leads me to a short comment on how the new leader of the regime, Kim Il Sung’s grandson and Kim Jong II’s son, Kim Jong Un, fits into the system. The young Kim Jong Un, is presented as a reincarnation of his grandfather, although not in a strict meaning of the term reincarnation. Rather than being his grandfather born again, he possesses his saintly grandfather’s personality, looks, and intelligence. This spiritual possession, makes him less of an individual, and more of a representative for the position his grandfather has held, but also increases the feeling of the spiritual “ghost”, that he has been met by the same spirit of the people as his grandfather, being the incarnation of the people’s will and the incarnation of Kim Il Sung’s love, intelligence, and fighting spirit.

B.R. Myers is skeptical to defining the North Korean belief system as religion. He argues that it has similarities with the Japanese emperor cult where Emperor Hirohito “appeared as the hermaphroditic parent of a child race whose virtues he embodied; was associated with white clothing, white horses, the snow-capped peak of the race’s sacred mountain (...)”297 He points out that where the official propaganda, in several places, tells stories of how outsiders, including Americans and South Koreans, have regarded Kim Il Sung as a godlike being, they never claim Kim Il Sung’s divinity

297 Myers, The Cleanest Race, 109
themselves. The North Koreans define themselves as an atheistic state that has not explicitly developed a concept of divinity, but it is clear that it is a system of belief with well-developed similarities to established religious systems, and that it, in addition to being an embracive belief system, is also a system of worship. The people of the DPRK clearly believe in the system, and accept sacrifice for the goodness of the dead but eternal president Kim Il Sung. Here we can see the close connection religion and ideology can have, which I mean is particularly present in the North Korean official consciousness.

B.R. Myers’ main point in his book *The Cleanest Race. How North Koreans See Themselves - And Why it Matters*, is that the North Korean ideology is a nationalist and racist ideology, and therefore has more in common with fascist ideologies than communism. Within the concept of *Juche* and self-reliance lies the fact that Korea does not need help from other nations, they can manage by themselves because they are better than the rest. They are a cleaner, chaster race of people. Since the people of South Korea, officially named the Republic of Korea (ROK) are part of the same race, they are just as clean, although they have been a little less strict on letting foreigners into the country and polluting the race, a fact Myers presents as disturbing to North Korean officials. The South Koreans are therefore not presented as evil, in the same way as the Americans or Japanese, but as under the influence of evil powers, from which they will one day be set free. Reunification is therefore an important factor in the official ideology, and presented as an immanent nirvana the patient Korean people will reach one day. The enemies are foreign, mainly American and white, or Japanese. This gives Kim Il Sung’s fight for independence from the Japanese a central position as the main revolutionary fight of the mythology, rather than the Korean war. This is of course also due to the fact that the fight against the Japanese can be said to have been won, while the Korean War only ended in armistice, and feels like a national tragedy on both sides of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that divides the country in two.

Racial purity is presented in the different expressions of the official mythology. Myers points out that the abundance of landscape paintings often present either the safe haven of the forest, or waves hitting the rocky coast of Korea. Both images symbolize the purity of Korea. The image of the waves is the most prevalent painting and is found all over the country: in the hotel lobbies, in official buildings, etc., and often with Kim Jong Il standing at the shore watching the heavy waves. This is a typical *Juche* image

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298 Ibid.
299 Ibid., 71/72
where the waves symbolize outside forces harassing the motherland, and the rocks embody the stability of the North Korean state. An interesting fact Myers mentions is that when the former American president Bill Clinton visited the DPRK in 2009, he was photographed together with Kim Jong Il in front of a painting of the waves. Little did Clinton know of the meaning of the painting, and what his placement in front of it symbolized. The image of waves also appears frequently in North Korean performance.

The nationalism and racism of North Korean ideology is interconnected with the whole Juche thought, the DPRK is self-reliant, and the reason they can and should be self-reliant is that they are pure and clean, with a smart and benevolent leadership, who assures that the subjects of the nation are safe. Nevertheless, the people of the DPRK know that there is not an abundance of food in the country. They do not know much about how life is outside, and do not have much to use as a comparison, but they know that they are not well off. The great famine of the 1990s was so vast that no one could avoid being affected by it. Consequently, there was no reason or possibility to keep the famine a secret. It is therefore made use of in the official narrative. One might ask how one can continue to love a leadership that does not secure you enough food to feed your family. The reason is subjected to Juche thought.

The reason is not that being “self-reliant” leads to the impossibility, especially in hard times, of the North Koreans being able to save themselves, but that the outside world does not acknowledge Korean greatness. The outside world does not understand, they are evil and mean. In some way even their suffering makes the belief in, and adherence to, the ideology stronger. Žižek sees fascism as surplus-enjoyment. Through renouncing enjoyment one finds desire in meaninglessness. The sacrifice is in its own meaninglessness a surplus-value, an objet petit a, a desirable object and a void. Seeing this in relation to the North Korean suffering, the suffering itself is given a quality. And the suffering is thus presented as a quality of the strong and pure people of the DPRK. Having said this I need to point out that the North Korean people do not, anymore than anyone else, enjoy starving. Accounts have been made of North Korean defectors telling their stories that are stories of love for the leader, or a will to suffer. The same accounts tell of a surprisingly large amount of love, and the concept of suffering is now presented as a part of the official canon of narratives and propaganda, something that

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300 Ibid., 65
301 Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 89
has become clear in the periods of mourning after the Great Leader and Dear Leader passed away.

5.3.2 Traveling in the land of Juche.
I traveled to North Korea in order to attend the 2010 Arirang performance. I entered the DPRK on September 21st by plane and left by train on September 25th. As already mentioned in chapter four, which covered methodology, I traveled as a tourist with an international tourist agency called Korea Konsult, which is located just outside of Stockholm, Sweden. We were six people traveling in the group, and apart from one other Norwegian, everyone came from different countries. The group was accompanied by two guides, Ms. Pak and Mr. Lee, throughout the whole visit.

Following the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994, and the recent death of Kim Jong Il in 2011, images of crowds of weeping people have been the most prominently published image of North Korea in Western media. Seeing the crowds of weeping people is observing a theatrical event, a theatrical expression of the suffering that just makes them stronger in their action of ideology. The trip to the DPRK was like traveling back in time. It was a theatrical journey unlike anything else.

When calling the trip a theatrical journey, my point is not to say that the North Korean society is fake, that the false consciousness, which is so present in the large amount of explicit ideological action, leads everyone to become actors who play roles in a society of falsehood. Rather I wish to present an experience of theatricality, as I experienced it, during my short stay in the country, and that this experience was due to the way the country and its citizens were presented to me as a western traveler. Contrary to a common notion that the DPRK is closed to all foreigners, and that it is very difficult to get in, the North Koreans have, in recent years opened up for an increasing amount of tourism. However, traveling to Pyongyang is not like traveling to Paris. Your trip is totally at the will of the North Korean government, and wherever you go you are chaperoned by two government appointed tour guides, and a driver.303

As I discussed in my chapter on theatricality, the Canadian theatre scholar Josette Féral argues that theatricality can appear almost everywhere. One of her examples is sitting on a sidewalk café in Italy and experiencing clivage.304 She distances herself from the world surrounding her because it is not well known to her. Her gaze

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303 In these trips it seems like one of the appointed guides is less of a guide and probably more an official agent supervising and checking the actual guide.
304 Féral, “Theatricality”
differs from the one she would have had at home in Canada in her ordinary surroundings. John Urry, who was mentioned in chapter four, discusses how tourism is a special form of gaze. This gaze is characterized by its ability to distinguish between the situation and object perceived, and what is encountered in everyday life. “Minimally there must be certain aspects of the place to be visited which distinguish it from what is conventionally encountered in everyday life. Tourism results from a basic binary division between ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary.” The tourist gaze rests on difference, on what estranges the tourist because what is encountered is different than the ordinary, and on the fact that the tourist does not belong in the visited environment. In what Urry calls a basic binary division lays a duality, a duality of space and time. Urry argues that the tourist is a semiotician, interpreting the experiences as signs. In many ways this resembles Erika Fischer-Lichte’s early definition of theatricality in which the signs presented are perceived as signs. When we travel we see the world around us as signs of communication, interpreting what we see as signs. And that is how I interpreted much of what I experienced in the DPRK, as a semiotic overload of signs on signs on signs.

Urry also cites Turner’s work on pilgrimages. In the article “The Center out There: Pilgrim's Goal”, Turner describes pilgrimages as a form of travel with ritual characteristics. The reason for this is that pilgrimages are structured by a departure and an arrival; the departure marks a break with ordinary life, which sets in swing a liminal time where communitas with the other travelers dominates, which is then followed by reintegration upon arrival back home. Turner also points out that many pilgrims resemble tourists. Although the pilgrim acts more out of a feeling of obligation than the regular tourist, the voluntary physical estrangement through temporary relocation is definitely, if not always liminal, a liminoid experience. So was my trip to the DPRK. For me it started on the flight from Beijing to Pyongyang, or maybe it was already at the Beijing airport. The North Korean people were easy to spot. They wore different clothes. They were dressed very correctly in an old-fashioned way. In addition they of course all wore the Kim Il Sung-pin just above their hearts. Next to me on the flight sat a woman with a 1950s style hairnet and glasses. She did not look my way once, and if I looked at her, she turned the other way. Arriving at the airport in Pyongyang we had to

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305 Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*
306 Ibid., 11
hand in our cellular phones before walking through customs. This action of handing in your telephone increased the framing of the event. I was leaving the world behind and stepping into insecurity. I had texted my family to let them know that I would now disappear off the radar for the next five days, and that was exactly how I felt, I was stepping into the unknown.

After having gone through customs where we had to show what books we were bringing into the country, and a thorough passport control, we were introduced to our guides and escorted onto the minibus from which the country would be observed from during the next five days. More than three million people live in Pyongyang, but despite this, the streets were empty and there was a conspicuous lack of cars. The roads were as wide as airfields, yet there were no cars, and therefore no congestion and no exhaust fumes. The city felt abandoned, and nothing felt like a city with several million inhabitants. An absence of electricity also made the buildings look abandoned. The high rise apartment buildings reminded me of suburban Moscow, if it had not been so quiet. But there were almost no lights in the windows, and as it grew darker, the whole city descended into darkness. This made me aware of the city as landscape. The place in itself emerged as the main expression, not its function, not the people, not the lives it harbored, but the city as existence, as presence. I had no way of blending into the environment, I was distanced from it. I was distanced from it by the glass in the windows of our Chinese minivan, and I was distanced from it by my inability to understand what this cityscape was saying about the society I was in the proximity of. I was estranged. And as the same time as I experienced a physical estrangement, I kept interpreting what I saw as signs. What did this cityscape mean? And why did it look the way it did? I settled for accepting that they were signs existing as signs.

The next day, under the light of day, everything looked a bit different. The night before we had been taken to a so-called spa hotel in the country side, and after breakfast we were driven back to Pyongyang. The trip into town gave us the opportunity to see some of the surrounding landscape. If it was a coincidence or not, I do not know, but that day was also a national holiday marking the celebration of the harvest season. The dust roads leading out onto the highway were full of people walking or cycling on oversized bicycles made of black iron. The men wore hats, and with the bright yellow

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corn fields in the background it all reminded me of films set in southern France in the 1950 or -60s, adding all the more to the feeling that I had traveled back in time.

The celebration was just as visible in Pyongyang. People were out in the streets, and in the parks groups of people were gathered in small circles having picnics. According to Paul French’s account of North Korean daily life, they do not enjoy much free time but share their time equally between work and mandatory social commitments. We can therefore assume that family picnics are occurrences taking place primarily on official holidays. However, being witness to the public celebrations gave me the opportunity of experiencing the city in a completely different way than what I had experienced at dusk the previous day. Though, I could still not blend in even though we were allowed out of the car for a stroll in the park. But the reasons for this were different. In one way this impossibility of blending in is the same as Féral’s experience at the sidewalk café in Italy; she cannot become Italian or a naturalized inhabitant of the surroundings no matter how much she tries. The North Korean experience, however, had an additional factor: the gaze of the North Koreans. They were looking at us now, and it made me feel slightly uncomfortable. The gaze was both at once theatrical and non-theatrical. I understood that they were people enjoying their time off. It did not feel staged or out of the ordinary, but the gaze made me aware of the distance between us. Under no circumstances would I be able to talk to them. Moreover, we were told not to take any photographs, so despite an inconspicuous attempt at taking some photographs, any real or explicit communication was rendered impossible. What remained was the gaze. And the gaze remained theatrical because there was nothing else.

During the stay we were taken to see all the mandatory sites. One of the most important sites that tourists must visit is Kim Il Sung’s birthplace in Mangyongdae, just outside Pyongyang. Legend has it that Kim Il Sung was born into a poor family, and when he reached adolescence he walked to Manchuria where he received most of his schooling. His grandparent’s house in Mangyongdae has been refurbished and is today a place of pilgrimage for North Koreans, and for the country’s visitors. Later in the trip we were taken to the North Korean film studio to see the North Korean film sets. According to the official narrative, Kim Jong Il was a talented film maker, hence the focus on film and the film set. There we were shown some houses that were supposed to look like Korea in the olden days, probably during the Japanese occupation. These

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309 French, North Korea, 20
310 Suk-Young Kim, Illusive Utopia. Theater, Film, and Everyday Performance in North Korea (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), 20
houses were built in the same way as the house we were taken to at Mangyongdae. The house was built of what seemed like plaster, not of the mud or clay I assume they actually would have used to build houses at that time. In addition, everything was very clean. Koreans love cleanliness but it would be hard to believe that Kim Il Sung grew up in a completely dust free world. The whole area seemed staged. After the short tour of the small houses, our tour guide encouraged us to have a group picture taken in front of it. I later understood that this was a part of the tour. We were supposed to be photographed at this sacred site.

The theatricality of this visit was exemplified by the large gap in the story being told, and the environment we were witnessing. We were there, able to walk into what we were told was his birthplace. Interestingly enough it resembled a stable, making a reference of Bethlehem not too farfetched. Still, we were not allowed to touch anything, and we were told to show respect. There was not actually much to see, some old photographs and some farming equipment labor all that were on display. So, we were not taken there for the possibility of learning something about Korean history, but to experience a sacred place. This experience had several dualities: Firstly, there is a physical duality between the object and me, almost similar to the one Fried experienced in the encounter with object art. Secondly, a duality occurs in the estrangement from the ideological message. The image presented to me was an image of desire, suffering, of greatness, and of a fighting a spirit. What I saw was a yellow house made of plaster. This creates a theatricality of miscommunication. I see that the house and the guides communicate something to me. I just do not understand who the recipient is.

We were taken to several sites like this one. One of the main attractions all tourists visit is the metro. All tourists who take the metro take it from the same station and travel one station before they get off. This has led to speculations and rumors that there only exist two stations, and that all the passengers are acting for the tourists. This, however, is not true. The metro system has in fact two lines, but most likely the other stations are not as elaborately decorated as the two tourists visit. Our guide became a bit uneasy when asked what the other stations looked like. Another mandatory site is a visit to the American ship USS Pueblo that was seized by the North Koreans in 1968, and lays at dock on the river in Pyongyang, a proud demonstration of how the North Korean army overthrew the Americans. At both of these sites an inherent pride overshadows

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311 When I visited the DPRK again in April 2012 we were allowed to see more stations, one of which was just as spectacular as the two I had seen in 2010.
312 Martin, Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader, 128-133
what is actually presented. This leads to a discrepancy between the presentation and the interpretation. What are these objects signs of? The greatness of the DPRK? Their strength? The complexity of their infrastructure? Again the signs are intended to be interpreted, but what I interpret is mainly that they are signs of something, but I am not sure of what. What I do understand is that they are signs of communication, that the most important task they have, is to present us with signs of greatness, but they are not so troubled with how great we end up thinking they are. We are to perceive the pride, maybe even the discrepancy between pride and object, but it does not really matter.

The two main sites were the Kim Il Sung mausoleum and the Kim Il Sung statue. The interesting thing with these places is that they involve action from the visitor’s side. I will start with the statue since it was built first. This enormous figure was built in 1972 for Kim Il Sung’s 60th birthday. The personality cult had at that time, according to Myers, surpassed the one of Mao in China, and the bronze statue is evidence of that. We were taken to the bottom of the small hill on which the statue stands before we were driven up to view it more closely. Here a woman was selling flowers, and we were eagerly encouraged to buy flowers. It was easy to understand that we would not be holding on to the flowers very long. When we came up to the statue we were met by yet another man who was a photographer, just as eagerly we were encouraged to let the man take our picture in front of the statue. When it was our turn we were asked to form lines of four, and to walk up to the statue, put down our flowers and bow. Afterwards, the photographer took a picture that we received almost immediately. The photograph had clearly been manipulated, with different weather, different people, and the statue looked smaller. The group was cut out and placed on an official background. This was most probably done so as to avoid cutting the statue in half, but why it was so important to add people to the background who had not been there, is a bit hard to say.

The visit to the mausoleum was an extraordinary experience. I have previously visited the Lenin mausoleum in Moscow many times, and felt prepared for the whole experience of a dead statesman in a box. The event in Pyongyang, however, greatly surpasses the Moscow experience. The mausoleum where Kim Il Sung was placed after his death in 1994, and which now also houses his son, is a huge construction. We had been told to dress appropriately, but the guide obviously did not think that I had dressed

313 This is the statue, which now is accompanied by a similarly large statue of Kim Jong Il. When the statue of Kim Jong Il was erected, changes had been made to the one of Kim Il Sung as well. He was given glasses. It therefore seems safe to assume that a new Kim Il Sung statue was raised together with Kim Jong Il in April 2012.
314 Myers, The Cleanest Race, 48
appropriately enough. She must have thought I was showing a bit too much skin, as she asked me caringly if I was cold and recommended that I put my sweater on. I had no wish to question her authority and followed her suggestion. Appropriately dressed, we left for the mausoleum. After having placed our bags in an attended cloakroom, we were required to join a queue on a moving walkway together with a group of young Korean girls dressed in the national costume. Visiting the mausoleum is also mandatory for Koreans from outside Pyongyang visiting the capital. The next step was the most interesting. We were instructed to walk through a machine that shined our shoes, and a blow drier that was supposed to blow the dandruff out of our hair. You cannot have dust on your shoes or in your hair when visiting the dead but eternal president. Before we could finally go into the room where the dead president lies on display, we were given an audio guide and taken through a museum section all about Kim Il Sung.

When we finally were able to enter the most sacred room of the mausoleum, we were informed of the rules we were to follow. In Moscow the only rule is that you are not allowed to stop or talk, in Pyongyang, the rules were a bit more complicated. We walked around the body in groups of four. On both sides, and at the feet we had to bow, but we were not to bow at the head. In Moscow, the room where Lenin is laying is very small, and a continuous crowd walks past the surprisingly small body. In Pyongyang the room was huge and the body much larger than one would have expect. At first I did not feel comfortable bowing to Kim Il Sung’s body. So on the first bow I just nodded my head, on the second I nodded a bit more actively, before I, on the third bow, decided that it did not matter and gave a good deep bow. Though it must be said, I did not feel comfortable refusing to bow either. Afterwards we were taken outside to the huge square in front of the mausoleum so we could take pictures and pose in front of the building whilst carrying a portrait of Kim Il Sung as an old man.

Both the visit to the statue and to the mausoleum required that I participated in the action. I did not feel that I had a choice, the action was required and I had no way of refusing. I might have been able to question it, but felt that questioning their customs just for the sake of it would have been rude. Acting on command gives a different perspective to the theatricality of the event. Firstly, it makes me more than a passive spectator. Secondly, doing as I was told, not as I would have acted if on my own or could decide for myself, created more of a frame around the event, and thirdly, I was given perspectives for understanding the event and actions as ideological actions. Even when I tried not to bow in the mausoleum because I did not feel subjected to the ideolog-
logical event, I ended up bowing anyway. At the time I felt I had done it out of politeness, but instead, I think I bowed because the situation required an attempt to make myself a subject of the event. As discussed in the chapter on ideology, ideology is confirmed through action, and this is certainly what happened here. If one can say that my actions resulted in the event being close and present, the framing also resulted in distance. Both in the mausoleum, and at the statue we were given more than adequate preparation for what we were about to meet. We had to walk, we had to have our hair blown free of dandruff, and we were given instructions. This created a clear frame for the event which resulted in my being distanced from the event, in the meaning that I was estranged since I still was physically quite close to the event as it unfolded before me. The fact that I was acting on the cue of someone else for reasons I did not fully understand created a distance to the actions I was acting out.

In addition the visits to the sites that were clearly framed and given meaning through presentation, the daily life in the DPRK can also be said to have theatrical aspects. My experience of visiting the DPRK as a trip back in time also created a distancing frame. I was standing outside the everyday lives people were living in this country, and their lives did not resemble anything I knew. One of the things that contributed to the feeling of a theatricalized way of life was the uniforms. Most of the North Korean population wears some form of uniform in their daily life. Clothes are scarce and they wear what they are given by the government. School children wear school uniforms that look like the uniforms worn by the communist youth groups in Eastern Europe before the collapse; the soldiers, of which there seem to be many, wear military uniforms, workers wear a worker’s uniform quite similar to the clothing Kim Jong Il was most often presented wearing, and a great deal of women wear the national costume. I saw school girls wearing school uniforms resembling the national costume. Dressing the nation in uniform in this fashion marks their role, and gives the impression that it is all about presentation. The presentation turns the people into signs. They are the signs of a state in full control, signs of strength, and signs of chastity.

The multiplicity of signs is present all over the DPRK, and is used explicitly in the public expression of ideology. Huge mass performances and parades are performed many times each year, especially for public holidays marking the birthdays of the leaders, the founding of the People’s liberation army, the anniversaries of the Korean Workers Party, and the founding of the North Korean state. In the next section I will
discuss the public use of parades, and how this contributes to theatricalizing the public society of the North Korean state.

5.3.3 Theatricality of North Korean public space. Pyongyang as stage.
The American-Korean theatre scholar Suk-Young Kim discusses how the city of Pyongyang becomes a stage of the nation. She describes how Pyongyang is mythologized as the almost sacred home of the leaders, and in the official narratives the difference between rural and urban communities, that is, rural areas and Pyongyang, is presented with a foundationally hierarchical difference. Pyongyang was completely in ruins after the Korean War and the whole city was rebuilt. This provided an opportunity to completely modernize the city, which for the North Koreans meant constructing wide roads, and building loads of prefabricated high rise houses with recognizably Soviet architecture. In addition to this, the city was decorated with monuments like the Kim Il Sung statue which was constructed in 1972. The Juche tower is large, constructed of brick, and has a glass torch on top that symbolizes Juche thought. The tower was allegedly erected by Kim Jong Il for his father’s 70th birthday in 1982, and supposedly consists of the same amount of bricks as there, until that point, had been days in Kim Il Sung’s life. Other important monuments are the arch of triumph, built to resemble the arch in Paris but much bigger, the party monument consisting of the hammer, sickle, and brush standing upright, and the reunification monument consisting of two sisters reaching out for each other to embrace. These monuments function as scenography for state spectacles. This is especially true of the Juche tower which is always seen in the background of the parades that invariably take place on the Kim Il Sung Square located in downtown Pyongyang.

In Pyongyang large parades and spectacles are staged for every major occasion. All the military parades usually follow the same dramaturgy, but small changes are made to fit the occasion. They always begin on Kim Il Sung Square where the most impressive parts of the parades take place, before they move through town thus giving the other citizens of Pyongyang the possibility to view the soldiers and wave. The part of the parade that takes place on the square is televised nationwide. Kim Il Sung square thus represents the city as a whole, it is an image of Pyongyang, as discussed by Suk-Young Kim. The military parades start off with a prologue where soldiers stand in square formations across the square. Behind them one can see a sea of pink made out of

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315 Kim, Illusive Utopia, 128
people holding pink flowerlike pompoms in their hands. In North Korea two flowers are named after their leaders, a pink hybrid orchid called kimilsungia, and a red hybrid begonia called kimjongilia. In the parades one can often see people shaking flowerlike pompoms in these colors, and thereby representing the leaders. Although both colors are represented, the pink one seems to appear a bit more frequently. The prologue most often consists of a speech held by some high ranking general but not the leaders, and/or an anthem, and the raising of the national flag after which the soldiers start marching in goosestep. When the soldiers start marching the sea of pink comes forward and suddenly the whole square is filled with pink. The pink crowd of people makes out letters and signs in different colors during the rest of the parade. 

The parade in itself may consist of different elements. The goose stepping soldiers are always included, but there may be a different amount of floats and Kim Il Sung artifacts in the parade. The National Day parades, for instance, start with a unit of soldiers marching with a raised flag-like construction made of plastic or wood with Kim Il Sung’s portrait. Other Kim Il Sung-effects are also frequently used in parades. In addition to the military parades, the celebrations include torchlight parades at night, mass dancing on the square, and parades that resemble demonstrations where people hold banners and posters with images of Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and different slogans that are also yelled out.

All the parades have in common that they are static despite the fact that they are dramaturgically reliant on movement. The parades are staged for an audience sitting in a seating area in the square, for the gaze of the leaders standing on a balcony above the square, and maybe most importantly, it is staged for the camera. These images are sent out to the world as an impressive performance of the nation, and therefore the unity of the performance is emphasized. In addition to this the parade has a route through town where the rest of the city’s population are offered a chance to greet the soldiers. I experienced this during my second visit to the DPRK in April 2012, where we were allowed to stand together with the North Korean people on a sidewalk, and wave to the soldiers passing by in the parade staged for the 100th anniversary of Kim Il Sung’s birth. The parade I saw from this perspective consisted of military vehicles with soldiers, but no goose stepping or marching.

The DPRK has staged parades since the founding of the state, and together with the mass performances they contribute to creating the notion of the DPRK as a theatri-

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316 This analysis is based on video material of Pyongyang parades from 1995 to 2005. See bibliography for detailed list of material.
5.4 North Korean mass gymnastics and the 2010 Arirang

5.4.1 North Korean mass gymnastic tradition

North Korean mass gymnastic displays surpass all other known mass gymnastic expressions in size, skill, and approach. It transcends what could be called megalomaniac in regard to performance, and develops the form known from Germany and Eastern Europe to a specific North Korean aesthetic. How this form of expression became North Korean, or when they first undertook the task of making a Nationalist Korean expression of the known form is hard to clearly determine. Suk-Young Kim claims that they started with mass gymnastics in the DPRK already in the late 1940s with the foundation of the state. Bearing in mind the development of mass gymnastics in Eastern Europe in the early postwar era, it may be fair to assume that the DPRK was eager to follow the communist European style. Besides, the DPRK had strong connections to the Soviet Union in the early years. However, there exists little documentation of the early mass gymnastic displays, and we know little about what they looked like. As the mass gymnastic displays of the DPRK today are, to a large degree, connected to the person cult of Kim Il Sung, and it is possible to argue that the development of the expression was slow until the peak of the cult in 1972 when Kim Il Sung celebrated his 60th birthday, and much was accomplished in terms of increasing his hold on the country through the celebration. The Korean War probably also slowed the development of the mass gymnastic displays, and as we know from the European expression of the form, the first big events including flip boards and costume changes were initially seen in the late 1950s, after the end of the Korean War. The early North Korean mass gymnastic displays were held for special occasions marking significant events in the state’s history. For example, a mass gymnastic display was held in Pyongyang to mark the 20th anniversary of the pioneer movement in 1966.

From photo and video documentation we know that mass gymnastic displays were held in the 1960s and ‘70s to greet foreign officials on state visits. In 1971 they,
for instance, put on a mass event to greet the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, and in 1977 they arranged a mass parade with dance to greet the Yugoslavian president Josip Tito on his official visit to the country. These events had the form of a greeting for the visiting nation, and do not seem as nationalistic in their form as the later events. In the early 1970s the Mass Gymnastics Production Company was established, and after this, mass gymnastics held a high position when it came to marking official events. The special Korean version of gymnastic aesthetics was consequently developed in the years that followed.

In 1987, at a time when mass gymnastics in Europe were performed as a last convulsion of the communist rule, Kim Jong Il gave a speech to the North Korean mass gymnastics producers where he expressed guidelines for the further development of North Korean mass gymnastics. His reason for the speech was his father’s upcoming 75th birthday, and the mass gymnastic display created for the occasion was called *Prosperous Juche Korea*. In the speech he starts out by praising the performance before pointing out all that is wrong with it, and what the producers need to do before presenting the finished performance on April 15th, the day of the sun and the birthday of Kim Il Sung.

The mass gymnastic performance *Prosperous Juche Korea* is a grand epic panorama of the reality of our country, which is prospering under the wise leadership of our Party and the great leader. It is good not only in its ideological content but also in its composition and editing. The mass gymnastics producers and Pyongyang schoolchildren have presented the new piece excellently by making strenuous efforts and displaying intense loyalty to the Party and the leader in spite of adverse weather conditions.

Kim Jong Il showed in the speech how the aim of mass gymnastics was a unity of ideology and art. He praised the high level of the physical movements, and was especially fond of the schoolgirls doing exercises with hula hoops because of its blend of physicality and artistic skill. Still, he felt that *Prosperous Juche Korea* reminded him too much of art:

The performance, however, involves too many dances and rhythmic movements; physical movements lack variety and skill; and more often than not similar movements are repeated. In *Prosperous Juche Korea*, the somersault performed on a plank is the same as the one performed

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319 Ceausescu’s visit to North Korea, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qd3I9X-112k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qd3I9X-112k) accessed online February 25, 2013
322 Ibid., 1
on the ground. The only difference, if any, is that one is performed by older schoolchildren and the other by younger ones.\textsuperscript{323}

In the speech he calls for more gymnastic movements rather than dance, and makes a special request for more difficult gymnastics, and, most importantly, without repetition.

The costumes were supposed to be colorful and in tones that would cater to the “people’s national emotions”. But most importantly Kim Jong Il stresses in the speech that the costumes must be easy and flexible since the performers are executing difficult movements. This argument for practical costumes is recognizable from the history of gymnastics, and was stressed by both Tyrš and Jahn. In his argument for more pliant costumes one can again see how he is searching for a unity of an aesthetical and an ideological message.

The backdrops are the most impressive factor of the North Korean mass gymnastic displays, and although flip boards were used in Eastern Europe in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, especially in the DDR; the North Korean backdrops surpass them in skill and amount. Reading Kim Jong Il’s speech it becomes apparent that a lot of time and work has been invested in the development of the expression of the backdrop.

The backdrop is a major means of visually and vividly expressing the ideological content of the mass gymnastics. It consists of a variety of pictures, letters, and three-dimensional, rhythmic descriptions, which explain or supplement the ideas and themes that are difficult to express by means of gymnastics formations and music. It plays an important role in making mass gymnastics an epic work. It is now developing from plane forms to three-dimensional and rhythmic forms. We must not rest content with this, but continue to improve its rendering techniques.\textsuperscript{324}

The backdrop’s function is thus to contribute explicit ideological messages to the performance since the ideological content of gymnastics is more implicit.

Kim Jong Il has one surprising argument with regard to the backdrop and its ideological content: the pictures of his father should not be showed too frequently. He calls for a more respectful use of the portraits. “Because his revolutionary history runs through the mass gymnastic performance, there is no need to present his image on the backdrop for every act and every scene.”\textsuperscript{325} And, as we shall see in the discussion of the 2010 Arirang, the presentation of Kim Il Sung’s portrait becomes the climax of the performance and is only presented once. There is no doubt that Kim Jong Il in this speech sees the mass gymnastics as a medium for presenting an ideological message to the people, and to its visitors. He does not, however, discuss the reception of the expression, if the audience and the people will find it pleasing or enjoying, nor does he use this

\textsuperscript{323} Ibid., 5
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid., 7
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid., 7
as an argument for how the mass gymnastics should be developed. In fact, his argument is not so much of an argument as a deliverance of the final solution.

As shown above, the mass gymnastics in the DPRK has a connection to similar events in Europe in the 20th century, and can also be placed in connection to the Olympic movement. Sports sociologist and political scientist Udo Merkel describes the 2008 Arirang in connection to the Beijing Olympics and reflects on how athletic relations and accomplishments have been important to the North Korean state. The mass gymnastic events have been, and still are, a way of displaying athletic might without actually having to relate to other countries in a way that is not competitive. In a study of mass performances in Uzbekistan after the fall of the Soviet Union, the American sociologist Laura L. Adams proposes that the Uzbekistani regime has staged ceremonies of Olympism without the athleticism that would otherwise follow. Adams discusses how the use of what she calls “Olympic style spectacle” strengthens the Uzbek notion of participation in a world community and universalizes Uzbek national identity. The Uzbek expression differs from the North Korean one most prominently in that they do not include gymnastics, but the notion of internationalism through nationalism can be said to be the same as in North Korea. The heritage of the Olympic movement in the Arirang performance becomes clear when we see how this issue of internationalism through nationalism is merged with a deep focus on athleticism and physical strength.

During the last decades of the 20th century mass gymnastic displays were frequently staged in the DPRK, but always for some special occasion. Although the first Arirang performance was held on April 15th 2002, Kim Il Sung’s 90th birthday, the start of the Arirang performances in 2002 also meant an opening for the possibility of putting on events on dates other than the holidays earlier reserved for performances of these proportions. It was no longer an expression reserved for holidays and special occasions. After the series of performances in 2002, the next Arirang was staged in 2005, and after not being played in 2006, it has been played every year since 2007.

The Arirang performance is now performed approximately four times a week, for a period lasting for almost two months from late August to early October. Kim Jong Il has been present at the premieres, and according to Suk-Young Kim he was present twice in 2002, bringing the Russian foreign minister Igor Sergeyevich Ivanov the

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second time.\textsuperscript{328} The Arirang of today is the same performance as the 2002 version, with only a few alterations. Some sections that were part of the 2010 version have been included later. I will describe some of these alterations in my discussion of the 2010 version. When I asked my guide in Pyongyang who had directed it, she said she did not know his name, but he had received the Kim Il Sung-prize. Since everything is collectively created, if not created by the leaders, it is not of interest who has designed the Arirang.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the title \textit{Arirang} is taken from a famous pan-Korean folk song that exists both north and south of the DMZ. According to E. Taylor Atkins it has been claimed that if (or when) the two parts of Korea finally reunite, Arirang would become the national anthem. However, the song exists in a multitude of versions and there would be good reason to envisage that they would not be able to agree on which one.\textsuperscript{329} The word Arirang is nonsensical, and the song has been given this name because of the humming of these sounds in the refrain. Atkins points out that this is one of the few characteristics that define a song as Arirang: “To qualify as an “Arirang,” a composition requires little more than a refrain “Arirang arirang arariyo” and maybe a nod to the familiar contours of the melody.”\textsuperscript{330} Still, the notion of the Arirang being a folk song with the potential of becoming a national anthem shows how the Korean people attribute a strong national value to the song, something that describes the nation as nation. In the Republic of Korea (ROK) there is even an international television channel called Arirang. So, that the North Koreans chose the song as title for the performance connects it to its national significance, and the song appears frequently in the performance.

\textbf{5.4.2 Experiencing the Arirang performance}

I witnessed the Arirang performance in Pyongyang during my visit in September 2010. It was an experience not comparable to anything else I have ever experienced. Although I was prepared and had spent much time watching videos of earlier events, nothing could prepare me for the experience of people and skill. The reason for my reaction was that approximately 120,000 people, mostly schoolchildren and youths, perform in the Arirang performance, which lasts for about 90 minutes. 100,000 of the participants perform as gymnasts and dancers, and the remaining 20,000 turn and change the flip

\textsuperscript{328} Kim, \textit{Illusive Utopia}, 279
\textsuperscript{329} Atkins, “The Dual Career of “Arirang,”” 650
\textsuperscript{330} Ibid.
boards on the opposite side of the stadium. The May Day stadium in Pyongyang is said to be the largest stadium in the world with a capacity of 150,000 people.

On September 23rd 2010, when I was present, the performance started at 7 p.m. with a warm up and our guides had us there in good time, which gave me time to marvel over the huge stadium, and also offered us an opportunity to shop in the souvenir booths that were set up all around inside the stadium building. The night was a bit cold, being in the end of September, and although I did not feel it that much while the performance was going on, my memory of the event is deeply connected to a feeling of cold, fresh air. As tourists we had the possibility to choose between four different classes of tickets ranging in price from 80 to 350 Euros. I chose to buy a second class ticket, and paid 150 Euros. This gave me a good seat in the center of the stadium’s seating area. The seating arrangements resembled those you would encounter at a sporting event except for the fact that one side is reserved for the people with the flip boards. The whole stadium was lit up, as it would have been at a sporting event, but sometimes during the performance the stadium went black or the lighting was dimmed.

The mass performance started with men dressed in white with light blue flags marching into the stadium, while the flip boards created abstract geometrical forms in different colors as part of the warm up. In addition to the marching men, a great number of women dressed in yellow, green, and pink dresses resembling the national costume started to fill the stadium, and were encircled by the men with the blue flags. The men with the flags later withdrew to the back of the stadium where the stadium ended and the backdrop started, and thereby marked the transition from performers to backdrop: the men with the flags created a bridge, and a unity of people.

The women danced in lines to happy music, and were later joined by a group of younger girls in gymnastic outfits with red bows in their hands. They filled the stadium in a traditional mass gymnastic fashion, in line. The stadium went dark before a laser show ended the prologue. This introductory dance section can be seen as a prologue, and including the prologue, the Arirang consists of five chapters or acts, where the four following the prologue are again divided into scenes that all have titles. The first act after the prologue began in darkness with a woman solemnly singing the Arirang song. A film was projected onto the backdrop and showed two people, a man and a woman, being separated. He looked like he was going to war, and the woman stretched her arms longingly after him as he walked away. The image presented their suffering, and their sacrifice for the nation. The images in the film were dark, and the skies were filled with
inky clouds. But then, while the woman on stage was still singing the Arirang song the colors on the backdrop gradually changed and turned yellow and orange.\textsuperscript{331}

While the backdrop turned yellow and orange, the performers on stage created waves. As already mentioned, the waves are an important and common North Korean symbol that frequently appears in mass gymnastic displays. While holding blue cloth the performers made wavelike movements all over the stadium floor. At this point it had become quite clear that the dark clouds over the country, accompanied by the solemn song, stormy weather, and separation of families symbolized Japanese occupation and the suffering the Korean people had to endure during that time. Slowly the backdrop turned completely orange and the waving performers turned orange with it. A rising sun was projected onto the backdrop and the performers became the rays of the sun. The section with the sunrise is one of the most cited sections from the Arirang, probably because of its use of colors and symbols. It does not resemble traditional mass gymnastics in that it is more artistic. Aesthetically we might compare it to a musical, only executed on an extremely large scale. The symbol of the sun is an unambiguous sign of The Eternal President Kim Il Sung. Kim took the name Il Sung in the 1930s, it even means “become the sun”, and the sun metaphor is used extensively in the North Korean narrative.\textsuperscript{332} Bearing in mind that the sun rises out of the darkness and the suffering, it becomes clear that the sun functions as a savior. In addition to this, the back of the stage was decorated by the summit of Mount Paektu, a traditionally holy mountain in Korea, resembling the significance Mount Fuji has for Japan, which functions as a symbol of the nation. The mountain is projected on to the backdrop, but seems to stand on the stage floor in the manner of a traditional theatre set. When the sun is Kim Il Sung rising to save the country after darkness and suffering, illuminating a symbol of the nation, the symbolism is clear. Kim Il Sung is the savior of Korea. The section ends with the word Arirang projected in hangul letters on the backdrop while the refrain of the song is played in a ceremonial and solemn fashion.

After the solemn climax of the introduction with the spelling out of the title on the backdrop, the stage went dark again, and in the next scene we were transported back to 1905 and the suffering of the Korean people. I know this because the number 1905 appeared on the backdrop. This scene introduced the first act or chapter, the title of the chapter was visible above the backdrop. This first chapter was called \textit{Arirang nation}. While the backdrop informed us of the year that was to be depicted, the performers on

\textsuperscript{331} See image one in the Appendix
\textsuperscript{332} Martin, \textit{Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader}, 30
the floor once again made out waves in a storm. Some more people made their way out of the waves, and after a while we could see a group of them, some dressed in uniforms, trying to part the water and pass through it. This element had some biblical connotations, although they are unknown to the North Korean public, the reference to the chosen people fleeing from their oppressors through the parting of water while awaiting their savior is a connotation impossible to avoid at this point in the performance, and bearing in mind other Christian and biblical characteristics of the North Korean narrative, it becomes relevant. As a part of the 1905 depiction of suffering, a storm and a chain appeared on the backdrop, and when the dramatic music reached a climax, lightning broke the chain.

Consecutive to this, the music slowed down and the backdrop changed into a dark but calm, night landscape. A shining star appeared, it moved upwards and when it reached the top of the backdrop, a torch on the roof was lit. Again the symbolism is easy to interpret. The lightning breaking the chain of what can be seen as Japanese oppression is the light of Kim Il Sung. The lightning became the star which again turned into the ever burning torch of the eternal president, Kim Il Sung. While the star rose to the top the performers became rays of light and we heard cheerful music. This introduced the next section, letting the stage gradually be filled with men in gymnastic outfits, holding cloth torches.

The torch is also a symbol of the ideology *Juche*. The Juche tower in central Pyongyang has a torch on top of it, and the ideology is very often presented by the image of a torch. The torch symbol clearly resonates the Kim Il Sung symbolism which is connected to the sun and star, and when the Juche torch is presented as the eternally burning flame, it is of course also a symbol of Kim Il Sung, the man who allegedly singlehandedly created the ideology for the people. The men with the torches were dressed in blue and white traditional gymnastic outfits.\(^{333}\) The interesting thing with the male performers and their outfits was that the performers were presented as traditional gymnasts here, and to a larger extent resembled traditional mass gymnastics than what had been previously presented in the Arirang performance. The gymnasts jogged in line and the whole group of performers jogged and waved cloth torches in various formations. On the backdrop we could see the flag of the Korean Worker’s Party, a red flag recognized as the party flag by its party symbol: the hammer, sickle, and brush in yellow in the middle. The section ended with the men forming letters on the floor while

\(^{333}\) See image two in the Appendix
the backdrop presented a torchlight parade, which are common at state celebrations. When the light subsequently went out, all we could see illuminated were the red cloth torches.\textsuperscript{334}

The following section was dominated by flowers, specifically, magnolias. Although both the great and the dear leader, that is, Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il have their own flowers named after them, the national flower is the magnolia. In this section of the performance a large group of young women, dressed either in long pink dresses resembling the magnolia, or in female military uniform and holding magnolias, danced.\textsuperscript{335} The backdrop showed a landscape covered with magnolias. Just as the hybrid orchid called \textit{kimilsungia} is pink, it seems as if all pink flowers symbolize Kim Il Sung. The section with magnolias differed from the previous one in that it had little to do with gymnastics. Instead, I associated it more with an over the top musical, rather than traditional mass gymnastics. The women’s costumes also reminded me of North Korean \textit{revolutionary operas}, a genre of operettas with ideological sound content that has been popular in North Korea during the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, and in many cases has female heroines. While I was doing field work in South Korea, I got the opportunity to watch all the revolutionary operas on film, and many of them include female heroines, and pink flowers are often used.\textsuperscript{336}

After a while the performers dressed as female soldiers withdrew from the centre stage and the women dressed in pink formed a rectangular shape. On the backdrop we could see Pyongyang’s Arc of triumph before the backdrop changed to show the national flag. At the same time as the backdrop changed, the women lifted up colored cloth in a way that also depicted the flag, while standing on the floor of the stage. The women continued to dance in formation while making out different forms of the flag.\textsuperscript{337} In the fourth scene of the first act the performers dressed like female soldiers were brought back onto the stage, this time as a marching band. The backdrop showed us a large handgun that represented a gun Kim Il Sung gave to his son, Kim Jong Il.\textsuperscript{338} This section reminded me mostly of a military tattoo; the whole section consisted of the performers dressed as soldiers marching in formations, and was accompanied by

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{334} According to a tour guide sitting next to me at the Arirang, the letters made out by the cloth torches lit up with red light made out the word \textit{independence}.
  \item \textsuperscript{335} See image three in the Appendix
  \item \textsuperscript{336} The most important revolutionary opera, which exists both in stage and film versions, and is very popular in the DPRK, is called \textit{Flower Girl}. The main protagonist of this opera is a young girl who earns her living by selling azaleas, another pink flower, during the Japanese occupation. In the set design of the stage version the pink flowers are very prominent. They are also very much present in the film version.
  \item \textsuperscript{337} See image four in the Appendix
  \item \textsuperscript{338} See image five in the Appendix
\end{itemize}
military images on the backdrop, most prominently the symbol of the army: A yellow star on a red background.

The military scene ended with the climax of the performance. The music slowed down before the backdrop was changed, and we saw a large portrait of Kim Il Sung as an old man. The portrait was on a large cloth that was rolled down, around it we saw first a circle of yellow that became pink and red around the rim, and at the edges of the backdrop there were red flowers.\textsuperscript{339} We heard a sigh go through the audience before a huge round of applause. It is clear that the yellow and gold surrounding Kim Il Sung’s face represented the symbols of him as the sun, while the pink and red represented the flower symbol and created direct lines between the straight forward image of the portrait and the symbolism that had been portrayed up until this point in the performance; and which were symbols well known to the North Korean audience. While the backdrop showed the portrait, the performers made out the army symbol on the stadium floor. The presentation of this image concluded the first act of the performance.\textsuperscript{340}

The second act started with a now familiar image. The stage was dark. On the backdrop we could see a night landscape with a moon and a mountain with a road where a train was driving towards the top. All the performers were women dressed in long, white gowns, and they stood in a big circle in the middle of the stage which was illuminated like a moon. Again there was a play on the contrasts of light and dark, and there was no question of who or what was represented through the light. They continued in the same way and once again the performers formed waves, conveyed an understanding that there was a storm going on. During this storm we could see a group of people making their way through the waves. The backdrop was filled with dramatic images of waves in a storm before everything gradually calmed down. After the storm, the performers stood still and, although still dark the audience was presented with an image of a city at nighttime on the backdrop. The city was of course Pyongyang, and, as mentioned above, the city has some inherent symbolic qualities as the centre of the state and the harborer of the leaders, both alive and eternal. The image of the city at night marked a passage to the next scene. The city emerged as the calm and safe place that is calm and safe exactly because of the fight that was fought by the leaders to achieve peace.

\textsuperscript{339} See image six in the Appendix

\textsuperscript{340} In the 2012 version of the performance, performed after Kim Jong Il’s death in December 2011, a portrait of Kim Jong Il is included in the Arirang performance together with the portrait of Kim Il Sung. This shows how the Arirang performance adapts to the social changes, and the position Kim Jong Il has received after his death.
The section involving children has a long tradition in mass gymnastic displays. In Czechoslovakia children performed together with their parents, and in Yugoslavia children were presented as a symbol of the state’s youthfulness, and its future. In the Arirang the children perform by themselves, and their scene differs distinctly from rest of the performance. First of all it has more characteristics of traditional mass gymnastics, and it lacks the narrative foundation of the previous scenes. The backdrop showed cartoon like pictures of well fed children playing and doing sports in addition to a picture of a sunny beach. The music was joyful and fun, and the impression it gave was that of a care free life where children are happy and well fed. Some of the most impressive technical acts could be seen in this scene. I was completely in awe when I saw the children jumping ropes while at the same time riding a unicycle. The acrobatics the children performed had a high level of difficulty, and bearing in mind how young they were, probably around six or seven years old, the actions were even more impressive. The backdrop in this section was also one of the most impressive because fast and small shifts contributed to making the backdrop look animated, although it was made by schoolchildren holding flip boards. In one image that showed two children, a boy and a girl drinking milk, the flip boards that made out the eyes were changed so that it looked like they were blinking. The scene ended with all the children forming a tight rectangle shape at the front of the stadium while waving and yelling. When I was present at the stadium, and the first times I saw video documentation of it, I did not understand what they yelled, before it suddenly became clear. They yelled “O-BO-DJI”, the Korean word for father, and the backdrop spelled out the words “Thank you, general father!”^341

As mentioned, the children in the Czechoslovakian mass gymnastic displays performed together with their parents. There the family was subjected as a unified ideological subject. The families, and especially the relation between mother and child, were recognized as an important ideological unity. In the DPRK the children did not seem to have parents, no adults were present during the children’s section at all. The children depicted on the backdrop looked free and without any connection to adults. This makes sense when seen in relation to the fact that they yelled father before running off stage. There is only one father, Kim Il Sung, and the nation is the family. The children are the children of the one and only family, the nation, led by the parent Kim Il Sung who is both father and mother.

^341 See image seven in the Appendix
The section with the children was the first section where contemporary society was presented, and this differed from the previous section that mainly portrayed the historical narrative of suffering and occupation. From here on out, the performance portrayed the bliss of being North Korean, and how it will become even better in the future. It is in the sections following the children’s that the most alterations are made compared to the 2002 and 2005 versions of the Arirang. However, all the sections had the same aim; presenting a prosperous Korea and creating comfort for the future.

The interesting thing about these sections, to me as an outsider, is that they all conveyed what the DPRK is lacking, and the lack of these things became even clearer when presented as an overflow of wealth. The section that followed directly after the children’s scene was all about electricity. The movements on stage were choreographed as traditional gymnastics, including acrobatics where the participants lift each other up and make formations on stage; these movements were executed by women dressed in pink gymnastic outfits. On the backdrop we could see the building of a dam that would secure the supply of electricity, and irrigation in the fields. Considering the DPRK has a serious shortage of electricity, the images become ambiguous.\[342\]

The next section that depicted what the DPRK is lacking, was all about food: great amounts of different food supplies. The performers were now dressed in green, representing fertile soil while the backdrop showed us an abundance of food. First we could see sheep, after that eggs that hatched and became chickens, and then large and happy pigs. On stage the performers were also dressed like food products. Small children were dressed like eggs, and strange figures were meant to resemble pigs. We were also presented with fish, corn, and potatoes. Potatoes have become an important produce in the DPRK, and therefore appeared frequently. There was even a backdrop image with a smiling potato. The animals and vegetables were clearly meant to represent food, and were given cartoon like expressions, which were animated in order to look cute and fun. The interesting thing about the way these food supplies were animated and given human qualities, is that it was not done to alienate the spectator from the fact that the objects were to be desired as food, but rather to move the food close to the spectator, and make a fun remark about food production that would make the spectator just as happy as the potato.\[343\]

The section of products ended with presentations of the production of another scarce commodity; textiles. Most clothes in the DPRK are made out of a special syn-

\[342\] See image eight in the Appendix
\[343\] See image nine in the Appendix
thetic fabric resembling nylon, and as mentioned clothes are given to them at special occasions: clothes are therefore not something there is a plenitude of. The image connects the production of the clothes in the factory to the clothes given to the people, and achieves to focus both on the efficiency of the machines and technology, and on the endowment of clothing to the people by the leaders.

The following section was devoted to girls with hula hoops, a common element in North Korean mass gymnastics and, as shown above, an element Kim Jong Il, in 1987, explicitly requested more of in the gymnastic displays. The hoops were used for different actions, they threw them in the air, jumped through them, and rolled them on the floor. All the performers were girls dressed in light blue gymnastic outfits, and this section therefore placed itself in the row of scenes following traditional mass gymnastic aesthetics. The images presented on the backdrop during the hula hoop performance were less connected to the actions executed by the performers.

The most interesting image portrayed on the backdrop during this section was one where the Latin letters CNC were presented with pictures of satellite dishes behind them. CNC is an abbreviation of Computer Numerical Controller, and have been used as a symbol of the now appointed new leader Kim Jong Un. The symbol of CNC has appeared other places than in the Arirang, for instance a song has been made about the acronym CNC, and it has become an unambiguous symbol of the future and the new leader. The symbol signifies how Kim Jong Un will be the one to take the DPRK into the future, and this will happen through the use of new computer technology. This image of CNC is new, and first appeared in the 2010 version of the Arirang. It was probably placed there with the intention of revealing small hints about the new leader who had at that time not yet made his first official appearance. The image, colored in blue and silver, resembled an image from science fiction animation. When male gymnasts subsequently took over the stage future continued to be the main topic. The performing men were dressed in traditional male gymnasts’ outfits and for the first time apparatuses were used in the performance. While they performed the backdrop showed a golden gate opening up showing the year 2012 above the Pyongyang cityscape recognizable by the Juche tower. Hangul letters made out the words Prosperous and

344 See image 10 in the Appendix
powerful nation.³⁴⁵ There was no ambiguity to the fact that 2012 will become the year that Korea will prosper.³⁴⁶

The subsequent section was more traditional and made a comment about physical strength through the presentation of Taekwondo, a specific Korean form of martial arts. Taekwondo has national value in both North and South Korea, and is perceived as typical Korean martial arts. The interesting thing about the section introducing taekwondo is, however, that it in the 2002 and 2005 versions of the Arirang it was not performed as a martial arts section. Some of the choreography, mainly the formations, was similar, but the movements and costumes were military-based, giving no association to the popular national form of martial arts. Much of the same movements that were done in the military sections in 2002 and 2005, were also done in 2010, though with some alterations. The main difference was, however, in costume and backdrop. The movements in 2010 were also more related to taekwondo in the sense that they had included more sounds and yelling. When in earlier versions the scene ended with the soldiers raising the army flag, the taekwondo fighters raised the national flag. The previously performed army section and the taekwondo section are very similar, and it remains a bit unclear why it had been changed. One reason may be that where both sections implied strength and fighting spirit, only the army section had an enemy. Another reason may be the amount of tourists traveling to Pyongyang during Arirang season has increased considerably in the last years. American tourists are now also frequently present at the stadium. The North Korean government might therefore want to moderate the image of fighting against an enemy, and rather focus on the strength of the nation. This focus on the strength of the nation resembles early mass gymnastics where the militaristic aspect was presented through bodily strength rather than traditional military training.³⁴⁷

Another new section in the 2010 version depicted Kim Jong Il’s alleged birthplace. It is today common knowledge outside of the DPRK that Kim Jong Il was born in the eastern Soviet Union where his parents had taken refuge during the Second World War. However, since this was not beneficial to the myth of Kim Il Sung’s past as a guerrilla fighter against the Japanese, a story was made up that Kim Il Sung and his wife

³⁴⁵ Translation according to the tour guide sitting next to me.
³⁴⁶ The prophecy of 2012 coincided with the death of Kim Jong Il in late 2011 and the appointment of his son as leader. When I visited the DPRK again in April 2012 we were told of a great optimism in the country because of this change and that Kim Jong Un’s young age would make the country young and modern.
³⁴⁷ See image 11 in the Appendix
Kim Jong Suk held headquarters for their guerrilla fighting at the summit of the national mountain Mount Paektu, located north in Korea not far from its border with China, thus placing the family just inside the nation.\textsuperscript{348} To further strengthen the narrative of Kim Jong Il’s birth, a small log cabin has been built at the summit of Mount Paektu, a cabin often presented in official images, and now also in the Arirang. The backdrop image showed us the cabin surrounded by trees heavy with snow. Behind it we could see the mountain peak fittingly called Jong-II peak. The cabin in itself was in the display surrounded by a golden light. The performers were dressed in white, as if they were snowflakes, and in the middle a circle of soldiers made their way through the snow. The reason this image was included in the performance may have been to secure the position of Kim Jong Il. Up till now Kim Il Sung had been the main subject in all the images, and it might have been seen as necessary to weight the presentation of the leadership. However, Kim Il Sung is of course also present in the image of the cabin at Paektu since he is the reason that they allegedly were at the mountain, and that Kim Jong Il was born into the fight. This again makes Kim Jong Il fit as leader since his relation to the fight is physical.\textsuperscript{349}

Following a section of impressive acrobatics with performers hanging from trapezes resembling a circus and a backdrop showing an image of the Pyongyang cityscape with the Juche tower, the performance continued with focus on the future with the scene of reunification. The topic of reunification introduced the last act of the performance could be read as the beginning of the conclusion. Reunification is an important part of the North Korean ideological narrative. As already mentioned, the official mythology has it that one day the two parts of Korea will be reunited, and the suffering of separation will end. It starts with an animation projected on to the backdrop showing the traumatic border between the two parts of the nation. The performers, all female, dressed in white, made out two triangles representing the two Koreas. In front of the triangles the women held their arms out as if longing to meet the other triangle. On the backdrop the image of the border turned into a gate that opened. When the gate was opened the triangles dissolved and the women formed the image of the map of a unified Korea. During this section, the Arirang song was played, something that emphasized the national value of the song and the fact that the song is a song for the whole of Korea, not just for the DPRK. The backdrop then showed an image of a Pyongyang monument of reunification showing two sisters holding hands. The section of reunifica-

\textsuperscript{348} Myers, *The Cleanest Race*, 37, 49
\textsuperscript{349} See image 12 in the Appendix
tion has been a part of the Arirang since the start in 2002, and sends an important ideological message. First of all it is a declaration of a wish for peace, a statement that the DPRK is not a warmongering country, but a country setting the future reunification above all else. It is also a tool for placing the future into the narrative. The reunification of Korea becomes a symbol of all that is good, and all that will come in the future.350

Where reunification has been an important part of the final act of the Arirang since the beginning, another part has been added celebrating the friendship with China. China is the DPRK’s only political ally, and an important contact in the world of politics and nuclear quandaries. However, after sitting for almost an hour and a half watching nationalistic themes, it was a bit surprising that China was suddenly included in the celebration. Music with Chinese rhythms and harmonies was played, and Chinese props, like a Chinese dragon, were used. The section ended with two performers in the middle raising the North Korean and the Chinese flag as a symbol of the friendship. The section of friendship with China seemed strange because of the overwhelming nationalism distinguishing the rest of the performance, and it makes sense that it has not been a part of the performance from the start. The DPRK is dependent on China in many areas, so this was probably mainly a way of expressing this. However, the Arirang is now in increasing degree visited by Chinese tourists; when I was there the stadium was dominated by Chinese tour groups. How the audience at the event was constituted will be discussed further below, however, the presence of Chinese spectators seemed to have affected the performance. Communicating to the Chinese visitors that they perceive China as a friend and emphasizing the friendship might, however, be a way to increase the Chinese spectators’ impression of the performance and, more importantly, the legitimacy of the DPRK as a state.351

The final scene of the performance continued the international openness introduced by the section emphasizing friendship with China. The finale started with what must be thousands of girls dressed in pink and white running on to the stage and filling it with different formations. The backdrop presented a landscape that looked almost mythological with high mountains and water, when a large globe on a float surrounded by girls holding hula hoops was moved centre stage. While we heard the Arirang song again, the backdrop showed an image of three people, one black, one white, and one Asian gazing in the same direction. The gender of these people was toned down and they were deliberately given an androgynous look. The white person was noticeably

350 See image 13 in the Appendix
351 See image 14 in the Appendix
female, but the other two were harder to define. The nationalistic performance was clearly celebrating and giving value to something international and universal. Korea is marked on the globe, giving Korea a prominent position in the world, but although Korea is highlighted, a finale with such a deep focus on the rest of the world seemed surprising. Again, the argument of foreign visitors can be used, though unlike the section presenting the friendship with China, the finale has been the same since 2002. So while the foreign gaze is a partial explanation, the wish of placing the DPRK in the world is another. The ideology of self-reliance has led the country into isolation. This isolation is often presented as a positive thing through the nationalistic narrative presenting the North Korean people as a strong people who do not need help from the outside. However, it is also often presented as a situation that has not been self-inflicted. One of the reasons the DPRK experiences so much suffering is presented as solely a matter of the outside world, especially in regard to the USA and the UN. In the performance’s finale, the DPRK presented itself as wanting to have, and having a place in the world. It portrayed itself precisely as not being isolated, and with this scene following the obvious flirt with China, the message is even clearer.

5.4.3 The body in the Arirang performance
In Kim Jong Il’s speech from 1987 quoted above he gave the producers critique for presenting more art than gymnastics. Today, the Arirang performance is called a “Grand mass gymnastic and artistic performance”, proof that there is room for both art and gymnastics. Art is in this sense to be understood as dancing and the inclusion of a narrative, while gymnastics is represented by acrobatics, hula hoops, and other traditional gymnastic movements. It is therefore clear that the development of the Arirang has involved an increased use of so called artistic elements. The biggest difference from European mass gymnastics is the inclusion of the ideological narrative as a common point of reference. Mass gymnastic displays have always been related to ideology and have been parts of national narratives. The difference between the traditional mass gymnastic displays and the Arirang is that the Arirang, rather than making the gymnastics itself a part of the national narrative, exorcises, to use Barthes’ terminology, the already existing narrative by giving it a frame.

Where earlier mass gymnastics focused on able bodies, the Arirang focuses on a nationalistic narrative presented by bodies. Where the body in early mass gymnastics as developed by Jahn and Tyrš was presented as an important object in itself, the body in
the Arirang is only a bearer of meaning, not the object of meaning. For Jahn the able male body was an expression of strength in itself, and in Czechoslovakian mass gymnastics men performed nearly naked and drenched in mud, emphasizing sexuality and strength. The Arirang has none of these bodily and sexual references that were so frequent in earlier mass gymnastic displays. Suk Young Kim points out that men and women perform separately, and almost never together. If they are present on stage at the same time it is never as a unit but always as representing separate spheres. Just as in the children’s section where all the children are representatives of the great family nation of the parent leader, the adults do not belong to any other unity than the nation. They are not involved in relations with other people, only as the ideological subjects of the leader. The body is a part of the narrative, a bearer of meaning that is a pixel in the complete image of a unified narrative. Bodily individualism is non-existent, the bodies are narrative instruments rather than physical factors. Although the narrative expressed is an unambiguous North Korean narrative recognizable to the North Korean audience, the use of it raises some questions about who the performance is meant for. It is clear that it has become a tourist attraction.

In the end of my discussion of the historical mass gymnastic displays I presented some elements that I see as important in understanding the specific genre of performance. I saw how the body as movement was an important factor, how the cultic had been important in the early events, how the artistic became important in the post-war era, and how the use of symbols, and especially the body as symbol were important characteristics in all the described mass events. In the Arirang the body as movement is present mainly through impressive physical movements and acrobatics, but also to a high degree through the magnitude of bodies. The huge amount of bodies performing is in itself an important and overwhelming factor of the Arirang performance. The full title of the Arirang, Grand Mass Gymnastic Display and Artistic Performance, denotes that the artistic perspective is taken into the gymnastic expression, contrary to what Kim Jong Il wanted in 1987. The cultic element has changed compared to Jahn’s early use of the cultic, but must be said to be present in the Arirang. This is mainly visible in the grand cultic worship of Kim Il Sung. The cultic here lies in the collective action and bodily presence fused with symbolism, and the devotion of a leader. In her description of cults, Catherine Bell focuses, as demonstrated above, on the participants of the cult being presented as a “family”, this must certainly be said to be the case in the Arirang where the people are all presented as the children of Kim Il Sung. The aspect of
communitas and liminality in the Arirang differs from the other events. The liminality is not presented as something that only exists for the time period of the event, but something that has become the permanent condition of the North Korean people. This is particularly clear in the section of reunification. The artistic expression referred to here is, as I mentioned above, probably mostly to be understood as the inclusion of dance and narrative structures, but one might also say that the artistic elements are increased here through the excessive flip boards work and the massive use of colors in background, props, and costumes.

The use of symbols in the Arirang is massive and overwhelming. If it is the performative setting that condenses the symbols or if it is the magnitude of performers and flip board flippers, is hard to say. Most probably it is a combination, and the remaining fact is that the overwhelming use of the symbols has a deep impact on the spectators, and probably also reaches the performers. The body and the magnitude of bodies become the most important symbol, and as in the other events described above, the body represents many forms of citizens, but it also represents the object of the gaze of Kim Il Sung, which will be described further below, and which can be said to be one of the main functions of the Arirang performance.

5.5 Arirang, jouissance and Juche. The ideological function of the Arirang performance
5.5.1 The North Korean Real
The Arirang performance presents a unified ideological narrative. As spectator you are served sign after sign after sign, all with fixed meanings. The sun is a symbol standing unequivocally for Kim Il Sung, it has no other interpretation and cannot be mistaken. The same is true of the other symbols of light and its ubiquitousness in the performance, but they may have other meanings as well. This is the case with the symbol of the torch which represents the ideology. The ideology is an expression of Kim Il Sung, and in the end the torch is also a symbol of the eternal president. Even the waves, which is actually a symbol of the outside forces ends up being a symbol of Kim Il Sung when the focus is on the strong North Korean nation holding up against the storm. The gun that is seen in one of the backdrop images also ends up being a symbol of Kim Il Sung’s time as a guerrilla leader, as a fighter. In the children’s section, he is absent, but present all the same because of this absence. He is present within all the symbolization throughout the performance, but in the children’s section he is only there as the one that has achieved
the children’s happiness, not alluded to directly before the children explicitly thank their “father”.

There are less clear symbols in this section but the children perform solely as if they are under the gaze of their leader and parent Kim Il Sung. Even the symbol of the cabin and Mount Paektu which is presented in the performance to give Kim Jong Il more weight, ends up being a symbol of his father because it is Kim Il Sung’s merit that has provided Kim Jong Il with this (alleged) birthplace, and thus his fight is in the end his father’s fight. I argued above that it is possible to locate several trinities in the North Korean narrative, and linked it to the understanding of the trinity in Christianity. In the North Korean ideology, however, the trinity is not made up by equal structures, as the main point of gravity always seems to be Kim Il Sung. This is for instance seen in the different images of him as an old and young man. He is both the loving and caring parent, and the strong, young guerrilla fighter. These qualities are parts of the same unequivocal kernel, completing a range of meanings in an all-embracing nodal point.

All the signs in the Arirang relate back to Kim Il Sung as portrayed in the image on the backdrop in the performance’s dramaturgical climax. The image becomes the master-signifier of all other signifiers, the last signifier in the signifying chain that quilts all the signifiers together, but not having a signified. Seen in this way it is no surprise that Kim Jong Il called for a more thoughtful use of the portrait in 1987. There are enough symbols of Kim Il Sung, the master-signifier must not be shown more than necessary so as not to lose its effectiveness as all-quilting master-signifier. Kim Il Sung’s gaze is present in the performance, as shown above this is especially visible in the section with the children. Through this gaze the symbol of Kim as master-signifier interpellates its ideological subjects and stitches them together into the ideology. Every performer and every interpellated spectator are quilted into the signifying chain where everything ends up in the image of Kim Il Sung and his gaze.

Kim Il Sung is the kernel of the signifying chain, he is the North Korean Real in the Žižekian sense. The great myths of Kim Il Sung, and through him the stories of Korean self-sufficiency and superiority lie as an effective ‘truth’ within all the symbols, he appears as a hard impenetrable kernel that at the same time is a void, an ideological Real. He exists at the same time that he does not. He is the end of the chain, but from there he ends up being nothing but a void. The signifying chain ends up in a kernel that

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352 This has changed somewhat after Kim Jong Il’s death. The official ideological narrative today focuses more on Kim Jong Il than it did before he died. The 2012 Arirang performance, for instance, includes a portrait of Kim Jong Il as well as the one of Kim Il Sung.
turns out to be a void. Kim Il Sung is dead. He is no longer the creator of ideological signification. He is the non-existent kernel of North Korean ideology. The image of Kim Il Sung masks that there is nothing behind it, that there is nothing but a void, a non-existent parent providing non-existent love. The love of Kim Il Sung is not a regular love but an all-embracing North Korean ideological structure presented through emphasis on emotions.

Kim Il Sung and his love is the object of desire, his love is worth desiring, but peeking inside the void shows the ultimate jouissance, lacking foundation in anything except another void. I would like to argue that the North Korean jouissance is the desire for this love and the kernel of love in itself. The love of Kim Il Sung is the utmost desire, but is at the same time the element masking the painful fact that this love is an ideological fantasy. The love of Kim Il Sung is what interpellates the ideological subjects, quilts them through being the receiver of love and the love they present back. Every object, every gift, and every smile from Kim Il Sung ends up as an expression of the love quilting the ideological subject into the big quilt of kimilsungism. The love of Kim Il Sung is both the utmost desire and the device masking that the love is a void. Transgressing the love, through seeking the object of desire and jouissance will be an act of terrible pain. One would rather keep the jouissance, in this case the love, than search for pain.

The Arirang performance shows this side of the ideology in a condensed version. The relation between Kim Il Sung’s gaze and the people is an image of society. His gaze is present through the whole performance, and the performers are presented as ideological subjects who aware of the gaze and are performing directly towards it. Every performer is presented as ideological subjects having a place in the collective body of the family nation. They are interpellated as subjects, belonging to the collective. Still, when participating as spectator in the performance I could not help but wonder what my role was in this spectacle. Was I interpellated? And what was the relation between the performers and their audience?

5.5.2 The autopoietic feedback loop and the role of the tourist spectator in the Arirang performance.

When I witnessed the Arirang performance in September 2010 it was late in the season, and the performance had already been running for some time. More than three million people live in Pyongyang, still at a stadium with a capacity of 150 000, 20 performances
would be enough to allow everyone in Pyongyang the chance of attending. The performance is played approximately 40 times during a season, based on the presumption that they run it four times a week for two months. There is no way the stadium can be filled every night. When I was there the stadium looked almost empty. In addition to the tour groups consisting of Western and Chinese tourists there was a great amount of soldiers that looked like they had been deployed as seat-fillers. It is thus easy to say that there were many times more people on stage, than there were in the audience. I could not help questioning why the performance was staged, and who the targeted audience of the Arirang performance really was. This is not to say that there were few people in the audience. Since the performance took place in what is supposedly the world’s largest stadium, there must have been thousands of people there. However, in comparison to how many the stadium actually seats and how many people were performing, the stadium felt more empty than I expected.

Above, in the discussion of theatricality and the duality of communication I presented Fischer-Lichte’s view on what she calls the *autopoietic feedback loop* as central to the communication of performance. When Fischer-Lichte analyzes mass performance in the interwar era and the USA in her book *Sacrifice, Ritual, Theatre* from 2004, she also emphasized how these events were dependent on the *autopoietic feedback loop*. Fischer-Lichte uses the same term in her book *The Transformative Power of Performance* from 2008, and here the term is not exclusively used for mass performance, but is a characteristic of performance in general. I agree with the feedback loop being a characteristic of performance in general, but will propose that the feedback loop will be strengthened in performances where extraordinary amounts of people participate as both spectators and performers. In the theory of the *autopoietic feedback loop* applied on mass performance in the interwar period, Fischer-Lichte regards performance as acts of two-way communication. In this loop the communication between stage and audience becomes a performative catalyst in which the performative event is created. Through a staged rituality where both spectators and performers are included in a transformation, the mass performances are able to influence its society, its surroundings, and community with that which is experienced within the event. In traditional mass gymnastic events, particularly in Germany before the Second World War, the focus was on a cultic and liminal event with elements of staged rituality and presence.

One of the reasons for the feedback loop being harder to locate in the Arirang than in traditional gymnastics, and especially early German mass gymnastics, is the
difficulty of understanding what the performance wants to communicate. Not that I did not understand the message, as shown above, the message of Kim Il Sung is quite clear, and although much of the analysis has been done in hindsight, where many of the symbols were not as clear for me at the time as they have later become, there was never any doubt that Kim Il Sung was the main object of the performance. Nevertheless, I am not interpellated by Kim Il Sung’s gaze. His love does not see me or quilt me into the master narrative. I stand outside, and can consequently not communicate back what has been communicated out. When I am not interpellated by the performance, when I am not a target for the communication, my communication back into the loop, wavers. This means that when we place ourselves outside the performative act of communication we do not have the ability to fully take part in the autopoietic feedback loop. It is, however, important to note that it is not possible to become totally uninfluenced by the performative act, so in some degree we will of course take part in the loop, but the lack of people in the audience, the great distance from the auditorium to the stage, and a lack of ideological understanding of the event’s message changes the character of the presence of the loop.

Where early mass gymnastics focussed on the physical body and its presentness in the meeting with the audience and other participants, the Arirang presents a semiotic body representing the children of Kim Il Sung and thereby presenting Kim Il Sung himself. To Erika Fischer-Lichte presentness is a performative quality common to performative events where performer and spectator meet.\textsuperscript{353} She distinguishes between a weak and strong concept of presence, where the weak concept of presence is recognized by traditional theatre experiences in the meeting with the phenomenological presence of a performative semiotic body. The encounter with the strong concept of presence becomes an intense experience of presentness as can be found in performance art where the presence of the phenomenological body is the focus of the performative act. I will argue that the stronger the concept of presence is, the stronger the feedback loop works. When Fischer-Lichte speaks of concepts of presence she uses traditional theatre situations as examples, where, in many cases, one or two bodies are responsible for the creation of presence. In the Arirang there are 100 000 people performing, not counting the people with the flip boards. This has an impact on the experience of presence although the presence is mainly made out of semiotic bodies. The overwhelming meeting with the bodies, which represented something I was not interpellated to under-

\textsuperscript{353} Fischer-Lichte, \textit{The Transformative Power of Performance}, 94
stand, presented to a crowd of people with a lacking ability to communicate back because of the discrepancy in amount of people performing, and people watching, increased my puzzlement over who they were performing for.

Although I did not feel like the target of the communicational act of the performance, the audience in the stadium is primarily made up of tourists, a fact that makes it difficult to argue that I was not a part of the targeted audience. And as argued in the discussion on the Arirang above, several sections also seemed to be included to please foreign visitors, especially the Chinese. The answer must be that I certainly was part of the targeted audience, but that I was a spectator to the whole event of communication without being able to communicate myself. Although I was not interpellated by the message, or quilted into the narrative of love presented to me, I was the targeted audience of the presentation of this love from Kim Il Sung for his subjects and the subjects desire for it, of the North Korean jouissance. Participating in Arirang was an enjoyable event. I was astonished, fascinated, surprised, and utterly and thoroughly estranged. What I witnessed was, to a large degree, an act of one-way communication from stage to audience because what was presented on stage, in so many ways, surpassed any possible reaction from the bewildered audience. I wanted to react, I wanted to communicate, but rather than being able to participate in the feedback loop I remained overwhelmed. Instead of receiving the empty love, I witnessed its communication. I saw it, but I did not understand it. I was not interpellated by it, and did not desire it back. At the same time as I was a spectator at a mass theatre event, I was a spectator of communication. I was fascinated, happy, and astonished, and I wanted to react as a proper subject, but I could not. I witnessed a performative feedback loop of love that was there exactly because it was not. Just as the love itself, which is more desirable because of its inexistence.

In this way the North Korean government succeeds in creating a double expression. The fact that the Arirang performance today, to a large extent, is staged for a foreign audience does not mean that it is not for the North Korean population. When 120 000 people participate as performers four times a week for two months, and in addition to this there are a great deal of people working with it in other capacities, including spectators, it does have an impact on a national audience. In addition to this the media coverage of the event is massive, and one would have to believe that the population living in the rural areas of the DPRK also see, at least parts of it on television. The Arirang performance thus has a local audience in addition to the foreigners.
The North Korean jouissance as love is presented directly to its subjects while at the same time showing an outside eye how this love is placed on the collective subjects and showing the subjects how the gaze of love is only meant for them, leaving the foreigner outside the love.

5.5.3 Theatricality in the Arirang

When attempting to understand what the Arirang aims to do, questions of presence, separation, and union arise; who is the targeted audience supposed to be, how is the implicit and explicit ideological image presented, what is the relationship of the performance to the leaders, and how and why has this form of bodily mass movement been chosen for this aim. These are also questions that are central to understanding theatricality because separation and union appears through movement and communication. The strict choreography and lack of spontaneity, and the complete subordination to outside control gives the Arirang an expression seemingly lacking in theatricality. The performers do not approach the audience directly, or provide metacommentaries on the act of performance. Physically there is a large gap between performers and audience, which leads to the form of performance seeming introverted and not taking advantage of the dualities which occur. Still, the amount of people, their execution of action and the overwhelming degree of communication of the message ends in a performatve event making use of its form in a way that has characteristics of theatricality.

In Fischer-Lichte’s discussion of retheatricalization from 1997 that I presented in chapter two, she argues that retheatricalization was concerned with a turn from language to body as semiotic sign. Seen in this way, the Arirang, in my view, is inherently theatrical in that it uses the body as ultimate sign. Complemented by the flip boards, the bodies are the main bearer of meaning in the performance. The bodily presence is in itself not explicitly emphasized, as it was in the theatre of the retheatricalization that Fischer-Lichte discusses, because the message presented through the bodies is emphasized more than the masses of bodies in themselves. Still, the presence is overwhelming because of the large amount of people.

Where the turn in the period of retheatricalization was a turn from a semiotic body presented as a sign of language and narrative of a phenomenological body presenting itself as a sign of itself, the Arirang presents a bodily presence that is both semiotic and phenomenological. This creates a duality in the act of perception where the distance from stage to audience and between the message and act of communication is fused
with an overwhelming bodily presence. The amount of bodies, the performers’ skill and synchronicity provides, at least for me, new perspectives on the human body, and bodily co-presence and communication. However, the overwhelming bodily presence reduces each body to signs and almost robotic images. Here again we see a discrepancy in the bodily communication that can be perceived as dual. In the chapter on theatricality I argued that the body as a sign in itself has an estranging effect because its form is distinctively different from quotidian communication. In the Arirang performance the estrangement effect surfaces through the massive size of everything presented. Everything in the performance is big, the amount of bodies and skill in particular, and the meeting with this massiveness is a thoroughly estranging experience, and this marked my perception of the event.

The use of a phenomenological body and the focus of presence over language and narrative in performance is often related to play. In chapter two I showed through Evreinov and Huizinga how a concept of play was central to understanding theatricality. The reason for this is that the explicit emphasis on the use of body in many cases can be seen as an act of freedom. Dance and physical movement have qualities that are possible to relate to a feeling of freedom and liminal times. In the Arirang much is done to give the movements a fun atmosphere. In the children’s section much weight is given to letting the children appear as though they are having fun, and that they are free. Still, the movements are so strictly choreographed that the element of play is largely complemented by the use of strict control. This discrepancy has an uncomfortable ring of theatricality. The uncomfortable side lies in the notion of knowing that what you see is the expression of a strict dictatorship that leaves little free action to its subjects but creates a performative expression that still emphasizes a strict freedom to play in an ideological frame. The duality of play and control creates an uncomfortable form of theatricality where the staging of the regime is crossed with the ambiguous performative actions of its subjects.

In my discussion of theatricality I argued that theatricality is recognized by its ability to separate and unite at the same time. This is often a spatial question, and in the Arirang the great spatial distance between stage and audience, and relatively poor attendance, creates mainly distancing effects. When the spectators are not interpellated by the ideological message, the ideology of the event also functions mainly as distancing. As spectator I was made very aware of the space of the other, in both Žižek’s and Féral’s use of the term, a complete clivage where I stood outside, merely reacting with
awe to a realm I could not know. The space of the other in this case becomes a space of a very specific other, and the presence of Kim Il Sung is tangible throughout the performance. His conspicuous gaze on the performance creates a distance between him, standing outside as an omnipresent godlike spectator, and the performers on stage. As spectator I witnessed the communication between the godlike gaze and the performers, where this again was communicated further to the spectator in the stadium. The clivage is double, one between stage and audience, and one between the performers and the nation they represent and their eternal leader. Here we can see how Féral’s concept of Other of theatrical space comes close to a Žižekian Other of desire.

Following my own argumentation of theatricality as a characteristic that both separates and unites, the Arirang feels like an event that mainly separates and therefore to some degree lacks theatricality. Still, the event unites in its message and its extreme bodily presence, what we in Fischer-Lichte’s terminology could call a strong concept of presence. The message is in itself a message of unity. The narrative is presented as extremely unified, as are the performers, and the spectators are invited to take part in this unity. The ideological narrative and notion of belonging and interpellation of spectators increases the unity of stage and audience both spatially and ideologically.

The relation between the outside gaze and the performers is critical to understanding the theatricality of the Arirang. Kim Il Sung is, as explained above, the narrative centre of the performance. He is what is presented to the audience as thematic kernel, and what gives the performers motivation to perform. Seen in a Žižekian sense, Kim Il Sung is the Real traumatic kernel of the performance, and the performance functions as masking device for the void. Kim Il Sung is present in all capacities in the performance, but still he is not. He is not there because he literally does not exist, he is dead. And in addition to being dead, he has never existed in the way the performance presents him. The Arirang performs this void. And it almost seems like the more people they put on stage, the more they are trying to hide the fact that what is really performed is a void. The relation between the megalomaniac presentation and the kernel creates a theatricality of ideology where the presentation is the Real, masking the void but actually presented as the kernel in itself.

The person cult of Kim Il Sung is the main motive of the performance. In my discussion of historical mass theatre and gymnastic events I demonstrated how the Führer cult of Hitler was the main factor of the Nazi party rallies, where it was possible to locate two main characters, Hitler and the masses. Hitler was described as the head of
the nation while the masses represented the body. In this way Hitler and the masses were a unity, one body combined by the rationality of the leader and the physical ecstasy of the masses. In the person cult of Kim Il Sung he is in no way presented as the rational head, he is the loving and care giving *Other*. He does not belong in a unity with the masses but stands above them, gazing at them and existing as a manifestation of their devotion. The relationship between leader and masses is in the DPRK not a relationship of bodily co-existence, as in the case of the Nazi Führer cult, it is a relationship of love from leader to subjects. In the Nazi events the relationship of the subjects to their leader is almost sexual, and the *jouissance* can be said to have a sexual origin. In the DPRK this love is parental, as if consisting of the love a parent has for its child, which makes the desire, to a great extent, desexualized. Where the two main characters in the party rallies unite in its expression, Kim Il Sung and the masses are always separated, existing in two different realms. Where the Nazi *Real* can be said to be this unity rather than merely Hitler himself, Kim Il Sung makes out the *Real* completely on his own. When Jahn started out his gymnastic events in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century he said that he wanted to create a movement expressing “love of the fatherland through gymnastics”, in the North Korean case it is rather “see how the motherland loves you, through gymnastics.”

I have proposed that the love of Kim Il Sung is the North Korean *jouissance*. In the performance this is presented as the ultimate desire, and it is presented as the operative concept of the nation. Food, clothes, electricity, and housing are all presented as something that is attainable through the love. This love does not exist, something that makes it a painful desire. Its own non-existence keeps the belief in the love alive, because losing the love would be the greatest pain of all. This is the main content of the performative act of the Arirang. The distance between the love presented and communicated, the way it is done, and the non-existent kernel, creates a discrepancy possible to locate as theatricality: the megalomaniac and grandiose expression, the 120 000 people, the relatively poor attendance. The non-existent love has no foundation, it is pure communication, and the stronger the communication becomes, the more the kernel, or the lack of it, is ignored. And the more the performance becomes an expression of pure communication relying on nothing but the communicational act and its own relation to itself, the clearer the theatricality of the event becomes. It is pure theatricality, representing nothing other than the action presented, and the reaction to love. This is all
going on while the performers and spectators are gradually interpellated into a system of *jouissance*, in a desire for a non-existent leaderless and endless love.

The theatricality of the Arirang performance is indissolubly connected to the ideological expression. One reason for this is that the ideology in the performative expression explicitly interpellates the spectators as subjects. Everyone, both foreigners and locals, are seen by Kim Il Sung, and this gaze universalizes the emotional content and the connection one should have to the narrative content. This message unites everyone, both performers and spectators, while the dualities of space and communication are clearly present because of the large amount of people and large distance from spectators to performers. Another reason for the experience of theatricality was that to me as a foreigner, the last duality of art and life was continually present because I also had to take into account a system of belief and adherence that I did not understand or know how to perceive. This meant that the duality of art and life gradually increased through the oscillation of my experience of the North Korean society and ideology and the aesthetic expression I was served. My reaction to the performance was mainly one of awe, but in this awe dualities of theatricality appeared because the wonder was based in utter estrangement.

5.6 Summarizing remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the historical foundations of the mass gymnastic displays found in the DPRK today as background for an analysis of the Arirang performance. The historical expressions all had foundations in ideological and political views, and the relation between body and society was strong in the gymnastic displays. In Germany it started out as an oppositional movement, but was soon implemented in the official ideological expression under the Nazis, a position the gymnastics kept even after Hitler disbanded the movement in 1938. The work done by the gymnasts was also implemented in other performative expressions of the Nazi era, and many of the main concepts developed by the gymnasts were used in both the Thingspiel movement and in the party rallies. In the party rallies the Führer cult was manifested through the relation of the physical bodies of the participants and the Führer. This is clearly seen in Leni Riefenstahl’s film *Triumph des Willens* where there are two main characters: the masses and the Führer. This relation is also seen in the Arirang where the relationship between the eternal president and his subjects is the main relation of the performance.
The Arirang performance is a strange event. In a country where a large part of the population is lacking in such basic necessities as food and clothing, a massive spectacle is staged to emphasize the country’s ideology. I have shown in this chapter that the performance’s function is ambiguous because it is hard to locate who exactly the performance is performed for, and with such an ideological message the performance must have an audience in order to legitimate it. As it is mainly staged for a foreign gaze, the ideological message might not be perceived as intended by all the spectators, many of the symbols and a great degree of the narrative play on knowledge that the North Korean public is already cognizant of, but that is not at all as clear for the foreign visitor. Nevertheless, the ideological content of the performance is aimed at both the visitors and the ideological subjects of the nation. As a foreign visitor you are subjected to the jouissance you are not interpellated to understand, but which is presented as an object of desire you are required to envy. The love of the North Korean jouissance is so powerful and all-embracive, that making the audience forget the grim facts might be a legitimating act, or it may at least give both the foreign and the local audience the benefit of the doubt. However the impact the performance has on the foreign visitors, it is clear that the performance aims to present foreign visitors and its media audience across the world with a glimpse of North Korean love, and this love is presented in an arena that does not allow for discussions of nuclear uncertainty or famine.

The theatricality of Arirang is ambiguous, and visiting the performance was, for me, an act of utter confusion. I was clearly distanced both physically and mentally from an event I did not understand, and the relation between performers and spectators, so important for theatricality, was blurred. Nevertheless, I mean it is possible to locate theatricality in the relation between the performance and its message, between the performers and the gaze placed on it from an outside force, the gaze of a dead dictator. The North Korean jouissance becomes the reason and foundation of the theatricality, and the love of Kim Il Sung creates the effect of a continuous loop of presence and, proximity and absence, and separation and unification.
6.0 Living History and Civil War Reenactment

6.1 Introduction
This chapter researches the sphere of performing a different time, and the attempts to make a different time come alive through applying a concept of performed historical action in mass performance. Bringing a past time to life, or at least attempting to do so, is popular in many places around the world. Nonetheless, no place is it more popular than in the USA, and this chapter will thus focus on a case study from North America. There is a wide range of people that spend their time acting out past times and situations: they are both amateurs and professionals, and entertainers and educationalists. What they have in common is the eager belief in the concept of looking back in time and finding ways to perform a specific time of history for a contemporary audience.

In the beginning of this dissertation I formulated a research question where the relation of ideology and theatricality was prominent. I seek to answer the question of how theatricality can be used to express ideology in mass performances in different cultures. Here I will focus on the terms authenticity, the Real, and nostalgia in order to see how the theatricality in events relating to historical times is used in an American perspective. In chapter three I showed via Roland Barthes how myths and narratives can function as symbolic expressions of ideology, and in the chapter on mass performance in North Korea I showed how mythological and historical narratives were central in the Arirang performance. In this chapter the historical aspect of the ideological narratives will be at the centre of the discussion. The reenactments discussed in this chapter present American narratives on a grand scale. The narratives differ from the ones discussed in the previous chapter, but in order to answer my question on how theatricality is used in ideological expressions in mass events in different cultures, the concept of reenactment is a relevant point of research.

The theoretical discussions in this chapter will research the quest for the Real as discussed in chapter three. This will become especially relevant in connection to the discussion of authenticity below. In this chapter authenticity will be introduced because the term is central to the understanding of the aim of the performances, and it is a well known concept in reenactment. Authenticity is a category the participants in the movement set higher than everything else and will be discussed from different perspectives, including viewing it in relation to the Žižekian Real. Other theoretical frames will be the reenactment and museological performances as performance and theatrical presentation.
The movement of Civil War reenactments is a national American movement. They reenact American history for Americans in an American way, and as a foreigner not interpellated into the American narrative, and when I participated as spectator in the event, I felt estranged in several ways. How does the event relate to the American ideology and narrative of American history? And how does a theatricalized history function in the meeting with its physical audience?

I will start out by discussing the movement of living history museums. What characterizes a living history museum is that they put live, costumed people on the premises, creating a performative museum where one can see live people rather than just historical objects. In this chapter I will discuss both the movement in general, and more concretely my visit to the Colonial Williamsburg, a living history museum in Williamsburg, Virginia, in June 2011. The discussions of the living history museum, with a focus on Colonial Williamsburg are included to give perspective to the performance of history in the USA.\footnote{Living history and war reenactments are not the only arenas for performing history in the USA through the ages. This has been done in many different ways. One interesting form of performing history is the American pageant movement in the interwar years during the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century where it was common to perform different epochs and occurrences of local history.} In many ways these expressions of history can be said to be precursors to the reenactment movement but I do not propose that we can see this as a clear chronological development. Rather, I will argue that the early movements of history performance created a foundation for the reenactment movement to build on. I also want to show that attempts to perform history were very popular in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century in the USA, and that this focus on American history in performance is the same focus we can see in the living history museums and reenacted battles today. In order to show the popularity of performing history in the USA preceding the reenactment events, I will also include a short discussion of the American pageant movement of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

From there I will continue by discussing the background for war reenactments in the USA, with a special focus on reenactments of American Civil War battles. After having discussed the reasons and motivations for reenacting the Civil War and explaining how the Civil War reenactment movement functions, I will discuss and explain my visit to the 148\textsuperscript{th} anniversary battle in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania in July 2011. In this explanation my focus will be on how I experienced the event as a spectator, and on the dramaturgy of the event.
6.2 Living History Museums

The term *living history* is used differently depending on who uses it. Some include all attempts on recreating past times, others use it as a concept regarding a special form of historical or ethnographical museum. This chapter will include several forms, but this section of living history will focus on the museums, and the term will, in this chapter, be used to denote museums and exhibitions using live performers in period costume, also including performances presenting history through third-person narration. The theatricality encountered in the Colonial Williamsburg museum will differ from the theatricality of mass performance found in the reenactment of the battle of Gettysburg since the amount of performers is considerably smaller, although there were a great amount of spectators present when I was there. However, I believe that the form of theatricality presented at the museum will lend some important perspectives to the discussion of presenting history in mass performance, and on the perspective of theatricality and ideology in general while giving some interesting perspectives on the concept of *authenticity* that will be discussed below.

One of the most influential and most cited books on the living history movement, *Time Machines. The World of Living History*, was written by American ethnographer and living history enthusiast, Jay Anderson. Although Anderson has an academic background, his role as living history enthusiast surfaces many places in the book, for example when he enthusiastically explains his own old-fashioned beer brewing project, or his description of an experience he had when he actually believed he was in the early 19th century. The sources used in the discussion of museum practice are, to a large degree, cultural historians, and their perspective is mainly museological. I will, however, not focus on the museological sides of the museums, but on the performative aspects as they are used in museum practice. Some performance theorists have also researched living history museums, and I will therefore rely on the American performance theorist Scott Magelssen.

Magelssen also finds Anderson to be slightly biased towards living history, because of the way he presents an almost Darwinian form of evolution in the movement’s history which results in the present day American museums being the best and most developed museums of our time. According to Anderson, the idea for creating

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museological atmospheres for preserving the past originated in the Swedish open-air folklore museum Skansen which was established at the end of the 19th century. Skansen was founded by the Swedish folklorist Artur Hazelius in Stockholm in 1881 and consisted of buildings and artifacts collected from all over Sweden. In the years that followed, similar museums were constructed in several European countries. Hazelius included performances of traditional music and the celebration traditional holidays like midsummer and St. Lucia’s day, but most of the time the museums that followed Hazelius’ model did not include actors, this being an element that was developed in the USA.

Magelssen does not believe that living history is a more developed version of Skansen or that the living history movement can be traced directly back to this one particular museum since the museums and museum traditions are so different. The scope of history, as I see it, is an important difference between the original Scandinavian exhibitions and the early American ones. Where the Scandinavian folk museums try to gather information, objects, and buildings from all over the country from different periods, the American counterparts mainly focus on one period and one place at a time. Where the Scandinavian exhibitions wanted to move rural folk culture into the city, the American exhibitions wanted to get urban people to seek out and visit more rural areas, and there experience what life in this area must have been like in a specific period of time at that specific place of historical significance. Another very important difference is, as mentioned above, that the European outdoor museums seldom include actors.

In the USA today, several forms of living history locations exist. The most famous museums are Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, which will be discussed at length below, and the Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts. Both of these museums have chosen to deal with a specific period of American history that was especially important for the construction of the nation. Colonial Williamsburg presents the history of the American Revolution and the fight against the British, while Plimoth Plantation houses reconstructions of the first establishments of the first pilgrims in New England. In addition to these central museums there are smaller museums and living history farms all over the country. The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) currently has 277 member institutions across the USA and Canada,

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357 Anderson, *Time Machines*
358 Ibid., 17-23
and there are member institutions in 44 of the 50 American states. The living history movement can therefore be said to be both popular and extensive. At the living history farms they most often focus mainly on agricultural reenactment, cultivating the land in the way that it was done at a certain period of time, at a specific place. After the movement gained popularity in the USA, it spread across the world and in Britain, for instance, several old mansions have been recreated as period homes and museums where different periods of history are reenacted for visitors.

Living history claims to have several important functions: entertainment, education, and research. Jay Anderson describes how he moved into a cottage at the Plimoth Plantation for two weeks to research how they made beer in the 17th century, and how one can experience what life was like at a certain period of time by living like the historical inhabitants and thereby getting in touch with it. Many of the historical sites used for living history are, for instance, also used as archeological sites. When I visited Colonial Williamsburg there were areas that were closed to the public, but where we could, from the outside, see that archeological excavations were being done. The most preferred argument of living history is, however, that this way of educating the visitors in history will not estrange them or be boring; if visitors get the feeling of how life really was, they will gain a new understanding of history. But in the end we cannot free ourselves from the fact that the living history attractions are, in the main, tourist attractions and family events where the fun and games take a more central position than the learning experience. In the next section I will discuss the background for the performative museum in Colonial Williamsburg, and how believed dichotomies of history and entertainment created conflicts of presentation.

6.2.1 Colonial Williamsburg, a tourist attraction and a historical capital.
The town of Williamsburg served as the capital of the Virginia colony from the late 17th century, and was later a central arena in the fight for independence from Great Britain in the 1770s. It is the period of the rebellious fight against the British that is attempted to be recreated at the Colonial Williamsburg museum. In 1780, during the Revolutionary War, the capital of Virginia was moved to Richmond. This led to Williamsburg’s decline, and except for the College of William and Mary, and a nearby mental hospital, not much happened in the city. The colonial buildings withered away along with its place in official American history. This went on until the early 20th century when some

people saw some potential in restoring the now almost desolate and ruined colonial capital.

The Colonial Williamsburg museum was reconstructed in the late 1920s on the remnants of the colonial capital of the state of Virginia. The restoration of the old capital that was to become the museum was founded and funded by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the work consisted of restoring what would eventually be 500 buildings. The reconstruction was a long process, and the first exhibition of the museum opened to the public in 1932. They started immediately with live interpretation and costumed guides.\(^{360}\) The aim of the museum has been to educate the public, and also to create an entertaining atmosphere. Colonial Williamsburg’s previous vice president for research, Cary Carson points out in an article on planning in the museum, how the dichotomy of education and entertainment has played an important part in the problems faced in planning processes at the museum.\(^{361}\) According to Carson, this is the main dilemma faced at the museum. What is interesting in Carson’s emphasis on this dichotomy is that it is actually presented more as a dichotomy between authenticity and play or theatricality, than between educational value and fun. The term \textit{authenticity} will be elaborated on below; here I will state that it is connected to what is “real” and serious, and in opposition to theatre and play.

One of the aspects of the dilemma as presented by Carson is that the museum has, since the start, been dependent on marketing strategies and commercialism to attract paying visitors/customers. Underlying Carson’s explanation lies the notion that the museum’s dependency on paying customers and marketing strategies might compromise the \textit{authenticity} of the museum, making it mere theatricality rather than actual and \textit{real} history. Anthropologists Richard Handler and Eric Gable point out in their critical research on Colonial Williamsburg that it is important for the museum that the museum is a not-for-profit organization.\(^{362}\) Still, as also Handler and Gable recognize, the focus on pleasing the customer, providing entertainment, and making an income from ticket sales is palpable throughout the museum. According to Carson the discussion of the weighting of education and entertainment became heated already in the 1940s, and the museum directors concluded with the importance of not losing sight of

\(^{360}\) Anderson, \textit{Time Machines}, 31
\(^{361}\) Cary Carson, “Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums”, \textit{The Public Historian}, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Summer, 1998): 11-51
entertainment in their “quest for complete authenticity.” In the planning traditions at Colonial Williamsburg as explained by Carson it all comes down to different ways of balancing historical facts and history as entertainment in order to create and consistently recreate a formula for the museum’s success, and legitimate it as a place of relevant historical research at the same time as earning money via its function as a recreational leisure activity. Seeing that Carson wrote this article as an internal researcher, his conclusions about these conflicts are biased, and may also seem to be too one-sidedly positive when taking into account all the controversy that the museum has evoked.

Within the dilemma of entertainment and education lies the problem of whether Colonial Williamsburg is to be understood as a tourist attraction along the lines of Disneyland, or as an ethnographical museum. Handler and Gable question this by asking whether it is a “Republican Disneyland” or a serious educational institution, while later concluding that it was more of a “Republican Disneyland.” They also recount an interview they had with some visitors who compared it to Disneyland rather than a traditional museum, regarding it solely as a tourist attraction. And it is no wonder they felt this way, as I will show when discussing my visit to the museum below, I quickly felt like a consumer visitor, presented with the fairy tale story of American history, when exploring the museum area. Again we see the notion of seriousness versus entertainment related to authenticity presented as a problem. Disneyland is by definition inauthentic, and therefore not good, but an ethnographical museum is perceived as boring.

One of the main dilemmas the museum has encountered with regard to the above mentioned dichotomy is the problem of how to present black history. This dilemma is interesting because it shows how the museum must continually dwell on the problems regarding presentation and facts, performance and history. The museum has, since it opened, been a museum presenting the life of the Williamsburg society’s elite in the 18th century. The men presented were active in the fight for American independence, and the houses displayed were, of course, their houses with their objects, furniture, and interior design. This meant that a great deal of the 18th century inhabitants of Williamsburg were not presented. Virginia was at the time a wealthy colony because of their cultivation and export of tobacco, and they had a great number of slaves working in the fields and in private homes. Their story was not being told at Colonial Williamsburg. There may be

363 Carson, “Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums”
364 Handler and Gable, The New History in an Old Museum, 24+220
many reasons for black history not being emphasized at Colonial Williamsburg. Traditionally the grand narrative of history has been constructed from stories of great men, rather than ordinary people, workers, and slaves. In 1977 a new curriculum for the museum was established in which it was stated that Colonial Williamsburg was to depict the whole of Williamsburg society, including women, children, and slaves, and particularly what they were to call “the other half”, the black population.365

Together with colleague Anna Lawson, Eric Gable, and Richard Handler describe, in an article from 1992 on black and white history in Williamsburg, a peculiar problem the museum encountered when they attempted to accurately present the black population’s history. To show how the slaves lived in the 18th century, the museum built slave quarters. The slave quarters were built with small plots of land where the slaves grew food. The historians had explained that the watermelon had been an important part of the slaves’ summer diet, and the museum grew watermelons and placed traces of watermelon throughout the exhibition. This resulted in visitors feeling that they were presented with black stereotyping, and the next year other melons were also included in the crops, although the crop records indicated that other melons had not been cultivated to nearly the same degree as the watermelon.366 Here, the presentation trumped the facts. The image of black people and watermelons had obviously become a part of an ideological narrative the museum felt was wrong, so they turned it around, to create a less factual, but maybe just as ideological image.

Gable, Handler, and Lawson’s article was written in 1992 and does not therefore include the most controversial performative event of Colonial Williamsburg’s history, which occurred in 1994. To give an accurate description of life in late 18th century Williamsburg, the museum decided to stage a slave auction. The performance led to outrage in different communities, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was especially outraged.367 Carson describes the event, which was attended by 2000 spectators, and featured a slave woman who was sold to her free husband, a husband and wife who were sold to different slave owners even though the wife begged the man who bought her husband to buy her too, and a carpenter who was valued more because he had a craft and came with tools. According to the

366 Ibid., 802
367 Carson, “Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums”
account of the performance in the New York Times, it was introduced by a person in modern clothing explaining what was going to happen before the actors dressed in period clothing came in. In Carson’s account of the event it ends, positively, with the activist from the NAACP who had come to protest being so emotionally involved in the performance that he ended up changing his mind, believing instead that it was important that the museum also showed that side of the story. However, the controversy that erupted both during the time leading up to the performance and following it, led to a slave auction never being staged again at Colonial Williamsburg.

Staging the slave auction was a part of Colonial Williamsburg’s attempt to bring so-called “social history” to the forefront of the museum practice. In Handler and Gable’s research from the early 1990s, the conflicts of increasing the aspect of social history in an attempt to give a more “real” image of the 1770s contra showing the lives of the leaders are thoroughly explained. One of the details they present is the discussion of if they should remove horse dung from the roads immediately, or if it was all right to let it lie for a while. Leaving the dung would increase the feeling of “authenticity”, making it more “real”, since it was never removed in the “real” 1770s. The museum decided to keep the horse dung, but more controversial issues were at stake, especially the presentation of the slaves, which is where the slave auction comes in. Handler and Gable discuss several attempts, in their opinion unsuccessful, to make history less about great men, and more about slaves and women. Still, they conclude, the events presented, to a great extent, legitimate the actions. Over and over again the interpreters and guides present slavery as a social problem, while managing to infer that the slaves were not that badly treated, and that some slaves could be worth a lot of money. The aspect of social history was important to the museum’s credibility and culminated in the slave auction. Although social differences and problems are still presented at the museum, controversy of this sort seems far away at Colonial Williamsburg today.

6.2.2 Visiting Colonial Williamsburg

Controversy was certainly not what sprung to mind when I visited Colonial Williamsburg in June 2011, rather there was a feeling of harmony and peace all over the place.

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369 Carson, “Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums,” 51
370 Handler and Gable, The New History in an Old Museum, 3-8
We began our visit at the Colonial Williamsburg visitor center, a huge building outside the historical area where tickets were sold and information given. From there we took a free shuttle bus in to the historical area to start our tour of the museum in the way that the clerk selling us the tickets had explained. The Colonial Williamsburg area consisted of two parallel streets in addition to the Palace Green, an avenue leading up to the governor’s palace and conjoining streets. Within these streets there is a special “neighborhood” called the Revolutionary City where the performances take place. Here we could see several shops selling mostly souvenirs and period object replicas, and a fair amount of private houses and buildings one can visit and tour, including the old state capitol and the governor’s palace.

The end of the historic area is marked by road barrier so we knew when we had stepped out of it, and just on the outside was a small quarter called Merchants Square with contemporary restaurants, ice cream parlors, an ATM, and more souvenir shops. The buildings resembled the buildings inside the historical area, and the people visiting the restaurants and cafés were more or less the same people who were visiting the museum, so if it had not been for the road barrier it might have been a bit hard to understand the difference, except for the increased occurrence of contemporary objects, and some parked cars. The focus on history was therefore something that was not only possible to find within the museum’s so-called historical area, but was a characteristic that was extended outside the spatial boundaries of the museum.

The first thing we did was stay for a performance called “A Place Called Saratoga” in the Revolutionary City, in front of the Raleigh Tavern. The story line of the performance was based on news of the Americans triumph over the British having reached Williamsburg from Saratoga, New York. The year was 1777. The performance started with the male performers in period clothing chatting with the visitors and explaining what the situation was. This was done in the first person, as though they were all living in 1777, but the fact that only the performers were in costume, and the distance to the events in time made them less relevant and close to the spectators. This also created a distance to what the performers explained, and demanded that the performer be explicative in a way that clearly only belonged to the performance. In front of the tavern, in the area where the main performances took place the museum had arranged the construction of a wooden stage. The main parts of the performance took place upon this stage, creating a discrepancy between a feigned attempt to get the event

371 “We” denotes my partner and myself.
to non-conspicuously glide into its surroundings, and the need to communicate the event to a considerable amount of people.

Through the course of that day and the next we attended several plays, although some were cancelled due to heavy rain. Later on the first day we saw “The Town is Taken” and “On to Yorktown and Victory”, the first taking place in front of the old state Capitol and second continuing immediately afterwards in front of the Raleigh tavern. The first performance was about Benedict Arnold, a famous American turncoat who first fought for independence but later defected from the colonial army and joined the British. In this performance he was portrayed as an unpopular traitor coming to Williamsburg to regain British control. While on horseback he explained his reasons for defecting and ended his speech by pledging allegiance to the king. Some women were dressed up as citizens of the town criticizing Arnold for being a traitor, and there were soldiers following him.

Handler and Gable tell how, in the 1990s, Colonial Williamsburg picked one historical day to present each day. This is no longer the case. The first day of our visit, June 19th 2011, was, for instance, instead given a theme; The Challenge of Independence, 1776-1781, and the performances presented belonged to this theme and period. The other performances therefore took place, time-wise, at different historical points but all belonged to the general theme, in this case, the fight for independence. The next performance was therefore independent of the first and included a different historical celebrity, Marquis de Lafayette, and his, at this point, upcoming battle of Yorktown. Marquis de Lafayette was a French nobleman who came to the American colonies to fight for American independence against the British. General Benedict Arnold and Marquis de Lafayette were played by the same actor, both times on horseback. The main differences in the two performances were the color of the wig and coat the actor wore, and the accent he spoke in. The Marquis de Lafayette was played with a distinct, almost parodical in its explicitness, French accent, while the general spoke a somewhat anachronistic American English. The style of performance was, in both cases, more or less a monologue. The general/marquis explained his actions to the “citizens.” As visitors we were supposed to believe ourselves to be “citizens” of the town. Our ticket, which was pinned to us so that we would be noticeable for the guides, bore the words Citizen Passport, as though by buying the ticket we became citizens of 18th century Williamsburg. By playing that we were the citizens, the museum got away with the monologue style of acting. If we had been “spectators”, it would have been too staged,
but making us citizens was a way to legitimize that what we were actually witnessing was a first person lecture on some aspects of the American Revolution presented in an accent. The “citizens” became representatives of the masses, the complete American public.

Another performance that day took place in an amphitheatre behind the coffee-house where we ended up becoming spectators watching the men on stage and sitting on the wooden benches made for this theatre performance. When I visited Colonial Williamsburg I had not yet read Handler and Gable and knew little of the issues Colonial Williamsburg had been facing in regard to the concept of social history. Maybe because of this, the performance provoked me. Again the performance was monologic; this time a black preacher told us of the hardships they were living under and their hopes for the future. First and foremost I was provoked by this highly respected black man being required to represent a society where most black people were slaves, and therefore not respected. Secondly, independence from the British did not, in any case, represent freedom for the black population of the American colonies. The hopeful theme of the performance therefore made me somewhat uncomfortable, and made me wonder if this was the way Colonial Williamsburg wanted to present the lives of black population of the 18th century. As spectators belonging to the 21st century, we knew that life for the African American population did not change with the coming of independence; the democracy that was fought for, was not their democracy, and although we can be led to believe that they can have hoped that it would be at the time of the revolution, the facts of history that followed the revolution did not feel irrelevant to me as contemporary visitor.

In addition to the performances that took place on programmed times of the day, the museum consisted of different activities in the various houses. After seeing the performances we visited the governor’s palace, the blacksmith, the gun tower and a tannery. The second day we visited the Wythe house, the Capitol, the church and the jail, among other places. The places to visit were mainly of two different categories, one where we were guided around the premises, and one where we could come in and ask questions of the guides who belonged to the place they were interpreting. We visited the large houses, like the governor’s palace and the Capitol, as part of a guided tour. These guides were costumed but spoke in the third person. Their main focus was giving an impression of what it must have been like to live or work in the area in the late 18th century. We were taken from room to room and told what it must have been like in
those specific rooms in the olden days. They were particular about delineating between what they knew, what was believed, and what was probable. In the gun tower, for instance, one man continuously told the people who came by how guns worked and how they were used, answering questions from the shifting audience.

The strangest thing we did during our visit was to participate in a military training program for children. We did not actually understand that it was for children, but found out after the training had started. We were supposed to learn to be soldiers in the revolutionary war, and we had to march, pretend to shoot with sticks and yell “Virginia!” It all lasted about 20 minutes before we were given a small lecture on what soldiers of the time ate by two costumed women, enough for all the children to respond with grimaces to the repulsive diet of an 18th century soldier. The section was one of pure entertainment. Although we were mainly just estranged as a young, childless, foreign couple who did not seem to understand what they were participating in, the event did not seem to aim to educate the children, but rather to give them an entertaining break and connect it to an ideological narrative of the revolutionary era. This was underlined by the over-played parodic style of our “trainer”, whose task was to perform a small entertaining show to us and the children rather than explaining historical facts.

We were also served hot cocoa in a tavern, the only edible thing we were served. At the Governor’s house we were taken into the kitchen where food was cooked, but it seemed as though state regulations made tasting the food of the era not possible. In the tavern we were given a choice of cocoa and tea, and told that the cocoa was very strong and not suitable for children. It tasted of cinnamon and was very tasty. While we had our hot drink we were told what the tavern was used for, and how men of the time would come to the tavern for food and drink. The guides were very active asking us questions and letting us contribute. However sitting there, around the table with other families and couples, being talked to in a kind voice while sipping an unfamiliar hot chocolate we had been informed was not for children, I didn’t feel like it was the 18th century.

6.2.3 Museums and theatricality

As seen above, the former vice president for research at Colonial Williamsburg, Cary Carson stresses the dilemma of how to present historical facts and entertainment all at once without losing legitimacy in their task of educating their visitors in issues of American history. During my visit we were often told that objects or parts of interior
design in the houses were interpretations. They did not have accurate knowledge of what the wall paper in the particular house looked like in the 18th century, but on the basis of the history of fashion they had recreated a wall paper that could have been on the walls in the house. We were told what they could have eaten, what they could have been doing in their spare time, and how they could have treated their slaves, making room for a theatrical “as if.” They were particular about this, only stating as facts what they had good reason to believe as being true. Still, Colonial Williamsburg presents itself as an authority on fact. The caution they show in regard to their interpretations is a way of showing responsibility. They show us how good their researchers are, and how well reasoned their interpretations are, and turns this caution into a part of the authoritative presentation of the facts of history.

In his book about performance in living history museums, Scott Magelssen has interviewed several interpreters in period clothing at different museums about whether or not what they were doing was theatre. A large degree of the interviewees answered that they did not feel what they were doing was theatre, and many claimed the reason for this was that they did not follow a script. In my reading of Magelssen’s account it becomes clear that the interpreters feel that they are more in touch with the facts than what an actor in a theatre would be. They cite reasons such as having a responsibility to their ancestors, and it was this that made them want to interpret earlier times. What they do is more than theatre. It is “real.” At Colonial Williamsburg in 2011, most of the performers had scripts, and the performances were repeated. Still, the performances attempt to give the impression that what they are presenting has factual backing, and that it has more to do with authenticity and factual communication than traditional theatre, which more easily in this discussion could be categorized as entertainment and play.

When Handler and Gable call the museum a Republican Disneyland it is because they locate an ideological edge in a consumer oriented frame of performance. The past is presented as a complete whole, a point of reference that stays the same all the time while providing a secure foundation to step on in the quest for knowledge. In many ways this resembles the theme park concept where the frame of reference is already set and known. Marquis de Lafayette, with his quirky accent and George Washington-like appearance is portrayed as a complete point of reference, one of many nodal points, in the same way as Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse are complete images. In the end it

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372 Magelssen, *Living History Museums. Undoing History through Performance*, 107
does not really matter whether or not there ever existed a historical person with that specific name who also had a French accent and a white fashionable wig, the person presented through the performance is an image of completeness. When this is fused with a focus on consumption, on souvenirs and kitschy replicas, it does not really matter if it is a head band with Mickey Mouse ears or a small 18th century army hat, it is hardly no wonder that it reminds people of an attraction rather than a historical village.

The theatricality of the museum has several aspects. Firstly there is the difference between the staged performances and the third person guided tours, secondly there is also a difference in seeing theatricality in all the minor events or analyzing the museum as a whole. The mixture of third and first person narration and the fact that all third person narrators also dress up in period costumes induces an almost Brechtian form of estrangement. In addition, the exhibitions at the museum all give an impression of theatricality. Contrary to regular historical or ethnographical museums the objects presented in Colonial Williamsburg do not actually date back to the era they are representing. The objects are always replicas. Since the objects used in the 18th century did not look like they were several hundred years old, the objects used in the exhibitions at the museum should neither look old. The objects should rather look similar to the way they would have looked when they were new. This is done to increase the feeling of being in the 18th century but ends up creating a distance between the presentation, the object, and the era it is supposed to represent.

In the Governor’s House, for instance, a dining room table was set for dinner with plates, glasses and silverware; it all looked like a bourgeois table setting where the master of the house would come to eat dinner. However, the food was also presented at the table. Since this exhibition is permanent, they could not present perishables that would rot and smell and quickly look very unappetizing. The solution was to present food objects made of plastic. On the table there were plastic fish, lettuce, asparagus, and quails. In another house we saw a plastic roast and pie. The food that was displayed represented foods that would have been common for the upper classes, but nothing really unordinary that would seem strange for the common 21st century visitor. The fact that this food was plastic increased a feeling of being in a world of theatricality. It looked like theatre props, and felt just like walking into a set design. In fact, that was what we did. We were of course not allowed to go near the exhibited objects, but had to gaze at them from a distance. Here we can recognize both a theatricality linked to a duality of art and life, and to a physical theatricality of space that I discussed in chapter
two. We see that what is on the table is not food but a mimetic representation of food, and at the same time it is presented to us through an installation, creating a *clivage*, to use Josette Féral’s term, in the physical and mental space of the room, both in physical distance and estrangement, and in the mental distance of different epochs of time.

The performative action of a guided tour will very often have theatrical aspects since the communication from a performer to an audience will always be the main factor. Here this is additionally increased by the guide always being in costume, and therefore increasing the aspect of the guide belonging to a different sphere than the visitors. This resembles the form of theatricality emphasizing a communicational duality as I explained in chapter two where action and reaction is the main contributor to theatricality. However, the inclusion of costumes emphasizes theatricality of time and space more than would have been the case in similar situations without creating the sphere of history that is so important at Colonial Williamsburg. Mainly, to visit Colonial Williamsburg is to be told stories by guides or actors, but it also includes some activity from the visitors’ part, as I related in my description of the military training, or when we had cocoa in the tavern. Here, the elements of communication of facts are downplayed to increase the elements of play, which means that you begin to lose track of the communication and a purer theatricality appears. This theatricality depends more on the here-and-now, taking into account what I, in chapter two, called theatricality based on a duality of art and life, increasing the mental distance between actor and audience.

The town of Williamsburg, Virginia, consists of the museum, the college, a whole lot of hotels, and not much else except the homes of the people living in these surroundings. Almost all the houses we saw while in Williamsburg resembled the houses on the museum premises. They were built in brick and were the same color, with the same windows and windowpanes, and the same roofs. In some way this diminished the feeling that what was being presented inside the museum was so different, old, and special. Everywhere we went inside the museum we could see cars, and the streets were paved, which led to the area outside and the area inside being quite similar. This makes the framing of the museum as event more difficult, though much of this is compensated for by the performers and their actions, who increase the frame through action. Nevertheless, it makes the edges of the frame unclear. This may be the reason for why the activities within the museum are provided with a clear frame, telling us how to understand the event we are participating in. The huge visitor center at the museum contributed to framing what we were about to do as an unordinary event. That it was
also our first meeting with the museum strengthened the feeling of frame and starting point. The shuttle bus taking us down to the museum area became a way of transporting us from our ordinary surroundings and into the unordinary sphere of the historical museum. All this leads us to forget that the roads are paved, that the houses are all in good shape and resemble American upscale, suburban homes. Scott Magelssen says that history “it would seem, becomes “real” when it involves costumed characters.”

Using this argument it might seem as if history comes into existence with the costumed guides, interpreters, and actors. Because history does not exist in the area by itself, and there are no objects wherein history lies, there are not many stories making Williamsburg more historical than the next county. Here history can be said to be present through performance. The same can be said about the pageant movement, which I will discuss below.

6.3. The American pageant movement 1908-1917

Anthropologist Cathy Stanton cites the American pageant movement as one of the precursors to Civil War reenactment. Although it would be hard to argue that the pageant movement was a direct precursor, the movement, together with the popularity of the living history museums in the interwar period shows the growing interest for the performance of history in the USA. The American pageant movement becomes one example of how the American society early on saw a need to perform and present their history as a collective entity that could be used to strengthen the communities. The pageant movement originated in Britain where the first historical pageant was held in the town of Sherbourne in 1905 to celebrate the 1200th anniversary of the town’s founding. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, the British pageants were designed to be events creating an alternative to the rapid industrialization claiming that a pageant should be “‘designed to kill’ the ‘modernising spirit.’”

Plunging into history seems to have been a way of escaping the stressful elements of modern life, recreating instead a world of *communitas* including the whole town commemorating their common history.

When the pageant movement was taken to the USA, it needed to be adapted to fit the local situation. For instance, the USA did not have villages dating 1200 years back in time to celebrate. The scope of history needed to be performed differently, but this also led to the function of history changing. Where the British pageants had used

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373 Ibid., 103
374 Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual*, 90
375 The term *communitas* as developed and explained by Victor Turner is discussed in chapter three.
history as a critique of present times and modernity, trying to reestablish something that was lost, the American pageants used history to establish modern communitas, seeing both future and past in one whole. The first American pageant was held in Philadelphia in 1908, only three years after British Pageant of Sherbourne, marking the 225th anniversary of the city’s founding. In his book on the American pageant movement, David Glassberg gives a detailed account of the event in Philadelphia. According to Glassberg the pageant in Philadelphia consisted of sixty-eight scenes from Philadelphia’s past mounted on floats divided into different periods. Most of the episodes were taken from older history, including William Penn’s arrival and treaty with the Indians, and the sewing of the first American flag. The American Civil War was also remembered in the pageant that ended with scenes presenting the modern city. Here we can immediately see that the use of history in American pageants differed from the British pageants. Although the Philadelphia pageant focused on the early history of Philadelphia and its role in establishing the American nation, events closer in history were included. The participants were amateurs recruited from different social classes and ethnicities.

As in Britain, the American pageants were, to a large degree, related to place and local histories. One American pageant enthusiast, William Chauncy Langdon, was picked by the small village Thetford in Vermont to stage a pageant during the summer of 1911 to mark Thetford’s 150th anniversary. According to Glassberg, Langdon’s vision to the Thetford pageant had the intention that the pageant would “be more than mere art of entertainment; rather it would be a vital part of the town’s social transformation.” The pageant took place on a field and presented ideal images of the town’s past through country dances and household tableaux. The pageant consisted of a lot of dancing; both traditional Anglo-American folk dances and modern dance inspired by the popular dancer at the time, Isadora Duncan.

Although the pastoral images of the ideal past dominated the performance, Langdon juxtaposed this with images of a troubled modernity, including the Civil War. Glassberg tells how the Civil War scene began with soldiers marching off to war while

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377 Ibid., 47
378 Ibid., 49-50
379 Ibid., 75
380 Ibid., 85
one could hear “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” in the background. The Civil War section of the pageant also had an episodic dramaturgy where the soldiers marching were followed by the people of Thetford, who were gathering to hear news from Gettysburg, and hearing the names of the Thetford dead being read aloud. This was followed by a small scene where the people hear news from Vicksburg proclaiming that the Union had won the war, before the whole Civil War section ended with the surviving, maimed soldiers returning home.

Glassberg emphasizes how Langdon perceived the Civil War as the start of the depletion of Thetford, killing so many of their strong, young men. This depletion continued with the scenes “Introduction of Machinery” and “The Rural Problem” depicting how the introduction of farming machinery led many of Thetford’s men to seek work in the cities. As already mentioned the American pageants differed from the British in the way history was used. Where the British pageants only depicted old history in order to ignore the terrible impact of modernity, American history was mainly a history of modernity and historical events closer in time had to be presented. Fischer-Lichte therefore points out that in the American pageants the belief in “progressivism outweighed anti-modernism.” It was the belief in progress that made Langdon conclude the Pageant of Thetford with a section on Thetford’s immediate future. In the section on 1915 the town was presented as a happy and prosperous place, revived through the community spirit of the pageant.

The American pageant movement was seen as a people’s theatre, and Langdon himself emphasized that it was supposed to be theatre by the people rather than for the people. Fischer-Lichte also emphasizes that the pageants’ focus on history and community would lead to immigrants integrating better into society, feeling as though they were a part of the common community. The emphasis on community and transformation shows, in my view how the American pageant was perceived ritualistically. Using the Pageant of Thetford as example we see how the concept of communitas is important. The people of Thetford came together and created a community of equals with the intention of transforming this community, which in turn created a lasting transformation that would lead the community to a better and brighter future. First of all the pageant in itself has some liminal characteristics with people gathering in a field,

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381 Ibid., 86
382 Fischer-Lichte, Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual, 92
383 Glassberg, American Historical Pageantry, 89
384 Ibid., 78
385 Fischer-Lichte, Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual, 93
transforming the space and together experiencing their equality and *communitas*. More interesting, however, is that the pageant depicts the times they are undergoing as liminal. The present is a time of depletion of the local community, distinguishing itself from earlier times when it was an ideal pastoral community, and, as becomes clear towards the end of the pageant, also from the future when the community would again be restored. As Fischer-Lichte points out, the Americans were not afraid of modernity, but the modernity they were undergoing, needed to be changed. Progress should mix with the community spirit creating an ideal future, where everyone could live together, in peace.

In the pageants, history was presented as a narrative construction that had led to the present, and the people were who they were because of this narrative. The past was unchangeable, but knowledge of the past could lead to the possibility of creating a future. The past had made the people who they were, and their collectiveness would be greater when they could join each other in understanding the community and its possibilities for the future. The narrative structure of the past presented in the pageants served as an ideological foundation by being a closed whole. The ideological content of the *Pageant of Thetford* was of local importance and influence, but the belief in the communal resurgence was national. Langdon believed that the pageants had national importance, and did not care much which local communities gave him the opportunity to bring a pageant to life.

In the years to follow, pageants that focused on local history were staged many places in the USA. Fischer-Lichte explains how workers staged their own workers’ pageant. In New York City in June 1913 groups of workers staged and reenacted *The Paterson Strike Pageant*, commemorating a strike that had taken place in February the same year at a silk factory in Paterson, New Jersey.\(^{386}\) By 1917 the pageant movement had lost its momentum, and faded out.\(^{387}\) It might have been a result of fading belief in the future after the First World War and the return of soldiers from Europe. Progress had not led to the bright future they had imagined; rather it had led to death in the trenches. However, the concept of resurrecting history had not faded, and continued to find new forms after the First World War. As I showed above the 1920s and -30s saw the start of Rockefeller’s initiative at Colonial Williamsburg, making room for a new national ideology with a foundation in history that was also employed in all the war commemorations performed during the 20\(^{th}\) century, as we will see below.

\(^{386}\) Ibid., 93
\(^{387}\) Ibid., 95
In my view the American pageant movement has much in common with Evreinov’s staging of *The Storming of the Winter Palace* in 1920, and to some degree also the German Thingspiel movement. The motivation for all these events was to unite the people in a popular presentation of relevant history. *The Storming of the Winter Palace* was a reenactment of the revolution that had happened only three years prior, and in *The Paterson Strike Pageant*, the event reenacted was less than a year old. In most of the American pageants older events were presented and reenacted, but mainly it was all about creating a common foundation of history through ritualistic means in order to unite the people in their experience of nationhood or local belonging. This was also done in the German Thingspiel movement where German history was presented in new ways in order to unite the people in a common Nazi belonging. Interestingly, all these events had a short lifespan and can be seen as events relating to what was experienced as liminal periods of time for the different countries and nations.

### 6.4 Civil War Reenactment

#### 6.4.1 Commemorating the Civil War 1865-1990

The need to make sense of history in order to create national unity through performing the past found its form in different commemorations during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Civil War, a conflict that more than any other had separated the country, was used to establish national unity. In one of the earliest research papers on the Civil War reenactment movement, anthropologist Cathy Stanton’s MA thesis from 1997, Stanton attempts to give an explanation of the historical roots of the movement. She traces Civil War reenacting all the way back to the Civil War, and claims that the first reenactors were the soldiers themselves. According to Stanton the soldiers of the Civil War acted out sham battles resembling child’s play while the war was still going on, like engaging in snowball fights against other regiments on the same side. Most of the play connected to the Civil War has, nevertheless, occurred after the war ended.

The Civil War had a great impact on a country that was trying to unite as one nation, and affected the whole population in one way or another. As Stanton points out, one out of ten eligible voters was, in 1890, a Civil War veteran. Taking into account their families and the families of the soldiers who did not survive, we can start to grasp the effect the war had on the American people both physically and ideologically. This

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389 Ibid., 20
meant that the war quickly became a part of official lore, and that commemoration events and reunions quickly became an important veteran pastime. These early events consisted, according to Stanton, of nostalgic encampments in addition to marching in commemorative parades rather than acting out battles.\textsuperscript{390} This seems at least to be the case until the reunion at Gettysburg marking the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the battle in 1913.

The years after the Civil War saw the rise of what the American historian Edward Linenthal calls ideology of reconciliation. A reconciliation was needed in order to start building one nation and a national ideology. Linenthal argues that the battlefields of Gettysburg quickly became a place where Americans could gather and celebrate their common history:

\begin{quote}
In reunions, patriotic rhetoric on numerous ceremonial occasions, and monument building, many Northerners – and many Southerners, as well – came to celebrate Gettysburg as an “American” victory. Because it was believed that the bravery and heroism shown by the contending Union and Confederate forces revealed a uniquely American form of commitment to heartfelt principle, Gettysburg became a heroic landscape, (...)\textsuperscript{391}
\end{quote}

Creating common ground of commemoration was controversial, but as Linenthal shows, Gettysburg quickly became a place of reunion, commemoration and reconciliation. According to Linenthal, already in July 1887, 24 years after the battle had taken place, several hundred Confederate veterans met with thousands of veterans from the Philadelphia brigade, the Union forces that had manned the Union line during Pickett’s Charge on the last day of the historical battles.\textsuperscript{392} The event ended, famously, with the veterans from both sides spontaneously reaching out and shaking hands. In some ways this can be said to have been the first reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg, still, the need the veterans had to meet, reconcile, and remember must have been very different from the motivation of later reenactors.

In the years to follow several commemoration events were held, but the most famous reunion was the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the battle in 1913. More than 50 000 veterans participated in the event. President Woodrow Wilson made an appearance and declared the war “a quarrel forgotten.”\textsuperscript{393} The four-day event included a reenactment of Pickett’s Charge including the veterans’ handshakes.\textsuperscript{394} David W. Blight tells of a grand event of mammoth undertaking, requiring a dexterity of logistics and technology to

\textsuperscript{390} Ibid., 22
\textsuperscript{392} Ibid., 94
\textsuperscript{394} Linenthal, \textit{Sacred Ground}, 96
carry out, and which more than just providing a recollection of the war, focused on the technological future of the nation, and what Linenthal would call an ideology of reconciliation. Central to Blight’s discussion is the treatment of the question of race during the summer of 1913 in general, and especially at the Gettysburg event. This question was thoroughly undercommunicated, and common glory of a united America was the main issue, not at all taking into account that this glory did not involve the black population. The grand logistical effort also emphasized the focus on an industrialized and successful country, united in terms of the future rather than the past. As hard as it may be to understand how the Civil War could be presented as part of a glorious and victorious past, this alleged notion of strength, glory, and prosperity was presented as what would make the nation prepared for a splendid future.

The fiftieth anniversary was not the last reunion, although it might have been the largest. At The Last Reunion of the Blue and Gray which was held in Gettysburg for the 75th anniversary in 1938, the numbers of veterans had, not surprisingly, decreased. According to Linenthal this event gathered almost fourteen hundred Union veterans and five hundred Confederate veterans. The event was held in the spirit of the ideology of reconciliation, emphasizing that those who had participated in the war were American soldiers fighting for what they believed to be the “eternal truth.” This event also consisted of a form of reenactment of Pickett’s Charge where the veterans crossed the flagstaffs of their battle flags while a color bearer lifted the Stars and Stripes, the flag of the current Union, above the two battle flags. Although the event also included a memorial ceremony commemorating the dead, the event emphasized current unity rather than historical disagreements, focusing mainly on the common Americaness of both sides.

These historical reunions are often referred to when discussing the origins of reenactment. Stanton does this explicitly, arguing that the reunions were the direct forerunner of today’s Civil War reenactments. In my view it seems like the early reunions had a more ceremonial character where reconciliation and the veterans’ co-presence, and future were emphasized more than the past. Although the reunions with veterans included battlefield meetings, they did not emphasize the war part of it. Reenactments in its current form did not come into being before all the veterans and other

395 Ibid., 96
396 Ibid., 97
397 Ibid., 96
survivors of the war had passed away, and the events could find their place in the realm of American mythology, at the centennial of the war in the 1960s.

The passing away of the last Civil War veterans coincided with the end of the Second World War and the return of victorious soldiers from Europe and the Pacific where they had all been fighting a common enemy. Maybe it was the unifying force of the common enemy mixed with military strength that was the reason for why the early years after the Second World War saw an upsurge in interest for the Civil War, and led to the foundation of Civil War societies. Jay Anderson cites the organization of black powder societies already in the 1930s as the direct forerunner of battle reenactments. These societies became more popular after the Second World War and led to the foundation of the North-South Skirmish Association (N-SSA) in 1950, an association that still participates in the reenactment events with performances of black powder and live mortar fire demonstrations. I will describe their participation in the 2011 event at Gettysburg below. The N-SSA uses weapons dating from the Civil War period, and meet for competitions in using historical cannons and mortars. According to Stanton the members of the N-SSA perceive their hobby more as a competitive sport than as performance or reenactment of history. Nevertheless, their interest of historical weapons and artillery has had an impact on the development of the Civil War memorial events occurring all over the USA, and when the centennial of the war was to be commemorated in the 1960s the knowledge of the fighting of the period and the battles lay with the N-SSA.

The centennial was marked nationwide, and a national commission, The Civil War Centennial Commission, was formed in Washington D.C. to undertake the planning of the centennial across the country with the purpose of promoting national sentiment and patriotic feelings. According to historian John Bodnar who focuses on American commemorations of history, the commission favored ritualistic events and ceremonies to mark the centennial rather than popular events with a focus on play and the attraction of tourists. The official events therefore ended up being quite formal, focusing on the heroism of the war to increase loyalty to the nation.

Bodnar’s account of the Civil War Centennial resonates with Linenthal’s ideology of reconciliation. The fight for civil rights was prominent during the 1960s in the

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398 Stanton, *Being the Elephant*, 31
399 Ibid., 32
USA. It was a time when the opposition between the black and the white populations was tense, and bringing up the Civil War and the end of slavery did not ease the tension of discrimination and color lines. It may seem as though this made the ideological actions of reconciliation both between black and white and between north and south more important. The centennial was for example officially launched in January 1961 with ritualistic ceremonies both at the tomb of the northern general Ulysses S. Grant in New York City, and at the crypt of the southern general Robert E. Lee in Lexington, Virginia.  

Bodnar also points out how many of the ceremonies had religious content, which can be said to have increased the ritualistic aspect of the events. The simultaneous ceremonial commemoration of both generals was an event created in the spirit of the ideology of reconciliation. The two men were equals, they were both worshipped as heroes, which was an attempt to leave the difficult parts of the past conflict, which were in no way solved in the contemporary USA, behind.

The centennial commission did not control all the events of commemoration that took place across the country. Commercial and popular interests, a fact Bodnar expresses great displeasure with, helped stage several forms of events, including the battle reenactments which were very popular. According to Bodnar the first battle reenactment of the centennial was held at Manassas, Virginia in July 1961, marking the centennial of the first battle of Manassas. The event met massive critique. After the reenactment of Manassas in 1961, both the Centennial Commission and the National Park Service that was in control of the battlefields frowned upon the organization of battle reenactments. The organizers were blamed with not showing respect for the fallen soldiers since they had made the event more an act of play than sincere and solemn ceremonial commemoration.

One aspect that met critique was that the event did not reenact the battle with historical correctness. According to Bodnar the historical battle had ended with the Union troops breaking up and fleeing towards Washington D.C., whereas in the reenactment, at the end, Northern and Southern units came together on the field to sing “God Bless America.” This was by some opponents read as making a farce out of the

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401 Ibid., 209
402 Ibid., 210
403 Ibid., 213
404 Ibid., 214
405 Ibid., 215
greatest national tragedy.\textsuperscript{406} Again, Linenthal’s concept of the ideology of reconciliation springs to mind. The organizers of the battle reenactment did not want it to end with the defeat of the Northern troops, as had been the case in the historical battle, but wanted to emphasize the idea of one nation, ending the event with peaceful togetherness expressed through a common interest in a patriotic song.

Although the national commission and the park service were increasingly skeptical to the use of reenactments for the commemoration of the Civil War, much local initiative was taken in the different states because of the persisting popular accept of reenactment events among the population. This was especially true of many of the Southern states, where most of the battlefields are located, and where this was used as an opportunity to attract Northern tourists.\textsuperscript{407} In the Civil War states this is still going on, and hordes of tourists visit every year. According to Stanton most of the significant events from the Civil War ended up being reenacted during the centennial, and she especially emphasizes that a clash between the ironclads Merrimac and Monitor, one of the greatest naval battles of the Civil War, was reenacted twenty-two times near Norfolk, Virginia in 1962.\textsuperscript{408} The large number of times the event was reenacted shows how great the popularity of the events was, attracting a great number of spectators and participants.

In Pennsylvania, a Northern state with its share of battlefields, the focus honed in on commemorating the battle of Gettysburg and Abraham Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg address. The reenactment of Pickett’s Charge in 1963 also bears witness to the degree of popularity the events had: 40 000 spectators attended the event.\textsuperscript{409} The three-day celebration of the centennial at Gettysburg consisted of different forms of events, not just battle reenactments. A military parade was held including modern military elements, reactivated Civil War regiments and high school bands. The reenactment was not staged before the third day, and Pickett’s Charge was the only event on the program. The Confederate troops’ charge into the Union line on the orders of General Pickett was reenacted while the narrative of the battle was explained to the spectators through a loudspeaker system, making it possible for the spectators to follow the development of the battle narrative. This is a trait that, as I will show in more detail below, is still acted out at Gettysburg. As Bodnar writes, the events were carefully planned in order to tone

\textsuperscript{406} Ibid., 214
\textsuperscript{407} Ibid., 221
\textsuperscript{408} Stanton, \textit{Being the Elephant}, 33
\textsuperscript{409} Ibid., 33
down the brutality of the war, emphasizing, as has now become clear that most events of the centennial did, national unity and patriotism. As at Manassas the event ended not with victory or defeat, but with the troops meeting for a flag salute and singing patriotic songs together.\textsuperscript{410} In Gettysburg they continued marking the centennial in November 1963, also reenacting the Gettysburg Address. \textsuperscript{411}

The celebrations marking the Civil War centennial established battle reenactments as a popular form of commemoration. When the bicentennial of the revolutionary war followed just a bit more than a decade later, reenactments were already a preferred form of collective remembrance. According to Stanton, the Revolutionary War bicentennial established reenactment as a legitimate form of commemoration which also led to a strengthening of Civil War reenactment as a hobby, inspiring the commemorations of the 125\textsuperscript{th} anniversaries in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{412} From this time on battle reenactments and encampments have been organized throughout the country all year, although mainly occurring in the states where the battles occurred historically, and mainly in summer time. The popular appeal the reenactments turned out to have also led to several other wars being reenacted, and today one can find reenactment events of the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the French and Indian War, and both world wars in addition to Revolutionary War and Civil War reenactments. The Civil War remains the most popular war to reenact.

\subsection*{6.4.2 Rules of reenactment}

Civil War reenactment is a popular pastime. Thousands of people spend a tremendous amount of their spare time and savings on pretending to relive the American Civil War. Within the movement the activity is just called the hobby. And although it is a playful hobby, the term used for it does not mean that they do not take it seriously. The activities are filled with different rules and customs the reenactors need to follow. The reenactment movement is wide, and although many of the events staged are huge, the movement in itself is individualized; every battalion or regiment does things their own way.

When Cathy Stanton did her anthropological research on the movement she joined a Civil War regiment in Massachusetts. She joined this group because they had a fife and drum corps where she could participate by playing an instrument. She later

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{410} Bodnar, \textit{Remaking America}, 219
\textsuperscript{411} Stanton, \textit{Being the Elephant}, 34
\textsuperscript{412} Ibid., 37
\end{flushleft}
realized that this regiment was just a marginal part of the larger reenactment community, participating more often in commemorative parades than battle reenactments, and she later visited other regiments in order to participate in the larger events. This shows how participating in the large reenactments is not the goal for all Civil War societies, and that it is up to the individual regiments and the individual persons themselves to decide what shape or form they wish to take on Civil War reenacting. This means that different people and different communities within the larger hobby of Civil War reenacting decide for themselves to which degree they want to follow the rules, and which rules they want to follow. This does not, however, mean that antipathies between the groups do not exist; the hardcore reenactors tend to look down on those who are more lax about the rules in their approach to the hobby.

The most common word for reenactors taking it easy when it comes to rules is *farb*. The origins of the term are unclear. The most common explanation is that its short for “Far be it from me.,” which means that for the person using the term it would seem wrong to act the way a farb does. Performance scholar Rebecca Schneider proposes in her book *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* that farb is short for fabricator. A person can be a farb, one can act as a farb or be *farby*. What characterizes a farb may differ from your own position, but in every case calling someone a farb is an accusation of a lack of *authenticity* in appearance. The opposite of farb is *hardcore*, or even *super hardcore* if you are prepared to take the quest for authenticity all the way.

Tony Horwitz gives, in his enjoyable book *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*, a good description of super hardcore reenactors. In his book Horwitz describes a meeting with a super hardcore Confederate reenactor called Robert Lee Hodge. Horwitz tells this of when Hodge first took him to a battle reenactment:

> The day before the Wilderness battle, Rob dropped by to lend me some gear: foul-smelling socks that might once have been white but were now splotted amber, a butternut “trans-Mississippi officer’s shell jacket,” gray “JT Moore” trousers, a “smooth-side 1858 model” canteen, and a “tarred Federal haversack.” None of this meant anything to me, but I was given to understand that I’d resemble a walking museum piece. “With this kit,” Rob said, “people will think you’re hardcore even if you act like a total farb.”

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413 Stanton, *Being the Elephant*, 40-42
415 Stanton, *Being the Elephant*, 91
417 Ibid., 127
According to Horwitz hardcore reenactors are ambivalent to battle reenactments because it is hard to get a real experience of *authenticity* when it is made into a performance. Hodge was this kind of man, writing off all forms of reenactment that do not lead to a complete experience of *authenticity*.

Derived from Hadden’s and Horwitz’ accounts we see that hardcore reenactors wear only period clothing, they “spoon” at night to keep warm, and they eat only period foods, like hardtack, a cracker that is so hard that it has to be broken into pieces before put into the mouth where it, after a while, dissolves in saliva, or pork fat. Historically, this was all common food for Civil War soldiers, if they had food at all. Hodge was a man who could bloat his stomach so that he looked dead. He searched for all the authentic experiences, wearing dirty, smelly clothes, eating only the *real* diet of Confederate soldiers, seeking out places providing a connection to history and sleeping outdoors, in tents, and in desolate barns. All to be able to feel like he was transgressing history, feeling a connection and living as the soldiers would have. This is how one can experience the connection with the *real*, what Robert Lee Hodge, according to Horwitz, calls a *wargasm*.

There are many rules in Civil War reenactment, and R. Lee Hadden has written a guide on how one can make sense of the rules, providing helpful advice on which rules to follow and how. Hadden does not make it easy. Although he is less strict than Hodge, Hadden does not like farbs either. The big difference between them seems to be that where Hodge is in it for the physical feeling, the *wargasm*, Hadden sees it as performance. In Horwitz’s account of Robert Lee Hodge, it also becomes clear that Hodge is a vain man, reveling in the fact that he looks so much like a Confederate soldier that he is used in films, and does a great deal of modeling. He is full of self-regard, and seeks experiences that are all about himself. Hadden on the other hand perceives the most important part to be presentation. Neither Hodge nor Hadden believes it to be right to drink modern drinks, but for Hadden it is ok if you just keep your modern beverage in a period can, so that no one can see what you are drinking.

It is also important that the reenactors hide their modern equipment when spectators arrive at the camp. Some might prefer modern sleeping bags, for instance, though if you are such a person it is very important to Hadden that you hide it during the day.
when spectators enter the area so that no one can see.\textsuperscript{418} Be that as it may, \textit{authenticity} in the personal experience is also important to Hadden:

\begin{quote}
The actor tries to fool the audience into thinking he is the person he is portraying; the reenactor tries to fool himself. There are moments when the reenactor loses track of the time period. At that moment he has gone beyond fooling others and is fooling himself. Reenactors live for moments like this. But this cannot be accomplished without authenticity. If you look down the field and see modern glasses or a wristwatch, the modern world crashes in and ruins the moment.\textsuperscript{419}
\end{quote}

When it comes to equipment it is very important that everything a reenactor wears is made by materials existing in the early 1860s. This means that all uniforms must be made of wool, and other clothing of wool or cotton. One of the biggest faux pas in this situation would be to wear something made out of synthetic fabrics. Weapons need to be just like the weapons used by Civil War soldiers, which means a Springfield or Enfield musket. It is also important that the musket is a reproduction of an old musket. You are not allowed to use an antique musket. According to Hadden, this is mainly of safety reasons, but because the musket should look fairly new since it was not 150 years old when the war was fought. This is the same argument Colonial Williamsburg uses for only exhibiting replicas, the objects are supposed to look fairly new.

One of the biggest quandaries for the rules of reenactment lies in the question of who is allowed to reenact. Some still firmly believe that women should not reenact soldiers, that if they want to join they should reenact civilians. In 1989, at the reenactment of the Battle of Antietam, a woman called Lauren Cook Burgess, an active Civil War reenactor, disguised herself as a man, but was discovered by a park agent when sighted using the ladies’ room. She was quickly informed that she could not longer participate in the events.\textsuperscript{420} According to Stanton, Burgess then provided historical documentation of women dressing as male soldiers at the historical Battle of Antietam, but was told that it was not sufficient. This led to Burgess filing a lawsuit against the Department of the Interior in 1991, which in 1993 ended with a ruling in favor of Burgess based on the decision that it was unconstitutional to exclude women only on the basis of gender.\textsuperscript{421}

After this it has become illegal to exclude women from the ranks of Civil War reenactors. Still, it is a little controversial. Writing in 1996, three years after the court decision, Hadden believes that it is important for women who reenact to conceal that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[419] Ibid., 36
\item[420] Stanton, \textit{Being the Elephant}, 104
\item[421] Ibid., 104
\end{footnotes}
they are women so that they will not be recognized; he believes it to be more problematic when you can recognize that the reenactors are women because the public may become confused. The main argument used against this, as is also cited by Hadden, is that although there were not many female soldiers who fought in the Civil War there were neither many soldiers that were fat and old, which many of the reenactors of today can be said to be. Here I would also need to add that when I visited Gettysburg in July 2011 I saw many women reenacting soldiers without trying too hard to conceal their gender, thus making it seem as though the rules on this are now less strict.

6.5 Concept of authenticity and reenactment practice

Hadden’s book is filled with advice and quite strict rules for how to reenact the Civil War. What becomes clear when reading it is that reenactment is not just about history, but very much about coming together in the present. In the section on how to dress, Hadden gives instructions on what type of shoes to use. He explains what kind the Union troops used, and how the Confederate shoes looked, and what kind is accepted to use at reenactment. However, he also mentions that historically many soldiers, especially on the Confederate side, did not have shoes. Many marched barefoot. Since participating in the reenacted battles barefoot might be dangerous, it is now prohibited at most battle arenas to attend without shoes, even though this might be historically incorrect.

The quest for authenticity is about experience and about performance and presentation. It is about creating a space of difference, trying to use history as reference point. Discussing this, performance theorist Rebecca Schneider points out:

“Reenactment,” then, is not one thing in relation to the past, but exists in a contested field of investment across sometimes wildly divergent affiliations to the questions of what constitutes fact. Clearly, the inevitable errors in (contested) authenticity mean that even though a reenactive action might “touch” the past, as any “again” can be said to do, that touch is not entirely co-identical to the past nor itself unembattled. It is both/ and – not one thing.

Through this it becomes clear that the concept of authenticity is an individual pursuit that creates rules for the collective that again contributes to create the frame of the collective space where the individual feeling of connectedness, a wargasm if you want, is the ultimate goal while at the same time making room for performance and communication of goal, frame, and history, or “history.” Authenticity, then, is a very important term in the reenactment community, but almost impossible to use academically. In the

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422 Hadden, Reliving the Civil War, 140-141
423 Schneider, Performing Remains, 56
following I will discuss what authenticity can be said to be, and how can it relate to the concept of reliving the past.

In his much-cited article “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”424, Walter Benjamin explains authenticity as experience rather than as an inherent quality of a work of art. As is well known Benjamin’s agenda is to analyze what happens to the concept of art in an age when art is so easily reproduced. He sees that there is a change in the perception of art in the age of modernity, and he questions how this change affects the artwork. To Benjamin a work of art, in order to be authentic, needs to be original. However, it is the experience of it as an original that constitutes the authenticity.

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Chemical analyses of the patina of a bronze can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical – reproducibility.425

The quality of the original making it authentic is, according to Benjamin, its aura. The aura is what is eliminated in mechanical reproduction. It is a quality inherent in a work of art because of its originality. As I understand Benjamin, aura is something we experience in a work of art when we feel that it has a connection to history or to some source of art. An ancient statue can have an incredible aura because it has existed for so long. A reproduction of the same statue can be objectively just as beautiful, but will not bring forth a connection to history.

Although aura is related to an object’s connection to a source, it is also an experience of perception. This can be seen in Benjamin’s famous account of experiencing aura in nature:

If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of that mountain, of that branch. This image makes it easy to comprehend the social bases of the contemporary decay of the aura. It rests on two circumstances, both of which is related to the increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life. Namely, the desire of contemporary masses to bring things “closer” spatially and humanly, which is just as ardent as their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.426

Here aura is not only an inherent quality of the work of art presented as a result of a connection to history, but it is also a connection between the beholder and object, or event of perception. The desire to get closer to the event or object shows a desire to get

425 Ibid., 222
426 Ibid., 224-225
closer to the source, closer to the connection the experience has to some unidentified source. Still, for Benjamin, this is also the reason for the increase in reproductions. The desire of getting close to the work of art makes the masses accept reproductions even though they are less authentic than the original. Here Benjamin is almost Platonic in his argumentation. The most precious object is the authentic object, the one that has a “real” connection to an unidentifiable source. The reproduction is a mimetic response to the authentic object, and the aura of the reproduction is less valuable than the aura of the authentic object that can boast its originality and closeness to the source.

What is most interesting in Benjamin’s discussion of authenticity and the aura is its relation to ritual. Benjamin believes that since the earliest art works originated in ritual, the aura of any artwork is, therefore, never “entirely separated from its ritual function.”

Seen in relation to theories of theatricality, as discussed in chapter two, aura as the desire of closeness to the artwork, as proclaimed by Benjamin, can be seen as a desire of experiencing presence and proximity simultaneously with estrangement. When aura is an inherent quality of an artwork, this quality is greater than man himself can grasp. The authenticity of a work of art proposed through the aura estranges the beholder who desires closeness. Seen additionally as something that can occur in a ritual and performative setting, the experience of aura and authenticity can be said to have qualities of a ritualistic theatricality. The term ritualistic theatricality will be explained and emphasized in chapter seven.

If we continue to see Benjamin’s terms of aura and authenticity in relation to performance, it is possible to argue that aura resembles Erika Fischer-Lichte’s use of the term atmosphere. She bases her discussion on the work of Gernot Boehme who himself saw his term atmosphere as a version of Benjamin’s aura. Atmosphere is a vague term, but seen according to Fischer-Lichte, atmosphere is that which transforms a given space into performative space. Seen again in relation to Benjamin’s term of authenticity as a prerequisite to aura, authenticity can be said to be an atmosphere that recreates space through its connection to some source, in the case of reenactment this source is history. Interestingly, Fischer-Lichte cites smells and sounds as elements that contribute to atmosphere. As shown above, wearing smelly socks was, among other things, something that made Robert Lee Hodge’s experience more authentic. Space is very important for the reenactments. The events take place in the proximity to the areas where the historical battles took place, although, as I will show below, reenactments are

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427 Ibid., 226
428 Fischer-Lichte, The Transformative Power of Performance, 114-120
prohibited on land controlled by the National Park Service (NPS) and therefore often not carried out on exactly same place as the historical battle. This connection to history that space provides, however, contributes to framing the space in the aura of authenticity. The space in itself has a connection to history that gives it an atmosphere of authenticity. The same might be said about the costumes, weapons, and other props, that although the reenactors dress in reproductions, the way the costumes are sewn, gives them a connection to history that strengthens the experience of authenticity. Although, in line with Benjamin, the reproduction items used by the reenactors will be inherent of less aura than the objects actually dating from the Civil War.

I have now established that authenticity is not an objective category saying something about an object’s relation to the world surrounding it, but a category of experience and perception. Nevertheless, in the case of reenactment, actual battle history continues to play an important role when the rules of authenticity are developed. Roland Barthes, in his article “The Reality Effect”, discusses the form of literary realism.429 He sees how the linguistic structures of realist narratives include details that are seemingly superfluous, not contributing to the narrative. He shows how realist novels are filled with minute details that have no signification for the form or the structure of the novel. Still, these elements of detail are given significance through the descriptive function because the details create an effect “reality;”

Resistance to the “real” (in its written form, of course) to structure is very limited in the fictive account, constructed by definition on a model which, for its main outlines, has no other constraints than those of intelligibility; but this same “reality” becomes the essential reference in historical narrative, which is supposed to report “what really happened”: what does the non-functionality of a detail matter then, once it denotes “what took place”; “concrete reality” becomes the sufficient justification for speaking.430

This aspect of detail functions to emphasize the “reality” aspect of the narrative that Barthes calls the reality effect. To explain it, Barthes, not surprisingly, uses semiotic models. He argues that, in the details of the realistic narrative, the signified is expelled from the sign. Instead of denoting a signified structure, the detail signifier connotes an abstract referential illusion.431 All the detail signifier does is to relate back to a category of “the real.”

When Erika Fischer-Lichte discusses Boehme’s term of atmosphere, she explains that Boehme presented the term as an alternative to semiotic analysis in order to

430 Ibid., 146
431 Ibid., 148
focus on the bodily experience of aesthetics rather than on the interpretation of signs. When in search for an authentic experience in reenactment the bodily presence in the atmosphere of the event is important, but it does not become an authentic experience if it is not related to a symbolic chain. The objects involved are in themselves bearers of aura and atmosphere. They have the “real” relation to the original event. These details produce the “reality effect” of the battlefield reenactment. These objects contribute to producing a category of “the real” to which the whole event relates, producing a signifying chain in which the signified is a void, but still extensive category of reality. And this, of course, brings us into the Žižekian Real.

As has till now been discussed several places in this dissertation, Slavoj Žižek discusses the term the Real as originally developed by Jaques Lacan in relation to ideology. To Žižek, the Real is an impenetrable kernel of desire, but the kernel is also a void, a non-existent kernel that exists in order to mask the void. This was thoroughly discussed in chapter three. When seeing how Barthes in his analysis of a realist aesthetic concludes with reality being a referential category where there is no final signified, it resembles Žižek’s view of the Real. Barthes sees how the extra details of the texts mask how the objects described do not exist, creating a reality effect, masking that there is no signified, just loads of very detailed signifiers. The Real in itself does not exist, but functions as a device masking this non-existent, but desirable, void. The reenactors desire to get in touch with history, to connect through the distance of centuries to some equally desirable past. Nevertheless, neither the connection nor the desirable past exists, but searching for the Real masks this apparent fact. Authenticity is a desire and a masking device. The reenactors desire the ultimate authentic experience, but in the search for the real past through authentic objects, clothes, and food, all they do is mask what they of course already know, that this connection to history, is nothing more than a fantasy. In chapter three I discussed how Žižek sees how fantasy supports reality rather than being an escape from reality, and in this case reality is based on a belief in history, a reality that is supported by the fantasy of authenticity.

This means that authenticity can be whatever you want it to be, what the desire tells you that it is. It means that although most concepts of authenticity will be agreed upon by the majority of the members of a certain group, there will also be disagreements on what is authentic within the group and between different groups. This was demonstrated above in the discussion on female reenactors; some people believe it is inauthentic to allow female reenactors to participate, others think that allowing female
reenactors is just as authentic as allowing fat men to reenact. Sometimes historical research can be used to decide what can be perceived as authentic, as when Lauren Cook Burgess attempted to show records of female soldiers dressing as men at the historical reenactment at Antietam, but others again felt that the research evidence did not help her case because, according to her opponents, the only reason these historical women succeeded was that nobody knew that they were women.432

In the case of Lauren Cook Burgess, a case that is now widespread in the literature on Civil War reenacting, the disagreement on what can be defined as authentic has been used as a principle of domination. In an article on Fort Snelling, a living history museum in Minnesota, Amy M. Tyson describes how notions of authenticity at the museum were used as a controlling device.433 Tyson worked at the museum for several years while also doing anthropological research, and noticed how the category of authenticity related to both by her superiors and her co-workers were not always first and foremost related to historical facts. She tells of one time she deliberately left her shoes off while playing a servant in an upper-class household. She explicitly explained to the visitors that this was not appropriate behavior but that she was testing her boundaries. Historically it most probably happened that servants sometimes forgot to put their shoes on before serving, but at the museum she was critiqued and observed, something Tyson felt was a critique against her body rather than a critique of historical incorrectness. Tyson describes several cases in which behavior is criticized as inauthentic in order to make political statements, and one especially interesting occurrence was when she and a female co-worker were critiqued for walking arm in arm in a parade. This was apparently inauthentic behavior. In the article, Tyson cites a historian who has researched female communities in the 18th century, and Tyson is certain that this would not have been uncommon behavior among women in the time period portrayed.434 However, when her superior calls it inauthentic the frame of reference is not the historical facts. Rather, this is a result of comprehension and opinion of sexualities of the 21st century. Seen this way, authenticity is also politics.

In a similar way, a frame of reference can be said to have settled the issues dealt with at Colonial Williamsburg in relation to the presentation of the black population as explained above. Although the watermelons were the favored melon by the slave

434 Ibid., 52
population in Virginia, they chose not to present it as the prioritized melon because of its function as a sign. When choosing solely to present watermelons in the slave quarters the reality effect sought for by the museum organizers failed to succeed. The frame of reference connected to watermelons was one of stereotype. A new reality effect had to be created, including other forms of melons in the knowledge that it was factually incorrect. It is not only a device of desire for an image of the past; it is also a device of constructing the present. This was also the case in the 148th Battle of Gettysburg that I visited in July 2011.

6.6 The 148th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg

6.6.1 Theme park dramaturgy

The 148th anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg was held in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on July 1st – 3rd 2011, and I was present at the reenactment for the whole three days. The event takes place every year on the first weekend in July, and in 2011 the reenactment of Gettysburg took place on the exact same dates as the historical battle, July 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The area of Gettysburg where the historical battle occurred in 1863 is today owned by the National Park Service (NPS) and is considered hallowed land. The battlefield area is covered with memorials, and the Gettysburg Museum and Visitor Center organize tours of the battlefields. The reenactment events cannot be organized on land perceived as sacred, but are organized on private land just outside the battlefield areas. Because the reenactments can be hard on the land, it changes location every other year, and there are mainly two locations used for it.

The location used in 2011 was the same location as was used for the filming of the movie Gettysburg from 1993, a reference point for many reenactment enthusiasts. In the chapter on the DPRK and the Arirang performance I wrote that my memory of the event was connected to the feeling of fresh and cold September air, and here I would have to point out that this event was deeply connected to the Pennsylvania summer heat with temperatures up to 40 degrees Celsius, and nowhere to hide from the sun. My physical experience of this event is deeply connected with walking around the reenactment area with sweat running down my back while using a small fortune on ice cold drinks, and feeling like a polar bear in the Sahara.

The main area consisted of two rows of shops, one for the “sutlers” selling all kinds of Civil War memorabilia, souvenirs, and weapons. Here you could also find a tent with a band playing Civil War music, a recruiting station for the North-South
Skirmish Association (N-SSA), and a tent for the Sons and Daughters of the Confederacy. Other places there was a Christian missionary tent and a patriotic tent. There was even a tent where you could do a civil war IQ test. In the other row of tents there were a great number of tents selling refreshments. On each end of the rows of food tents there were tents from a soft drink provider called Doctor G’s where seemingly old-fashioned drinks which included (a really tasty) lemonade, root beer, birch beer, and a drink called sasparilla were sold. The other tents sold mostly modern food, far from what soldiers and others ate in the 19th century. The food items they sold ranged from hamburgers and smoked turkey legs, to hot dogs, and ham and cheese sandwiches that were called “mile high ham and cheese” because of the extreme amount of ham within the bun. They also sold more contemporary items such as chicken pitas, french and sweet potato fries.

Outside the center of sales tents there were the living history villages, and the Union and Confederate camps. Within two living history villages, one for the Unionists and one for the Confederates, were located the impersonators of the famous generals and officers. Here one could find an actor portraying General Lee speaking to another portraying General Armistead, and I had a little chat with a man portraying William Smith, a confederate general who was also the governor of Virginia. These generals did not participate in the battles as fighting soldiers, except for at the last battle reenactment performance, which was a reenactment of the famous battle called Pickett’s Charge where a reenactor portraying General Pickett made an appearance.435 I will come back to this battle reenactment performance below. The camping sites were different because this was where the reenactors stayed while they were in Gettysburg. They were open to the public and I could walk around watching the people in costumes, and some might talk to you or explain something to you about the war. These are the areas where Hadden believed that modern day sleeping bags had to be hidden when visitors appeared during the day. However, the reenactors were, in the main, out of character. They had driven their cars close to the places they had set up their tents, so there were lots of cars all over the camp. Many of the soldiers slept, and some just ignored you in their wish for privacy in their tents.436

Many of the reenactors were women, and surprisingly many reenacted soldiers, but most women were dressed in female period outfits. Some of these women brought with them folding chairs and parasols onto the reenactment battlefield during the battles

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435 See image 15 in the Appendix
436 See image 16 in the Appendix
in order to watch the battle from a distance. There were whole families too including children dressed in period garb. They also kept their horses in the camps. In addition to the already mentioned tents and camps there were two activity tents: tents 1 and 2. Here small performances or lectures took place during the day. Here I heard a man reenacting General Lee talk about why he needed to defend is home state Virginia against the Union, heard all the Confederate generals discuss the war, or heard the Union General Hancock discuss his view on the war, and why he disagreed with General Lee.

The dramaturgy of the event mirrors the event as a mixture of theme park and performance. Mainly, it is dominated by what I would like to call a theme park dramaturgy where you walk around the designated area and pick the events you want to participate in. The concept of reenactment as theme park has been recognized by several scholars, as I, for instance, showed in Handler and Gable’s account from Colonial Williamsburg as a Republican Disneyland. Cultural heritage scholar David Lowenthal sees how history is presented as theme park with the argument that history becomes a postmodern theme. When I argue that the dramaturgy of the resurrected battlefield resembles that of a theme park, it is not in order to solely argue that the concept of history creates a theme park but to say that the spectators at the event are turned into consumers, picking which attractions and events to seek out within a very clear frame. The fact that we for the main attractions also had to stand in line for a long time increases the experience of what I here call a theme park dramaturgy with a planned succession of smaller events within the greater frame. At the reenactment event there are attractions and performances happening all day in the activity tents, but also smaller activities you could choose to visit. The sutler row, the row of booths and tents where they sell different souvenirs and period artifacts can also be seen as a performative attraction because the sutlers present their objects and tell stories about them. They sell both antiques and replicas to both reenactors and tourists, which mean that they also sell objects that would be regarded as too farby by most reenactors, but that work well as a toy or souvenir.

The area has a strict division of stage and audience. Everything takes place on a large field, which again is divided into smaller areas. The greatest division, however, is the one marking the stage from the audience area which is physically divided by the

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437 See image 17 in the Appendix
bleacher seating, and by ropes keeping the audience outside the performing area of the
field. As a spectator you spend all your time at the event in the spectator area anyway,
but the division of the area is a reminder of the event’s performative focus. This means
that the event depends both on a quite free form where actors and spectators participate
together, and a form with a very strict division. The division, however, is present
throughout the event because of the difference in clothing and the perpetual knowledge
that the reenactors are in one way or another, actors.

The American anthropologist John J. MacAloon presents, in his discussion of
the Olympic Games as spectacle, the Olympic games as a *ramified performance* type.
This means that within the frame of the Olympic games several forms of performance
exists. First and foremost there are the athletic competitions, but in addition several
festival actions are performed as mass street festivals. The opening and closing ceremo-
nies contribute with ritual grandeur, and the visitors and performers choose which
events to participate in.⁴³⁹ Although the size of the Olympic games out conquers any
battle reenactment, the model of ramified performance may be said to fit the reenact-
ment weekend. There are main events participated in by all visitors and performers, and
there are smaller events where one is free to choose, both to choose which events one
wants to experience, and if one wants to participate at all. In addition to this there are
parties of a more festive character only for the reenactors at the reenactment site at
night. The town of Gettysburg is very small, and the number of people in town is
increased at least in twofold during the reenactment weekend. At night in town there
was also a festive spirit when all the participants went out to eat and drink. Here people
were mainly spectators, not in costume, but some reenactors were also to be seen in the
restaurants in full uniform providing a small theatrical clash. To MacAloon it is im-
portant that, in the Olympic games, festival, ritual, and spectacle exist side by side
within the grander frame of the Olympic spirit. In the reenactment event all the smaller
performances add up to the great event rather than existing side by side outside per-
formative hierarchies. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the festival spirit, and the more
solemn and ritualistic spirit of the battle performances, it is suitable to use MacAloon’s
model of ramified performance types also for smaller events like the battle reenactment
weekend. Ramified performance and festival and ritual spirit will be discussed further in
chapter seven.

The reenactors are seen everywhere inside the event. They are in the sutlers’ tents and in the tents selling refreshments. Before I went to Gettysburg I had read Hadden’s book of rules and guidelines for Civil War reenactors, and Horwitz’s account of Robert Lee Hodge’s quest for authenticity, so seeing reenactors drinking out of Coca-Cola mugs, or drinking icy drinks synthetically colored blue, surprised me.440 One of the moments I enjoyed the most was watching a Union reenactor check out the appliances to clean muskets for sale in one of the sutlers’ tents. He was an older man with a characteristic beard, and looked like he belonged to a different time. When he bowed down to make a closer inspection of a cleansing appliance shaped like a long stick, I could see an advertisement for Visa right behind him. He might have been the epitomy of the 1860s in every other way, but he would be paying with his credit card. Visa’s slogan ran through my mind: “The Future Takes Visa.” Through this image the fact of the temporal categories clearly existing side by side becomes emphasized. The reenactors were not escaping the present, they were so much a part of the present, they were shaping it through an image of the past.441

6.6.2 Battle performance
The main happenings of the event were the mass performances of the battles.442 The audience that chose activities from a list of events, became a single, homogenized audience twice a day when gathering to view the performances of the battles. The first day there was only one battle performance, as instead of a morning battle they had a live mortar fire demonstration. This demonstration was also repeated in connection with battles on the two following days. The live mortar demonstration is not a reenactment although they are divided into teams of Unionists and Confederates, and are dressed in period uniforms. The men and women participating came from different divisions of the N-SSA and seemed quite united in their mission even though they belonged to different sides, and were competing in shooting mortars at goals. I mentioned above that the N-SSA themselves compare their activity with a sporting event, and although winning was not the point of the mortar shooting, the competitive element was emphasized more in the mortar demonstrations than in the battle performances.

The unity of the different divisions was underlined when the man introducing the events of the mortar fire, he was himself a part of the association, dressed in Con-

440 See image 18 in the Appendix
441 See image 19 in the Appendix
442 The term mass performance will be discussed in chapter seven.
federate uniform told the audience that he was married to a woman on the Confederate team, and playfully emphasized that both Union teams were shooting with Confederate mortars. The division of North and South was not at all important at this event. They shot cannon balls at goals they had made for themselves and cheered when they hit it. There were no winners, or at least I could not pinpoint who had won, although I understood that there was some sort of competition going on. At the end of the demonstration all teams (one Northern and two Southern) fired their mortars at the same goal, an exploding haystack.

The live mortar fire demonstration was the first big event of the first day. One man, who was called Leonard, was the commentator for the whole event. This meant that we could hear his voice all day giving instructions like “remember to keep hydrated” or “have some ice cold refreshments”, a mixture of health advice and advertisements. He also repeated many times that we had to remember to get our wrist bands for the bleachers. Leonard was a patriotic man, so every event he introduced was followed by some patriotic act. This was especially clear at the beginning of the each day’s events where everyone had to stand up and say the American Pledge of Allegiance. On the first day, ahead of the live mortar fire demonstration, this was recited while a group of children held the American flag. To me this felt utterly strange. I did not know the words or actions to go with it, but I rose and tried my best to participate in what for most of the people surrounding me was a sincere emotive experience.

At 6 p.m. on the same day the first proper battle reenactment of the weekend started. All the battle performances took place on a large field. The grass was yellow, and behind the field was a forest, or a cluster of trees that created a backdrop for the stage area and served as a physical limit for the battle. On the right side the field ended in a small creek with the union camp on the other side. From the spectator arena we could see the union tents, their cars, and the wagons for the horses. On the left side there was nothing but fields and woods. In the distance we could see some typical American farmhouses. On the field, with some distance to where the reenactors were pretending to fight, a small group of female reenactors sat down to watch. The field in itself was delineated by the increasing amounts of reenactors. The blue and gray, or butterscotch as was worn by many of the confederate reenactors dominated, but in some of the

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443 See image 20 in the Appendix
battles the artillery soldiers wore red uniforms which provided a great contrast in color on the soft colored field.444

The first battle was given the name “Overwhelming Odds – The Fight at Barlow’s Knoll.” Historically the battle was fought north of Gettysburg and ended with Union forces, led by General Francis C. Barlow, retreating south through the town of Gettysburg. The battle reenactment started out with a cavalry battle supposed to resemble or symbolize a meeting between North and South cavalry divisions the day before the battle began. This was explained to the audience by a commentator who knew the development of the battles and what the reenactors were representing. The Confederate artillery was placed at the end of the field bordering on the forest, or cluster of trees, right behind it. The Union artillery stood close to the seating area with their backs to the audience. They started firing, and the artillery fire was loud. In addition to the rumble and sounds from the cannons, they also used some kind of fireworks that was shot into the air, and gave off a mighty bam. At first I did not really understand what they were for, but later I understood that they simulated the sound the cannon balls made when they exploded in air, or landed on a target. During the course of the reenactment I learned that I had to cover my ears when these fireworks were about to go off. After the artillery had ended their shots, the infantry started walking towards each other from both sides while firing muskets. The muskets also gave off a loud sound and a lot of smoke.

The infantry soldiers were fighting on several flanks, both to the right and to the left from where I was sitting. Quite suddenly it was over. I did not understand quite how and why it had finished: what had happened to make it stop? Every battle ended with a man playing “taps” on a bugle. Taps is the name of a bugle tune often used in connection to the Civil War events that sounds like a melancholic fanfare. Sometimes the bugle was close to the seating area so that it was easy to hear and understand as a signal of the battle ending, sometimes the bugle player was a soldier at the other end of the field and it was harder to hear. After the playing of taps everyone had to rise and sing “God Bless America.”

The first battle of the second day “Cavalry Battle: A Fleeting Victory – Emmitsburg Road Cavalry Skirmish” was a cavalry battle. It started at 11 a.m., and followed the same routine as the day before. Leonard was an active commentator, noticeable from the moment we entered the area. As on the day before we had to rise for

444 See image 21 in the Appendix
the Pledge of Allegiance before the first event started. This day we also had to sing the national anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner”. Every time a song was to be sung, either the introductory national anthem or “God Bless America” which was to be sung at the end of every battle, Leonard asked for volunteers. Two or more people from the audience came forward and sang in the microphone. Another interesting feature of this introduction was that Leonard asked all veterans from the US army to stand up. A number of men rose, and the rest of the audience applauded. Then he asked every family member of a veteran of any capacity to stand up, and we also clapped for the family members. Leonard almost cried. He repeated that this was a very patriotic event.

At this battle a female reenactor dressed in a hoop skirt with an apron that looked like the American flag, and matching bonnet sang together with two volunteers. A group of veterans held the American flag while they sang. It was carefully folded out by Leonard, and held by the veterans.

On the field the artillery was placed differently than the previous day and stood to the left and right of where I sat. This battle was mainly a cavalry battle so the artillery did not play an equally important role as it had done in the battle the day before. The Union cavalry rode in and met Confederate infantry. As was the case in the Civil War and in pre-industrial warfare in general, the infantry moved in lines. Union infantry moved in from behind the cavalry and towards the Confederates. The initial infantry battle that was fought in the middle of the field was followed by a full scale cavalry battle played out right in front of the seating area.  

The second battle of the day, “The Raging Attack – Battle at the Sherfy House”, took place at 5 p.m. Again Leonard stood for the commentating and introduction. We had already heard his voice over the speaker all day. Leonard’s introductory routines with the Pledge of Allegiance and national anthem only took place on the day’s first event. He had initially intended to omit encouraging the audience to praise the veterans again, but had changed his mind. He had been told that because he had used the word war excessively the day before, a lot of veterans who had served in supporting troops, and, as I understand it, not in the wars overseas, felt left out. So to include them, and they were of course just as important as anyone who had ever been sent out to war, we had to do the whole veteran routine one more time. The veterans rose, the audience applauded and cheered, the families rose, the audience applauded and cheered. Another thing that happened during this introduction was that a young man was taken up on the

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445 See image 22 in the Appendix
“stage” next to Leonard. Leonard told us that this young man was going into the marines in January, and we applauded and cheered for the very young man soon to enter the military.

For some reason there was the start of the battle was delayed. In order to stall, Leonard asked the audience who thought they had traveled furthest to be there. People started answering: Houston, Texas! Oregon! Montana! People yelled out all kinds of different places from across the USA. Leonard was astonished. Florida!? Wow. Although we did not respond to the question, there happened to be some other Norwegians there who did. They were not the only foreigners who responded either, several European nationalities were called, and some Australians made themselves heard. The most interesting thing about this improvised introductory event, was that although Leonard was courteously impressed by people having traveled from northern Europe or Australia to be there, he showed more astonishment for those who had journeyed from Texas, Florida, and Montana. When he asked the opposite, about who had traveled the shortest distance, people from all over Pennsylvania and bordering states responded. Leonard was still astonished. I got the impression that the most important aspect of this exercise was to show how the USA stood united in this event. Although it was not commented on, one could see that people came from states that had been on both sides during the war in addition to states that were not part of the Union during the war, or did not exist as states at that time. Here, in this event all Americans from all states stood united in a truly patriotic and uniting event.

The battle at the Sherfy house was a bigger battle than the two previous ones we had seen. The Confederates were placed on the left and further in on the field than the left flanks had been earlier, which meant that Confederate artillery stood quite close to the bleachers. There were also a great number of infantry soldiers, who stood relatively still while the battle was once again started by the cavalry, and continued by artillery fire. The Union artillery was placed on the far right side of the field, which was hard to see from where I was sitting, but we heard it, and it was interesting to hear the bouldering coming over the field after we had seen the smoke. While the artillery was firing, the troops of infantry started moving towards each other. Compared to the other battles there were a great number of infantry soldiers in this battle. Again, it suddenly ended with the sentimental playing of taps. As was common after battles ended the reenactors marched next to the tribune so that we could take them in eyesight. The

See image 23 in the Appendix
Union army was richer and therefore they had more complete uniforms, something that is visible in the dress of the reenactors today. The march was of course followed by everyone singing “God Bless America.”

Historically, the third day of battle was the decisive day of the Gettysburg campaign and led to the Confederate troops’ retreat from Pennsylvania and back south into Maryland. This is therefore also the most important day of the reenactment event. The day started at 11 a.m. with a battle called “The Confederate Surprise – Cavalry Battle at Fairfield.” There were a lot more people both reenacting and visiting on the third day. The lines to get into the seating area were longer and started earlier; it also took more time to buy a bottle of water if we were to follow Leonard’s orders to stay hydrated, which in any case would have been dangerous to boycott because of the heat.

The last battle of the event was a reenactment of the most famous battle at Gettysburg, Pickett’s charge. At the 148th anniversary event the battle was given the subtitle “The Artillery Opens Up”. There were clearly more people at the battlefields this day, just to see the famous reenactment of Pickett’s charge. As shown above, this was also an important event at all the veteran reunions. The battles resemble each other a lot. The soldiers may be placed at different posts, and might walk in different directions, but the actions carried out by the different divisions are quite similar. The first battle of the third day was impressive because it was larger in scale than the battles the two previous days, and because there was so much going on at the same time. Although all divisions, infantry, cavalry, and artillery had been fighting simultaneously in all the other battles I, as a spectator, mostly concentrated on one main event. How this would be perceived would depend on where you were sitting and your proximity to the course of events. In this battle more was going on at the same time so you would be concentrating on several aspects at once. When the battle ended the reenactor playing taps came up front to the tribune so that we all could see him before the rest of the reenactors marched passed the audience. For the last time we all sang “God bless America.” After this battle we also had to honor some contemporary US Army soldiers who were there. I think the reason they were there was to keep an eye on security, but their presence in contemporary uniforms made a line of military belonging apparent, and they created a breach to the military history that was the events’ theme and agenda at the same time as they marked a continuous, and also here a uniting, line between the historical and contemporary military.
6.6.3 Theatricality on the battlefield

There is no doubt that the reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg was a theatrical event. The first and main reason for this was that it was easily identifiable as theatre. Thousands of people sat in the bleachers in addition to those who had not bought passes for the seating area and sat on the edges in camping chairs they had brought with them. In front of all these spectators thousands of people pretended to act out war battles from the early 1860s. The action, communication, and communal bodily presence in the act of pretending was for me thoroughly an experience of theatricality. Some parts strengthened this notion. As I explained above it could sometimes be difficult to understand the narrative development of the battles. To avoid too much confusion, and to strengthen the communication of historical facts, a guide from the Gettysburg museum and Visitor Center acted as a narrator explaining the details of each battle’s development to the audience. This also meant that Leonard had to let go of his microphone for the time the battle lasted. The presence of narrative is in no way a prerequisite for theatricality, but it in many cases does help. In this case the communicative act of the performance was emphasized through the action of narration. The emphasis on communication brought the event closer to the audience in that we were explained the actions, though the fact that it was a performance of reenactment was emphasized to such a degree that the theatrical distance was made very clear.

In her account of her visit to Gettysburg, Rebecca Schneider tells of how she was sitting in the tribune while the fighting occurred inside a forest without the spectators being able to see anything but the smoke, and hear the shots.\textsuperscript{447} When first reading this I thought that the reenactors were performing for themselves, searching for the authentic experience away from the spectators that would ruin the illusion of war, but at the 2011 event all the fighting took place in the proximity of the spectators. Since the action was spread out on a large field, not everything was equally easy to see from all the seats in the bleachers, but it was anyway clearly staged so that it would be possible for the spectators to see. The aspect of communication in theatricality was here made a central part of the battle reenactments.

The most theatrical aspect of the events was watching the reenactors pretend to die, and consequently rise at the playing of taps. This opposition between actual dying and the explicit performance of make-believe is a good example on what I in chapter two described as a theatricality of life. Rebecca Schneider cites this as one of

\textsuperscript{447} Schneider, Performing Remains, 33
the things in reenactment that made the deepest impact on her.^{448} I agree with Schneider’s experience but I cannot get away from the fact that there were not so many reenactors died. Tony Horwitz tells from his experience in reenacting the Battle of the Wilderness how the reenactors were reluctant to die:

(...) I was the only man without a gun. I asked the captain what part I might play in the upcoming combat. “If one of our men should fall, pick up his musket and fight on,” he said. Then he added, sotto voce: “If no one goes down, run around a while and then take a hit. We can always use casualties.” Back in line, I shared my orders with Bishop. “Casualties are a problem,” he said. “Nobody wants to drive three hours to get here, then go down in the first five minutes and spend the day lying on cowpies.” Sometimes, he said, officers began the battle by asking everyone for their birth dates. “then they’ll say ‘all Januarys and Februarys die. March and April, serious injuries.’”^{449}

This reluctance to die may have been the reason for the small number of theatrical deaths at Gettysburg as well, at least only a small percent of the reenactors acted dead, and most often not before the end of the battle.

The reenactors who acted dead, were mainly infantry soldiers. This never happened in the cavalry battles. This probably has a very easy explanation, because pretending to get hurt while sitting on horseback will cause you to lose control of the horse. If being injured causes you to fall off the horse it might be dangerous, it can be a hard fall and quite certainly you would be trampled on both by your own horse and by the others. Moreover, the horse will no longer have a rider and may gallop off on its own. Another thing is that the cavalry soldiers use guns to a lesser degree than their infantry colleagues. Some of them have small handguns and they also carry muskets, but a lot of the fighting is done with sabers.^{450} Compared to the guns shooting black powder, sabers can be said to be quite dangerous weapons, and the horseback riders must be careful so that the saber does not pierce the opponent’s body. Safety for the horses is of course also important in this regard. With these things in mind it makes sense that the cavalry soldiers ride over to each other and hit the sabers against each other one or two times, and then ride on. It does not look as though they are involved in combat. This gives the cavalry parts of the battles a different experience in regard to theatricality than artillery and infantry who use weapons that make sounds and emit smoke.

The theatricality of the event becomes evident through the reluctance to die. Since most reenactors seem reluctant to die, and only a small number of performers

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^{448} Ibid., 54

^{449} Horwitz, Confederates in the Attic, 130-131

^{450} See image 24 in the Appendix
playing dead can be seen on the field, the action of play becomes conspicuous. In Huizinga’s theories of play, discussed in chapter two, *play* is connected to the term *agon*, the Greek word for contest. *Agon* is an important part in many acts of play, and is clearly present in battle reenactments. By declining to die, the reenactors show that they are in it for the fun and game of it, in it for play. Still, some of them do pretend to die mainly in order to provide *authenticity* to the event, but also in order to take the concept of *agon* all the way. Huizinga recognizes a lot of play in war, and in battle reenactments it seems as if they have eliminated death, pain, and suffering from the war, and are left with the concept of *agon*: contest and play. Stanton’s account of the historical soldiers’ snowball fights discussed above may be an example of this. In this performative action of play I see theatricality. In chapter two I showed in the paragraph on theatricality and life that Huizinga’s play term is suitable for discussing theatricality because it creates a realm outside of the ordinary, a realm where there are other rules to follow, and this creates an experience of freedom. The lack of pretended death, an element I probably expected more of, combined with suddenly seeing bodies lying around on the field that then rose quickly up at the playing of taps, shows the deepest form of theatre, pretending, performing, and ending. It shows the audience that they, the audience, are constructing their own illusions through a theatrical “as if.”

Another element of the reenactment I found to provide theatricality to the event was the use of smoke. The use of black powder inevitably causes smoke. This resulted in that in several of the battles one could see a layer of smoke between the reenactors and the seating area in addition to clusters of smoke all around the battlefield. The smoke created a distance between the spectators and the playing field, like a visible but not physical *clivage*, to use Josette Féral’s term. Watching the battle being played out through the smoke, I for the first and only time thought to myself that, “wow, this looks like war!” I was feeling like the distancing effect the smoke provided estranged me in a way that also made it possible to pretend for a split second that this was what it had looked like. I was no longer in the same space as the reenactors, as I had been just seconds before, the smoke changed the space. When the clouds of smoke had disappeared it was almost as if the different spheres on and off stage merged again, and this play on space enhanced by the smoke contributed in strengthening the theatricality of the event through separating and uniting simultaneously.\footnote{See image 25 in the Appendix}
6.6.4 Liminality on the battlefield

Most accounts of reenactment focus on the collective experience of participating in the events. The reenactors are faithful supporters of the education about, and presentation of Civil War facts, but many present it mainly as play: it’s a great deal of fun, going camping with their friends, and pretending to fight. Stanton points out that many reenactors see the camaraderie of the events as the main reason to reenact. Seen as an event where most reenactors travel a long way, dress in different clothes, and leave their regular world behind, it becomes clear that the event has characteristics of liminality, or what we, by paraphrasing Fischer-Lichte, may call a strong concept of the liminoid. Stanton shows how most reenactors belong to the same social strata, however, this can be said to have less importance in the events than in regular life. Especially because the reenactments have their own clear hierarchies and command lines, and so the hierarchies of regular life seem to temporarily cease to exist within the realm of battle and encampment. As discussed in chapter three, the lack of hierarchies is a characteristic common in communitas as discussed by Turner, and in carnivals as discussed by Bakhtin. Having in mind that the hierarchies of the reenactors change during the weekends, participating in the hobby can be said to be a way of seeking out a form of communitas just as much as entertaining or educating an audience. The action of participating in the events is voluntary, the voluntariness of it is even important since it is presented as a leisure event and hobby, and this is so inherent to the reenactors’ perception of it. Therefore, the participation is probably more liminoid than liminal if following Turner’s definitions of the terms. Still, it has some genuine ritual emotions connected to it.

These emotions are mainly connected to the space of action. The historical battlefields are, as mentioned above, not used for reenactments but the areas used are chosen to represent the historical battlefields. Its physical closeness to the historical sites helps create a bond between the event and the historical battles. The same might be said about time. It is important that the events are held on dates close to the original dates, this is both to emphasize the concept of commemoration through making it an anniversary, and also to provide the same kind of weather as the historical soldiers had. This was repeated when I visited Gettysburg, the heat we were experiencing was referred to as being the same heat as the soldiers had experienced in 1863. This physical

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452 Stanton, Being the Elephant, 61
experience of heat consequentially contributed to strengthening the feeling of connection with history.

In his account of the commemoration events and monuments at Gettysburg, Linenthal argues that participants at the early commemoration events were reminded “that the ground they were standing on had been transformed by the potency of battle.” Linenthal is of course right, the area of Gettysburg was, after the battles, transformed from being regular American farm fields into areas forever connected with bloodshed and war. The question is, however, why this transformation occurred. I do not think that the monuments merely reminded the visitors of a transformation that has happened; the monuments transformed the fields themselves. Physically, this is the case. Driving around the Gettysburg battlefields today, there are monuments everywhere. The monuments have made the area look more like a cemetery than farmland, and everything appearing on the land is presented as semiotic signs directly connected to the Civil War. In this way the land is transformed, not as much by blood as by marble. This has similarities to Schechner’s argument concerning the Berlin Wall, which was presented in chapter five, where the symbolic meaning of the construction was transformed by the revolution. At Gettysburg the area has been transformed through the actual battle, the monumental rearrangement, and performance.

The same can be said of the space of reenactment. Whether or not it is the exact same place as the historical battles took place does not really matter. The events transform the space and connect it directly to the historical event. The authenticity of the event is, to a large degree, secured by the geographical closeness of the spaces in question, but it is the event that makes the space of the event sacred, which is the term Linenthal uses in the title of his book. The total event, therefore, has a ritual effect, where the space is transformed in order to provide a frame of commemoration and solemnity for the participants, both reenactors and spectators, enhancing the sincerity and emotion of the event. The space becomes liminal space, existing in the flux of time, concrete and abstract, and close and distant all at once. In terms of theatricality we can say that it separates and unites.

As discussed above, Linenthal argues heavily for the events being a part of an ideology of reconciliation, and also perceives the early commemoration events that included veterans as rituals of reconciliation. As briefly discussed in chapter three, Victor Turner, in his discussion of social drama, characterizes the dramaturgy of social

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453 Linenthal, Sacred Ground, 111
drama as having four phases: breach, crisis, redress, and either reintegration or recognition. Turner argues that rituals and liminal phases occur in the phase of redress. The redressive phase is also the phase of the subjunctive mood, the “as if”. Turner himself shows how this form of dramaturgy has similarities with the dramaturgy of tragedy presented by Aristotle in the Poetics. Social drama, therefore, has a form that resembles stage drama. To Turner staged drama occurs within the form of social drama, most importantly in the redressive phase. Here he actually cites civil war in itself as a form of redressive action and a result of breach and crisis. So when the American Civil War is reenacted it is the redressive phase of the conflict that is emphasized, this is especially true of the Battle of Gettysburg that functioned as a turning point of the war, given a ceremonial influence through Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address four months later.

The first commemorations at Gettysburg and elsewhere after the Civil War were clearly ceremonies of redressive action. Seen in a larger perspective than above where the Civil War can be perceived as the crisis of the drama, the ceremonies of commemoration in the years that followed were attempts to reconcile the enemies, and create one union of what had for a short period been two. The events of commemoration were staged explicitly as reunions held in order to reconcile the former enemies. This is the reason that the handshaking at the line of battle had such an impact on participants. The crisis was manifested in the handshake that then slowly transformed itself into a phase of reconciliation.

However, today the reenactment events are not direct results of national crisis. The element of commemoration seems to be toned down. Still, the event bears evidence of redressive action. First of all the modern reenactment in Gettysburg pays homage to the reconciliatory attempt put forward by the early commemorative events through the use of sincere commemoration. Although it is presented and experienced as a fun weekend, the sincerity and solemnity connected to the idea that participating is more than fun is emphasized throughout the event. This is best exemplified by Leonard who, in the introduction to one of the battles when we were about to sing “God Bless America”, yelled out: “come on guys, this isn’t a ballgame!” Meaning that where a ballgame is all fun and cheers, the battle reenactment was a serious event. This experience of seriousness is related to the early commemorative events and their inherent liminality. The USA is today a multifaceted nation. As Stanton points out, almost all reenactors are

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454 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 69
conservative, middle class, white, and male. Although surprisingly many women participated both as soldiers and civilians, and the audience seemed predominantly to be families, there was a still a majority of men, especially as reenactors. Contemporary conflicts related to race, politics, or demography are invisible in these events, but the notion of the conflicts’ existence merged with the awareness of the historical conflicts creates space for ritualistic events of reconciliation and union.

One of the things that enhanced the focus on the liminal at the event was the abundance of food. As Richard Schechner writes in *Performance Theory*, eating and drinking have accompanied performance all over the world. This is certainly true of traditional theatre where refreshments continue to be served at intermission, or a meal or drinks are often enjoyed afterwards. At Gettysburg it was almost as if it was one of the main attractions. The portions were also huge, making eating into an event in itself, not just a necessity. The festival theme of the event was emphasized through the focus on food, an aspect also important in the Bakhtinian carnival. And although very strictly organized, the reenactment event at Gettysburg did have similarities with carnival; hierarchies were to some degree dispersed, all around me people had dressed up like other people, and a festive mood covered the space of action while reminding us of what they believed in: The United States of America.

### 6.7 The Battle of Gettysburg as performative and ideological event

#### 6.7.1 Restored behavior

The Civil War has gained an important place in American popular culture since the war ended. Films like *Gettysburg* from 1993, *Gone with the Wind* from 1939, and *Glory* from 1989 featuring Denzel Washington as a black Union soldier, among many others, have provided the Civil War buffs with images and information on the historical time they seek to recreate. Also rock groups have taken the image of the Civil War into their scene. In their song “Civil War” from the album *Use Your Illusion II*, the American rock group Guns N’ Roses see war as an action repeating itself. While crying out for an end to the repetitious action of sending young men out to war, the front singer Axl Rose proclaims: “Look at the young men dying the way they’ve always done before.” And in the emotional refrain he repeats “I don’t need your civil war. No no no no no no no no.” Their take on civil war is different from the perspective of the reenacting practice, but for both Axl Rose and reenactors war is repetition. In reenactment practice the illusion

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456 Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture*
is used exactly to let the men, although often not that young, die (or refuse to) repeatedly. In their performance of the past the Civil War has become a need. Where the pop group easily can present civil war as a cruel and gruesome historical event and serve political purposes as a campaign against war, Civil War reenactment serves an opposite purpose, not in the sense that they are praising war as such, but by using war to perform the past in order to structure the present.

Vanessa Agnew argues that historical reenactment is a result of what she calls an “affective turn” in historical representation.\(^\text{457}\) An affective turn is, according to Agnew, a turn in traditional historiography where eliciting affect plays a more important role, and where the individual’s physical and psychological experience is at the center of attention. Agnew, writing in 2007, argues that this is a recent turn in historiography, and that reenactment events are an example of this turn. This is certainly true; in the reenactment the focus on physical and psychological experience in addition to emotions is the main priority of organizers and participants. Affective use of history giving experience priority over structure is therefore not something that solely belongs to the reenactment movement although it is very much present at the reenactment events. Emotional history combined with a system of authenticity is the main expression of the event. This emotion becomes clear when we analyze the nostalgia present in the event. Emotion in regard to the presentation and performance of history and ideology will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Repeating the past in performance is not an invention of modernity. The ancient Greeks performed mythical history, and Shakespeare wrote plays based on historical events. Hence, performing history has been quite common in theatre history, and might be seen as an elementary performative concept. Richard Schechner argues in the article “Restoration of behavior” that all performance is “twice-behaved behavior.”\(^\text{458}\) Schechner sees how rituals always repeat an earlier ritual and how these rituals often have a foundation relating to an original historical or mythical event. Traditional theatre too is restored behavior in the sense that it always points back to rehearsal, and often back to an original staging of a text. The past is always in transformation, which means that when behavior is restored it is not always related back to the original event but also to the transformations that has occurred with time.


The reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg claims to reenact the first event, the historical battle, but is, in the main, a restoration of the early commemorations and battle reenactments. This can be seen in the importance that the once spontaneous handshake at the reenactment of Pickett’s Charge received, and how this was later incorporated in following events. The battle reenactment is therefore not a restoration of the historical war battle but of the performative and commemorative practice that has been presented after the war. Performing history is therefore not necessarily performing what happened at a certain period of time, this time has in any case passed away and is now non-existent, but rather a reperforming of performative practice. So, as discussed above in relation to authenticity, the system of history referred to by the performance is not only connected to the performance of historical facts but more prominently to the restored performance of performance.

6.7.2 Nostalgia

The restoration and repetition of performance related to a category of history seems to me to deeply correlate with nostalgia. Although performance can be defined as twice-behaved behavior and a repetition of performance more than a repetition of non-performative life actions, the wish to repeat history in the Civil War reenactments is all about a feeling of loss of what history has represented. Nostalgia, a pseudo-Greek word put together of Nostos, return home, and Algia, longing, was first used as a diagnosis given to Swiss mercenary soldiers who were suffering from homesickness. The Russian-American literary scholar Svetlana Boym defines it as a “longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed.” She points out that nostalgia in the 17th century was treated as a curable disease, and the Swiss soldiers receiving the diagnosis were treated with opium, leeches, and convalescence in the Swiss Alps.

Boym’s main project is investigating the post-communist nostalgia of Russia and Eastern Europe. She discusses what happens when the country the people grew up in ceases to exist, and the construction of memories needs to be changed with the overall political and geographical changes and what cultural responses this nostalgia for the old regimes has had. Boym distinguishes between restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia Boym identifies as focusing on the nostos, and

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therefore includes attempts to build up the bygone past, while the reflective nostalgia focuses on the *algia*, the sentimental longing for, and loss of, the past.  

This kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in anti-modern myth-making of history by means of a return to nationalist symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time.

The reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg is a deeply nostalgic event, and can easily be categorized as an event of restorative nostalgia. Interestingly, Boym points out that this category of nostalgics do not see themselves as nostalgic since they believe that their quest for the lost time of history is a quest for truth. And I have already shown how the reenactment’s quest for truth, in the sense of *authenticity*, pervades the event.

One interesting aspect in Boym’s discussion of restorative nostalgia is that she connects it to action and customs. With the help of Eric Hobsbawm she distinguishes between the habits of the past and the habits of the restoration of the past, and sees restored or invented tradition as a set of practices. Seen this way restorative nostalgia is not too far from Schechner’s concept of restored behavior. In restorative nostalgia the main point would be to actively restore the past through truthful commemoration, but also the examples used by Schechner, as the living history museum Plimoth Plantation, or the recreation of an Indian ritual for the sake of documentation, are active restorations of the past through a belief in revealing the habits of the past. Restored behavior relates its activity to a kernel of originality in the same way as the nostalgics presented by Boym. The performative actions explained by Schechner, in most cases, do not relate back to an original event, but what Schechner calls a non-event, which in this case means the habits of the restoration of the past rather than the habits of the past itself.

Pierre Nora, in his article “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, also presents *memory* as action or habits. Memory, Nora argues, is an understanding of history that has been passed down through the generations creating a relation between the people and its history. This closeness to memory has, however, changed, and now these environments of memory, *milieux de memoire*, have ceased to exist and have been replaced by places of memory, *lieux de memoire*. When I say that

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460 Ibid., 41
461 Ibid.
462 Ibid.
463 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, in *Representation*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, (Spring 1989): 7-24
Nora’s concept of memory has an aspect of action it is because of his focus on the habitual past: that which has easily been handed down to new generations. When these memories disappear, Nora sees them being replaced by the actions and monuments of commemoration. Where history claims bookishly to present the facts of the past, memories are kept through the actions of commemoration: creating habits of memory through repetition of commemorative actions. Seen in this way restored behavior, in cases of commemoration, become actions that restore the habits of the restoration of the past in order to create memories for the present. Rebecca Schneider distinguishes between history and memory by defining history as documentation and memory as bodily experience. In this way we can see memory as bodily action, restoring an image of lost bodily actions.\textsuperscript{464}

Boym points out that nostalgia is not always about the past. “Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have direct impact on the realities of the future.”\textsuperscript{465} The longing for something old has an impact on how we construct both our present life and the future that follows. Also Schechner acknowledges that performance as twice-behaved behavior takes the future performance into consideration, and taking into account that history through the performative events of commemoration is transformed, one, in my view, can see the performative behavior as one link in a chain of behaviors with a consciousness of history, referring both backwards and forwards in time, but most of all to the present here-and-now of performance. It refers mainly to the performative co-existence experienced by spectators and reenactors alike, together. The relation nostalgia has to both the present and the future makes the term especially relevant in regard to discussing ideology.

At the 148\textsuperscript{th} anniversary reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg, the past and the present were carefully combined in order to create a whole. As has already been discussed, even though the concepts of authenticity and truth are important among reenactors, the history presented refers rather to a category of the past than to historical facts. This category of the past becomes a reference to a Žižekian Real. It is experienced as the most real of all, but it is in any case independent of historical facts. The 19\textsuperscript{th} century is presented as an easy time, a time of gallantry and easily understood gender divisions. The reenactors’ focus on the romantic past is documented by Stanton in her interviews with Civil War reenactors.\textsuperscript{466} When I visited Gettysburg there were surpris-

\textsuperscript{464} Schneider, Performing Remains, 38
\textsuperscript{465} Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, xvi
\textsuperscript{466} Stanton, Being the Elephant
ingly many women dressed in civilian period outfits. They did not have any function in the performance, although, as mentioned above, some of them did take place on the battlefield watching the battles while they lasted. Still, they represented a nostalgic force of the event, walking around in hoop skirts, looking pretty, and probably hoping not to need to use the bathroom very often.

Although the reenactors dive into their nostalgia more or less consciously, focusing on the side of the event that has to do with history, or memory, to use Nora’s term, the event has more of a double edge in relation to the spectator. Walking around in contemporary clothing, the main point of reference for the spectator, that is, me, is the here-and-now. Leonard, the enthusiastic commentator, became a representative for performing the two layers. His main task was to give information, but by insistently repeating patriotic actions together with practical information, Leonard emphasized the collective co-existence in the presence shared by all the spectators, including him. When this was combined with the entry into the realm of history on the field, the nostalgic search for history turned into a presentation of the present through the perspective of nostalgia.

This aesthetics of nostalgia or commemoration is presented through an elaborate but easy sign system that in a way simplifies the image of the past presented. This is easily seen in the presentation of women. A woman is someone wearing a hoop skirt. Although the women who do this go to great efforts to put together impressive costumes, this does not change her symbolic meaning. A woman is a person in that particular type of dress, there is no other way to dress as a woman. The women who dress like men and participate in the battle performances are not symbolically defined as women. Other social implications are not given through the costumes, and everyone seems to belong to the same middle class. When the woman who was dressed in a hoop skirt with an apron that looked like an American flag, described above, sang the national anthem, her clothing transgressed the layers of performance, moving over from the historical category to the present, but she still belonged to the image of the hoop skirted woman. It did not matter that everyone could agree that the apron was an invention of the present. The referential illusion she refers to, to use Barthes’ term, is the same even though she chooses to be a bit radical by choosing to adorn a nationalistic apron.

Regarding the symbolization of the reenactors the most important distinguishing mark was the one between the union and confederate soldiers. In the same manner as the women, the soldiers are presented as images of the 19th century soldier, and the
conflict they represented. Although the soldiers represent two sides of a difficult conflict, the difference in their presentation is not very noticeable. More than being presented as incorporating ideological differences they are presented through geographical differences, which means that they together represent the complete USA. Being aware of the effort put into the costumes, and the authenticity that has been considered when sewing them, the reenactors can be read as signs of the exact same authenticity. They represent their own image of what authenticity is, and the performance of costumes and artifacts becomes signs for the concept of authenticity as such. In addition to the reenactors’ function as signs, the event is overflowing with explicit national and patriotic signs such as flags from different eras in addition to the singing of national anthems, pledging allegiance, and so forth.

In her analysis of Civil War reenactments, Rebecca Schneider focuses on the reenactors’ desire to “touch time.” As Schneider’s concept of memory as a physical bodily action, the touch is inherently physical. Schneider points out that the concept of touch is problematic because it suggests the possibility of a transcendence of time, an actual leaving behind of the temporal origin. However, Schneider sees that touch can mean existence in two spheres at once: “To touch is not to become coextensive, to fully become that which is touched or which touches, but is to (partially) collapse the distance marking one thing as fully distinct from another thing.” What occurs then is a temporal and bodily duality, an experience of bodily existence and presence in two spheres at the same time. This physical touch separating and uniting the conceptual spheres is marked by the concept of memory as a bodily experience, and can be seen as a theatricality of memory or nostalgia, physical and conceptual all at once. Here the theatricality is related more to the experience of physicality and, as I showed in chapter two, to Josette Féral’s term clivage, and what I called a theatricality based on a duality of space, but also to a theatricality based on a duality of art and life, creating different spheres of existence.

Schneider describes this touch by applying terms used by the reenactors themselves. Here she includes Horwitz’s term of wargasm that I explained above. The term wargasm refers directly to a physical, and not least sexual, reaction. In Lacan’s use of the term jouissance the sexual side of the term is more prominent than in Žižek’s use. Wargasm is a desirable state, a physical desire for transgression, but it is also a state that it never will be possible to reach. The state of wargasm is always further ahead, within a

467 Schneider, Performing Remains, 35
second realm that would be impossible to fully incorporate because it does not exist. The physical desire for transgression is a desire for an escape into memory. *Wargasm* read as *jouissance* would mean that it, in the final degree, would be an act of pain. War in itself is painful, and within this desire for war and malnutrition there is a sense of physically seeking pain while always knowing that the overpowering pain sought for will not occur. Besides this, the transgression of realms, the loss of ground when entering an undecided realm, an unclear place of collective memory, would appear as a diffuse pain when completeness is what the actual desire is. The concept of authenticity sought for by the reenactment is an attempt to create a desirable completeness, while the theatricality is eternally present, reminding us that there is no such thing.

Axl Rose from Guns’n Roses finishes the song about civil war by, in a speaking voice, saying: “What’s so civil about war anyway?” This is a question you can easily ask yourself when walking around the Civil War reenactment area at Gettysburg. There is no conflict to be seen, no differences to talk about. The event is most of all an event of fun and games, a family event as Leonard put it. Everything was very civil, so why did they need the war? It seems as if the focus on conflict put forward in the battle performances works as a unifying element. Spectators, organizers, reenactors and others involved in the performances unite through the performance of conflict. This can again be related to Huizinga’s concept of *agon*. Although it in many ways reminded me of a sports event where people cheered for their “team”, no one actually won, the winner was always *America*, the superstructural *we* shared by everyone participating. This may be one of the reasons that Leonard did not show much interest in the participation of foreigners, people who were not a part of this superstructural *we*. We, the traveling Europeans, were welcome to take part, and treated courteously, but it was not about us.

### 6.7.3 Narratives, the Real and ideology

The battle reenactment weekend was an explicitly patriotic and nationalist event. This was made very clear with such explicit nationalist actions as singing the national anthems and pledging allegiance to the American flag. Leonard spoke about it as an important American event and used the term patriotic several times when explaining the actions. In its explicitness the ideological side of the event becomes very clear through the patriotic insistence. The narratives presented are given a high value, and they are presented as being *true*. The main narrative is the narrative of American history which is very much fused with the narrative of the fight for independence. Although the
Revolutionary War was fought more than a hundred years before the Civil War, the narratives connected to them are almost similar. In the reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg this can be seen most clearly by the large lack of explicit questions related to the ideological sides of the Civil War as slavery. In all the talks I attended held by living history reenactors performing generals, the factor presented by the confederate soldiers was the one of control and independence, while the union soldiers presented the issue of keeping the nation together. All in all, everyone spoke about issues ideologically important in the USA today: independence and nationhood. None of these matters are controversial or are actually filled with meaning. Their function is symbolic, a symbol of a unified America.

Even though the aesthetics of the event, in its simultaneous quest for authenticity and enjoyable performance, can be said to resemble scenic realism, the form of theatre opposed to by the retheatricalists for lack of theatricality, the battle performances are to be regarded as performances inherent of theatricality. This has to do with the presence of a great amount of dualities of spheres and play. The most conspicuous duality is the duality of spheres where the sphere of the Civil War is juxtaposed with the sphere of the performative here-and-now and the sphere of the spectators. This is both a concrete and physical duality of space in the sense that the performance area is divided, and an imaginary duality presented through the difference in historical time, providing a sense of touching time also for the spectators. Secondly, a duality of communication is present through the active use of the spectators. First of all because the spectators encounter the reenactors on a more personal level through the sutler tents, camps, and living history village, and also through activating the spectators in the bleachers prior to and during the battle performances.

In the literature of Civil War reenactment most emphasis is put on the reenactors and their quest for truth, history and authenticity. In Horwitz’s account of Rob Lee Hodge, for instance, Civil War reenactment is something mainly done for personal gain, and the authentic experience is something that can only be achieved when distancing oneself from spectatorship. However, the reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg I attended was primarily a spectator event in the sense that it could not exist without the spectators. The event depended on the relation between spectators and reenactors, in the terms of Willmar Sauter, on the action and reaction that constitutes theatricality.468 There are also dualities of play present. The event is a very playful event, much focus is

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468 See chapter two for the discussion of Willmar Sauter’s view of theatricality.
given to the fun aspects of participation and camaraderie. The same is the case in the battle performances where choreography and prepared action is juxtaposed with playful improvisation. Here the freedom of play is combined with controlled staging. The playful dive into flexible memories is placed side by side with fixed and unchangeable history.

The main object of communication within the event is a formulation of a Žižekian ideological Real. This Real is here constituted by the category of authenticity as explained above. Authenticity as the Real of reenactment masks the void of the impossibility of authenticity, making the performance of authenticity a performance of nostalgia. Nostalgia and authenticity therefore become closely related terms. The physical desire inherent in the performance, manifested through what I have, with the help of Horwitz, called wargasm, fails in becoming an actuality because the actual desire is too painful and because transgressions of time are factually impossible. The desire is therefore replaced by a masking desire of nostalgia. Wargasm is the desire for transgression of the here-and-now, but it is still dependent on the here-and-now to exist. It is a very spatial concept, related to the concrete and physical space in the here-and-now. Wargasm is jouissance. The Real is masking the void that transgression is impossible. The Real is both authenticity and the glue of the here-and-now in the sense that desirable escape is impossible. Authenticity is a prerequisite for wargasm at the same time as it functions as the desirable part of the Real, that is, jouissance.

The theatricality of the event occurs when this desire is communicated to an audience, and the audience reacts to it. For the nostalgia is not only the physical transformation via the costumes of the reenactors into a bygone world. The nostalgia is also shared by the spectators. The authenticity creates an ideological foundation in that it functions as a unifying tool. The deeply rooted causes of the Civil War and their remnants in today’s America visible in large disagreements over governmental control and racism are problems that do not even break the surface at the Gettysburg event: the main content of communication is unification through difference. This means that in the case of theatricality the event uses techniques of unification more than separation, but the event is still evidently dependent on physical and spherical separation to work. The wholeness of the ideological message surfaces within its own paradox. The existence of unity through conflict is a basic paradox, but presented through an effect of separating and uniting at the same time, the basic paradox becomes naturalized, creating an effect of the Real.
In the chapter on ideology I quoted Žižek’s statement on false consciousness as a misrecognition of illusion: “What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity.” In the case of the reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg one could say that what they misrecognize is not the nostalgia in itself but the way it is structuring their social activity. Everyone participating in the event, either as spectators or as reenactors, knows that the historical Civil War was not a fun weekend with entertainment and copious amounts of food. Still, they continue to act as if it was and as if this war is representative of their beliefs in contemporary America. What is performed at the event is exactly this acting as if, Turner’s subjunctive mood in an ideological frenzy. This acting “as if” in an ideological sense here comes close to a theatrical “as if” constituting a theatricality of defamiliarization making a desirable familiar.

Žižek argues, as has been discussed several places above, that ideology is action. It is acting as if one believes what one desires. The reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg is exactly this form of ideological action, maintaining a belief in memory and authenticity as representative for modern day America, willfully overlooking the tragic consequences of war. In the reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg ideology is restored action, and rephrasing Sauter we can also see it as theatricality as action and re-action. In the reenactment event this action is a bodily and physical action, where the desire of jouissance and ideological foundation is touched on both sides of the stage as a result of bodily co-presence. The presence of bodies is combined with the presence of spheres and the desire for both spheres at once, and the impossibility of transgression creating a cluster of dualities constituting the event.

6.8 Summarizing remarks
In this chapter I have discussed how time is performed. More specifically, in this context, performing time means performing historical time both at Colonial Williamsburg and at the reenactment event at Gettysburg, history and historical times related to a specific place where its history is now attempted recreated. The most important term that I have introduced in this chapter is authenticity. For the reenactment community it is a very important term, and in the literature on reenactment events the term is used frequently both by enthusiasts and by theorists from different fields. In my discussion of the term I concluded that authenticity is to be regarded more as a category of reference.

469 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 30
than being related to actual history. In the reenactment events authenticity has also been used as an authoritative term to explain preferred roles of conduct at the event rather than historical facts.

The discussions in this chapter have focused on the alleged dichotomies of authenticity and theatricality. In the section on living history museums and Colonial Williamsburg I showed how the museum, since the start, has been drawn between presenting and performing authenticity on the one hand, through a quest to educate their audience, and theatricality on the other, through appealing to the audience through entertainment. The dichotomy of entertainment and education was deeply felt at Colonial Williamsburg. When attempting to present what they called social history, reactions were hard when carried out within a theatrical frame, where it was seen as an entertainment rather than an education. I have also demonstrated how sincerity and play were set up as a dichotomy during the early Civil War commemorations, and how authenticity is an important factor for Civil War reenactors, many frowning upon those who go too far when it comes to play, or theatricality.

In the section of Civil War reenactment and the 148th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg and in my discussion of the term authenticity, I have, however, shown that a concept of authenticity is not something that stands in opposition to theatricality, but an element that becomes an important part of the theatricality of the reenactment events. The system of authenticity sought for in the events is exactly what creates the most prominent dualities of the event. In chapter two I proposed duality as the core of the different experiences of theatricality, and here we can see how the reenactment events include a clear duality of life where the different spheres of time and place coincide while still deeply emphasizing their separation. Authenticity, thus, is what separates and unites both experience and people at the events, an element I established as an important factor for theatricality in chapter two. A category of authenticity that is created to support difference and duality therefore strengthens the theatricality of the event, it does not create a clear dichotomy.

Another factor that has been important in this chapter is that of a physical experience, what I, with the help of Rebecca Schneider, have called touch or touching time, and which she with the help of Tony Horwitz, has connected to wargasm. Through these physical experiences the goal is to transgress history, open up the closed doors between the different time periods and touch the time, which has now passed, existing simultaneously somewhere in history and somewhere within human desire. I have
suggested that the term *wargasm* can be seen in connection with the Žižekian and Lacanian term of *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is connected to sexual desire, and here it becomes a physical desire for transgression, which conceals the known fact that transgression is impossible. Coexisting in different times, time travel or transgressing time, history and ideologies are not possible, but still the belief in a source of history carrying with it the truths of life, death, and America, and the desire to reach it lies as a physical motivation throughout the event.

I have shown that the ideological content of the event is connected to narratives of American independence, freedom, and nationhood, which are defined through the stories of revolution and subsequent independence, and from the terrifying conflict of unity in the Civil War. The ideology of the Civil War reenactment at Gettysburg and at Colonial Williamsburg is highly present through the unalterable concept of authenticity. By creating an absolute structure of history, which through its narratives, in addition to clearly defining the past, contributes with definitions of both present and future this concept of authenticity takes form. In the discussion in this dissertation it is necessary to place this next to a discussion of the Žižekian *Real*, which has been done in relation to authenticity and ideology. I have argued that the *Real* of reenactment masks the void of the impossibility of absolute authenticity while at the same time constituting the ideological authenticity and the knowledge, making the category of authenticity also a category of nostalgia. Through actions of conflict staged as actions of unity, the conflicts of past times surfaces as present unity, separating and uniting at the same time.
7.0 Ideology, theatricality and mass performance

7.1 Introduction
In the first part of this dissertation I discussed three central, but different, theoretical approaches. Where my discussion on theatricality has roots in the mainly European tradition of theatre research or theaterwissenschaft, the perspective on ideology is gathered from a Marxist and structuralist approach. Finally, I also included the perspective of performance theory and its relation to ritual theory of anthropology and religious studies. In this chapter I will attempt an explanation of how and why these theoretical approaches can be used together when discussing mass performance. In the second part of the dissertation I presented my two case studies including historical and contextual background. In this chapter I will take the discussion further and consider the case studies in relation to the main problematics of this dissertation. When discussing both the examples and the main theoretical approaches, the two studies will not be compared closely; instead each will mainly be used to illuminate the theoretical foundation. However, some comparative remarks will be presented in order to show commonalities and differences in relation to the main questions of mass performance.

In chapter one I formulated the dissertation’s main research problems to lie in how theatricality as theoretical term can contribute to defining and discussing ideological mass performance. I stated that the dissertation’s main focus would be on mass performance in an ideological sphere and that I would discuss how the events described and analyzed relate to the use of theatricality. Another question is how important is the aspect of communitas to mass performance, and to the discussion of theatricality and ideology in mass performance. And finally, why is mass performance an effective form for the (re)presentation of ideology? In this chapter I will discuss these questions more concretely.

In the first part of this chapter I will propose that the mass performances discussed can be defined as a form of performance through their massness, a term introduced by anthropologist Laura Adams as a characteristic of mass performance. As I will show below, what characterizes the examples I have discussed is, to a large degree, their dependence on crowds in order to exist. Further on in this chapter I will discuss this dependence on crowds and see how crowds relate to the Other. Through the use of the term Other I will see how the relation to the Other exists on different levels, and how one through these levels can find a connection between ideology and theatricality.
In this discussion Josette Féral’s term *clivage* will be important, but I will also see the relation to the *Other* as a dialectical opposition.

Another important term that will be introduced in this chapter is my concept of *ritualistic theatricality*. Here I will propose that a central part of theatricality as part of ideological expression depends on applying theatricality ritualistically. This will depend on the abovementioned terms of clivage and opposition in addition to terms connected more to theories of ritual like *communitas* and *efficacy*. Towards the end of this chapter I will discuss the mass performances according to Žižek’s view of a *sublime object of ideology* in order to propose a viewpoint on how theatricality used in a sublime and ritualistic fashion serves an ideological purpose. In order to answer the question of how theatricality can be used for strengthening ideological beliefs in mass performance, the last discussion will focus on how mass performance most importantly ends up with being a way of *performing the Real*. I will start with a discussion on what characterizes mass performance in general, and the discussed and analyzed case studies in particular.

### 7.2 Mass performance

#### 7.2.1 Crowds and massness

The term *mass performance* presupposes that the performance in question consists of masses of people. Laura L. Adams, in her book on Uzbek mass performance, uses the Russian term *massnost’*, translated to *massness*, as a concept central to the staging of the events.\(^{470}\) When defining the term she states simply that the main purpose is to include a lot of people in the spectacle. In this sense the overwhelming experience of the presence of crowds of people becomes the most important and necessary factor. Mass performance may therefore belong to different forms of performance, but it will always be dependent on crowds.

Mass performance is dependent on large amounts of people, on crowds, groups, or masses of people. If these masses of people are to be defined as a proper *crowd*, they will also have a common aim, a common reason to be at the same place. In the first chapter of his book *Crowds and Power*, the Bulgarian poet, novelist and intellectual Elias Canetti establishes the fact that people fear the physical touch of the unknown more than anything else.\(^{471}\) Canetti establishes that the crowd in itself is a desirable object. In most cases we try to avoid touching strangers, but when incorporated into a crowd this fear changes to the opposite, the prospect of touch goes from fear to desire.

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\(^{470}\) Laura Adams, *The Spectacular State* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 71

When a crowd is established it becomes a unit. It has a common aim and exists as one physical structure.

According to Canetti most crowds will desire to increase its numbers, to grow, and include new members, and the new members will desire to become a part of the increasing crowd. Crowds can be spontaneous and short-lived, or organized and stable. However, some crowds are closed and survive by keeping the amount of members stable. To keep the crowd closed it is important for the crowd to define itself in opposition to what is outside of it, the crowd has to define itself in opposition to other crowds or individuals, distinguishing itself from the rest of the world by closing itself off from the others. Most crowds will have this need to create an opposition. In my view, this will, in a theatrical situation, most often occur in the need to distinguish between spectators and performers. Canetti also points out that crowds are always already related to a second crowd. He sees how crowds of men are related to crowds of women, and how an army is related to its enemy. He also points out how in certain ritual circumstances crowds of living people may be opposed to crowds of the dead. It may seem as if all crowds contain, in order to exist, their own division, knowing what defines them as a united crowd is exactly this opposition. We also see here how this inherent experience of opposition can exist on different levels. Not only can we perceive the oppositions as physical distinctions like the one men might feel towards women in Canetti’s example, but there is also a less concrete level, a level of opposition where one can relate to an outside other, as is the case in what the living might feel for the dead. In a theatrical situation I propose that one level of this form of opposition is similar to what Josette Féral called clivage, discussed in chapter two. This will be elaborated on below.

On a different level I propose that the knowledge of a certain other as the defining point of a crowd’s identity seems to create an effect of interpellation, as discussed in relation to Louis Althusser in chapter three. The crowd as unit is hailed by the external or opposite other. In religious groups, this other can be a divinity, ancestors, or spirits, while in political situations it may be manifested in the relation between leader and subjects. In chapter five, I showed how the North Korean performances were recognized by the crowd functioning as the body while Kim Il Sung became the all-embracing Other that interpellated and defined the citizens as a crowd. This leads to the naturalization of the crowd as a unit and legitimizes its existence, which again gives it the opportunity of expansion. The crowd or group then becomes a desirable object for
those standing outside it at the same time as the group defines its existence through equality within the group and opposition to the ones standing outside it and the defining Other desired from within the group.

In Sigmund Freud’s theories of group psychology the group’s attraction is defined, not surprisingly, by sexual desire and love, *libido*. Here the group unites in a common object of desire simultaneously as the group itself is a desirable object. Through identification with the object of desire the group of subjects is formed. The object of desire replaces what Freud calls the ego-ideal, the subject’s inner image of itself that it wants to become, transforming the subject into a group member. In a group situation, the identification is both projected onto the leader of the group, or the external object of desire common to the group, and to the other individuals in this group who all replace their ego-ideal with the object of desire. This results in a group with few individualistic traits, rather showing off a complete unity with one common aim. Not surprisingly, having in mind that Lacan was a psychoanalytic theorist, the desire for the external object and group resembles a form of *jouissance*. Desiring the group and its object, and the experience of belonging to the group is a factor of enjoyment in itself, this desire is physical and to some degree sexual, and the object of desire turns out to be the desire in itself. Here *jouissance* becomes more of a physical attraction than an intellectual desire, and this physicality is central when discussing ideology as action.

### 7.2.2 Different forms of crowds

Crowds gather in several forms. When discussing crowds and desire, it is easy to think of the masses cheering for Hitler as described in chapter five, or teenage girls losing all control when seeing their idol as with beatlemania in the 1960s, or the present day groups of young girls called “beliebers” in love with the young pop star Justin Bieber. Both cases are forms of performance where the desirable object is clearly defined and agreed upon. In chapter five, I discussed how the desire for the love of Kim Il Sung could be regarded as a North Korean *jouissance*. Kim Il Sung becomes the common desire for the masses in a way that also makes the masses in itself desirable. What unites the masses is the common desire of the love of Kim Il Sung, creating a circle effect where the devotion and love of the subjects strengthens the desired, and of course non-

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existing, love of the dead ruler. The term *jouissance* was discussed in chapter three, and its relation to ideology, theatricality, and performance will be elaborated on below.

Historically, crowds have been important in the discussions of theatricality. This is, for instance, very clear in Evreinov’s staging of the *Storming of the Winter Palace* in Petrograd in 1920, which I presented in chapter two. His theories of theatricality are here merged in a mass performance, making life theatrical through huge grandeur. As discussed at length in chapter two, Evreinov meant that theatricality could occur everywhere, and was not something dependent on the existence of crowds of people. Nevertheless, the result of the performance at the third anniversary for the Russian revolution saw a theatricality where the union of spectators and performers on a grand scale was the most noteworthy, and one of the reasons the performance received such an important place in theatre history of the 20th century. The same thing can be said about the inventor of the term *retheatricalization*, Georg Fuchs, and his attempt to ritualize theatre and fuse actors and audience, at least physically. In the case of Fuchs, his concept of retheatricalization can be seen as a reinvention of crowds.

In both Fuchs’ and Evreinov’s attempts we see two forms of dualities of theatricality merge, both the form where a new sphere of life is created in opposition to the quotidian and a physical and bodily duality of space. Even in Meyerhold’s and Brecht’s theatricality, which initially wanted a lesser physical divide between stage and audience, theatre estrangement effects were applied in order to create a distance between stage and audience. The distinction therefore resulted in being a *clivage*, or an experienced opposition, rather than the physical distance that had been more common in the bourgeois theatre of the 19th century. Referring this to Canetti, we can say that the result was two opposite crowds identifying themselves in relation to the other.

What becomes the strength of the theatricality of mass performance is the emphasis on the amounts of people. There is almost a latent Friedian theatricality in this where the physical encounter with the grandeur of the event creates an experience of estrangement of size, something I showed in chapter two was important to Michael Fried’s understanding of theatricality. Although Fried would probably not agree that this has any relation to his use of theatricality in discussing object art, the experience of theatricality through size and communication is present in events characterized by the presence of large amounts of people. Here theatricality is a result of an experience of a duality of space. When this distancing occurs it is not only a physical distance, but, moreover, the distance between the meeting crowds is enough for an effective *clivage* to
appear. As mentioned in chapter six, the reenactment weekend at Gettysburg was constituted by several events with the main point being the battle reenactment. During the weekend there was an ongoing opposition between reenactors and spectators constituted by a difference in clothing and behavior, while the battle reenactment, in addition, included the physical distance between the stage and the seating area. In both these cases a *clivage* was present, although it was encountered in different forms during the weekend.

In my two main examples, crowds and theatricality appear in different ways. This is mainly a result of the very different cultures and societies the mass performances represent. Nevertheless, in both places the opposition of crowds was important for the theatricality presented. Where the theatricality in Gettysburg relied on a relation to the system of authenticity, the theatricality experienced in the DPRK rested on the physicality of communication, leaving questions of authenticity to the narrative structures of the country both in the performance and outside in the experience of traveling in such a place. In both cases there is an internal opposition that contributes to the theatricality. Here we have a level of opposition relating to the physical *presentness* of the event, to use Fischer-Lichte’s term.

In the Arirang the opposition between the performer and the gaze of Kim Il Sung results in a theatricality that emphasizes the presence of a very prominent spectator, and with him the presence of a *clivage*. Here we can say that there is an external level of opposition where the *Other* is to be found outside the physical presentness and here-and-now of the performance. In the Gettysburg battle reenactments the internal level of opposition is less subtle than in the Arirang performance since the union and confederate conflict is the foundation of the performance, and the internal opposition between the blue and gray is present in all parts of the reenactment weekend. It is also interesting to note, as I did in chapter six, that in battle reenactments it is not uncommon for female reenactors in hoop skirts to bring a parasol and a folding chair and place themselves on the battlefield area with a view of the performed battles. Here, also, the role of spectatorship was emphasized including yet another level of opposition and *clivage*. In both cases this is paired with a communicative duality focusing on the audience as group.

### 7.2.3 Forms of mass performance and theatricality

When crowds are applied in events of performance and cultural activity many terms are used. For instance the North Korean Arirang mass performance is called the *Grand
mass gymnastic and artistic performance, and, less officially, the Arirang festival. In Western societies today the term festival is mainly used to define a frame of a selection of planned cultural events, which can take very different forms. In his discussion of cultural performance, John J. MacAlloon distinguishes between festival, ritual, and spectacle. Ritual, he claims, differs from spectacle in that “ritual is a duty, spectacle a choice.”473 I will get back to his view of ritual below, and instead focus here on his distinction between festival and spectacle.

MacAlloon is borrowing from Turner when he says that spectacle is voluntary and ritual a duty, but claims that in the Olympic Games these different expressions of performance are present side by side.474 A spectacle is an event of communitas, and according to MacAlloon an “excellent example of the liminoid.”475 Communitas, MacAlloon claims, is an important part of the general idea of Olympism, the coming togetherness of the event is supposed to transgress racial, ethnical, political, or economic differences between the participating nations and individuals. One of the elements that distinguishes spectacle from the other forms of performance, as for instance ritual, is that the spectacle is concerned with spectatorship. You only have to watch, you do not have to have an active part to participate in the spectacle. MacAlloon’s most important claim when discussing spectacle is, however, that spectacle consists of the relationship of “image and reality, appearing and being.”476

The foundation of this view of spectacle is the discussion of what really is and what only appears to be, the same foundational question that we find in the theories of ideology and ideology critique. What the spectacle does is to present these two opposites in one and the same event. On the one hand the Olympic Games presents the illusion that we are all the same and “ignores the structural realities that separate men from each other”, but on the other hand the Games are full of events that remind us that this is not so. “Often in the Games, we encounter the genuine article. As much as they are a bourgeois theater of delusion, the Games are equally full of sudden shocks, like Brecht’s “theater of problems” or Artaud’s “theater of cruelty.”477 Not only does MacAlloon here use the traditional polemic of theatricality and realism, which was exemplified in chapter two by the relationship of Meyerhold and Stanislavsky, to illustrate how the Olympic games works ideologically, he illuminates how the world of

473 MacAlloon, “Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies,” 244
474 Ibid., 243
475 Ibid., 266
476 Ibid., 270
477 Ibid., 273
spectacle and the liminal/luminoid exists on the borderline of ideology and opposition. He shows how the events distance themselves from the world’s problems, but on the other hand are united in exorcizing them. MacAloon consequently points to an inherent paradox of the spectacle event. At the same time as the spectacle is invented to control what is perceived as mere image, they risk creating an even greater realm of images.

MacAloon’s term *spectacle* consequently turns out to be a system of performance inherent to theatricality. Because of the element of spectatorship in spectacle, a division between spectators and actors appears. However, the element of communitas affects the focus on unity between all participants, and a lack of division between stage and audience. The spectacle is by nature an event that separates at the same time as it unites, and this small theatricality paradox is the same as the ideology paradox that MacAloon finds in the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games deceives its followers in creating an ideology that unites them all at the same time as it exposes the delusion of unity through a fragmented world. Performative events connected to a liminal and political realm are in interplay with ideology all the time. Spectacle is a form of performance that creates wonder and awe, and it also rests on traditions of ritual, but that have been developed into a new form. This new form is closely related to social expressions, and is therefore easily connected to a society’s ideology and ideological expressions. Spectacle is a liminoid performance, which through awe and wonder efficaciously affects its participants.

Although MacAloon does not elaborate on this, it must be possible to say that festival has in common with spectacle an element of choice: one chooses to participate. Festival is mainly categorized by its mood; it is connected to joy and a joyous time. Festivals are most often calendrical events taking place in a time “marked by special observances… a program of public festivity.” *Spectacle* on the other hand is not connected to any distinct mood, it is less bound calendrically, it is irregular, and open ended. Spectacle is first and foremost a visual observation, and is defined by size. According to MacAloon a spectacle is defined by being “noteworthy of sight” and of a “certain grandeur.” It has a dynamic form, demanding movement, action, and change, and it institutionalizes “the bicameral roles of actors and audience, performers and spectators.”

When MacAloon states that spectacle institutionalizes the bicameral roles of actors and audience he means that it is easier to distinguish between spectators and performers in spectacle than in festival. Another interesting aspect in MacAloon’s

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478 Ibid., 246
479 Ibid., 243
comparison is that spectacle can be perceived as immoral, and he states that “(w)hile we happily anticipate festival, we are suspicious to spectacle.” What festival and spectacle both have in common, which is of most significance, is that they are both what MacAloon calls “megagenres (…) of cultural performance.”

According to this division of terms, it seems more suitable to call the Arirang performance a spectacle than festival although it is sometimes called festival. It is huge, and it is its grandeur that is the most attractive aspect of the performance. Compared to the reenactment event at Gettysburg, which has more in common with MacAloon’s definition of festival, the Arirang performance is less bound calendrically; it is occasional, characterized by its size, and evokes awe rather than joy. The Arirang has been performed at more or less the same time most years, but it is not connected to any special date. The first time it was performed was to celebrate Kim Il Sung’s 90th birthday in April 2002, and only later did they begin to perform it in autumn. The Gettysburg event is necessarily calendrical since it should be performed on the anniversary of the battle in 1863, and so it is always performed as close as possible to the original dates. In the Arirang performance the division of spectators and performers was large and physical, we had no contact with the performers, while at Gettysburg we were physically closer to the performers, and we were able to observe the performers outside of the pure performative realm of the battle reenactments. The reenactment event at Gettysburg is a joyous event, related to play and fun. Although much play can be found in the Arirang performance, the foreign audience is, to a much greater degree, skeptical to the event, and it is not uncommon to hear claims that the event is ideologically and ethically immoral.

The different forms of massness in the performances also rely on difference in the use of bodies in performance. The two main cases of mass performance discussed here belong to two very different cultures, and the two countries are most often regarded as enemies, and if written about in the same sentence it is most probably a sentence about an old war, nuclear armament, or the coining of the infamous “axis of evil” by former American president George W. Bush. The most important and conspicuous difference in the two performances analyzed is, however, the approach to the body in performance. The bodies in the Arirang performance are strictly choreographed, and the movements are acted out synchronically. The performers seem like small parts of a huge machinery without any room for human error or difference. In the American perfor-

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{480} Ibid., 246

\textsuperscript{481} Ibid., 251}
mance individuality is sought for and the personal relationship to the event is given importance in the communication of the battle reenactment. Although I will argue that the use of bodies is important in mass performance, the ideological mass performances discussed become ideological mainly because of the use of national ideological narratives.

7.3 Narrative structures and mass performance

7.3.1 Narratives and performance

In chapter two I discussed ideological narratives via the theories of Roland Barthes and saw how narratives can be perceived as symbols structuring society and the way we understand it. The myths, as argued by Barthes, are empty signifying systems based on a naturalizing tautology where the myth is perceived as true because the myth has already stated its truth. What the semiotic system of myths refers to is another similar system, where the actuality of the narrative has less value since it is the narrative in itself that promotes truth.

In the two main performances discussed in this dissertation the national narratives have functioned as a semantic foundation of performative actions, within a textual frame. In both performances the traumatic history of a nation is at the core of the narratives. In the Arirang performance we see that concrete national narratives are presented through familiar symbolization as we saw with the above mentioned birth myth, but also about, though not limited to, Kim Il Sung’s guerilla wars, the Japanese occupation, and the Korean War. In the battle reenactment event at Gettysburg the smaller narratives are more abstract and personal while all is related to the superstructural grand narrative of the Civil War. There are also more versions of this grand narrative, as the confederate and the union reenactors do not always agree on the motivations for war. I experienced that the question of slavery, for instance, was undermined, while other questions about independence and freedom of secession were central points of reference. This difference in narratives, and the presentation of them is one of the reasons that the dramaturgies of the event largely differ. In the Arirang performance there are several sections, all relating to some form of national narrative through symbolization, while the reenactment at Gettysburg presents fewer of the lesser narratives, connecting everything to the grand narrative of the American Civil War.

The North Korean performance presents nationalist narratives but continue to mention and refer to relations to other countries, both friends and foes. The first is the
mentioning of the liberation from Japan, and Japan continues to be the greatest enemy of the national narrative, more so than the USA, or South Korea, at least explicitly. As touched upon they also present a section about friendship with other countries, especially China, which focuses on international relations and friendship across borders. Whether or not this is included solely to amuse the international audience is hard to say, the presence of the international audience must at least be taken into account when we are to understand these sections. As shown above in the case of the American example, conversely the outside world is not alluded to at all; here the communal presence of Americans and how Americans from all over the country participate in this great event together as Americans without the need for the outside world takes precedence. This can actually be perceived as a bit paradoxical since the DPRK is often perceived as being a hermit state, and the USA as an important member of world society.

Another similarity in the narrative structure of the performances is the use of emotional connections between the narrative presented and the people perceiving it. In this emotional aspect lies an aspect of interpellation of the subjects, making the performance relevant for its participants. In the North Korean case this is made more difficult because of the large amount of foreign spectators, who naturally are not interpellated by the North Korean ideology and narratives in the same way as the North Korean public, who are more than familiar with the narratives in question. However, the emotional content is presented more objectively in the sense that everyone can be connected emotionally to the presentation of families being driven apart, happy children and animals, food, and a prosperous future. Nevertheless, the national connection, together with a portrayed sense of belonging is only for the North Korean public. In the same way, the American participants are presented with a sense of belonging both geographically and emotionally to the event at Gettysburg. The historical battles are simultaneously presented as a terrible bloodshed, and a sacrifice that was supposedly meaningful, resulting in the participants emotionally experiencing a connection to the sacrifice that was made by the Civil War soldiers.

The narratives of the DPRK and the USA are different in many ways. However, we can see some general similarities and I will propose that in both cases ideological narratives are explicitly presented within performance, although applied and performed differently. Most importantly though, the narratives used belong to a greater ideological realm of the nation, and provide an emotional connection, which via a pre-existing importance and familiarity interpellates the participants present into the greater realm of
ideology and narrative. In the American case the accounts are not especially concerned with the accomplishments of a few great men, but focus rather on the private soldier, and the gruesome sufferings of the Civil War soldiers as well as their accomplishments. The narratives present in the American event, therefore, can be seen to be quite egalitarian and democratic, while the North Korean narratives center on the relationship of the leaders to the people. Both these performances, however, set out to include the whole nation within the narratives, the difference lies only in the position the participants have in the presented narrative.

In both performances the narratives are gathered from national history. In the Arirang the future is also explicitly performed, but it is through history that the national future is represented. There is no explicit future present in the battle reenactment event at Gettysburg, but it is not possible to deny that contemporary America and its future is at the core of the beliefs constituting the event. As the quote from Svetlana Boym in chapter six demonstrates, nostalgia is not only about the past, it is just as much about the present and the future. The use of history makes it possible to connect the narratives to a system of authenticity. The use of a system of authenticity as aesthetic expression was, as I showed in chapter six, a ubiquitous trait of the battle reenactment, but the presence of the construction of history cannot be ignored in the North Korean performance.

During my visit to North Korea I wondered whether what I saw was real or not, and being presented stories of the country’s history daily, I was close to questioning the authenticity of what I experienced. The image of Kim Jong Il’s birthplace was one such image that made me question what form of narrative the performance presented. Here, the “reality effect” presented by Barthes can be seen in relation to his concept of mythology presented in chapter three. The narratives structuring social life function as an effect of “reality” and the term “reality” comes close to the Žižekian Real. Seen like this the concept of authenticity can be said to play a role in the construction of ideologies, and to what might be seen as being “false” in the traditional Marxist notion of false consciousness. The focus on historical narratives as a constitutive factor of the ideological realm of society is the reason that commemorations of historical events are important for almost every nation, and both the Arirang performance and the battle reenactment at Gettysburg can be said to bear the traits of ideological historical commemorations. One of the most important narratives of both events was the narrative of strength, and in the next section I will focus on this in particular.
7.3.2 Narratives of national strength and commemoration

In the beginning of chapter five with the discussion of early German mass gymnastics, I showed how the performance of national strength was important to the movement. In the mass gymnastics developed by Jahn, physical strength was presented as a practical, in addition to an aesthetic, quality, and the militaristic content in the gymnastic movement was an important contribution in the gymnastics of the 19th century. As the gymnastic expression evolved after the period of German romanticism, the militaristic aspect was toned down and on the whole transformed into a symbolic quality. Nevertheless, in Nazi Germany gymnastics had a relation to militaristic effort, and, as shown in chapter five, the Sturmabteilungen (SA) was founded as a kind of subdivision, and gymnastics were presented during the party rallies at Nuremberg: events that were mainly militaristic in their aesthetic. During its development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, gymnastics were less militaristic and more in the spirit of the Olympic movement. Still, strength was an important aesthetic quality in the events, and this strength was connected to the nation. The presence of a huge amount of bodies functioned as an effective symbol for the nation and its subjects, and their strength was symbolized through synchronic movement and acrobatics. This is also seen in the DPRK where general strength through children and female dancers is juxtaposed with militaristic strength in the sections including martial arts, and those including displays by the army.

In both performances the army is given a central position. This is of course connected to a common background of civil war and oppression, but is also connected to the overall importance of the military in the societies the performances occur in. In the North Korean performance we, for example, see this through the military marching band, through the large backdrop picturing a gun, and the martial arts section. In the American performance the military presence is everywhere because of the inherent message of war and Americaness. The military presence is, however, strengthened through the presence of contemporary soldiers in standard modern uniforms, which do not at all resemble the historical ones, and the saluting of the veterans and their families. This establishes a connection between the historical fight between the states, and the united efforts of the American army today. Both fights are presented as a fight for freedom, a grand narrative of the American nation.
The early American events that were described in chapter six were, to a large degree, actual commemorations of former military strength. This includes the reunions with the Civil War veterans where the direct relation to the military was the main motivation for the event. Today, the militaristic aspect of the battle reenactment is different because it is largely fused into the system of authenticity. Nevertheless, the modern day military is, on the whole, present at the reenactment event both through presence of soldiers in contemporary uniforms, and through the souvenirs that can be bought that relate to the American army and their contemporary operations. The military strength of the nation is therefore an important part of the event, both in terms of this historical fighting spirit to preserve what they meant was right at the time, and in terms of the fight for American values today that is inherently present at the event. The righteousness that was displayed in the event was also present at the living history exhibitions and performances at Colonial Williamsburg, and although less militaristic, the focus on American superiority and victory through fight was there throughout.

Physical strength and bodily presence through movement and masses in performance is a main factor in both of the main events discussed in this dissertation. This is the place where we, in both case studies, can see most clearly how the narratives are incorporated into the pure performative expression, making the immanent narrative part of the communication and theatricality. Through this theatricality the commemoration and history is made into a contemporary expression, defining present and future through commemoration, making history a part of the quotidian from which there is no escape. The narratives of the performances provide a mythological foundation, which we, following Barthes’ definition of myth, can see as providing as true that which is already stated as truth. This is merged with a theatricality that bases itself and its intrinsic duality and dialectical qualities on a ritualistic expression, creating a ritualistic theatricality in which ideology may flourish. Below I will elaborate on the concept of a ritualistic theatricality, and explain why this ritualistic theatricality is an effective expression in regard to the ideology’s conditions. I will start out with the importance of ideological narrative as an element in ritualistic theatricality.

7.4 Ritualistic theatricality
7.4.1 Symbolization, ritual and performance
The two main mass performances I have discussed here can both be said to be semiotic overloads, affirming each performance’s social position through structural systems of
symbols. The use of symbols as more than traditional sign systems but as ideological nodal points can be seen as one way that mass performance makes use of their ideological importance and national effects. Eric Rothenbuhler, whose theories were discussed in chapter three, focuses on the importance of symbols in ritual. Ritual is to be defined, for Rothenbuhler, as symbolic communication, and as previously pointed out, he differs from Turner and MacAlloon in that he defines ritual as voluntary actions. For Rothenbuhler, ritual is most importantly a form of communication in which symbols are condensed, a language composed as signs, which is in effect the same definition as Barthes used for myth. In chapter three I saw this in relation to Laclau and Mouffe’s formulation of a process of articulation, creating nodal points through condensed symbolization. Rothenbuhler points out how regular symbols, like flags, are strengthened in meaning and importance within a ritual frame. This should, I would add, be possible to see as a two-way form of communication where the use of symbols increases the ritual presence, emphasizing the importance of the event because of the importance given to the symbols and the form in which they are communicated.

In the Arirang performance there was a symbolic frenzy with symbol upon symbol being presented to the audience. Symbolic frenzies are not uncommon in the DPRK, but in the spectacular form of the performance the communication of symbols becomes overwhelming due to the magnitude of it. Most of the concrete pictorial images presented are presented on the backdrop, and when these images are constructed by 20,000 school children at once, it has an impact on you, and how you read the images presented. The form of the performance, thus, strengthens the importance and interpretation of the symbols. The meaning of the symbols is fixed, but the importance of their meaning is constructed through the performance. Here, also, the length of time the image is held before it is changed, in addition to the number of versions it is presented in, contributes to establishing this hierarchy of symbols.

At Gettysburg the symbols took a different form, but were present in equal degree. This was especially clear ahead of, and after, the battle reenactment performances when national anthems were sung, flags held up, and army veterans applauded. National symbols like flags, national anthems, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the American army were emphasized throughout the event. In addition, American history as concept functioned as symbol in itself, and here the frame of the event contributed to making the realm of history a naturalized symbol. Many of the things for sale functioned as symbols as well, some of the food items were given a historical link, but most
importantly the old army equipment, antiques or replicas, contributed both to strengthening the concept of authenticity and to emphasizing violence and strength, which were important to the event, and which were less prominently communicated in other areas.

In these cases the great use of symbols contributes to creating a ritual-like effect, resulting in expressing structural hegemony. The event was to be understood as serious action. This was emphasized through for instance the singing of the national anthem, and Leonard’s, the commentator at the event, request for the audience to sing more loudly since it was more than a ballgame. Introducing symbolic and emotional action in this way increased the level of solemnity in an event that is otherwise so fused with play. In the Arirang, the symbols, both the images on the backdrop, and the symbols provided by the performers and their actions, contribute to the nationalization of the performance. Comparing this to historical mass gymnastics one can see that ritualistic surroundings were provided in different ways. In Prussia, and what was to become Germany, this was done through a focus on symbols such as fire and blood. This form of ritualistic action was found less in Eastern Europe after the Second World War, where action and strength held a center place, and the aspect of nationalization was expressed through more explicit national symbols. Nationalization occurs through relating everything presented to a kernel of nationhood, something that is very clear in the North Korean performance. In the performance many images are presented where the nation is less explicitly present, like images with food, clothes, electricity, industry, and farmland. However, the way this is connected to the performing masses of people and the gaze of Kim Il Sung, as explained in chapter five, relates the images back to the same master-signifier, Kim Il Sung, and the Korean nation.

In both performances the rich structure of symbols can be seen as an ideological quilt resulting in an articulation of an ideological discourse in Laclau and Mouffé’s understanding of the term. This quilting process has an ideological totality as its goal, providing the right answers to all the symbols. The articulation of what can be seen as a hegemonic structure of symbols will, in its claim for truth, have an interpellating function. Through recognizing the symbols as symbols of a hegemonic expression, the subjects are caught by the symbols because they recognize their value and place in the larger quilt.

482 Discourse and articulation is discussed in chapter three
7.4.2 Emotional history and affective turns

Another aspect of what I have chosen to call ritualistic theatricality is to be found in the use of forms common to ritual in the theatrical expression. The frame of symbols common in ritual increases the spectator’s ability to understand the event as being one of solemnity. In addition to increasing the solemnity of the event, the ritual symbols contribute in creating what Josette Féral called a clivage between what is inside the ritual frame and what is outside of it, thereby being conducive to creating a theatricality of ritual. This theatricality relies mainly on creating a break in the quotidian, creating a new and different sphere of solemnity, seriousness, and aspects of transformation, but infusing it with play, make-believe and desirable ideals. It has in common with the forms of theatricality discussed in chapter two that it creates dualities of life, space, time, and perception but adding to these forms elements of ritualistic behavior that encourages seriousness and action connected to belief, or the will and desire of belief. This does not mean that the performances necessarily are to be understood as rituals, but that they use ritualistic effects in order to create a frame of sincerity and solemnity. These actions, as has been described here, are inherently ideological actions where collectivity, sincerity, solemnity, and common desires are acted out and become “real” through action. This was especially clear in the mass gymnastic events of the 20th century in Germany, and in the Nazi thingspiel. But also at Gettysburg I experienced serious action that had ceremonial characteristics as when we sang the national anthems, and pledged allegiance.

Although MacAlloon follows Turner in his view of ritual, he contributes with an interesting aspect in that he gives weight to the solemnity of ritual to a larger degree than Turner. MacAlloon’s main research object is the Olympic Games, and when he discusses parts of the Olympics as ritual, he points out in particular the attempts to make the ceremonies solemn. Just as in the Olympic ceremonies, following Coubertin, solemnity is used in other mass performances in order to create an atmosphere of efficacy, transformation, and unity. This was for instance used in early mass gymnastics where fire was an important element evoking a play on contrasts and on common religious questions of lightness and darkness, and life and death. In Fuchs’ theatre of retheatricalization unity was also to be achieved through these means. In chapter three I characterized the use of contrasts, and the play on light and darkness as cultic elements, and showed how the use of ceremonial expressions were important in order to create a solemn and sincere event. The appliance of solemn and cultic characteristics in perfor-
mance can also be seen as being an attempt to apply sincerity to an event, something that can be seen in connection to a concept of efficacy as discussed above. In the question of solemnity lies the active contribution of elements one relates to ritual within a frame of theatricality that does not necessarily have much in common with ritual in the sense of action evoking transformation.

When speaking of sincerity and solemnity as important factors in establishing a ritualistic theatricality it has to be added that this solemnity is by and large provided by emotional content. In chapter six I showed how Vanessa Agnew used the term affective turn in order to discuss how reenactment had become a form of history presentation depending on the emotional responses of its audience. The same is the case in Svetlana Boym’s nostalgia. In this term history becomes an emotional system, something one can use to search for belonging and feel connected to. History can therefore have an interpellating effect, in Althusser’s sense of the term, creating a bond between the system of history and subject. In this use of emotion we can find aspects of solemnity and sincerity, concepts that most often relate to the stirring of emotions within the participants.

In all the performances presented in this dissertation, emotions have played an important part. The emotions presented have been shared emotions, presented as equally important for both performers and spectators and thereby uniting stage and audience. In the mass events of the totalitarian regimes presented in chapter five, we see how the love for the leader is central to the performative expression. At the party rallies at Nuremberg, the adoration of Hitler by the people and their love of his grandiosity and genius, are the main theme. In my analysis of the ideological content of the Arirang performance I saw how the love of Kim Il Sung is omnipresent throughout the performance, interpellating all spectators through his literally undying love of the people. In the historical plays in the USA the emotional was on the whole connected to the history of the nation. In the reenactment event at Gettysburg, emotions were everywhere. As described in chapter six Leonard, the commentator, was explicit in his personal emotions connected to the activities, at points almost crying and explicitly asking the audience to take into account the solemnity of the event and participate in the singing and pledging.

Leonard’s emotions were personal. He presented himself as an individual within the masses where his emotions were representative for the emotional state of the complete masses of participants. His emotions became representative for the emotions
of his audience. By personalizing the emotions the individuals were emphasized resulting in an interpellating effect where the individual emotional state of the participants was given weight. Here it even did not matter much if the emotions felt were of a lesser state than the quite extreme emotions presented by Leonard, his individual emotions supposedly represented the entire emotional state of the audience, mirroring the feelings of each and everyone present.

The interpellating effect that the emotions of patriotic duty exercised at Gettysburg and the love of Kim Il Sung exercised in Pyongyang were in both cases effective because of its interchangeable use of the individual/personal and the communal. The ideologies adhered to in the two different countries are maybe most different in regard to the individual versus the communal. Where the USA is a country devoted to individual freedom, collective freedom is the most important part of North Korean ideology. Nevertheless, in both cases, interpellation is acted out by showing the individual’s place in the community, being an individual in the masses. In both examples affective history and nostalgia for the past, present, and future are applied in order to emphasize the emotional connection between individual, masses and cause.

In chapter three I discussed Erika Fischer-Lichte’s idea of the autopoietic feedback loop. The act of communication in the performance moves from stage to audience, and back again. A performance cannot exist without this loop. To Fischer-Lichte emotions play an important part in the feedback loop. She understands emotions as physical reactions, that the bodily communal encounter in performance elicits emotions, and that these emotions have an important impact on the autopoietic feedback loop. In mass performance the amount of people participating increases the bodily aspect of the loop, increasing emotional action and reaction.

Including personal and communal emotions in mass performances introduces sincerity and to some degree, solemnity. By including emotions, the performance elicits results. A change in perception occurs within the changing emotional foundation when the emotional structures are shown as inflicting a personal level on the participating subjects. When Leonard expressed that the reenactment battle was not a ballgame, he at the same time insinuated that the reenactment was a more serious event, which had an impact on its audience not as mere entertainment, but as something that touched the very deep of their hearts, on an educational and sincere level. This has an efficacious effect, which again means that the ideological message is reacted to on a level of

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seriousness and sincerity. While the participants know that they are participating in an ideological event, they continue to act as if it was all make-believe, fun, play, and theatre. The relation of efficacy and entertainment and Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment braid will be discussed further below.

7.4.3 Mirroring
The masses of mass performances appear as miniature societies. In chapter three I discussed how Clifford Geertz places the metaphor as central to a society’s structure. To Geertz culture is to be understood as structural systems, and these systems are strengthened through ritual. Within ritual the metaphor is exaggerated, something everyone participating knows, but still wishes to act according to, fusing lived life and the imaginary. This, as has been pointed out earlier, has much in common with Rothenbuhler’s view of condensed symbols. Within a ritual frame symbols are given a strengthened function, structuring regular life outside ritual through meeting an imaginary and symbolic sphere. What is most important in Geertz’s discussion is that he argues that this symbolic sphere in what he calls cultural performance, mirrors the society’s structure. He makes this argument in relation to the famous Balinese cock-fights, where he sees the cocks as symbols of the relations in society. In this way the fights contribute to strengthening class relations, an ideological fact that becomes truth through the acting out of them through the cockfights.

In Geertz’s argumentation it is the symbolic value of the roosters that represents the imaginary ideological relations of the Balinese society, but the symbolic mirroring in the cultural performance discussed by Geertz can also arguably be seen represented in performative action and bodily movement. Seen this way the symbolic mirroring will strengthen the argumentation of ideology of action rather than pure consciousness. With this I mean that the performed actions of the examples discussed and analyzed here, in their way, can be seen as symbolizations of ideal societies. Through the performed communitas and physical actions of the events, we can see a mirroring of the desired aim of the crowd. In the Arirang performance the bodies presented are presented within an extreme structure. Nothing deviates from the norm, all movements are totally synchronic. The collective performative movements in itself become a condensed symbol, to use Rothenbuhler’s terminology.

This point can be exemplified by an experience I had while doing research for this project, and spent three weeks at the Information Center on North Korea in Seoul,
South Korea. After devoting almost all the three weeks watching North Korean performance on video I was, with the help of a librarian, given a recording of the 1988 opening ceremony of the Seoul Olympics in order to see how mass athletic performance was done in the South. I quickly acknowledged that many of the movements presented in the South Korean performance were similar to the movements done in the North. It was, on the whole, made up of rhythmic sports gymnastics with banners, and some of the movements were gathered from Korean folk history, something that has in some performances been presented also in the North. What I, however, reacted the most to was how badly I thought the South Korean performers acted out the movements. Afterwards I understood that, most probably, the South Korean organizers had not hired badly trained gymnasts to perform in the Olympic opening ceremony but that the ideal of synchronicity differed from the ideal presented in the North Korean mass gymnastic performances I had spent weeks watching. The North Korean movements mirrored the structure of the society where everything was completely similar, while the South Korean movements opened up for less structured interpretations of the choreography by those involved.

The North Korean movements in the Arirang performance are structured in order to offer synchronic and impressive movement. The crowd of performers symbolizes the North Korean nation, and is presented as a total unity with very few exceptions of individual movement. Some acrobats did at times catch one’s eye, but this did not happen often in the course of the performance. Most often the different groups of performers were presented as a closed unit, symbolizing the closed unit the ideology presents as the ideal of the ideological realm. The crowd’s movement can therefore be read as a symbolizing process in itself, representing ideology through action at the same time as it creates and upholds ideology. This happens because the performers themselves are ideological actors and because the megalomaniac and grandiose style of the performance in itself functions as a desirable ideological object. When this action is fused with traditional expressions of ideological symbols and narratives connected directly to the regime and Kim Il Sung, the performance becomes an efficacious ideological expression.

Seen in regards to the American case study at Gettysburg, the bodily actions presented differ widely from the North Korean case. This has of course something to do with that the aims and backgrounds of the two events differ, but it may also result in a difference of ideological ideal. In a society where individual freedom is the ideological
benchmark, the crowds performing are presented as crowds of individuals rather than a unity. This also gives room for presenting the American nation, and its unity of individuals, as divided. The focus on individuality can be seen in the costumes, especially on the Confederate side where it is more common for uniforms to have individual traits. Some individual action can also be seen on the battlefield, although they mainly move in groups, as was common in Napoleonic warfare.

The main argument is, however, that the bodies are presented as individual bodies that are also part of a crowd, not as a community of non-distinct bodies making out one great body that represents society as a whole. The reenactors and spectators/visitors together represent the American nation. When Leonard, the commentator at the event, made the spectators call out from where in the USA they had traveled from, receiving replies from states all across the country, what he did, effectively, was show how the people present at the event were representatives of the complete and contemporary nation. The lack of conflict between union and confederate reenactors also emphasize this unity, turned the battlefield arena into a miniature America that epitomizes all the correct American values, places and people. This was made explicit when we had to sing “God Bless America” twice every day, and the lyrics that stuck in my mind were “From the mountains, to the prairies/to the oceans, white with foam.” This was not a local event, but something America as a whole participated in, the people there representing all those who were not.

### 7.4.4 Between ritual and theatre?

In order to develop a concept of a ritualistic theatricality it is necessary to discuss more closely what differentiates ritual and theatre. As has been mentioned above and in chapter three, MacAloon distinguishes between ritual and spectacle by saying that ritual is a duty, and spectacle a choice. When saying this he is borrowing from Victor Turner who distinguishes between the liminal and the liminoid by saying that the liminal is mandatory, and the liminoid connected to leisure activities.484 Using a dichotomy of ritual and theatre we can, thus, say that ritual is duty, theatre a choice, and that ritual is liminal behavior and theatre is liminoid. Still, this dichotomy has more sides to it, making it difficult to state that an event is always the one or the other.

When discussing the relation of theatre and ritual in performance it is helpful to take Richard Schechner’s view of ritual and theatre into account. In chapter three I

484 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 20-59
presented Richard Schechner’s *efficacy-entertainment braid*, which he applies as a model for performance existing in the realm of the liminal/liminoid, and in between duty and choice.\textsuperscript{485} It is important to Schechner that one should not perceive efficacy and entertainment as opposites, “rather they form poles of a continuum.”\textsuperscript{486} Schechner proposes that the efficacy-entertainment binary is more useful than ritual-theatre. This is because ritual and theatre may best be defined from their functions. If a performance is efficacious, that is, it evokes transformation, it may be defined as ritual, while a performance that weighs heavily towards entertainment will be regarded as theatre. According to Schechner performance that has initially had important social impacts might with time turn into entertainment, or take on more of the characteristics of entertainment.

As a binary of terms Schechner’s system reflects the oppositions proposed by both MacAloon and Turner, defining ritual and theatre as different forms of performance which often are inherently dependent on each other. Taking another look at Turner we see how rites of passage are efficacious because they evoke a transformation that cannot be undone, through liminal actions, while liminoid actions on the other hand will not evoke the same permanent form of transformation. In relation to MacAloon’s distinction between duty and choice we can see how Schechner states that efficacy necessarily relates to results while entertainment relates to fun. Other terms Schechner uses to define efficacy in performance are: link to an absent Other, symbolic time, performer possessed, audience participates, audience believes, criticism discouraged, collective creativity.\textsuperscript{487} The terms describe ritual, but through form and expression rather than function and results.

Schechner’s description of the efficacy-entertainment braid simultaneously presents the system as a binary system and as a continuum. What Schechner proposes is that ritualistic elements can be used in liminoid events, creating different forms of events that can be placed within the wide spectrum of the continuum. A performance can have characteristics of efficacy but still be a liminoid event; being an event one chooses to participate in rather than by obligation. What this, in my view, shows us is that Schechner’s braid is not a clear system of binaries, neither is it an egalitarian continuum, but something in between. I propose that it should rather be read as a circular structure including both ends of the binary braid and the points of the continuum in different degrees within one performance. Examples of this can be seen in

\textsuperscript{485} Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 112-170
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid., 130
\textsuperscript{487} Ibid.
Schechner’s own discussions, as when he visits ritual dances staged for tourists in Papua New Guinea or his own performance practice in the performance *Dionysus in 69* from 1968, where he drew on his experiences of ritual practice in creating artistic theatre. As has become clear during the course of this dissertation the various approaches to the ritual term are complex, something that makes the discussion of ritualistic elements in theatre and theatricality equally intricate.

### 7.4.5 Dichotomies of perception

Following the above discussion I will argue that the binaries presented by Schechner in a continuum can open for a discussion of oppositions within performance. In a discussion of ritualistic theatricality a tension of dichotomies as found in Schechner’s binary continuum becomes central. In my discussion of Colonial Williamsburg in chapter six I showed how the main dilemma for the museum had been the dichotomy of education and entertainment. The museum saw it as its primary task to educate its visitors. However, one of the early motivations was to make history “come alive” in addition to just providing what they saw as traditional education. Within these two major tasks, the museum found themselves facing a dilemma. Efficacy here is not related to ritual and transformation as much as to the results of education. In the case of Colonial Williamsburg, this dilemma turned out to be a dilemma of *authenticity* and *play*, something that was automatically perceived as opposites. This can be seen in the slave auction that presented the unpleasant sides of American history, and that resulted in a great deal of controversy.

In chapter two I introduced Huizinga’s term *play* as central to theatricality. Play differs from ordinary life, creating a duality of the seriousness of life and the freedom of play. This duality is common in a theatricality where both sides of the duality are presented simultaneously. Although authenticity can be a form of play, as is particularly clear in the reenactors’ use of the concept of authenticity, it is also often perceived as an opposition to play. The dilemma of authenticity and play as experienced at Colonial Williamsburg, which also was important in my reading of the battle reenactment at Gettysburg, can be seen in relation to a dichotomy of efficacy and entertainment. In Schechner’s terminology this can be seen in connection to a discussion of ritual and theatre since what the museum wanted was to evoke results. These results differ from what we would usually see in ritual where personal and communal transformation can be the goal of efficacy. At Colonial Williamsburg it could be said that the goal is to
widen the knowledge base of American history, but in order to achieve these results the event had to make the audience believe in the actions carried out and in the possibility of results. Making the audience believe is one of the characteristics of efficacy as defined by Schechner, and in this case we can relate the form of audience belief to an understanding of authenticity. Through creating complete images of history, criticism was also discouraged, another one of Schechner’s characteristics of efficacy.

The educational side of the dichotomy was constructed with efficacy in mind, with the aim of creating lasting results within the realm of knowledge of American history and ideological narrative. This can be seen as ritualistic in the sense that it is connected to the efficacious. On the other hand though, it is clearly linked to entertainment, and as Schechner’s continuum can be understood more as a circular structure it is possible to argue that the reenactment event simultaneously falls under both poles of the continuum.

Authenticity, thus, is connected to emotional sincerity, while play is connected to entertainment and fun. I consequently propose here that if we see the dichotomy of authenticity and play in connection to Schechner’s braid, we end up with a magnitude of dichotomies all relating to a binary effect of efficacy and entertainment. The efficacy-entertainment braid may, however, be said to be manifested in different forms; the dichotomy can be seen in different versions like authenticity and play, education and entertainment, sincerity and fun, transformation and stability, liminal and liminoid and duty and choice. These dichotomies are all related to the main binary of efficacy and entertainment but shows which forms the binary structure can take in performance.

As dichotomies these terms initially describe different forms of performance, but by placing them within a continuum, as explained by Schechner, the dichotomies can contribute to establishing dualities within an event, making oppositions like these interesting when discussing theatricality. When seeing Schechner’s continuum as a circular structure we can recognize factors that I have previously presented as elements of theatricality. This is because the different forms of communication making out the different points of the continuum may then appear together. Authenticity and play is central to a duality of life, while education and entertainment can be seen in a duality of communication, and all of the oppositions cited can be said to relate to a duality and temporary transformation of space.
In her task of formulating an aesthetics of the performative, Erika Fischer-Lichte bases her discussion on an age old dichotomy of art and life.\(^\text{488}\) That *art* is something other than *life* is a common understanding, and in chapter two I demonstrated how a duality of art and life is central to the understanding of theatricality. However, Fischer-Lichte’s main point is to show that these dichotomies collapse in the meeting with the liminal. According to Fischer-Lichte, the dichotomy changed when, with the historical avant-garde theatre and performance art, there was no longer any difference between signifier and signified. In many ways she is, here, building upon her definition of retheatricalization where she argued that the body as sign replaced the linguistic sign. What, according to Fischer-Lichte, happened with the postwar avant garde was that the body as sign was replaced by the body as body without relation to a signified. What was presented on stage was no longer to be perceived as a sign but as something representing nothing but its own existence and presentation. In this she sees a collapse of the traditional dichotomies. In her view artistic performances created liminality on stage by collapsing the dichotomies of art and society, and with this she states that “(t)he project of the aesthetics of the performative lies in collapsing binary oppositions and replacing the notion of “either/or” with “as well as”.”\(^\text{489}\)

My argument in regard to Fischer-Lichte’s statement and the experiences I have had in my encounter with mass performance would be that the binaries may seem to collapse, but that it is the awareness of this collapse that contributes to the dualities of a ritualistic theatricality. It is the awareness of the simultaneous existence of the “either/or” that defines much of the experience of theatricality. However, this also becomes central to an understanding of ritualistic theatricality because the sincerity of the experience is, to such a degree, fused with play and a *clivage* of the quotidian. What Fischer-Lichte calls the “as well as” is the awareness of oppositions being oppositions but seemingly merging through the exact same oppositions. This leads us back to my initial definition of theatricality as a factor separating and uniting at the same time.\(^\text{490}\) So when I argued above that Schechner’s proposed continuum of binaries can be seen as a circular structure alternating between the binary aspects at the same time as they are presented simultaneously, it can be argued that Fischer-Lichte’s “as well as” and “either or” are similar binaries which melt together at the same time as they are divided.

\(^{489}\) Ibid., 204
\(^{490}\) See chapter two
In my view the performative binaries most often do not collapse, most oppositions never merge. In the cases I have presented here, the oppositions of communitas, the two crowds representing stage and audience that meet, for instance, will be static throughout the performance, but this opposition and other oppositions might be at the point of merging when the awareness of oppositions reappears and strengthens the ongoing and necessarily inherent dualities. As I briefly mentioned in my discussion of crowds above, merging is a desirable process, but within the performative structure it never actually happens. The oppositions of communitas will be elaborated on further below.

The active presence of the mentioned oppositions may lead to the spectator meeting the event with some degree of insecurity. This insecurity that one meets the events with in regard to the presence of oppositions increases the dualities of theatricality. In my description of the Arirang performance I explained how I was bewildered and had problems with defining what I had experienced. On the one hand I knew that what I had witnessed was theatre, play, and entertainment, but on the other I felt insecure about the message I was presented with, and the motivation for the presented message. Was the aim to transform me into a believer of Kim Il Sung, or was it to show me the lucky believers? Or was it again just to entertain locals and foreigners alike? The performance achieved all these things at once through my, and my fellow spectators’, insecurity and emphasized dualities. The dualities I experienced were, consequently, a result of my insecurities related to the levels of expressed authenticity, education, and sincerity, but also of my wondering about whether the local participants were there out of duty or choice. The dualities and dichotomies in themselves contributed to making the experience into an experience of theatricality. With this I mean to say that the use of the ritualistic and efficacious, in Schechner’s sense, were elements in the ideological mass performances that contributed to increasing the dualities at play in the perception of the events, and the emphasis on these dualities resulted in an increased experience of theatricality.

In this case providing a ritualistic theatricality means giving weight to efficacy while at the same time emphasizing the dualities. At the same time as one anticipates results, it is perfectly clear that ritualistic theatricality might not contribute to results. To use categories found on Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment braid, we can say that the audience believes in what is going on but at the same time knows that it is mainly entertainment, fun, and games. Simultaneously as it is a game of make believe, it is
sincere and orientated around results, seriousness, education, and an experience of emotional duty. The dualities of theatricality that were explained and discussed in chapter two are infused with elements of efficacy in a way that provides new dualities emphasizing the experience as an experience of theatricality. The ritualistic theatricality is, however, not only dependent on dichotomies of efficacy and entertainment, or sincerity and play, but is also dependent on the collective action of the crowds in its use of ritualistic elements within the theatrical frame.

7.4.6 Structured and spontaneous communitas

One of the similarities the mass performances discussed have with ritual are their importance as communal events, and the presentation of communitas. In chapter two I discussed the Bakhtinian carnival and saw how it can be seen as an expression of a theatricality that tears down the fences between art and life, and structuring behavior through a pattern of play while at the same time transforming the perception of life through this duality. In the Bakhtinian carnival of medieval times whole towns participated and people from different strata of society participated in the communitas of the event. It might therefore be regarded as a social duty, but, nevertheless, it was also a time of enjoyment that was not given the solemnity and seriousness of ritual duty. As with festivals, carnivals are joyous. Carnivals differ from staged festivals in the sense that carnivals are, most often, characterized by what Victor Turner calls a spontaneous communitas, which was discussed in chapter three, while festivals are arranged according to certain frames and forms.

A poignant example of the difference of what I have here called structured and spontaneous communitas can be seen in performance scholar Vicki Ann Cremona’s discussion of different carnival cultures in Malta. Cremona discusses different forms of Maltese carnival arguing that the main carnival in Valetta has changed over time, losing its original spontaneous form, which resulted in a structured and not very popular event. Cremona compares the events in Valetta with village carnivals that have to some degree taken over the spontaneous and carnivalesque spirit that used to be found in the capital Valetta. In the capital, the carnival has turned into an event staged by the ruling party with a clear distance between performers and spectators where most of the adults participate solely as spectators and do not dress up for the event: dressing up is now only for the children.

491 Vicki Ann Cremona, “Carnival as a Theatrical Event” in Theatrical Events, ed. Cremona et al. (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), 69-90
The spontaneous events are, on the other hand, to be found outside Valetta where impromptu carnivals continue to exist, taking new forms, and mixing spectators and performers within the event, diminishing the opposition of actor and audience. Cremona sees the difference of the structured and unstructured events as a difference in theatricality:

In the unstructured event, the quality of theatricality allows the free exchange of roles between actors, direct participants and watchers. In the structured event, the distinction between actors and watchers is irreversible. The degree of distinction between the roles of watchers and direct participants reveals the level of involvement.492

What we see here is that both events are equally theatrical, but the form of theatricality has changed. Where the unstructured form has qualities of what I, in chapter two, called a theatricality based on a duality of life, moving its participants from a realm of the quotidian and into an extraordinary world of play, the structured events become a distancing event presenting a theatricality based more on a duality of space, where the estrangement effect is a result of physical interaction in space rather than a mental and physical interaction in life. Seen according to Willmar Sauter’s definition of theatricality as action and reaction, the distance between the action and reaction is increased in the structured event compared to the unstructured event. The unstructured event results in decreasing the level of participant reaction.

What can be said to have happened in the main carnivals of Malta is that Turner’s spontaneous communitas has been framed and staged: the communitas is now structured. I consequently propose that antistructure minus the anti does not always equal structure, but rather becomes a structured antistructure, and in the examples involving spectatorship, a structured communitas. In Turner’s discussions on communitas and the opposition of structure and antistructure, the necessary reversal of antistructure back into structure is an important element. A structured antistructure would never completely leave structure but would still necessarily be of a temporal kind which in its staged form would end when the theatricality is dissolved.

In chapter three I discussed Turner’s concept of communitas and his division of the term into three subcategories: spontaneous communitas, normative communitas and ideological communitas. In Turner’s view, spontaneous communitas is the sudden common experience of belonging, normative communitas a common attempt to hold on to communitas in opposition to the majority of the community, and ideological

492 Ibid., 84
communitas a collective bond of belief in utopian structures.\textsuperscript{493} There is no denying that these forms of communitas overlap, ideological communitas might be normative in some cases, and spontaneous communitas might be comprised of both normative and ideological communitas. What distinguishes what I call structured communitas from Turner’s concept of normative variant, which also is structured in some ways, is that a structured communitas will always have an audience in mind, and that audience will always be temporary. A normative communitas can exist parallel to the social majority, and is therefore a form of communitas that is not always necessarily temporary. Turner’s categories show that communitas can originate in many different circumstances and evolve into different forms. This last point is very clear in Cremona’s description of the different forms of carnival in Malta. Most importantly, in her argumentation the different forms of communitas are rooted in different forms of theatricality, where one is more structured than the other.

In the two main cases I have presented in this dissertation, structure is an omnipresent foundation and necessarily present for the events to be carried out. To the degree that communitas can be said to be present in the Arirang performance it is in the sense that it is referred to as an ideal. The masses of people are used in order to present unity and community, and the individual performers and their co-presentation on the huge stage can be read as a sign for the North Korean people as a whole. This is plainly evident in the sections that present groups of people, like the section with children, and the sections with soldiers. They are presented as representatives for all children or the complete army, and, especially in the children’s section the communal spirit is presented through staged play and joyousness. Communitas is therefore, in this case, not something that is experienced by spectators or performers but rather something that is desired and presented on stage as an existing factor of North Korean life. In the reenactments at Gettysburg, the opportunity of experiencing communitas is more possible, or at least it is for the reenactors. Still, it is not a spontaneous communitas and resembles the form of theatricality that Cremona has observed in the staged carnivals of Valetta. The resemblance is present in the fact that the distance between (reen)actor and spectator is institutionalized, and the structural aspects of the event is presented as attraction in itself. The biggest difference, compared to Cremona’s description of the carnivals in Valetta, is the enthusiasm the event is met with by both spectators and reenactors. Where the Valetta carnival, according to Cremona, lacks popularity with the

\textsuperscript{493} Turner, \textit{From Ritual to Theatre}, 47-48
people, the reenactment events are immensely popular, and participating in them means a great deal to the people visiting. Both in the Arirang performance and at Gettysburg, although very different, communitas is something that is presented as part of the performance more than something actually occurring.

What I consequently propose is that when discussing ideological communitas one should not focus primarily on a collective belief in utopias, but on presenting communitas ideologically. This can happen when there is a foundation of theatricality of structure presenting the dualities in a way that introduces a desirable object within the one side of the duality inherent in the performance. The massness of the performances increases the presence of structured communitas. If one is to believe that one believes in the existence of communitas through staging, the performance needs to present the masses of spectators with masses of performers. This can be seen in relation to the discussion of ideology as action as discussed in chapter three, and that I will now return to below.

7.4.7 Theatricality, communitas and oppositions

It may seem at first glance, that the opposites of theatricality and communitas is at insurmountable odds with each other. Where the one term apparently is a term of division, the other is a term of unity. However, as has gradually become clear in this dissertation in general, and in this chapter in particular, theatricality is necessarily dependent on opposition, and as was argued in chapter two, theatricality is a concept that both separates and unites. Communitas can be said to contribute to the oppositions by increasing unity and separation from the quotidian in a way that opens the term of theatricality to new interpretations. As shown above carnivals are especially good examples of theatrical communitas. In the example of Evreinov’s staging of the Storming of the Winter Palace the historical event as it was reenacted had never actually occurred, the October revolution in Petrograd in 1917 resembled more of a coup d’état than a people’s uprising, but Evreinov’s staging of it three years later as a staging of the spontaneous communitas of the actual historical event. It did not matter whether or not the actual revolution had been an act of celebration. Another example of this, also cited in chapter two, is David Hasselhoff’s performance on the Berlin Wall on New Year’s Eve 1989. Here the original event had erupted out of the people’s celebration, but in order to continue this celebration within the still liminal times of the community, a
communitas was staged several months after the wall between east and west Berlin had actually been opened.

As shown above Canetti argued that crowds always find themselves in opposition to other crowds. In mass performance the main opposition will always be between spectators and performers. This opposition helps in identifying and defining the crowds. According to my argumentation, it might almost seem as though the use of crowds in staging communitas is merely a tool of deception, but it is important to remember that the participation in, and observation of crowds is connected to enjoyment. As shown above, crowds originate in a form of desire. Here we can also see a connection to the anticipation of theatricality mentioned in chapter two. Although desire is a much stronger emotion than anticipation and excitement, the anticipation of theatricality increases the anxious enjoyment present in the encounter with communitas.

This desire is fundamental when both performers and spectators choose to participate in mass performance. This is, of course, very different in North Korea where choice is not part of the vocabulary of the performers. Crowds exist in the gaze of the other, something that is illuminated when the gaze of performance is fundamentally present. Above I explained via Freud how there are two desires present in the creation and evolution of crowds. The first is a desire for the crowd in itself, a desire to be included, and a desire to touch. The second is the desire for the other. This, I have shown, is the case in totalitarian regimes, and is indeed present in the Arirang performance, but can also, as conveyed above, be seen in crowds of fans in non-totalitarian systems. This desire is of course important when discussing how the mass performances work and why one is induced into participating.

I propose that mass performance is constituted by two crowds in opposition to each other, the one desiring the other. One group represents structure while the other represents antistructure. The audience, representing structure, desires the performers, representing antistructure, because of their presentation and representation of the festival spirit. By this I mean that the performers represent the carnivalesque side of the performance through performance of theatrical play. This means that they represent antistructure even though the event in itself may be strictly structured, as with the North Korean Arirang performance where nothing is coincidental and the movements are totally synchronic. The play presented within the performance, as I have demonstrated, was especially present in the children’s section but also the martial arts section, and the acrobatics were infused with play, representing freedom and liminality. This form of
bodily movement can be read as a symbol of play, freedom, and liminality rather than as liminal as such. And through this representation the performers represent anti-structure although it is not actually anti-structural behavior.

What I put forward here is that, roughly categorized, mass performances consist of two forms of oppositions that can be related to a concept of theatricality. The first one is divided between ritual and theatre and present within the work; it exists on the continuum of efficacy and entertainment, where different points of this continuum exist simultaneously within the performance giving room for a theatricality existing in the “as well as” of the poles of the continuum. The second form of opposition is the one existing in the physical performative opposition of audience and performers, which is present throughout the performance and in many ways defines the theatricality of the event. We have one opposition between theatre and ritual expressed together, and one between actors and spectators desiring to merge, but prevented from actually merging. Both of these forms are physical experiences occurring through the bodily co-presence of actor and spectator. In addition to this comes the oppositions I mentioned above including the relation to an outside Other, and what occurs at Gettysburg with the Union and Confederate groups standing in opposition to each other.

I suggest that this can be seen as different levels of clivage. When Josette Féral coined the term she used different examples ranging from sitting on a sidewalk restaurant in Italy and entering a theatre before the performance starts. Her definition of theatricality is therefore related to her physical experience in which she feels distanced from something or someone. In the clivage she experiences an opposition to whatever object the clivage occurs in. What I have shown here is that clivage may occur on different levels within a performance, and that several levels of clivage may exist simultaneously.

7.4.8 Formulation of a concept of ritualistic theatricality
In what I call ritualistic theatricality the ritualistic elements are found in the focus on communal and collective action, symbolic action, and a cultic and solemn aesthetic. I, therefore, will propose that performances of ritualistic theatricality make good use of all the poles of Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment braid by employing elements of efficacy in order to maintain entertainment, yet still having effect and therefore being efficacious and result oriented in some form or another. Central to the experience is the

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494 Féral, “Theatricality,” 95-97
simultaneous existence of the dichotomies of ritual and theatre which increases the theatrical dualities and the awareness of them while at the same time increasing the desire and knowledge of totality and union. The dualities of theatricality are, in mass performance, increased due to the use of ritualistic elements. The increase of dualities and opposition is especially clear in the use of communitas as discussed above.

For a performance to be characterized along the lines of ritualistic theatricality the ritualistic elements must be fused with the inherent theatricality of the event. In ritual and what Schechner calls efficacious events, the audience participates, the audience believes, and there is, among other characteristics, a collective creativity. All this attracts the spectator to the event and decreases the distinction between actors and audience. The characteristics of efficacy unite the performers and spectators in a common collective event. This means that the ritual aspect has a uniting function. What distinguishes performance of ritualistic theatricality from performances of traditional ritual is that they simultaneously include more of the distancing factors common in theatricality.

In all the case studies I have discussed in this dissertation, symbolic and emotional expressions have been used in order to attract the audience and relate to them in a direct way, enhancing the experience of unity, connectedness and closeness to the event. This again results in an increased presence of communitas, which again increases the experience of belonging. Nevertheless, the performances also produce distancing effects. The size of the performances discussed is one factor in which distancing occurs. In the Arirang performance the distance is physical in that the audience is placed far from the performers, while at the Gettysburg reenactment there is a traditional distance between actors and spectators in the battle reenactment performances, and in the event as a whole there is a distance between the costumed reenactors and the visiting spectators. In addition to these physical effects of distance, the performances are also expressions of estrangement, which has been discussed in connection to each of the case studies. Most importantly I will propose that these effects of estrangement occur because the events apply different effects than would be the case in events that can be said to be more purely ritual. This does not mean that rituals cannot include theatricality in some form or other, but that the events discussed here do not intend for the audience to believe, in Schechner’s sense of the term, in the same fashion as other ritual performances where the distance between the spectator and what is performed is emphasized. Ritualistic theatricality is a form of theatricality that uses certain forms of expressions in
order to create inclusion and unity, but still uses traditional forms of theatricality in order to express its message.

7.5 Mass performance, ideology, jouissance, and the sublime

7.5.1 Ideology and the sublime

In chapter three I briefly discussed Kant’s term of the sublime in order to set the discussion of Žižek’s notion of a sublime object of ideology in perspective. Although Žižek in the title of his book places the sublime of ideology as object, it is in the meeting with the subject the object becomes sublime. This is also the case in Kant’s original sublimity. An object which is perceived as sublime has the quality of sublimity, but this quality appears through the subject’s judgment, which in the end means that the sublime is an attribute of the mind, not of the object itself. As I explained in chapter three, the experience of the sublime, as argued by Kant, appears in the meeting with an object or phenomenon where the totality of it is difficult to grasp. The sublime is characterized by its boundlessness, and the experience of it is a feeling of negative pleasure, displeasure, or an alternation of pleasure and displeasure. As mentioned, one of the reasons for experiencing an object or phenomenon as sublime is that the subject, in this experience, will have problems with grasping its totality. The object is too huge, or the natural phenomenon too monumental or difficult to understand logically for the subject to grasp every aspect of it, and the experience of not being able to grasp the totality is frightening.

In fear of the lack of totality of the object we see the first connection between the sublime as aesthetical concept and ideology. In traditional Marxist critique of ideology, ideology is seen as a totalizing process that explains the world through a graspable totality, as I explained through the theories of Georg Lukács in chapter three; ideology is for Lukács formed when the world is only perceived in partiality. To free oneself from ideology it is necessary to be able to perceive the world in its totality. Ideology understood as a result of false consciousness may, thus, in my view, be seen as what liberates the subject from realizing its own necessary incapacity of understanding the totality, which again can be seen as liberating the subjects from the terrifying process of the sublime, alternating between the ungraspable totality, and the insufficiency of partiality. This means that ideology is what covers the terrifying and ungraspable sublime object of the subject’s consciousness. Here we are close to Žižek’s description of the sublime object as was also explained in chapter three, which denotes an object
covering the unconscious desire of the Real, and which has much in common with his own definition of jouissance. The sublime object then is both what masks what Žižek calls the impossible-real kernel and the terrifying kernel in itself.

The concept of boundlessness and ungraspable totalities, that is, the sublime, are in this argumentation what makes ideology seem like a safe haven of consciousness. However, this might also be turned around, using monumentality and boundlessness in order to make ideology desirable. In an interesting article about the German National Socialists’ use and concept of sublime aesthetics, the German musicologist Reinhold Brinkmann, argues that the National Socialists moved the sublime from the subject’s experience to an inherent quality in the aesthetic work itself, creating what he calls a distorted sublime.²⁹⁵ Brinkmann’s main case study is National Socialist music and music favored by the National Socialists, such as the music of Richard Wagner and German music of the romantic era. What is particular about this musical expression is its monumental form. Placing the sublime within the object, the National Socialists presented an aesthetic sphere “focusing exclusively on monumentality, violence, terror, and abstract power.”²⁹⁶ In dismissing the subject and the subjective experience, the National Socialist sublime, according to Brinkmann, replaced it with the monumental structure of a collective will, placing Hitler on top as a symbolization of this collective will. Although a distorted sublime, the National Socialists used the sublime as a part of their ideological presentations, and this use of the masses can be said to have similarities with the events I have discussed in this dissertation.

Brinkmann himself uses the party rallies at Nuremberg as example of a distorted sublime. In my view this use of aesthetics can be found also in earlier German nationalism, as in Jahn’s early gymnastic displays, focusing on the heroic and monumental body, on physical strength and mystifying symbols of fire and blood. The collective will of the people was a characteristic used already by Jahn and his followers, and in the totalitarian mass gymnastics that occurred in Europe after the Second World War. The cultic and religious aspects disappeared but the focus on monumentality, strength, and heroism, combined with the collective will as structural system characterizes all these events. In the Arirang mass performance collective will represented by, and merged in the leader was not as prominent as in the European performances of totalitarian regimes.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 48
Here the sublime was present as law and the leader as the presentation of this law. The collective will was present as the notion of a people, as well as through the local spectators, but their will was never made into a central object. The sublime object was the eternal president Kim Il Sung: monumental, heroic, terrifying, unbounded and eternal. The collective existed merely as his subjects, and if they were to represent any will at all, it was his will, which was terrifying and loveable all at once.

Neither the distorted sublime of National Socialist aesthetics nor any other form of communication of the presentation of a sublime object achieves its purpose of sublimity without the subject taking it in as experience. This is important even though individual will and subjectivity is dismissed by the object in question and merged in the object itself as a symbolizing structure of collective subjectivity. Here the monumentality and grandiosity of the events become important, and creating events including thousands of people becomes an end in itself. In the reenactment event at Gettysburg every subject was individualized as spectator or reenactor, not only as a mirage of a personified other, as was the case in Pyongyang. The Gettysburg event has its sublime sides; it is massive, grand and violent, trying its best to induce terror, and its presentation of a melancholic loss of a by-gone time places it within a disturbing eternality of American historical time. The violence presented was estranged in such a way that it did not, to me, feel threatening or scary. As mentioned in my discussion of the event, very few of the reenactors pretended to die, and the few who used fake blood in their presentation did it in a way that only made it look funny. The distance to the violence made it more pleasurable than displeasurable, but an alternation between play and violence was definitely part of the experience, resulting in an estranged sublime, covering the underlying concept of death, violence, and pain with enjoyment and play.

In these examples I mean that we can see how the explained ritualistic theatricality has sublime features. The Nazi events were clearly efficacious in the sense that they transformed the subjects into subjects of Nazi society, and the events were sincere and seriously acted out. Here, the characteristic of solemnity is present to a large degree. This is also the case at Gettysburg although it was done in a different way. In all the examples the magnitude is central, the same place as much of the factors of the sublime is located. The clivage between performers and spectators is increased through magnitude, as shown via Fried, great size can be an important factor of theatricality. Seen in Brinkmann’s sense of the word, the ritualistic aspects of the event can be seen as an expression of a distorted sublime. In my opinion it is possible to argue for a distorted
sublime by focusing on the deliberate emotional intention of the events where an
objective emotional sublimity is created simultaneously as it brings the subject to an
affective experience of emotional boundlessness.

### 7.5.2 The sublime, desire and theatricality

In chapter three I defined Žižek’s use of the term *sublime* in two ways. I said that Žižek
borrowed from Lacan and his definition of a sublime object as an everyday object that,
by chance, occupied the place of the terrifying and desirable object of *das Ding*. *Das Ding*
is for Lacan a primal desire, and in my view it has a lot in common with Lacan
and Žižek’s term *objet petit a*, an outside other that represents an external desire and an
internal void. Žižek also explicitly states that the alternation of pleasure and displeasure
in the sublime, and its place ‘beyond the pleasure principle’, makes it an object of*
*jouissance*. Contrary to this I also presented Žižek’s notion of the sublime as a reminder
of the lack of totality in a certain experience. This is on the whole in accordance with
Kant’s philosophy of the sublime where the unboundedness of an object or phenomenon
and the subject’s experience of it is important. This is a result of the impossibility of
grasping the object or phenomenon in its totality.

As in much of the discussion of the sublime Žižek is deliberately unclear on the
relation between subject and object. The sublime is a quality of an object but the quality
is subjective. In his discussion of Kant, the British philosopher Terry Eagleton nicely
comments that aesthetic judgment is a performative disguised as a constative.⁴⁹⁷ We
want to believe that an object is beautiful or sublime, but actually it is a statement in
which we decide on a personal level which quality we perceive the object to have. In
Žižek’s argumentation following Lacan a sublime object is an object replacing a
desirable but traumatic kernel, and therefore the sublime quality of this object is neces-
sarily personal and subjective. When the sublime object is transferred from the personal
and into the collective realm of ideology, the objective, or commonly perceived quality
of the object or phenomenon, becomes important. What I propose we can draw from
this is that the sublime in an ideological sense succeeds in being both subjective and
objective simultaneously, or at least that it alternates between the two. This means that
the interpellated subject can personalize its own experience while still experiencing it as
valid for the society as a whole, that is, totalizing the subjective experience.

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As mentioned above the relation of totality and partiality in the perception of the sublime is central also to Žižek. As Žižek himself notes there is a paradox in the sublime in that through the sublime one encounters, on the one hand, an insurmountable and unbounded gap between the empirically experienced phenomenon and its beyond (das Ding), but on the other hand it is exactly this insurmountable unboundedness that gives the object or phenomenon in question its sublime quality. The paradox lies in that it is both a quality of the insurmountable and ungraspable gap located in the object’s beyond and a quality of the object itself. Nevertheless, defined as a quality within the object or phenomenon itself it is still a quality existing because of the presence of an insurmountable beyond. The Lacanian das Ding is a beyond, a non-existent kernel of desire which both structures its subject’s world and is terrifyingly ungraspable. The sublime defined according to the abovementioned paradox is then both the object replacing das Ding, as well as the gap between das Ding, and the object replacing it/masking its non-existence.

This means that the sublime in terms of a discussion of ideology can be detected within a presented totality and in the gap between the totality and the beyond, that is, the surplus that is left after the totalizing process, the totality’s inherent lack. According to Žižek the sublime is recognizable through the failure of representation. It is through the inherent failure in a representation of totality that we get closer to perceiving the ungraspable beyond. Žižek’s use of failure can be said to have similarities with a Hegelian sublime as described in chapter two. The necessity of negation is to be perceived as a sublime feature. To Hegel and Žižek this failure is a quality of the object, but it would not be fair to deny that it is mostly present within the subjective experience, something that connects it easily to theatricality. Failure is easily connected to theatricality because failure makes clivage appear, and the dualities of performance are more clearly emphasized.

The mentioned failure is also a surplus, a remainder of the totalizing process. Knowledge of the surplus will be terrifying because it shows the illegitimacy of the presented totality, but also desirable in the sense that the surplus represents knowledge. Herein one can see the relation to jouissance. In my discussion of jouissance in chapter three I showed that jouissance is the impenetrable kernel of enjoyment which is in

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498 In his discussion on pages 228 and 229 (2008) Žižek, without questioning it, equals the Lacanian das Ding with the Kantian das Ding an sich. Here, the beyond is, for Žižek, a Kantian Ding understood as a traumatic kernel of truth.

499 Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 229
essence related to pain, and that this pain keeps us away from terrifying knowledge. If we are to seek the truth we need to seek the beyond of the pleasure principle, and *jouissance* keeps us away from this knowledge, away from the beyond of our totalized surroundings. The sublime, thus, becomes both terrifying and enjoyable, alternating between pleasure and displeasure. It is also tempting to argue that there is a parallel here to an alternation between efficacy and entertainment, sincerity and play, and that ritualistic theatricality is very much connected to this kind of alternation within the sublime.

In chapter three I presented Žižek’s use of the Lacanian term *objet petit a*. The *objet petit a* is the object-cause of desire, the object existing as an *other* which is desired because of an internal lack in the subject. Consequently we desire it because we lack it, and the object’s existence leads it to be both the object of desire, and the same time the cause of our desire. In relation to Žižek’s use of the term I argued, in chapter three, that the *objet petit a* can be seen as that which both interpellates the subject into the societal quilt and that which becomes the object of desire of the society itself. The societal quilt becomes the object of desire but its existence, or also the subject’s experience of its lack, initiates the quilt’s desirable nature.

Seeing how the *objet petit a* as object-cause of desire becomes desirable because of an internal lack, the desire for the crowd, as explained above in reference to Canetti, can be seen as a desire for totality. Wanting the crowd to increase and attract new members is a desire for totality that can be said to be caused by an experience of a lack of totality within the crowd, just as a desire to become part of a crowd can be said to be caused by an experience of a lack of totality within the subject. This can be related to the desire of being interpellated into the societal quilt. On the other hand, the lack in itself seems to have a quality. The *objet petit a*, represents, to Lacan and Žižek, the surplus of *the Real*. In chapter three I argued that the *objet petit a* does not necessarily represent a desire for a concrete object, but a desire for a void. Here I will say that we can see the *objet petit a* also as a desirable object of lack where we again can recognize failure. Following this argumentation I will also argue that the theatrical *clivage* in mass performance can be said to represent this lack or failure in the impossibility of merger. This makes the *clivage* in itself desirable. The *clivage* becomes the surplus of the totality of the crowd which shows how the totality of the crowd and its merger with the other is impossible but still recreates and becomes the force of recreation of the *clivage* and the inherent oppositions in mass performance.
In my reading of Žižek in chapter three I said that an object becomes desirable when it enters the framework of fantasy. In the mass performances presented and discussed in this dissertation the content of the performances represent fantasy. First of all it can be seen as a traditional theatrical sphere of play, one represented by a duality of art and life as presented in chapter two. Here we see how the theatrical content is presented through spheres breaking with the quotidian creating a realm of art, what one might have wanted to call fiction. There is, however, good reason for my choice not to call it fiction since what occurs within the performances cannot be said to exist only in a fictional world. It has to be admitted that what is presented in the content of the performances is Real. Although some of the factual issues can be debated, the Arirang performance presents an image of its own reality, and where all historical facts are not correct in the Gettysburg reenactment, presenting an authentic or real image of the American history is an important part of the reenactment event. However, both images presented amount to ideological fantasy.

What I will propose here is that the ideological fantasy becomes double-edged. First of all, the clivage in itself enters the framework of fantasy in mass performance. The clivage represents a break with the quotidian and while it reveals the lack of merger it turns the lack into enjoyment. The lack present in the quotidian is also what allows for the possibility of a break with a quotidian world, making the collective action of fantasy possible. When this clivage is staged as massively as it was in the examples discussed above, theatricality in itself enters the framework of an expected or desired fantasy through clivage. The narrative structures of ideology present in the performances are fused with the theatricality of oppositions in collectively acting out and structuring a framework of ideological fantasy. This ideological fantasy of performance can be seen as a form of what Turner called the subjunctive mood in a liminal phase, the as if. Here we see a subjunctive mood of the liminoid breaking with the quotidian world and creating several levels of clivage and reception of dualities in order to open up the world of ideological fantasy.

7.5.3 Efficacy, jouissance, and the sublime

As becomes clear when reading Žižek the terms of his argumentation are closely linked and illuminate different sides of the same issue. This means that the Real and jouissance are just different factors of a desirable void, and the element that masks the painful knowledge of the void. For instance, in the North Korean I saw how Kim Il Sung in
North Korean ideology represents a master-signifier in which the totality of the ideology is articulated. He is everything, and every sign presented in the performance signified the ultimate sign and master-signifier, the Kim-family, Kim Il Sung, and his undying love.\textsuperscript{500} He is loving and eternal, and he is dead and non-existent. The sublime in the narrative is located in the gap between the structural master-signifier, and the fact that he signifies nothing other than his own incapacities. The concept is terrifying. If Kim Il Sung is not there to provide safety and fundament for his subjects, there is nothing.

Following this line of argument, the sublime of the Arirang performance is placed outside the performance itself because the gap between the totality presented and its surplus would not be possible to find within the strict North Korean totality. Still, the totality presented in the Arirang performance is not free from the existence of the outside and a surplus to the North Korean total ideology. This can for instance be seen through the inclusion of the section concerned with the country’s friendship with China in particular, and the rest of the world in general. This section is of course included because it looks good to a foreign audience, but it is also an integral part of the notion of North Korea’s place in the world, and thereby alludes to the knowledge of a surplus. There is \textit{something beyond} the totality, and much of this is the terrifying outside world. More importantly, and much more visible, however, is the attempt of masking the existence of the surplus by masking it in such a size that one could think that the surplus was also a part of the totality.

When talking about size as tool of presenting totalities, we are back at Brinkmann’s notion of the distorted sublime that was presented above. It may be argued that Brinkmann perhaps distinguishes between the sublime as subjective experience and as objective quality a little too strictly when he states that the National Socialist sublime is an example of the latter, and is therefore distorted. The sublime would not be an objective quality if it was not experienced in that way by its audience and participants. Nevertheless, in the totalitarian mass performances, size and cultic elements are placed within the object in order to evoke sublime experiences. This was, as shown in chapter five and above, common in Nazi Germany, but monumentality and hero worship was

\textsuperscript{500} After the death of Kim Jong Il in December 2011, Kim Jong Il has been given a greater place in the National pantheon of master-signifiers, which his father for many years ruled more or less by himself. This can for example be seen in the inclusion of a great statue of him next to his father, the increase in murals with images of Kim Jong II, and Kim Jong Un now having an official wife. Kim Jong Un has, for the time being, a less monumental position in the structural system of ideological signifiers. Interestingly, women have started to play a bigger role in the master-signifier of the first family. Kim Jong Il’s mother has also started to appear more often, and Kim Jong Un’s wife is now an official figure.
also common in the Soviet Union and the communist bloc in Europe after the Second World War. In the Arirang performance the size and extravagant massiveness of the expression and the skills performed were the most impressive and awe inspiring factors. The expression was sublime, and the responsibility of the sublimity was to be found in the object of perception itself.

In the DPRK everything fits into a nice system. Every sign represents something else, most often as part of a signifying chain ending in Kim Il Sung, or occasionally, his son or grandson. The performance was a reminder of the totalized system of the state, sublime in size and monumentality, and terrifying in its lacking presentation of a necessary surplus. It felt as though the bigger the performance was, the more it masked the lack while the distance between lack and performance became even greater as more people came on stage. Through the allusion to an outside world, the performance acknowledged the existence of surplus, but it did not recognize the actual wants of the North Korean society. This means that the performance in every respect presented a social reality that does not exist. For instance there is not a surplus of food in North Korea. They do not have enough electricity, and the children are not healthy and strong. Through this presentation the physical lack of the society was masked, while at the same time pressingly present because of the lack.

As mentioned in my analysis of the battle reenactment at Gettysburg in chapter six, the event consisted of different forms of performance and activities. The most important part was, however, the battle reenactments on the field where a large amount of reenactors performed a Civil War battle. As in the Arirang performance, the totality of the ideology was presented through both narrative and action, and at both places the narrative had a mainly historical foundation, related to a traumatic national history. In American history the Civil War is an open wound, and as, for instance, Tony Horwitz points out via the title of his book, it is in some ways not even actually finished. Still, in the battle reenactment the wound in itself becomes jouissance. This becomes the case when the terrifying violence is presented as pure enjoyment. In Huizinga’s theories of play, as was discussed in chapter two and in relation to my analysis of the Gettysburg reenactment in chapter six, competition and mock battles, agon, are an important contribution. And the battle reenactments are exactly that, mock battles. They pretend to fire guns and cannons, they pretend to die, although not as often as one, as a spectator, could hope, and they pretend to be seriously injured. In one way this covers the national

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501 Horwitz, Confederates in the Attic. Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War
traumatic wound. The wound is, we could say, covered in fake blood, it is not actually a part of what it is to be American today. The performed violence masks, in an enjoyable way, the actual wounds of actual American violence, and replaces a kernel of terrifying desire for violence and continued war.

The sublime can be located within this use of violence. The violence is in itself terrifying but in its playful form a legitimating process of violence and play masks the trauma. Play and violence are not opposites, as Huizinga’s theories clearly point out, but appear here as a troublesome union. This is a good example of jouissance as a desire for the most desirable of all; the painful bloodshed of American history is only just touched upon, but after the first touch it turns to sheer enjoyment, masking the knowledge of pain and suffering that represents the actual collective desire. The totalizing practice is represented through the unified nostalgia and narratives of chivalry and grand moral values. The surplus beyond this totality is the actual suffering and the actual conflicts of the USA today.

In chapter six I discussed the term authenticity in regard to the performative ideal the reenactors seek. Authenticity as a system of the Real remains a structural signifying system of totality, and the nostalgia represents a counter-desire for totality. Nostalgia is juxtaposed with violence, resulting in an expression making violence fun and history play. The sublime, thus, is a result of the gap between everything beyond the totality and an internal presentation of terrifying desires. Size also matters here. To me the amount of people playing war elicited in mixed emotions of unease, awe, and wonder. It was in one way realistic, but at the same time utterly weird, different, and can be said to be theatrical in several ways. The mixed emotions were a clear result of an experience of estrangement and a duality of art and life, but the large amount of people involved also led to a duality of space, and a duality of communication that was strengthened by my inability to understand just how I should react.

When the sublime, seen both as object and subjective experience, is applied to ritualistic expressions, we see that the efficacious aspect of it, what Erika Fischer-Lichte would have called the transformative power of performance, in itself becomes an unbounded sublime. In performances of ritualistic theatricality the efficacious result is unclear, differing from most ritual where the participants know what the result will be, or have clear expectations about what will happen. Because ritualistic theatricality does not actually inflict great transformations or results but still is fused with efficacious
characteristics, in Schechner’s sense of the term, the insecurity increases, and ends up with unbounded and unclear sublime features.

In this sublime feature of the efficaciousness of ritualistic theatricality lies the idea that the efficacy of the event in itself is desirable. This would of course also be true of actual ritual events, and will in the events of ritualistic theatricality take a different form and the lack of actual transformation results in a lasting lack, in which we can identify the sublime. The desire for the efficacious is a desire for what is masking this lack, and in this case it must be seen in relation to experiencing a significance of action. Within the actions of performers and spectators lies a notion of wanting and desiring that the actions are not meaningless, that they have significance and a greater social impact.

This aspect of creating significance within the event and making it appear efficacious is a form of jouissance. Inherent in this discussion of efficacy and desired efficacy lies the same problem as with the sublime concerning whether it is to be perceived as an objective or subjective experience. Is the implied social significance deliberately placed within the event by the organizers, or is it something that occurs with the subjective experience? Of course the answer must be that it is both subjective and objective, but in the cases of clear cut propaganda, as in the DPRK, social significance is deliberately included in the event. The jouissance found in this significance lies in finding the enjoyable meaningful. In participation lies contribution to the social significance, and the jouissance is in the pleasure of the fantasy of efficacy, although the meaninglessness of it is a terrifying fear that lurks in the background. This argument is from my side not an attempt to say that there is no meaning to the events. I have shown in the analyses of the chosen performances that they both are loaded with meaning, and especially in the American case study, I mean that we can see how the event had a deep impact on the participants. However, the events were not efficacious in Schechner’s sense of the word, they did not lead to social transformations. Rather, both events contribute to maintaining the status quo. These are not liminal events or life changing experiences, but events that through the use of ritualistic aspects are instrumental in maintaining stability.

7.6 Theatre of the Real

One of the aspects that both of the cases studies I have described and analyzed in this dissertation have in common is, in my opinion, the level of jouissance in which the
ideology is presented. First and foremost this has resulted from the high level of entertainment both events exhibit; spectators and performers participate in the performances primarily because they are fun, and also because they are interesting or inspiring. In the DPRK force may of course be one of the factors of participation, but for the foreign audience and myself, enjoyment was the main factor of our experience. And although there is reason to believe that at least the performers did not have an actual choice in whether or not they wanted to perform, this does not mean that there cannot also be forms of enjoyment present. Enjoyment is therefore an important factor for the carrying out of both performances. In regard to the discussed studies, *jouissance* can be seen as regular enjoyment but only in the sense that it is an enjoyment and desire on a level of fantasy existing as a parallel *jouissance* to another *jouissance* representing the desires of fragmentation, knowledge, and pain.

*Jouissance* is a form of desire, which is too powerful to handle but which is still present through every day pleasures. In mass performances *jouissance* is expressed through a desire for ultimate knowledge, but when knowledge in itself is too terrifying the ideological totalities take its place, resulting in a desire for the totality as knowledge. We perceive these totalities through experience and desire but actually know that they are too good to be true. If the total is perceived as truth, then the impossibility of the total will also make truth impossible. Truth can then be seen as the Real. The total is a desire, a desire we can play out through theatricality. Theatricality opens a space for the possibility of the existence of the totality. It may only be temporary but in its temporariness it evokes the action of “as if”, which in a Žižekian sense is as close as we come to actual believing in the totalities.

In a traditional understanding of ideology as false consciousness the totality of narratives and symbolization presented through modes of play and theatricality could easily be understood as “false”, as a form and presentation proposed to the audience in order to “trick” them into believing in the current social structures in order to uphold the status quo. In this understanding play can be perceived as false and as something that

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502 My guide told us about the time she had been chosen to dance in the 2006 Arirang performance. This was something that she saw as an honor and she seemed very proud. However, the 2006 Arirang performance had been canceled (for uncertain reasons) and she had never been able to perform for an audience.
masks “what really happens.” As discussed in chapter three, in Žižek’s definition of ideology early on in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, he argues that the ideological illusion is located in the *doing* rather than in the *knowing*. Paraphrasing Marx he says that “[t]hey know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know.” What we, according to Žižek, overlook in this process of ideology is an unconscious illusion, and in this overlooked unconscious illusion we find ideological *fantasy*. This fantasy structures our social reality and is a desirable knowledge. In my view it is the ideological fantasy that is acted out in the mass performances discussed here. And in acting out ideological fantasy, the ideological knowledge is developed through action, *doing*, rather than knowing. The ideological fantasy is connected primarily to the narrative content of ideological performance. However, perceiving ideology as action rather than knowing the performance consequently becomes a space for acting out what one might want to know.

In using elements of performance resembling ritual and emphasizing sincerity, belonging, solemnity, emotional foundation and size, the performances open up a room for acting according to ideological knowledge. Ritualistic theatricality provides theatricality with seriousness and the prospects of results, while keeping actions of entertainment, fun, and make-believe. Within ritualistic theatricality the totalities are present through the narrative structures and solemnity both in itself and in the merging with collective action. Whereas all theatricality opens a space where the “either/or” can exist together with the “as well as”, ritualistic theatricality in addition legitimizes the dualities of the non-existent totalities making out ideological knowledge.

Ideological knowledge can lead to an experience of doubt in whether or not the knowledge is true, or if we just continue to act as if it was. However, within the frame of theatricality there is no such thing as doubt. Theatricality instead opens a space where one can act “as if”, opening a space in which there is no need for doubt since truth is not important. When I say that there is no such thing as doubt within the dualities of theatricality it is because you do not have to dwell on what bothers you, you can act according to whatever knowledge you may desire. Just as with other oppositions of theatricality and performance discussed above the dualities exist side by side while never merging, but not having to merge in order to be presented in its optimal position within the

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503 An understanding of *authenticity* on these premises would mean that the problem with authenticity is that it is not authentic, believing that a pure authenticity is possible. Relating this to a discussion of reenactment and living history one can see that this would not be possible and that *authenticity* would always be a result of presentation and performance.

504 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 30
performance. It does not matter how you stand on the issue of the totalities of ideology as long as you want to, and do in fact, act according to the desires that move you. *Jouissance*, thus, becomes a motivation for participation, and lets you desire the factor of enjoyment and play while letting you act as if your actions are true, but still representing what is beyond, the uneasiness of lack in the totality and fragmentation.

This “as if” can be seen in relation to what Turner called the *subjunctive mood* and what I called the theatrical “as if.”505 What Turner sees as the subjunctive mood is the mood of “as if” occurring within the liminal period or sphere. Since mass performance in Turner’s term would not be ritual and therefore liminoid rather than liminal, understanding the subjunctive mood in mass performance as a framework of ideological fantasy will allow us to view the liminoid in a completely new way. The liminoid thus becomes a period of theatrical action where the ideological fantasy is acted out through a simultaneous desire for *clivage* and merger.

If we see the mass performances as sublime objects the uneasiness is an important factor. Mass performance becomes sublime because of its size and unbounded nature, and because of its self-imposed position of importance in the society it represents. In Žižek’s paradoxical explanation of the sublime, he states that the sublime is both to be found in the ungraspable of the object itself and in the gap between the object itself and its innate lack represented by the object’s beyond. In mass performance the sublime becomes a factor of the theatricality, bringing closer what is a part of the terrifying lack while still masking the lack through its enormous size. It separates and unites. Both mass performances discussed here present totalities. However, if we are to follow Žižek the totality is a structure one chooses to believe in fear of the inherent lacks and failures.

What succinctly happens in the mass performances is that the size of the event merged with a total narrative and symbolic structure provides an ideological totality but that the sublime aspect constantly serves as reminder of there being a logical *failure* to totality. This, however, becomes a characteristic of mass performance where the sublime together with theatricality is a constant reminder of the necessary lack but where the lack in itself becomes enjoyable. The lack is a double *jouissance*, it is both the terrifying kernel/surplus that one seeks to avoid because it will demolish the structure one desires to believe in, but the lack in itself is, in theatricality, what makes the performance in itself a safe haven of failure. *Failure becomes play*. We can play as if

505 Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 82
the structure was total, as if Kim Il Sung loves us and is eternal, and as if American history provides nothing but chivalry and roots of existence, and that divisions of class, race, and religion are no longer relevant, although we know that this is not the case. We play as if the Real is real. And in this play of failure we find the desire for clivage and the theatricality that simultaneously separates and unites.

Seen as theatre where one can pretend and actively play that the Real is Real, the ideological performances discussed in this dissertation can be categorized as a theatre of the Real. The kernel that resists symbolization and represents our ultimate desire of knowledge but which broadly understood still does not exist, can thrive within a frame of play. When we, according to Žižek, deep down inside know that it is this kernel that structures our world because we, to a large degree, desire it to do so, does not exist, it is a terrifying opportunity of knowledge. This means that the world in itself can often be experienced as ungraspable, but participating in mass performance in many ways opens the door for the desired knowledge of totality and we can act according to this desired knowledge, which is liberating and enjoyable. This makes ideological mass performance an effective form of performance in an ideological sphere.

When the world seems ungraspable and fragmented, the unified performance can be a place of refuge. However, according to my discussion above, the performance is in itself ungraspable, which is what characterizes what I have pinpointed as a sublime aesthetic within the performances. The ungraspableness and boundlessness within the performances is a result of the totalities’ surplus and inherent lack and failure in addition to the experience of an insufficient capability to experience the massiveness of the totality presented. Within the performance, however, the sublime function is turned around, distorted in Brinkmann’s words, and serves both as a representative of the terrifying surplus and as the most desirable of all. I have no problems stating that the sublime is a quality of perception rather than being inherently present in the object. However, the active use of elements that would easily be experienced along the lines of sublimity, increases the experience and the desire for its kernel, its totality and greatness, and for the Real that becomes an aesthetic category driving us into play and pretend.

The sublime in the performance becomes a premise of theatricality. In the insecurity of the existence of totalities the sublime appears as a condition in which play is necessary. When the links of the total picture are difficult to find, the frame of the theatrical form gives room for pretending what one cannot see and making room for the
part of the sublime that is presented through its size to be perceived as the ultimate end. Seeing as theatricality separates and unites at the same time, the performances bring the spectators both closer to and further away from the Real, estranging and legitimating at the same time: it comforts through this simultaneous existence.

This must, however, be said to be accomplished in very different ways in the two main examples discussed. This is mainly dependent on the relation the performances have to their audiences. In chapter five I discussed who the targeted audience of the Arirang performance was. The question of who the performance was performed for rose after my visit at which most of the audience consisted of western and Chinese tourists in addition to a great deal of uniformed soldiers. Most of the arena was empty, making it quite clear that it was not filled with locals at every performance. If the performance is not made for a local audience how can it be that the foreign audience can be said to believe what they otherwise do not during those 90 minutes of mass gymnastics? As I argued above the Arirang performance is to some degree also performed for a local audience, but my response to this would be that the Arirang performance is in such a degree a sublime and awe-inspiring performance, that although one does not believe in Kim Il Sung as father of the nation or eternal president, it does for a tiny instant seem desirable that he is. And within the room of theatricality that opens up for alternating belief and disbelief and union and estrangement, one can for just a minute or two, desire the presented knowledge of totalities and the love represented through it.

For the local audience the performance still creates a room where belief can be genuinely and emotionally felt. In the performative culture of the DPRK, there are many rooms for this. What the Arirang performance does in particular is create a grand scale theatricality with a recognizable distance and clearly demarcated space, and through a mix of play and entertaining factors, and solemn and emotional expressions, it is possible to locate the theatrical room in which both foreigners and locals can believe, and where the Real for a time becomes close though far away.

At the battle reenactment event at Gettysburg the case is different because it is directed to an American audience almost exclusively and sees no special need to include its foreign visitors in its ideological realm. The American audience is in many ways invited in to a room of fun and a joyousness to a greater degree than the North Korean performance which is much stricter and, as discussed above, more related to awe. In many ways one can say that the American audience, although there is a distance between spectators and reenactors, is included in the play and through this they have a
greater area of choice when it comes to deciding whether or not they want to search for a truth of how things really were, or if they want to act as if they already know. Here the room of theatricality is, in my view, a greater part of the audience’s consciousness and perception, and this creates a greater possibility for choice. The American audience was, however, a respectful and loyal audience, which could for instance be seen in the emotional actions of Pledging Allegiance, and so forth. In the American case the Real is strongly connected to the concept of authenticity, which means that acting as if the American Real is real is also acting as if there is a possibility of presenting a total image of history through performance. Playing authenticity is playing the Real. Here the willingness to believe is an ideological truth becoming true through a frame of theatricality and play, finding in a desire for history a contemporary jouissance.

7.7 Summing up: Mass performance, theatricality, and ideology
I have asked the question of how theatricality of mass performance can be said to be an effective form of presenting ideology, and in an attempt to sum up the discussion I will propose here that there are three sides to mass performance, and the case studies I have discussed in this dissertation, in which the attraction and effect of mass performance can be located. The first is the use of theatricality in ritualistic terms, the second an experience of one form of sublime aesthetic, and the third the opening of a room for performing the Real.

A ritualistic theatricality, as was described and discussed above, is both an emotional and a bodily experience. By moving away from the analytical and truth seeking, the collective body of participants act according to emotional and physical desires and needs. This is the reason we can see Žižek’s jouissance as one of the main factors in the participation of mass performance, when emotions and physical well-being is what we wish for, it is easier to act in one way although we might intellectually know that it is not so. Here we see a theatrical duality of art and life where it is the liminal or liminoid side of life that is desired. It provides a cleft of the quotidian where everything is fine, where troubles of the everyday can be put aside opening the fantastic room of belief and enjoyment.

As sublime object of ideology, the mass performance becomes an object that totalizes the ideological experience but at the same time is experienced as ungraspable and exposing its own surplus and necessary ideological lack. It is desirable and terrifying but maybe also desirable because of the terror. Theatricality is useful in the sublime
because it easily confronts both of these experiences, and provides the ideological subjects with these rooms of pleasure, displeasure, enjoyment, and fear in a way that achieves a presentation of a totality without disguising the fact that there will always be a surplus to the totality. The theatricality of the sublime is based on a duality of communication where size is an important factor. This communication is based on an interaction of subject and object, defining the sublime within the object but released by the subjects’ experience. This aspect therefore also relies mainly on a physical and emotional experience of the subject’s surroundings, leaving the intellectual analysis while devoting oneself to jouissance.

The last point, performing the Real, is to be found in the inherent lack of the presented totalities. As argued above, the failure of presenting totalities opens a room for play and possibilities for pretending that the totalities are perceivable. In contrast to the other two aspects, seriousness and emotional experiences are juxtaposed with pure play here. This means that the emotional experiences are replaced by an intellectual experience where the Real is replaced with a performance of the Real. The bodies are presented as signs for other bodies and a subjective bodily duality appears. This means that the actions acted are signs for other actions representing a greater part of society, and the ideological subjects know that they represent the non-existing totality but they do it for fun, and again we have arrived full circle back at jouissance, acting as though one believes in order to temporarily suppress the terrifying voids of ideology.

These three factors make mass performance expressions fitting in an ideological realm. The participants of mass performance both know and do not, they play through both laughter and tears, and perceive themselves as being central to the event at the same time as they are conscious that they are symbols for something else. They are a part of the crowd and are interpellated as ideological subjects. They experience with body and mind, happiness and sorrow, fear and hope. They fear that all they do is play, but hope that it is not.
8.0 Summarizing epilogue

I started out this dissertation by presenting my theoretical foundations and points of departure. First I presented and discussed theories and approaches concerning the term theatricality. Theatricality is a wide term, and its width needed to be discussed in order for it to be a useful term when analyzing performance. In the chapter on theatricality I therefore presented different forms of theatricality as used historically in theatrical practice through performances and the theories of Meyerhold, Brecht, and Evreinov, in addition to performances by the Dada movement and futurists among others. I also focused on performances outside the theatre stage, such as revolutions and carnivals, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and David Hasselhoff’s performance there on New Year’s Eve 1989. With the help of the theories of Josette Féral, Michael Fried, and Erika Fischer-Lichte I concluded that theatricality was present in different forms of duality most specifically in dualities of art/life, space and communication. In these dualities I located an internal opposition, and what Josette Féral calls clivage.

In chapter three I presented two different theoretical approaches: theories of ideology and performance. In presenting ideology I demonstrated how the theoretical approaches to ideology is founded in a tradition of Marxist critique of ideology, and a widespread conception of ideology as false consciousness. I also showed how ideology can be seen as a system of narratives through Roland Barthes’ term of mythology. Through Louis Althusser’s theories of ideological state apparatuses I conveyed how the application of ideological narratives, expressions, and systems are carried out through statehood, interpellating all national subjects into ideological subjects belonging to one specific ideology.

Most importantly, in chapter three, I presented Slavoj Žižek’s theories of ideology as presented in his book The Sublime Object of Ideology, theories which have followed me throughout the course of work that has resulted in this dissertation where his apparatus of terms has been used widely. The terms I have discussed most thoroughly are the terms the Real, and jouissance which Žižek borrowed from the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. In Lacanian terminology the Real is considered a hard impenetrable kernel that resists symbolization, and Žižek is indebted to this definition in his writing, but he has developed the Lacanian terms further. In my reading of Žižek the Real has become a hard impenetrable kernel resisting symbolization, but which exists through symbolization as a master-signifier without a signified. The Real is nothing but
a void, but it is also that which masks that it is nothing but a void. *Jouissance* is a form of desire. Where Žižek differentiates between *the Real* and *jouissance*, he also sees the terms as coexistent and closely intertwined. *Jouissance* is the ultimate enjoyment and the desire for *the Real* that still stops us from desiring what terrifies us, and therefore masks the void we fear by creating a realm of desirable enjoyment.

In the last part of chapter three I discussed performance theory with a focus on the theories of Victor Turner and Richard Schechner. I focused on Turner’s terms of *liminal/liminoid, structure/antistructure*, and *communitas*, and discussed Schechner’s *efficacy-entertainment braid*. I also presented the theories of Eric Rothenbuhler who defines ritual differently from the above two, and who also, in my opinion, has a too wide a take on ritual. What I, however, find interesting in Rothenbuhler’s argumentation is that ritual becomes a frame of symbolic meaning in which the symbols presented through ritual are condensed in meaning. At the end of this chapter I also presented John J. MacAlloon’s term spectacle, a genre of mass performance that applies ritual characteristics without actually being ritual, but which still has a great social impact. In the following chapter, chapter four, I presented my views, understandings, and problems related to questions of methodology and approaches to research.

In chapter five I started to present my case studies, and began with North Korean mass gymnastics and different historical perspectives connected to the expression seen in the DPRK today, and which gave some important perspectives to my analysis of the 2010 Arirang performance. I started chapter five by presenting the historical foundations of mass gymnastics and the first organized gymnastic events in Germany held by Turnvater Jahn. I continued to show how the first organized gymnastic movements were political movements working for the unification of Germany, and how they lost much of their importance after the unification of 1871, but still carried on within a political realm. This led to the organizations being disbanded by the Nazis in 1938, not because the Nazis did not enjoy mass gymnastics or see the ideological potential of the movement, but because they wanted full control of the gymnastic expression and organization. I also discussed other forms of mass performance in Nazi Germany such as the Thingspiel movement, and the Party Rallies at Nuremberg with a focus on the 1934 event and Leni Riefenstahl’s film of the event from that year. After having presented and discussed the history of organized gymnastics in Germany until the postwar separation of the country and the German Nazi mass performance, I continued with
presenting the road organized mass gymnastics took in Communist Eastern Europe after the Second World War.

In my discussion of the postwar events I relied on the research of Petr Roubal and his discussion of the Czechoslovakian Spartakiada. I also relied on available video and image material. Here I saw how the Czechoslovakian Spartakiada which was indebted to the prewar developments of the Sokol movement, and the Czech “turnvater” Miroslav Tyrš who had emphasized a more artful form of gymnastics that was closer to dance. I saw how this form of mass gymnastics together with the legacy of the German tradition that was attended to in the DDR provided a new style of mass gymnastics that became popular in Communist Eastern Europe. I also gave weight to the fact that the use of flip boards in mass gymnastics seems to have originated in the DDR in the 1950s, and that this style was quickly favored in Moscow. Subsequently I showed how this style was adopted by most of the Communist allies of the time, and that this is the reason it spread to Asia and to China, and, most importantly in this setting, to the DPRK.

Following this discussion I moved on to discussing the mass gymnastic expression of the DPRK in particular, but I also gave a presentation of the North Korean ideology and how I had experienced my first visit to the country in September 2010. Being present at the Arirang performance, as becomes clear in my analysis in chapter five, was an experience not like anything else I have ever experienced. In my analysis I focused on the presentation of the ideological symbols in the performative action and backdrop images. In this analysis I saw how Kim Il Sung as national parent and leader was the signified of every symbol but that Kim Il Sung himself became the recurrent master-signifier not symbolizing anything else but himself and the void he can be said to have masked. I concluded by saying that Kim Il Sung could be seen as a North Korean Real, and that Kim Il Sung’s love for his subjects was a North Korean jouissance. I also discussed how one was to understand the performance when so many of the spectators were foreigners not interpellated into the North Korean ideology. To do this I used Erika Fischer-Lichte’s term of autopoietic feedback loop, and rounded off by saying that even though many of us in the audience were not interpellated by the ideology we were still recipients of the love presented, and that although it did not seem like the North Korean public ran down the doors of the stadium it has to be stated that they of course also were the intended audience of the performance.
In chapter six I moved on to my next case study, being my visit to the 148th anniversary battle reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg in Gettysburg Pennsylvania in July 2011. The most prominent aspect of this event and the movement behind it is the task of attempting to perform a period of time. In order to lend perspective to the event I therefore decided to present my visit to the living history museum Colonial Williamsburg which I visited earlier the same summer. What I saw as especially relevant at Colonial Williamsburg were the controversies of authenticity that appeared when they attempted to present history in the most authentic way possible. Explicitly, this was said to be a controversy between education and entertainment.

In my analysis of the 148th anniversary battle reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg after giving an introduction to the historical actions of Civil War commemorations and reenactments, I began by discussing the Civil War reenactment movement in general giving particular emphasis to the many rules the reenactors abide by. I also discussed the term authenticity in relation to Walter Benjamin’s term aura, something that becomes important in the presentation of the “authentic experience” sought for by the reenactors at the reenactment events. In my analysis of the event I saw how the event was characterized by what I called a theme park dramaturgy where the participants chose which smaller events and actions they wanted to participate in while the main events of the day, the battle reenactment attracted all participants. My main conclusion of the event was, however, concerned with how the concept of authenticity became an emotional and ideological system presenting a desirable Real making it possible to dive into what was actually very troubling but which in this frame of theatricality made it possible to elude while simultaneously desiring.

I started chapter seven by discussing mass performance as a genre. I presented Elias Canetti’s poetical discussion of crowds and how crowds desire each other and desire to grow, and I also saw this in relation to Sigmund Freud’s theories of group psychology. In chapter seven I proposed that what recognizes the mass performances I have analyzed and discussed is the application of what I have wanted to call a ritualistic theatricality. What I have called ritualistic theatricality consists of several different factors. First of all I saw how ritualistic theatricality applies factors of emotion and solemnity frequently used in actual ritual in order to create a ritual effect without necessarily providing actual liminal or transformational actions or results. In addition to this I demonstrated how this ritualistic theatricality is dependent on inherent opposi-
tions. I saw how these oppositions were related to Schechner’s efficacy-entertainment braid and could take different forms within this continuum.

Ritualistic theatricality is therefore that which belongs both to ritual and theatre, and which combines the inherent oppositions in order to create one expression. It separates and unites but uses aspects of unification, transformation, and efficacy in order to do so. Mass performances are huge events, and the size contributes to creating insecurities. I have seen these insecurities in relation to Žižek’s use of the sublime. In the end of chapter seven I discussed how the sublime factor increases the space of ideology within mass performance and ritualistic theatricality. I saw that the terrifying factor of the sublime as located by Žižek could be found in theatricality, and in theatricality’s necessary failure. Theatricality fails in presenting ideological totalities because of its necessary dialectical structure and its several forms of inherent clivage. This failure becomes play, and this play is jouissance, desirable action that masks the presence of failure and ideological void through indulging in failure itself, resulting in theatricality providing space for indulging in ideology and strengthening ideology’s presence and status.

In this dissertation I have shown that theatricality is close and present within mass performance. The dualities of theatricality that I presented in chapter two show the dialectical nature of theatricality, a dialectical nature that also appears in ideological expressions. This dialectical nature is nurtured in mass performance through explicitly providing theatre, play and what Victor Turner called a subjunctive mood but uses this realm of escaping the quotidian to express a desired Real.

I also argue that this theatricality can enforce and articulate the ideological narrative and expression. The reason for this is that theatricality opens a space for fantasy in which ideological narrative and expression can evolve and where belief, knowledge, and external influences can be put on hold. This means that theatricality has the ability to let participants place their consciousness where they desire it to be, creating an important form of communication between the ideological content of the event and the participants’ desire. It is in the dialectical nature of theatricality that we find the possibility of this articulating space of fantasy and desire that can be used to strengthen ideological narrative.

What I have wanted to show with this is that when discussing mass performance and ideological content we need to focus on more than the content and message of the events in order to understand how and why these events affect their audience. When
discussing how these events work and why different forms of mass performance continue to be popular happenings around the world, theatricality can be a helpful term because it clarifies the motivation and affects of participating in the events, and can propose answers for why ideology presented through mass performance is an enjoyable but serious form of action related to the individual and collective desire for safe havens of knowledge and action. I propose that the reason for the theatricality being able to open this space of possible ideological desire is communal. It is through creating a ritualistic room that this theatricality achieves the development of the necessary voids for ideological fantasy to evolve and exist in a realm of collective play. This means that the aspect of experienced communitas is very important for this space to appear.

Mass performance becomes an effective form of expressing ideology because ideology becomes a part of the communitas. Where many forms of expressing ideology can interpellate its subjects, the experience of communitas gives the participants the opportunity to choose their own interpellation through the experience of collective belonging. Mass performance becomes an effective expression of ideology because it requires mainly voluntary action, and the ideology’s recipient is also the ideology’s creator and upholder. In between desiring and acting a sense of trouble free belonging may appear, creating worlds outside quotidian problems, and projecting desires onto what may always be beyond in the Other.

Writing this dissertation and conducting the research has been a journey. Physically it has been a journey to both Korea and the USA and to places I would maybe not have sought out under other circumstances. In addition to this it has been a mental journey in the vast field of performance studies, a field that in its vastness also becomes clearly defined, and which contributes to analyzing and discussing the cultural and aesthetic aspects of the lives we live. Mass performance surrounds us and is tremendously popular all over the world. In this dissertation I have attempted to illuminate how and why mass performance has achieved the important national position it has, and why mass performance is chosen as form to present national ideologies.
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Appendix

Image 1

Image 2
Image 3

Image 4