

The Dramaturgy of Ontological Verticality in the Wooster Group's Theatre: Fragments of Memory in Search of a Whole

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In the fall of 2006, I was a graduate student in the Performing Arts Department at Washington University in St. Louis. In a class called "Great Directors, Great Plays," I wrote a paper entitled "Elizabeth LeCompte's Theatre: Deconstruction, Reinvention and Invitation," in which I offered a critical analysis of Spalding Gray's two monologues *India and After (America)* and *A Personal History of the American Theatre*, and the Wooster Group's *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points ...)*, and *Brace Up!*. My focus was on how the Wooster Group widened the potential of theatre, by taking advantage of the technological advancements of the twentieth century, and how the Group's unique and innovative aesthetic could represent theatre's stronghold against the threat of the more accessible and popular media like television and film. My discussion included, among other things, Spalding Gray's use of his memory for the spontaneous creation on stage and LeCompte's challenge of the theatrical representation of race, gender, and class through the deconstruction of classical texts in *L.S.D.* and *Brace Up!*. The critical sources by David Savranⁱ, Arnold Aronsonⁱⁱ, John Russel Brownⁱⁱⁱ, Elinor Fuchs^{iv}, and Theodore Shank^v, among others, provided me with substantial historical and theoretical context, and my exploration of the aesthetic of the Wooster Group was an exciting venture.

In retrospect, what strikes me most about this paper is that I wrote it without having seen any of the productions I wrote about, or any other Wooster Group productions. I came from Korea to the United States to study theatre in 2005, after finishing my three and a half years of military service as an intelligence officer in the Korean Navy. I had not been in New York to watch the Group's emergence in the 1970s and its rise to prominence in the 1980s, nor did I have knowledge of the impact of the Wooster Group in academic discourse before I came to the United States. My first encounter with the Wooster Group was through John Rouse's article, "Textuality and Authority in Theater and Drama: Some Contemporary Possibilities" in the anthology, *Critical Theory and Performance*, which I read in an introductory class at WU in 2005. My fascination with the Group's commitment to questioning the nature of theatrical form and its constant innovation led me to continue exploring their work. And after I moved to the east coast to attend the Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism program at Yale School of Drama in 2007, I could finally afford to experience the Wooster Group in production in *La Didone* (2009), the revival of *North Atlantic* (2010), *Vieux Carré* (2011), *Early Plays* (2012), and the revival of *Hamlet* (2012). While I felt proud of myself for knowing the "language" of the Wooster Group and the implication of the directorial choices, I could not help but question the interconnection between my encounter with the Wooster Group in writing and in performance. How did my knowledge based on scholarly material shape my appreciation of the Wooster Group in performance? Also, in reverse, how did my experience as an audience member speak to my previous appreciation of the Wooster Group and, especially, the four pieces I wrote about – *India and After (America)*, *A Personal History of the American Theatre*, *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points ...)*, and *Brace Up!*?

The series of questions following my different encounters with the Wooster Group brought to mind performance studies scholar Diana Taylor's notions of "archive" and "repertoire." While expanding the definition and function of the term "performance", Taylor questions the "rift" that lies between "the archive of supposedly enduring materials (i.e. texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral repertoire of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e. spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)" (19). Focusing on various kinds of Latin American performances, Taylor challenges "the preponderance of writing in Western epistemologies" (16) and how the Conquest of Latin America changed "the degree of legitimization of writing over other epistemic and mnemonic systems" (18). As a study of performance deeply rooted in cultural anthropology, Taylor's approach carries with it an exploration of the ideological and hierarchical implications of her subjects, which are the Western writing and embodied culture of "the other." The relationship between the writing on the Wooster Group and the Wooster Group performance does not possess the same kind of political and geographical scope as Taylor's subjects. Nevertheless, Taylor's methodology provides an apt theoretical framework in assessing the intricate connection between the Wooster Group's dramaturgy and the criticism and scholarly analysis of the Wooster Group's performance. Examining how a research-based critical assessment of the Wooster Group initiated an active dialogue with the performance and revisiting the four productions I previously wrote about, I would argue that the Wooster Group demonstrates a "dramaturgy of ontological verticality" that engages the spectator/reader on multiple ontological levels and, in doing so, expands the degree of performance the Wooster Group engages in beyond the theatrical.

In the many meanings of performance that performance studies take into account, the Wooster Group's performance is probably of very conventional nature – that is, it is a theatre performance. It adheres to the general rules of theatre: it is rehearsed for a period of time; it is staged for an audience who pays and makes a commitment to see the piece; it is performed for an agreed amount of time, in terms of both the running time of the individual performance and the total running period of the piece; and there is a mutual agreement on the division between the performance space and the auditorium. While the Wooster Group on occasions became entangled in judicial affairs, such as when they lost funding from the New York State Council on the Arts for using blackface in *Route 1 & 9* (1981) or when Arthur Miller sued them for their use of his play *The Crucible* in *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points ...)*, their practice has been in the theatre and their innovations are those of a theatre piece. They emerged in the New York avant-garde theatre scene, and their base, the Performing Garage where they perform most of their pieces, has remained downtown New York.

What is unique about the reception of the Wooster Group is the function of media and scholarship in their rise. Talking about the Wooster Group in theatre scholarship inevitably accompanies viewing them in relation to the development of academic discourse, possibly since Arnold Aronson, in 1985, famously called the Wooster Group's work "virtually the only example of deconstructionist ideas put into practice in the American theatre" (345). As Mike Vanden Heuvel points out:

Arising roughly at the same moment that post-modern theory was making its mark on the academy, the Wooster Group has evolved alongside a critical discourse that, for better or worse (and somewhat belatedly) hitched its wagon to

the star of avant-garde theatre and performance as a productive object for its modes of analysis, interpretation, and further theorizing (72).

David Savran, with *Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group* (1988), raised awareness of the Wooster Group outside of New York. In “Obeying the Rules” (2004), he retrospectively acknowledges the function of the media and theatre reviews in the growth of the Wooster Group:

The change in the Wooster Group’s cultural status that began in the late 1980s can be charted with remarkable precision by examining the coverage of them in the *New York Times*, that imperious arbiter of upper-middlebrow taste, style, and culture (66).

Whether as an object of theoretical analysis or a new unorthodox theatrical attraction, the Wooster Group has thrived along with the writing about them and developed a symbiotic relationship with it.

While the coincidental rise of the Wooster Group and post-modern theory in theatre criticism in the 1980s turned out to be mutually beneficial, the change of taste in criticism also meant a change in attitude toward the Wooster Group. With the “ebbing of postmodernism” in the 1990s, the critical discourse around the Wooster Group turned to, as Heuvel says, “more empirical forms of reviewing: descriptions of the work in progress, commentary from the artists and translator, and the like” (78). In a *Village Voice* review of *Frank Dell’s The Temptation of Saint Anthony* in 1988, Elinor Fuchs calls the Group “this purest surviving example of our all but vanished theater avant-garde,” while expressing her concern:

It is as if LeCompte and her group, in their exacting struggle to realize the oddest “bits of culture” as theater, had come to the end of a certain line of thought and been pushed to consider their relation to theater itself (185).

Looking back at his initial encounter with the Wooster Group, David Savran recalls in 2004: “To this day, they represent the last stand of the avant-garde because of their instrumentality in both destroying and preserving the very meaning of the word” (“Obeying the Rules” 66). Savran’s statement reflects the dual status that the Wooster Group retains today: on one level, they exist as a surviving representative of the avant-garde, carrying its own legacy; on the other, they exist as a contemporary theatre group still striving to create something radical. The repertory of the Wooster Group in the past few years includes both revivals – *North Atlantic* (2010), *Hamlet* (2012) – and new works such as *Early Plays* (2012), a collaboration with New York City Players on Eugene O’Neill’s early works, and *Troilus and Cressida* (2012), a collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Even though the critical discourse on the Wooster Group may not be as active as in the 1980s, they have remained prolific and their influences are recognized in younger experimental theatre artists or groups such as Richard Maxwell, Elevator Repair Service and the TEAM (Theatre of the Emerging American Movement), among many others.

The concurrent rise of the Wooster Group’s status and the critical discourse in the form of writing can be viewed in terms of Taylor’s archive and repertoire. The

Wooster Group's performance, as a repertoire in Taylor's term, requires the presence of the spectators and the participation of them as a collective in the spectatorship. Being a spectator signifies not only watching a live performance but also feeling the tension of the moving and breathing bodies on stage and in the auditorium as well as the sensory experience of voice, sound, and visual. The spectator captures the performance as an "embodied memory," and this memory, "because it is live, exceeds the archive's ability to capture it" (Taylor 20). Nevertheless, for the majority of people who only read about the Wooster Group without seeing their performance, "writing has paradoxically come to stand in for and against embodiment" (Taylor 16). Because the writing on the Wooster Group (the archive) is not ephemeral as the performance (the repertoire) and, therefore, enables wider accessibility, it expands the general knowledge of the source material, what Taylor calls "archival memory." However, the reader of the archive on the Wooster Group, without the experience of "being there" at the performance, can only acquire a distanced perspective on the performance once mediated by the author.

Taylor's notions of the archive and the repertoire provide the theoretical lens of performance studies into the relationship between the Wooster Group's performance and the critical discourse on them. Nevertheless, to proceed with the exploration of the Wooster Group, what should be noted here is that Taylor's subjects and the Wooster Group are located in different ideological sites. The archive, as Taylor notes, carries with it political power that, to different degrees, determines the value or meaning of the repertoire. For the Wooster Group, the hierarchy between their archive and repertoire is more fluid and also dependent upon accessibility, order of the exposure, social or professional circle, or personal preference. As my personal first encounter with the Wooster Group suggests, a person not in the vicinity of the performance site is more likely to be exposed to the Wooster Group through critical writing or review. An ardent theatre-goer living in New York is more likely to watch the Wooster Group's performance before reading about it. A theatre scholar is more likely to view the Wooster Group's performance through a theoretical lens and write about it accordingly. Some people might go to see the Wooster Group purely for the fun of it and not read the critical analysis at all. Recognizing the Wooster Group's "genuine delight in [popular traditions]," Greg Giesekam makes a compelling case for the "pleasure [of the Wooster Group performance] in its own sight:" that the performances "exceed whatever meanings we might take from such post-event meaning production," as criticism is created to do and tends to focus on (91-93).

As the various scenarios demonstrate, the Wooster Group's relationship with the critical discourse it has engendered is one of contemporaneity rather than codependency or even contention. Elizabeth LeCompte's own view on the Wooster Group's performance further confirms the independence of the performance in its conception and execution. In numerous interviews, LeCompte has acknowledged her awareness of the academic interest in the Wooster Group's work but emphasized the deliberate openness of the Wooster Groups' pieces. When questioned about her choice to use Japanese Noh theatre for *Brace Up!*, she answers, "My meaning is in the piece itself. I'm not going to now make meaning separately from that piece for you" (Kaye 256). By simply presenting the piece, she endows the spectators with the freedom to make it meaningful for themselves. In this respect, the "meaning" of their performance offered in the writings is a possibility, not an assignment or an imposition.

The unique relationship between the Wooster Group performance and the critical writing illuminates what triggered my interest in the four performances (that I had not seen back then) and what enhanced my active engagement with the scholarly material. The scholarship I encountered at that time mostly read the Wooster Group's performances as examples of "deconstruction," which, in Elinor Fuch's words, entails "not the destruction of a literary work but rather the exposing in that work of contradictory possibilities of interpretation" (174). The Wooster Group's theatrical elements are often read as "signs" and are analyzed in terms of semiotics, which Arnold Aronson describes as:

One might be called "layering," the creation of successive layers of sign systems based upon a foundation of conventional theatrical signs. The other, a sort of reversal, is dessemanticization, the conscious attempt to divorce signs from their semantic content (355)

These theoretical analyses helped me imagine the performances in "signs," "layers," and "contradictory possibilities of interpretation." In this theoretical mindset, the description of the performances in reviews, photographic images, and short video clips all appeared to me as signs to decipher and fragments that composed a whole. In my effort to fill in what was left open, I found myself become an active participant in the imagining of the whole of the performances.

The dramaturgy in *India and After (America)* and *A Personal History of the American Theatre*, and the Wooster Group's *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points ...)*, and *Brace Up!* is one built upon multiple layers that makes itself susceptible to critical discourse and, in doing so, also appeals to the imagination of the potential reader/spectator. The scholarly responses to these pieces serve as an additional layer of potential openness extending the discourse rather than a meaning-assignment with a closure. For the multiple ontological layers that consist and arise out of the Wooster Group's performances, I term the Wooster Group's dramaturgy "dramaturgy of ontological verticality," and will demonstrate how the four pieces create a performance text that reaches over to the critical and, further, to the imaginative level through the lens of memory.

From 1975 to 1982, Spalding Gray, as a member of the Wooster Group, performed ten autobiographical pieces: the improvisational *Three Places in Rhode Island* trilogy (*Sakonnet Point*, *Rumstick Road*, and *Nayatt School*), an epilogue to the trilogy called *Point Judith* (which is a response to Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*), and six more solo monologues. Among these, the lesser-known *India and After (America)* and *A Personal History of the American Theatre* demonstrate, simply yet most aptly, the dramaturgy of ontological verticality through their direct engagement with Gray's personal memory and the deliberate mediation of the memory into fragments.

India and After (America) ran at the Performing Garage from September 12 to November 27, 1979. This piece centers around Spalding Gray casually sharing with the audience his experience of the trip to India with Richard Schechner's Performance Group for the tour of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, and his return to the United States in 1976. During this period, Gray suffered from great emotional distress, which he identified with his mother's manic-depression. *India and After* is both a confession

and a commemoration of this period. On stage, an assistant opens a random page of a dictionary, gives Gray a word, its definition, and a time period between fifteen seconds to four minutes. During the given time, Gray talks about his memory associated with the chosen word. At the performances, his anecdotes also included his arrest in Las Vegas when he refused to give the policeman his name, and his temporary job as a pornography actor to make money to travel west. As David Savran noted:

[Gray] communicates the severity of the crisis less through the content of the stories than through their fragmentation. [...] The piece can never be complete. There will always be fragments left over, unexplored and unexplained, that elude the play of rationality and the game of chance, loose ends that resist incorporation into this cunningly constructed artifact. [...] *India and After* is not so much about Spalding Gray's emotional crisis as it is a translation of the crisis into another medium (*Breaking the Rules* 72-73).

The performing method affects the audience members just as it does Gray himself. They become equally involved in the unpredictability of the upcoming word and the time restriction.

A Personal History of the American Theatre, which ran from November 7, 1980 to January 31, 1981, at the Performing Garage, features forty-seven cards of play titles, in which Gray performed between 1960 and 1970. He picks one card randomly and starts reminiscing about his experience around that play, such as other actors or problems during rehearsal. After each reflection, he invites the audience for conversation or questions about the experience. While lighter in tone and subject matter than *India and After*, Gray's delivery is still candid, unrehearsed, and directed to the audience

In an interview with Richard Schechner, Gray refers to his memory as his starting point when preparing a performance: "What I start with is memory. All memory is a creative art. If you have a memory, you're re-creating the original event" (Schechner 165). What these two monologue performances have brought to the critical table is the questioning of the nature of performance. The arbitrary determinants in both pieces – the assistant with the dictionary and the order of cards – and the subjective nature of Gray's memory force a spontaneous creation on stage, that is both real and performance: real, in that it involves actual reflection on the spot and immediate expression; and performance, in that it entails his skilled delivery to the audience. In the performance, these mediating devices inevitably cause a division of attention for both the performer Gray and the audience. In both pieces, Gray has to switch back and forth between recollection and the delivery of it, while being alert for the next word or play title. The audience switches back and forth between Gray's story and the randomness of the determinants. As the audience members are invited to join Gray's game, they become active participants in their own game, rather than passive listeners to Gray's stories. While the two monologue performances focus on Gray's memories, the performance devices evoke the multiple ontological levels in Gray's dramaturgy: starting from Gray's past, Gray's memory of his past, Gray's association with his memory, the audience members' association with Gray's memory, and the audience members' association with their own memories. The performances give rise to further

ontological levels outside of the performance space as they lead to the contemplation on the nature of memory itself and how memory is animated through random associations.

While Gray's *India and After (America)* and *A Personal History of the American Theatre* create a wave of layers through Gray's personal memory, his interaction with it, and the performance of it, the Wooster Group's *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points ...)* and *Brace Up!* expand the scope of memory to "cultural memory." The two pieces unfold their dramaturgy of ontological verticality through the interaction between a classic text and the performance of it. The original texts, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, serve, on one level, as the source of memory, with their established status and supposed familiarity to the audience. However, the Wooster Group delves much deeper into what shapes the memory and how it conveys to us through performance. David Savran notes that, "*L.S.D.* examines cultural memory – that is, history – by interweaving personal memories with a great diversity of texts" from the past (*Breaking the Rules* 173). *Brace Up!* examines cultural memory from a futuristic perspective by creating a site where technology replaces humanity. Yet considering the methodology of transmitting this memory through performance, the cultural memory is more than history. Diana Taylor's definition of cultural memory applies more suitably:

Cultural memory is, among other things, a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection. [...] Memory is embodied and sensual, that is, conjured through the senses; it links the deeply private with social, even official, practices. [...] it's always operating in conjunction with other memories, "all of them pulsing regularly, in order" (82).

In *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points ...)* and *Brace Up!*, the Wooster Group uses a variety of theatrical elements that renders their engagement with cultural memory on multiple ontological levels.

In *L.S.D.*, which opened in March 22, 1984, *The Crucible* is used to express the Group's examination of the repressive modern society. LeCompte recalls that the motivation of *L.S.D.* was the extreme disapproval of the use of blackface in Route 1&9, which caused the Group the loss of the New York State Council on the Arts funding by forty-three percent, harsh reviews, and suffering tantamount to a witch-hunt. The choice of Miller's play served as a self-reflection of the Group's situation at that moment. Yet instead of an adaptation or an interpretation of a canonical text, *L.S.D.* integrated the text into the performance in the form of a "reading staged as an activity of intertextuality" (Rouse 150). Regarding the Group's particular approach to classical texts, Fuchs says that the Wooster Group "has not only made a practice of 're-reading' classic modern texts, but has done so staging the very mechanics of reading itself" (85). *L.S.D.* examines the oppressive forces in society, using the dynamics between the process of recollection and reproduction, and the pressure of performance.

L.S.D. is overall framed as a memory play for Ann Rower, the American author and renowned babysitter for LSD guru Timothy Leary. The main setting is a long table where the actors mostly sit directly facing the audience. Considering that the scholars I cited above have analyzed the plethora of performance elements in this piece extensively, I will only give a brief description of the structure. The piece consists of four parts. In part one, the actors read random parts from passages by 1960s beatnik writers

such as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and Timothy Leary. In part two, the male actors in street costume and female actors in colonial costume very rapidly perform parts of *The Crucible* at an unusual high speed. Part three shows the video of a rehearsal of part two by the actors under the influence of LSD. In part four, the actors reconstruct a debate between Leary and G. Gordon Liddy from 1982 and end the play with a Spanish cabaret dance. In this performance, *The Crucible* initially exists as a classic most audience members would easily associate with, through their encounter with it in high school. Yet, by speed-reading the text in frenzy or under the influence of LSD, either around a table or in a video footage, *The Crucible* becomes present only in the form of becoming utterly unrecognizable and eventually absent. Arthur Miller threatened to force legal action, claiming that the Wooster Group used portions of his play without permission. The Wooster Group initially cut the forty-five minute segment to twenty minutes and ultimately cut the whole dialogue and performed the play only in pantomime. *The Crucible's* actual elimination from the performance is often cited as an example of a performance transcending the boundaries of stage and reality, and the ultimate irony of how the theme of persecution came to life.

While *The Crucible* dissolves under the “staging [of] the very mechanics of reading itself,” as Fuchs puts it, Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* becomes dominantly present in *Brace Up!*, which was performed at the Performing Garage from January 18 to March 9, 1991. LeCompte terms her use of Chekhov’s play as “reinventing it from the ground up,” so as to connect Chekhov’s work to the present (Kaye 259). The Wooster Group stages the theme of alienation by literally alienating every theatrical element on stage: discrepancies exist between actor and character, in the case of Beatrice Roth, an old actress, playing the youngest sister Irina on a wheelchair; between human and technology, when an actor has conversation with a TV screen; between the stylistic form of Noh theatre and the realistic form of Chekhov’s play; and between process and product, as this piece deliberately incorporates elements of rehearsal such as the narrator giving direction to technicians or correcting an actor’s grammar.

More so than Gray’s monologues, *L.S.D.* and *Brace Up!* appeal to the audience’s multiple attention levels. On the most basic level exists the Wooster Group’s handling of the classical texts, and in *L.S.D.*, other texts of the beatnik writers. Yet, as mentioned above, the performances consist of various semiotic elements such as the table or the TV screens and constantly switch their methods of delivery to the audience; sometimes direct, and other times presentational, refusing any attempt at creating a coherent performance piece, let alone a theatrical illusion. The massing of performance elements put overwhelming pressure on the audience members, forcing them to determine which elements to focus on and to question the implications of them. The pressure makes the audience members self-conscious of the act of watching a performance and, by provoking their critical faculty, turns them into active participants in the performances’ playing with different planes of realities.

Just like Gray’s monologues, the multiple ontological levels in *L.S.D.* and *Brace Up!* take the audience engagement beyond the critical. In *L.S.D.*, the various historical time frames combine with the form of the memory play to shape the cultural memory. The literary texts evoke the following historical frames: the seventeenth century Salem as the setting of *The Crucible*; the 1950s as the decade of the Beat generation and *The Crucible*; the 1960s as the setting of the beatnik writers’ passages; and 1982 of the Leary-Liddy debate. The form of the memory play merges the above-mentioned levels

into a collective filtered through Ann Rower's recollection, within which reside the levels of reading and performing, and the levels of performing live and a video footage of performing. Outside of the literary and the theatrical, more levels emerge: most conspicuously, the parallel between McCarthyism in the 1960s and the oppression by the New York State Council and the Miller estate in the present. *Brace Up!* uses the performance itself as a frame, by staging the act of staging. Memory is used more drastically as Chekhov's classic text from 1900 is spread through the dual planes of performance and rehearsal as well as that of humanity and technology. The cultural memory in this piece occurs on multiple nostalgic levels: the nostalgia of the three sisters in Chekhov's play for their glorious past; the nostalgia for humanity spared of technological intrusion; and the nostalgia for a "whole" – that is, an intact being, not a performance that, through rehearsal, can strive for but never reach perfection.

In Gray's monologues, the engagement on the part of the audience members is clearly delineated, with one level of consciousness leading to another. However, in *L.S.D.* and *Brace Up!*, the ontological levels merge into one another and coexist on the same plane of reality on the stage, both visually and stylistically. LeCompte's own words aptly express her impulse. She tells Nick Kaye:

[A]nything can coexist together – without, you know, losing its own uniqueness. [...] They are separate, and they can stay separate and at the same time inform each other – within the same work (135)

In another interview, she says:

I turn on the television and turn down the sound. I put the radio on and do my writing, all at the same time. Most kids have been doing their homework while watching TV all their lives, so there's this weird mishmash for them already (Shank 341).

The simultaneity of things both in space and in time is what she observed, what she worked with, and what she tried in these two pieces, to test the impact. Rather than gently inviting the audience members to critical and imaginative engagement like Gray does, LeCompte dares them to make their own associations and shape their own cultural memory. The conglomeration of the multiple levels leaves it open for the audience which level to interact with and, further, what to evoke from the interaction. As the scope of the memory expands from the personal to the cultural, the ontological levels become more fluid and variegated, being stacked vertically on top of each other as they are. Accordingly, as the landscape of the memory becomes more social, political, and even metaphysical, the degree of the audience engagement becomes more fervent and pressured.

An examination of the trajectory from Gray's monologues in the late 1970s to the Wooster Group's performances in the 1980s and 90s reveals that the Wooster Group demonstrates a dramaturgy of ontological verticality that, through their engagement with memory, appeals to the audience's critical and imaginative faculties. An understanding of the ontological levels inherent in the Wooster Group's dramaturgy suggests a solution to the puzzle about how my initial encounter with the Wooster Group only through scholarly material envisioned for me the performances in all their

liveliness. The academic writings on the Wooster Group are distanced perspectives on the performances, mediated through the critical lens. Nevertheless, as the dramaturgy of ontological verticality indicates, the Wooster Group engages in multiple ontological layers, whether they are performance of a memory, deconstruction of a classical text, or juxtaposition of different performance styles. Since all the levels already presuppose mediation through a particular perspective, the question remains: Is there an unmediated, pure level in the Wooster Group performance? Whether the answer is “performance” or the source of the memory or something else, what would be scholarly writing but one more layer of perspective? The critical discourse in the form of writing is, in Taylor’s term, an archive in that it is not conceived as part of the performance on stage. Nevertheless, because the Wooster Group engages in multiple ontological levels even outside the theatre space in the cloud of academic memory and actual archive, the Wooster Group archive might have created another kind of repertoire altogether.

ⁱ David Savran. *Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1988)

ⁱⁱ Arnold Aronson. *American Avant-garde Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2000)

ⁱⁱⁱ John Russel Brown. “Theatre Since 1970,” *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Theatre*, Ed. John Russel Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 499-537.

^{iv} Elinor Fuchs. *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996)

^v Theodore Shank. *Beyond the Boundaries: American Alternative Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002)

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