The Effect of Masked Performance Techniques on the Perception of Identity

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The Effect of Masked Performance Techniques on the Perception of Identity

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theatre from The College of William and Mary

by

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Abstract

Masked performance offers many unique opportunities and possibilities to actors, and can also help guide audience reaction to theatrical content. The central question of this research is how the application of masked performance to a piece of theatre that is not generally performed in mask will affect the audience perception of identity in performance, and how it helps actors engage with a challenging text.

Attempts on Her Life by Martin Crimp is an unconventional play; it does not specify the number of actors needed for the production, the division of lines, or how many characters there are. Further the 17 scenes which compose the show are seemingly disjointed, held together only by the recurrence of a woman named Anne. The research has focused on analysis of the text and historical context surrounding the play and playwright to justify and highlight the ways in which the masked performance is a choice that complements the piece.

The choice to utilize masks, as well as the other directorial choices that necessitates, are then justified via an analysis of the text through multiple lenses of theory. The research also includes an account of the rehearsal and production process and concludes by analyzing audience and performer response to the production with specific regard to the effect of the masks.
# Table of Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. Page 4  
Chapter 1: On Masking ............................................................................................... Page 10  
Chapter 2: Analysis of *Attempts on Her Life* ....................................................... Page 23  
Chapter 3: Rehearsal and Production Process ....................................................... Page 39  
Chapter 4: Post-Production Analysis ....................................................................... Page 52  
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... Page 64  
Appendices .................................................................................................................... Page 66  
Bibliography .................................................................................................................. Page 72
Introduction

*Attempts on Her Life* is a problematic play from many points of view. On a purely practical level it does not prescribe a number of actors required, characters per scene, plot, or even give a division of the lines. On a more cultural level it encapsulates the styles and themes of in-yer-face theatre, yet its author, Martin Crimp, is avowedly removed from the aforementioned movement. If one goes by age then Crimp is quite correct in his estimation. At the time of the first production of *Attempts*, Crimp was 41 while most other playwrights associated with the movement were in their early to mid-twenties. The show received significant attention upon its premiere and has been translated into about twenty languages and is commonly utilized in British A-level examinations. However, the show does not seem to receive as much attention in terms of production, potentially because of the numerous challenges presented by the text.

A quick word on the show itself, *Attempts on Her Life* is subtitled ”17 scenarios for the theater,” with the specific instruction to “let each scenario in words – the dialogue – unfold against a distinct world – a design – which best exposes its irony” (Crimp). The text is open in many senses of the word; outside of the previous instruction, no information about setting is given. Further, there is no indication of the number of actors needed for the piece, the number of characters per scene, how the dialogue should be divided, or a plot in any traditional sense. Amidst all of this, the audience is continually alerted to the presence of a woman named Anne, or any
variation on Anne imaginable. In every scene we hear about this woman in a new context and our focus is directed to a new, or perhaps different, facet of her identity. The cumulative effect over 17 scenes though is not strictly additive; Anne is not the sum of identifiers deployed. Rather, by the end of the play Anne’s identity is no clearer than it is after the first scene. Information is dispensed freely and the list of potential facets of Anne’s identity include, but are definitely not limited to, a suicidal artist, a terrorist, a porn actress, a neo-Nazi, and most bewilderingly, a car. The seemingly mutually exclusive scenarios force readers to reflect on what information can be accepted about the identity of others, or, in a twisted manner, highlight the impossibility of fully defining another person’s identity.

Diving more deeply into the initial production, critical response was divided, to say the least. First off, Attempts was produced by the Royal Court, the theatre at which Crimp has served as Writer-in-Residence for over a decade, in 1997 with a cast of eight. It would seem that amidst the praise and condemnation the most articulate encapsulation of reactions to the show was that “if it doesn’t baffle and irritate the life out of you, this play will fascinate” (Herbert, 312). Other opinions range from enthusiastic praise hailing the piece as “an important new play,” to denouncements that “most scenes are mind-numbing” (Herbert, 312).

Outside of this initial production, the only major revival of the play in England was staged in 2007 at the Lyttelton, with a smattering of smaller regional productions throughout the intervening decade or so. The productions seem to fall into a distinct binary; either the production focuses on minimalist staging,

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1 The full list of variations is: Anne, Anya, Annie, Anny, Annushka, Anna
highlighting the astringency and incisiveness of the dialogue, or it focuses on incorporation of technology, pushing the show towards multimedia art installation extremes. With the previously mentioned criticism in mind the minimally staged productions suffer because “the script desperately needs a little dramatic invention to counteract its rather bullying and violent in-yer-face verbosity” (Shuttleworth, 24.15: 960).

It is almost impossible to divorce Attempts from in-yer-face theatre, regardless of whether it is truly of a piece with the movement. The play certainly explores the same themes, utilizes a very similar tone and style of dialogue and fits nicely with the experimental sense of form displayed by some other in-yer-face playwrights. Crimp’s work leading up to Attempts seems to converge into the same vein being mined by in-yer-face writers but not in a deliberate manner. For example, the experiment with form in Play with Repeats (1989) when taken with the themes and subject of the play seem relatively far away from the world of Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill. But plays produced shortly before Attempts, Getting Attention (1991), or The Treatment (1993), begin to sharpen and parse back their dialogue and have a much greater element of menace while highlighting violent and sexual tendencies in the works. Another way of putting it is that they move closer to the pattern of in-yer-face theatre.

As a movement, in-yer-face theatre was not really defined until the late 1990s. The most useful definition comes from Alex Sierz who states that “the widest definition of in-yer-face theatre is any drama that takes the audience by the scruff of the neck and shakes it until it gets the message,” in his study British Drama Today:
In-Yer-Face Theatre (4). As a historical moment, in-yer-face begins in the mid 1990s, in the aftermath of almost two decades of Thatcherite policy. The Royal Court’s 1995 production of Sarah Kane’s Blasted is often regarded as the first in-yer-face production to achieve widespread cultural attention (Sierz, 36). Between the works of Sarah Kane and Mark Ravenhill there is a relatively full portrait of the obsessions and possibilities of in-yer-face theatre.

Both playwrights push against naturalistic constraints and utilize extreme aggression and violence in their language. As such, it is very easy to view the experimentation with form and aggressive dialogue of Attempts as an example of in-yer-face theatre. However, it must be noted that the violence of Attempts is in the language, not necessarily in the stage images. This is an important element that Attempts lacks that sets it somewhat apart from the majority of in-yer-face works. The context provided by the in-yer-face movement is useful as an analytic tool though the term itself is not.

The unique position that Attempts occupies within the in-yer-face movement, combined with how formally innovative the text is provides a unique directorial challenge. Further, this challenge extends to scholarly exploration and analysis of the text. What is the best method to approach the production of this challenging piece, and can this approach be justified via analysis of the text? My initial readings of the text made me question the complexities of identity, particularly in relation to Anne, but in a more universal sense as well. The contradictions within the text and the multiple ways these contradictions are pitted against one another were extraordinarily interesting to me.
Around the time I first encountered the text I was involved with designing masks for another production. Those masks dealt only with the concept of disguise, but even just the temporal association of the two became hard for me to ignore. With further thought the utility of masks in a production of *Attempts* seemed hard to limit. With this in mind, I crafted my proposal to direct *Attempts* with the conceit of masked performance and that is where my research has originated.

The addition of masks seems to solve a number of issues presented by the text, as well as those presented by the reality of producing the show in the available space on a limited budget, in an efficient manner. Masking is an inherently theatrical device, and succeeds in injecting the “dramatic invention,” previously mentioned (Shuttleworth, 24.15: 960). Masks can also act as a tool for developing character, an essential benefit for a text that is so dense and difficult to parse. Further, with the requirement of a small cast, masks increase the ability of actors to present as many distinct characters as possible.

Masks provide a strong guiding principle by which to engage the text and fully explore the themes of identity within the work. This thesis is intimately connected with my production of *Attempts on Her Life*, and my research will explore the precise way that masked performance is applied to the production and the various ways in which analysis of the text through various lenses support the use of masks. The hope is that audiences will more readily accept the creation of actors’ identities as character because of the use of mask. There are a variety of ways in which this basic conceit will be expanded upon throughout the thesis. The success of

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2 Generally, the cast size for directorials is capped to single digits.
this approach will be determined via a post-production analysis based on audience, production staff, and performer response.
Chapter 1

On Masking

The crux of this research rests with the application of masks in performance. From what tradition of masking will this production draw? There are, of course, many traditions of masking, each with distinct nuances and conventions. There is significant research into the masking traditions of Greece, Medieval England, Commedia dell’arte, Bali, Italian Carnival, Japan, Yoruba culture, etc. An exhaustive overview of even those traditions just listed would serve as an intimidatingly large tome on masking, and is far outside the scope of this research. For my purposes, I choose to delve into Greek, Commedia dell’arte, and Balinese masking traditions to explore various theories of masking and what their use implies, as well as to see if any of these traditions could serve as useful points of departure for the masking in this production. While my selection of masking traditions is somewhat arbitrary, they do present a useful continuum on which most masking practices fall. The Balinese masking tradition is very ritualistic in nature, and is a performance of religious or cultural stories. The Commedia tradition, in contrast, is secular and based exclusively on entertainment. Finally, Greek practice is highly debated in its entertainment versus ritual content and falls somewhere between the two extremes of Commedia and Balinese masking.

Commedia dell’arte provides one of the most well known masking traditions from which to draw inspiration. On a basic level, Fava posits that Commedia is a tradition in which “troupes of actors, portraying fixed characters or masques, performed plays which were based on written outlines called scenarios, but
included only improvised dialogue” (2). These fixed characters have become known as stock characters and have been utilized as a rich theatrical resource. Within the tradition of Commedia these stock characters are almost all associated with a mask, and even if a performer is unmasked their character is no less defined compared to the masked characters. The thing to remember is that “there is no attempt in Commedia to explain why anyone is the way they are; character is a given fact” (Fava, IX).

While there is not necessarily a problem with the unmasked characters, those that are masked are much more prevalent. The utility of the mask can even be described in purely technical terms:

The mask is a useful project. The use of a mask is often necessary for practical reasons. It is called for to characterize, to create a character who is obviously and unequivocally that certain thing. Makeup alone may not be enough or be poorly visible or faded. The facial mobility and mimicry of the actor, even when excellent, are subject to inconsistency and confusion. From a distance, all facial expression is attenuated and becomes vague and therefore ineffective on an expressive level. (Fava, 5)

The mask presents a consistent visual from which the character emanates. Thus, the possibility for confusion is mitigated as much as possible. Further, the mask is a means of transmitting the information of character to the performer who “acquires the face molded by the mask itself, along with the characteristics that the mask is intended to express. The actor takes on all the expressive consequences imposed by the mask, including both physical behavior and qualities of character” (Fava, 3). The mask is a tool by which the actor engages with the physical and vocal characteristics necessary to produce the character, which has a psychology that is “absolutely
watertight and organically consistent” (Fava, XI). Further, the improvisatory elements of Commedia are only possible once there is a complete mastery over the character, including the physical, vocal, and psychological elements. Those three elements are all derived from the mask itself.

Balinese masking practices are radically different, in many respects, from those of Commedia. I was fortunate enough to spend two weeks in Bali this past summer learning about masking practices. The most direct explanation of the Balinese masking tradition I received, and it is repeated in other studies of Balinese masking, is that the mask acts as a kind of spiritual conduit. Through ritual practice, prior to use, spirits enter into the mask and, upon wearing the mask, these spirits will enter into the body of the performer to be expressed via that performer. Bandem and DeBoer eloquently describe the process by which spirits enter the mask as follows:

it [the mask] is taken to a sacred place, along with a large offering. There, spirits are invited to enter the mask, while the future users and the mask-maker watch from a safe distance. It is said that often it is possible to see the power entering the mask, in the form of a glowing nimbus, like St Elmo’s fire. (45)

Another significant element to Balinese performance is entertainment; tourism is a large market in Bali and performances can garner significant revenue. As such, the performances can utilize techniques more comprehensible to those not familiar with Balinese culture. As Emigh reports, in Balinese performance there is “a subtle referencing and manipulation of the rival aesthetic procedures of visitation and possession on the one hand (the most common Balinese term is rauh, a “coming”) – and mimetic representation and illusion on the other” (107). Mimetic
representation is a building block of Western acting, and thus familiar to a wider range of people not familiar with Balinese culture. Whether or not possession or trance are a factor in performance, the “approach to characterization through the mask is informed and supported by the tradition of visitation” (Emigh, 116).

Similar to Commedia, there are styles of movement and choreography associated with different groups of masks, but the “masks themselves are not used at all at this stage of the training” (Emigh, 116). The masks, of course, are still important and “make their own very specific demands, and work with a new mask begins with a respect for a mask’s separate ‘life’ as an objective other” (Emigh, 116).

It is important to remember that despite any similarity to Commedia, the Balinese masking is based in ritual. Prior to any use in performance there is a ritual practice to prepare the masks.

As stated, Greek masking falls somewhere between Commedia and the Balinese traditions in terms of practice and cultural/spiritual content. Wiles highlights the “question of whether actors are in constant conscious control of their craft, or whether they are, in the best cases, somehow possessed by their part” (Mask and Performance, 2). This debate on the exact effect of the mask upon the performer is interesting, but it appears that the main concerns of Greek masking are of a technical nature. Greek plays were often performed with three actors handling all speaking roles, so there is naturally the need to efficiently differentiate the various roles for the benefit of the audience. Masks were the easiest way to facilitate these distinctions on the scale needed, and in Greek theory “the mask... guarantees for the performer the possibility of becoming ‘other,’ of acquiring a different
identity” (Wiles, *Mask and Performance*, 2). This also means that the actor himself is minimized in importance compared to the character. The “actor must seem to slip effortlessly from one mask and costume into the next. The actor subordinates his own physical presence to the transindivual presence of the mask and costume” (Wiles, *Masks of Menander*, 23).

This focus on distinction of character is a thread that runs throughout the Greek masking tradition. The focus is mostly upon the mask as a sign, “Aristotle argues that the visual image necessarily carries a higher information content than the voice” (Wiles, *Masks*, 24). Mask-makers utilize the accepted sign system of the day in order to convey the maximum amount of information to the audience to ensure the most ease in the audience’s ability to read the performance. Further, the masks also functioned as a vocal amplifier for the performers, to ensure they actually reached the entirety of the audience. However, increasing comprehensibility of performance is the entirety of the function of the mask (Wiles, *Masks*, 68). The mask does not imply a physical vocabulary in the same way as the Balinese masks or Commedia. The real physical requirement of utilizing Greek masks is in their manipulation, in order to most effectively present them to the audience.

In this, admittedly, limited range of masking practices we begin to see some common ideas and focuses. All of these masking practices, and I think this can be held more generally, require a special attention to the physical presentation of the actor while masked. Without creating a consistent and clear connection between the physicality of the actor and the mask, the characterization of the mask will fail. As
Emigh relates, “If the face of the actor behind the mask did not register the character of the figure dancing, the body would move wrongly, and the mask would be denied its life” (116). Further, each of these masking traditions present the mask as a finished product, the performers do not have an input into the masks. This may contribute to the relatively expansive time frame required for actors to learn the nuances of any given mask. The last element that I think is of interest is the idea that each of the masking traditions treat the mask as a whole entity, a fully formed identity. I will discuss this more in depth in Chapter 2, but it seems to me that for this production masks cannot be representative of a complete identity.

I have tried to make the cultural distinctions that I have just discussed behind the masks a non-factor in the production and research. On one hand the masks I created were not tied to any particular tradition of masking, they were character masks created specifically for the production. Further, the masks that did have a distinct cultural component were presented in a way such that the rest of the production elements undercut this component. For example, at one point an actor wore a Commedia dell’arte mask but neither utilized the physicality prescribed by the mask, nor did the character of the mask line up with the actor’s character, nor were the expected costume elements present. Can we still argue that the mask has significance as a reflection of the Commedia tradition? Or does it merely become a signifier?

Thus, the masks are tools to facilitate the actors’ entry into the text, and act as an element of visual interest. The design of the masks will inevitably incorporate some amount of character choices made both by the actors and myself. However,
the aim of these masks is not to reduce the actor to a sign. There was an element of unpredictability to how audiences responded to the masks, particularly in how they interpreted the “meaning” of the individual masks. Additionally, there was the factor of the actors’ performance, which inevitably colored the audience’s perception of the masks.

For the audience, the masks in this production functioned as signs. On a very basic level they resembled Greek masks in their utility in visually distinguishing the numerous characters actors portrayed. The informational content of the masks I created for this project was somewhat minimal by design. By including the actors in the design process I hoped to make them aware of ways in which their own ideas were present in the mask, but not necessarily in any way that was intelligible to the audience. The actor’s performance displayed the information for the audience, but this was of the actor’s knowledge of those ideas within the mask reinforcing the need to perform these differences, rather than the audience reading it in the masks themselves. The audience engaged with these signs as they pleased; the specific conclusions drawn about the “meaning” of any given mask was somewhat irrelevant, as long as the audience accepted and noted that each mask corresponded to a different identity, or facet of an identity in the case of Anne. The production, as far as the masks were concerned, did not have a particular preference as to the specific identities implied by these masks; that is left to the audience, to read and interpret the signs. As Bennett points out, “a performance is, of course, unlike a printed work, always open to immediate and public acceptance, modification, or rejection by those people it addresses” (67). The energy to attempt to guide the
audience’s interpretation of the masks could have been expended, but that would have necessarily required either limiting the actors or exerting a higher level of directorial control over their interpretation of the text, something I wished to avoid.

As a point of reference, I will include a brief description of the design process for the masks, but this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. After working through the initial division of lines, concurrently with determining the specifics of each scene, I asked the actors for immediate reactions to who they thought their characters were. These initial conversations gave me a starting point to work with in sculpting masks. Throughout the rehearsal process I altered the sculptures until I felt that we had reached a point at which the masks were ready to be used, a somewhat arbitrary process controlled more by time than anything else. The alterations to the sculptures were based upon how actors were utilizing the text in rehearsals so that the masks could be more connected to the ways in which the actors were developing the performance. In addition, I showed pictures of masks in progress to the actors to get their opinions on how they were developing. This, hopefully, gave the actors some sense of connection between their characters and the masks while allowing them to continue developing and exploring those characters rather than prescribing to them a specific way to perform.

An important element that came up repeatedly is the neutral mask. The neutral mask is a development credited to Jacques Lecoq during his time in Italy in the 1940s (Murray, 11). While Lecoq is known for many innovations in theatrical pedagogy, the neutral mask may be his most renowned. The neutral mask “possesses no psychological or biographical characteristics, but is neither ‘dead’ nor
lifeless” (Murray, 73). A particularly nice description of the neutral mask comes from Chamberlain and Yarrow:

The neutral mask captures a facial expression that is neither sad nor unduly happy but maintains a point of equilibrium. The mask captures an expression at the moment it is about to change. This equilibrium is reflected in the mask’s design; Sartori’s [original designer] neutral mask appears to be symmetrical, the brows are relaxed and rounded and the mouth is ready to smile, swear, eat or kiss but is doing none of these things. Both masks [male and female] capture a facial expression that is on the cusp between equally powerful feelings. (76)

With that passage in mind, we will now consider what the neutral mask can do in this production. In Lecoq’s training, the neutral mask is used to develop the physical vocabulary of the actor before moving on to other forms of mask (Chamberlain, Yarrow, 77). While Lecoq’s training process with neutral mask takes approximately a year, time I clearly did not have available for this endeavor, the neutral mask was still utilized as a means to prepare the actor for character masks. The use of neutral mask is often associated with a “stripping away” of excess thought, affect, or convention. This is not meant to imply that the neutral state of all performers is the same; it is made clear that “we each have our own neutrality which is our essential physical self determined by our physique with all our personal traits, strains and conflicts removed” (Chamberlain, Yarrow, 75). I utilized a small number of neutral mask exercises combined with improvisatory exercises to help expand the actors’ physical vocabulary and develop a language to discuss performance in a different manner than the actors were accustomed to that helped facilitate the use of other masks.

3 For pictures of the neutral masks used in this production see appendix B
The primary function of the neutral mask is as a training tool; Murray argues, “The neutral mask is a way of understanding performance, not a way of performing” (72). However, there are a number of useful ways in which the neutral mask can function for this production in performance. We will consider the difference between both a neutral and character mask, and the difference between a neutral mask and unmasked face. Chamberlain and Yarrow quote an interview with Lecoq in which he explains, “The neutral mask is not a surface mask but comes from deep inside one. The neutral mask is like the bottom of the sea: it’s quiet: it’s still. The expressive mask is like waves; underneath is the neutral mask” (78). After a full year of neutral mask training an actor should be able to achieve neutral without the mask. However, in this compressed time frame where the actors may not be able to completely achieve unmasked neutrality, the difference between an actor removing a character mask to reveal their face versus an actor reverting from character to neutral mask is a significant difference. The effect of viewing the neutral mask is interesting, Because there is no conflict in the face, the neutral mask creates conflict in the minds of the audience who, on seeing the mask, sense that something is about to happen. By making no comment or by ‘having no story’, the neutral mask creates a vacuum that, as an audience, our imaginations rush to fill. (Chamberlain, Yarrow, 76)

Compared to the human face, our ability to project ideas or emotions onto the neutral mask is significant. This difference is pushed even farther when the neutral mask is seen in relation to either the human face or a character mask. Taken together, the above quote and the way in which the neutral mask demands an economical physical expression of action imply that the difference in witnessing a
performer in neutral mask versus one not in neutral mask comes down to our ability to understand action and emotional content. The neutral mask increases our ability to read physical action, but strips away the particular emotional expressiveness of the face, and “creates a vacuum,” as described above, which limits or prevents us from connecting the action to anything but the performer in the present moment (Chamberlain, Yarrow, 76). The actions become disconnected from a past or future, they are in and of the moment. This contrasts with both the character mask and the unmasked actor, where action is less clear and emotions are more easily read in the face. Without significant neutral mask training the actor may have some difficulty in presenting the most precisely clear physical actions, but reading emotion, or connecting action to past or present information is much more feasible. We will more fully explore what the idea of the neutral mask in performance means in Chapter 2.

Lecoq developed many other distinct strands of thought within his pedagogy, but almost all of them relate to the neutral mask in some way. In particular, two concepts stand out as being particularly useful within the context of this production. One is a specific concept Lecoq utilizes throughout his career, the other is a more commonly used phrase, but one that Lecoq clearly defines and connects to the neutral mask. The first concept is that of play. It’s a rather amorphous and hard to define idea, but one that permeates Lecoq’s work and the work of those who claim his influence (Chamberlain, Yarrow, 33). Murray describes play as being more about openness, a readiness to explore the circumstances of the moment without intellectual “editing,” but within a set of rules or expectations germane to the style or form of theatre under investigation. (50)
We will come back to the idea of openness, and this definition as well. The important point is that neutral mask training can help foster play, which, with its connection to openness, will be vital to this production.

The other idea is that of ensemble, a specific area explored within Lecoq’s concept of *complicité* (Murray, 70). Lecoq makes a connection between play and *complicité*, specifically that play will produce *complicité*, including a sense of ensemble. This “spirit of ensemble only communicates itself to an audience when there is a palpable sense of those performers all being complicit – of colluding – in the deed of daring to create and present a show to spectators” (Murray, 71). These interrelated concepts informed the rehearsal process for this production. They may not be specifically referred back to, but these concepts imply an approach by which to integrate masked performance. That is, the creation of an environment in which play and ensemble are positively reinforced and primed for by the use of neutral mask exercises will foster an environment in which character mask work can flourish. Simultaneously, such an environment will provide extraordinary support to this particular text, as will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

Throughout this chapter I have made mention of various limitations imposed on this research. The single biggest obstacle was time. Both the process I devised for the mask design and the time frame to incorporate mask work were exceedingly limited and this will prove a point of consideration in the post-production analysis. However, I have now set out the basics of where I am coming from with regards to masking and how mask work was approached in the process. I will now turn my
attention to how the application of masked performance is justified via analysis of the text.
Chapter 2

Analysis of Attempts on Her Life

Approaching a text like Attempts on Her Life presents an interesting challenge. There are a variety of possible analytic methods with which to approach the text. This chapter will set out to present a clear justification for the insertion of a masked Anne into performance, justify the use of mask more broadly, and highlight how the use of mask better articulates the focus on identity. On one hand, there is the text as written, on the other hand, there is the text as performed. While the words remain the same, the division of the lines and introduction of specific speakers allows us to analyze the two texts in distinct manners. Further, the specific choices made in relation to the division of lines can be seen as a method to further the discoveries made in the analysis of the undivided text.

The most obvious point of entry for this text is not in what is present, but what is absent. There is no indication in the text that anything is supplied or spoken by the woman, Anne; yet the text is obsessed with her. Over the course of the text her identity quickly becomes overdetermined. However, all of these various potential narratives or facts about Anne are attached only to this name, or its variations, but never to a character present in the text, and by implication in the staging of the play. In the text we are provided with a litany of information about Anne. There are numerous identifying characteristics I’ve used to describe Anne previously but they scarcely convey the breadth and disparity of the information we have. The obsession with defining Anne only serves to highlight her already conspicuous absence from the text. We are provided with absolutely no way to
measure the veracity of anything given to us, no person, or more abstractly an image or concept, to compare to the words.

It is a situation that distinctly calls to mind Roland Barthes’ discussion at the end of *Mythologies*, in which “the myth-reader is led to rationalize the signified by means of the signifier” (130). In the text the descriptions of Anne are plentiful and overdetermine her identity, yet in reality we are left with nothing concrete about who or what Anne is. Similarly the name Anne, and its variations, is present in the text and is able to conjure associations to various descriptions. However, the name is not a meaningful signified because it does not refer to a specific object. More succinctly what we are told of Anne functions as a signifier, while the name Anne and its variations function as a signified in Saussurean terms (Saussure, 62). Then, according to Barthes, we are dealing with a mythic signifier, “its form is empty but present, its meaning absent but full” (*Mythologies*, 124).

Thus, in the text as written we are dealing with a myth of Anne, a specific instance of an individual identity being (de)constructed and reconstructed. Attempting to find Anne in the text becomes both an obsession and an impossibility. If one focuses on the chain of signifiers, it is a fool’s errand to connect them to a stable concept of Anne, whereas if one focuses on the signified, it becomes disjointed from the surrounding information. In either case, the impression of Anne we derive from the reading is difficult to parse. We cannot break the sign down and point to which specific elements are driving our perception, for if we point out one specific declaration in the text then another will contradict it. However, to work through the
text we must engage it on the subject of its own obsessions. That is, we must find Anne, to the extent that such an act is possible.

Fortunately, Barthes again provides an avenue of inquiry for us to pursue:

Truth to tell, the best weapon against myth is perhaps to mythify it in its turn, and to produce an artificial myth: and this reconstituted myth will in fact be a mythology. Since myth robs language of something, why not rob myth? All that is needed is to use it as the departure point for a third semiological chain, to take its signification as the first term of a second myth. (Mythologies, 135)

The signification here is the combination of the name Anne and the information we have about her. In a text in which she does not exist how can we present her in a manner that we can combine these elements? In the text itself there is no real solution to this issue, but in the course of performance a solution does present itself. That solution is to have Anne in the production as a physical presence. Then the presence of Anne acts as the signification; that is, the presence of Anne acts as “the association of the first two [terms]” (Barthes, Mythologies, 121). This is the point from which we begin a second mythic system.

This second-order myth is now built off the foundation of a physical Anne, who functions as the signification of the name Anne and the information presented about Anne. Following from Barthes’ schematic of Myth, and the quote referenced previously, this Anne must be the signifier that is “present yet empty” (Mythologies, 124). What then is the signified that is “absent yet full?” (Mythologies, 124). The signified is the identity of Anne. Despite the information presented regarding Anne, we receive no concrete identity; however because we have a physical presence that must have an identity, we know that it exists in a meaningful way. Thus it is “absent yet full” (Barthes, Mythologies, 124).
That is not the end of the road mythically. The implication of the myth itself must be probed to understand how we are to read the results of the production. Barthes argues that “*myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear” (*Mythologies*, 121). We have two levels of myth to which we must apply this thought. In the first level myth of *Attempts* there is the distortion of Anne’s individual identity. The implication presented by the text is that these characters “know” Anne, but because the myth is limited to an individual there is no universal conclusion to be drawn. However, as we move on to the second level myth, we produce a more universal myth of Identity broadening and affirming the first myth. As Barthes argues, “the concept, on the contrary appears in a global fashion, it is a kind of nebula, the condensation, more or less hazy, of a certain knowledge” (*Mythologies*, 122). This knowledge implies the inability to accurately read the identity of anyone outside of yourself, and possibly including yourself. Not all practical results from creating the second level myth are positive though; there is a caveat to this new myth that will become evident upon further discussion.

The insertion of Anne raises a new set of issues. The text maintains a detached opinion regarding Anne, over the course of eighty-odd pages it refuses to pinpoint Anne anywhere; the interpretation of Anne is entirely open. The interpretation is left as a task for the reader based on his or her own reading of the text. In performance, if one were to see a character that is designated as the object of discussion then the mere presence of that character will serve as a constant point of reference for the veracity of what is being said. As States points out in his study of theatre, “The problem with the actor, in fact, is that he is *there*, before us, *all at once*”
The perception of the audience will be inevitably colored by the physical presence of the actress playing Anne. This runs counter to the openness of the text, and if the second order myth is to be effective then we must find some method to preserve openness in the production. Any specific reactions of the actress were shaped via direction, and there were no issues there that hampered openness. Thus, the largest barrier to maintaining a sense of openness in the production via the insertion of Anne is on a visual level. The element of an actor’s body that we can most easily gather information from is the face. If we can neutralize the face of the actor we can prevent the complete transmission of information, thereby maintaining ambiguity and openness. This presents the use of neutral mask for, at least, Anne as an attractive means of maintaining openness in performance in spite of the addition of Anne’s presence. Thus, the caveat previously mentioned is that in order for the second-level myth to function as we have discussed Anne must be present in a neutral mask.

In addition, it becomes worth noting that, as far as my research has yielded, the insertion of Anne into the text is a previously unexplored possibility. As such, most productions of Attempts work through only a single level of myth. While such productions can no doubt be effective, the exploration of identity is halted at the level of some undefined other rather than extending the scope to virtually anyone. This is reflected within reviews of past productions that question

What is Anne to us or we to Anne that we should care for her? Her identity is so indeterminate and unstable that a play about the difficulty or impossibility of defining her is rather like, say, a film about the difficulty of scoring goals when the goalposts are constantly on the move and regular doubt is cast on the existence of the ball. (Herbert, 311, emphasis added)
It must be noted that the focus of this review, and of most others, stops at Anne. They lack the ability to draw a larger conclusion from the text because they did not engage in the second-level myth as this production did.

The reviews also reveal another interesting assumption, namely that Anne is a single entity. Of course, the insertion of Anne into the piece implies that I also subscribe to this view of Anne. However, there is nothing to prevent a reading of the text in which the names refers to multiple individuals. With the neutral mask as a base image for the character, though, each of the various character masks Anne dons serves as a visual representation of the various individual interpretations expressed by other characters rather than as distinct entities themselves. This also connects distinct visual components of Anne to distinct languages/modes of speech in various scenes. The method of presenting Anne effectively fosters an environment in which the potential to debate anything said about Anne, or anything said by other characters. Definitively interpreting any given statement made in the performance becomes almost impossible.

A different approach to the text comes from a comment Crimp made in an interview with Aragay, that a text “should continue to live and change and not be fixed in an absolute way. ... That’s why I made Attempts on her Life completely open partly as a reaction against all this” (61, emphasis added). While I am not sure I agree with the text being completely open, it is remarkably open. In a sense, the defining characteristic of the text is this openness. The openness stems from the undivided nature of the dialogue, the ambiguity of the signifier of Anne, and all of its variations, and the ambiguity of the scenarios. However, there is an interesting
contradiction; to perform the text requires making choices to assign the dialogue, and to determine the scenarios, all of which presumes an interpretation and attitude towards Anne. The ambiguities of the text are removed until we come to the repeatable product that is performed. Up to this point we have dealt with an undefined concept of openness, but to really explicate what this means for the text and how it can be integrated into performance we must define it. A second element from the interview previously mentioned to keep in mind is that Crimp believes that Attempts is about “a whole range of events,” rather than any specific event or topic (Aragay, 58). Arguing that the play is about a single idea, or event is directly contradicted by Crimp, which serves to emphasize the openness of the text.

The concept of openness is prevalent in the ideas of numerous theorists. One concept of openness has already been discussed to a limited extent, Lecoq’s. For Lecoq, openness is “a readiness to explore the circumstances of the moment without intellectual ‘editing’, but within a set of rules or expectations germane to the style or form of theatre under investigation,” as was mentioned in Chapter 2 (Murray, 50). This idea of openness is useful to consider from the perspective of exploring the text in rehearsal, but from an analytic viewpoint is not the most useful.

Another somewhat sensible starting point is the work of Umberto Eco. One of his most well known pieces, The Open Work, deals explicitly with the concept of openness in a manner that will be useful for analysis. Eco posits that for a work to be open that it must be, “intentional, explicit, and extreme – that is, based not merely on the nature of the aesthetic object and on its composition but on the very elements that are combined in it” (39). These requirements are certainly met in Attempts. The
text contemplates issues of consumerism, “art,” terrorism, pornography, racism, etc. Any source purporting that a single element of the text holds the most importance is only a matter of interpretation, because this work is “completely open” (Aragay, 61). This multiplicity of potential avenues to explore within the text lines up nicely with Eco, who argues that in an open text, a “great variety of potential meanings coexist in it, and none can be said to be the main or dominant one. The text presents the reader with a ‘field’ of possibilities and leaves it in large part to him or her to decide what approach to take” (Eco, X). Openness for Eco requires two elements, that the signifiers are ambiguous, and that the aesthetic organization of the signifiers is integrated into and supportive of the ambiguous signifiers. The unique structure of the text demands that there is equal emphasis placed upon all of the different ideas or events explored within the language; this structure combined with the ambiguous signifier of the name Anne, which acts as a kind of organizing principle for the text, ensures the openness of the text itself.

But how can openness in Eco’s sense be preserved in performance? The act of dividing the text and defining scenarios removes all but the ambiguous signifier of Anne’s name. Does this closure, or determination of ambiguities, hamper the production? Martin Crimp’s position on the text is clear, it is a challenge of interpretation for those who produce it. However, Moss raises an interesting question, asking “what happens when the producer chooses to work with the spirit of the text to go on to make a performance that translates its open quality to the stage” (1). In what sense can we maintain openness if we must close the text for performance? The answer again lies in the combination of myth and mask. As
previously discussed, the insertion of Anne in neutral mask will turn the play into a myth of identity. Identity itself is already an element of the text that is ambiguous, so the myth of the production provides a new organizational principle for the text. The ambiguity inherent in Anne’s identity can be expanded to every entity in the play via the use of mask so that we have a new aesthetic organization for ambiguity. The use of the masks turns every character into a source of ambiguity, yet the masks will also serve to organize the text and distinguish one actor’s character from a different character played by that same actor. Essentially, a fraction of the text is kept open in performance by the use of mask and the insertion of Anne. We then utilized the ideas of Lecoq in the rehearsal process to spur the actors’ exploration of as many possibilities of the text to further the openness in performance.

On the topic of reading there is more to be said. We have already discussed that the other characters in the play purport to “know” Anne. Said another way, they have attempted to read her identity from miscellaneous information, the veracity of which can be called into question. The production text explores this idea in a way that is of some note structurally. While the piece contains “eloquent flights of writing,” it is worth nothing what distinctions exist between the words of Anne and the other characters (Herbert, 311). In this production Anne speaks in four different languages,\(^4\) sings, and experiences “word salad” in addition to day-to-day grammatical forms. In contrast to this, the other actors speak entirely in grammatically correct English. The style of the writing of the characters may be sparse, but in no way compares to Anne’s language. Of course, Anne does speak in

\(^4\) English, Spanish, Afrikaans, Japanese in this production
the same style as the other characters for the first two scenes in which she speaks, but from that point on her language is wholly dissimilar to the other characters. Even in the two scenes in which she is speaking English, her information directly contradicts that of every other character in the scene. Anne effectively presents an isolated element of her own identity in these two scenes, then moves on to disrupting the discourse of others. This disruption is in the form of the foreign languages and “word salad,” which interrupt the more easily understood dialogue of the other characters.

These two divergent strands of language function as two battling discursive regimes. As Foucault highlights in *The History of Sexuality*,

> We must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. (100)

Anne’s variety of modes of language act as one discourse that consistently challenges the discourse of the rest of the text. Taken further each character presents a new strand of discourse, none of which are ever fully developed or allowed to come to a natural conclusion. The discourses surrounding Anne never have a logical starting or ending point when we encounter them; the only real distinction is the language of the discourse. Anne is never able to engage the discourse of the other characters on any terms that they would understand. Thus even Anne’s language fails to alter the creation of her identity. This difficulty extends to the audience as well, reconciling the structural differences of Anne’s language with that of the other characters is challenging. Even when Anne speaks
we are no more able to ascertain the truth of her identity than when any other character speaks.

The majority of Anne’s time on stage though is not spent speaking, but silently watching the show. Foucault holds that, “silence and secrecy ... loosen its [powers] holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance” (101). We can find meaning in Anne’s silent reactions, and these reactions are a more effective means of subverting the discourse than Anne’s own words. In performance this is relatively easy to judge based on the audience response, specifically whether they find more meaning in Anne’s words or in Anne’s reactions. Finally, this furthers the utility of the neutral mask in production, since the neutral mask calls for economy and efficiency in physical action we are more clearly able to understand these silent reactions than if Anne were unmasked.

There is another interesting contextual bit of information regarding Attempts, and it plays nicely into a Marxist reading. Around the time of the first production of Attempts the in-yr-face movement was a well-known phenomenon. As Sierz puts it, “in-yr-face theatre had not only arrived, it had become the dominant theatrical style of the decade,” by 1998 (4). Because of similarities in the style of writing, Crimp was occasionally lumped in with the in-yr-face movement. For example, compare Attempts with Crave or 4.48 Psychosis, both by Sarah Kane. The innovative form of Attempts is a clear point of reference – all three plays lack most stage directions, and the characters are rather undefined. 4.48 Psychosis even utilizes the conceit of not dividing lines. However, when asked if he saw himself “as a part of that mid-1990s moment which is often considered as signaling a
renaissance in new writing for the stage,” Crimp responds unequivocally with “the answer is no” (Aragay, 64). Crimp’s theatrical writing extends back to the early 1980s, but his greatest success came in the mid to late 1990s. This places Crimp in a unique position because he produced work both through the height of Thatcherism and in the direct aftermath, which spawned the in-yer-face movement.

The decline of new writing in the face of Thatcherite policy is well documented; as Sierz points out, “while statistics show that fewer and fewer new plays were being put on in the late eighties, this was compounded, says Jonathan Meth of writernet, by the myth that new writing was a box office risk” (233). Further, in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, Kershaw highlights that

> In an extensive survey of the theatre repertoire across the country in the 1980s and early 1990s, John Bull noted how reliant the main London and regional subsidized companies had become on the same diet of musicals, West End successes (recent and older), school set texts (usually Shakespeare) and the plays of Alan Ayckbourn. (434)

Essentially, the focus of theatres in the late 1980s and early 1990s was on proven quantities that were sure-fire commercial successes, or commodities, to the detriment of new plays. The process of commodification of plays and increased need for profit meant that, “as a result, from about the early 1980s justifications for theatre as a cultural practice became increasingly determined by its value as a commercial activity” (Kershaw, 426). This focus on profit stems from the decrease in arts funding throughout Thatcher’s time in office, as reiterated in numerous sources, “Thatcher distrusted the very concept of public support for the arts” (Kershaw, 428).
The response to this commodification can be seen in *Attempts*, as well as in the works of numerous other in-yr-face playwrights. Everything in *Attempts* is turned into a commodity: film, art, cars, suicide, pornography, etc. All of these commodities are defined in relation to Anne. The problem then is how can these commodities have meaning when the character from whom they derive their meaning does not exist? The complex web of productive forces are implied by the text, but the meaning, or reality, of their existence is called into question precisely because they are in relation to the individual. Further, we can then view the attempts to define Anne as attempts to commodify her as well. The success of selling a script, film, car, porno, etc. depends on being able to market the product, and marketing the product requires having explicit knowledge of what the product is. However, there is no single explanation of who or what Anne is, so on the macro level the commodification of Anne will fail, and even in individual scenarios there is disagreement over who Anne is.

Outside of *Attempts*, Mark Ravenhill most evidently manifests this response in *Shopping and Fucking*, and *Handbag*. The characters of *Shopping* conflate consumerist behavior and intimacy; all sexual or romantic interactions are turned into a transaction, while all transactions take on a sexual edge. In *Handbag*, Cardew indulges the consumerist impulses of Phil in the Victorian time line. The increased presence of commodification and consumerism can be seen in many other plays associated with the in-yr-face movement as well and highlights the focus placed upon economic concerns by British theatre of the nineties.
The effect of this focus on profit in British Theatres profoundly impacted the work of playwrights for some time. The biggest successes of the time frame were large-scale musicals, which “reveal both audiences’ (understandable) wish ‘to escape’ and the dangerous depoliticisation of such profoundly political subjects as Evita – or, most obviously, Les Misérables” (Kershaw, 421). This is in stark contrast to the earlier generation of post-World War Two writers “who variously attempted to use or explain history, and to locate the individual within a social, political and thus often historical context” (Kershaw, 413). Even once the in-yer-face movement kicks off in the 1990s, it “resulted in new plays which may sometimes have been public, but were rarely political and generally lacked historical context” (Kershaw, 420).

However, the in-yer-face movement sparked a resurgence in new writing, from which Crimp benefited. The period from 1993-1997 saw an increase in new works, so that new plays accounted for 15% of theatre repertoires, and an attendant rise in box office revenues (Kershaw, 434). With this division between pre and post-Thatcher playwrights, Crimp is an anomaly. He was able to produce new work with some modicum of success throughout the 1980s, and found his biggest success alongside the in-yer-face movement, but with a distinctly political view and in a formally innovative manner.

In Althusser’s terms, Attempts is a striking example of a work refuting the State Apparatus on almost every front that it can. As highlighted, “the ISAs [Ideological State Apparatus] are not only the fundamental means by which a society’s ruling ideology is transmitted. They are also a site in which oppositional
ideologies ... are articulated” (Ferreter, 85). Take the starting point as the individual, and recall that Thatcher holds that

there are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It’s our first duty to look after ourselves first and then to look after our neighbor. (Evans, 115)

In the context of Attempts, this is particularly intriguing. The absent Anne throws a cog into Thatcher’s ideology; how can we deal with individuals when defining any given person’s identity is so easily called into question? In an abstract sense, Thatcher’s point of view falls apart if one cannot define an individual.

The next oppositional element comes from the structure of the text. Thatcher placed a high priority on the organizational prowess of business, arguing that “the service needed the brisk discipline of the market to eliminate waste and to achieve stated objectives” (Evans, 55). The unwieldy structure of Attempts runs quite opposite to the ruthless efficiency associated with business.

A further element of interest lies in the focus of a number of scenes on film or television. Both film and television experienced significantly more success, commercially, than theatre in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kershaw, 418). Attempts acknowledges the developments in film and television via continual reference to film and television, particularly in the recurrent image of the camera, but then subsumes them within a theatrical context. Outside of the film references the presence of consumerism in the text is overwhelming.

Via this analysis I hope to have made a compelling case for the introduction of masks to Attempts in order to highlight the theme of identity. The choice is

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5 Including Tragedy of Love and Ideology, Faith in Ourselves, and Kinda Funny
supported by the insertion of Anne into the text, but in turn this choice also furthers the focus of the text on identity. The efficacy of the decisions will be explored more fully in the coming two chapters as I work out the specifics of utilizing masks in rehearsal and in audience and performer response to the masks themselves.
Chapter 3  

Rehearsal and Production Process

In the previous two chapters I have discussed the implication of utilizing masking techniques and the analysis of the text to support this choice. The thesis itself is ultimately how to successfully implement masking techniques and to probe how it affects actors and audience members. Fully utilizing masks in the production necessitates certain elements in the rehearsal process that will be detailed throughout this chapter. Ultimately, I am seeking to show that the use of mask in my performance of Attempts on Her Life will further complicate the audience's understanding of the character of Anne while simultaneously solidifying the characters of the other six actors. In addition, the combination of the masks and the process necessitated to integrate the masks should provide a strong mode of character development for the six actors not playing Anne. If successful, this will also help to explain why the audience more clearly understands the other actors’ characters.

I wanted the act by which the production was developed to provide valuable insight into the application of masks. With an open text there is an imperative in having a clear, well-defined guiding principle against which decisions can be made. Fortunately, for this production masks served as that guiding principle. Almost all decisions were made with the thought of how to best integrate and present the masks as a means of highlighting the intricacies of identity as probed in the text.

In order to fully integrate masks into the performance it was of utmost importance to build a tightly knit ensemble. Most actors were unfamiliar with the
use of mask and, in some cases, felt extremely uncomfortable with the use of mask or with the text itself. The range of prior experience with masks was an interesting challenge throughout the process. Creating a strong sense of ensemble, and thus a space in which actors felt safe to engage with the text and approach performance in an unfamiliar manner, was essential. Further, many choices in how to approach the piece were made with an eye towards fostering a sense of control and ownership in the actors over the process of creating characters and performance. By ownership, I mean that my goal was for the actors to feel that all decisions made regarding the division of the text, the specifics of the scenarios, and the direction their characters take, including masks, were reflective of their own thoughts. The actors must feel that all decisions made regarding the division of the text, the specifics of the scenarios, and the direction their characters take, including masks, are reflective of their own thoughts. That is, the actors must have a sense of control over the decisions made regarding their performance, rather than having these choices dictated to them.

The first step in creating this environment and giving actors ownership over their characters was to establish that they had permission to make choices that are seemingly outside the bounds of an actor. For instance, because the text is undivided, actors entered the initial read-through asking what the division of the text would be. Rather than provide them with a product created in a vacuum, I instructed the actors on the number of characters in a given scene and told them to play with how they felt the lines should be spoken. While this certainly led to some moments of confusion it required all of the actors to actively engage the entire script
and work together to make their way through the text. In short, I have described the beginning steps of building a tightly knit ensemble. Further, I explained to the actors that they would have a hand in determining the division of lines, so the read-through became an exploratory exercise in which actors had the opportunity to “test out” the text prior to the rehearsal process.

Dividing the text of the show was a bit of a daunting process. Over the course of the 17 scenes there are numerous direct repetitions, reoccurring themes, and no organizing principle. Over the course of two weeks all seven actors, the stage manager, and myself sat and discussed the text. These initial conversations were focused specifically on how many actors were in a given scene, and answering initial questions about the use of mask. These conversations then gave way to the divisions themselves. All actors were present for and participated in the discussion of each scene, even if it was determined that they would not be in that scene. Without any specific guidance on the matter, the actors approached the division ready to cooperate with myself and one another. There was no bickering or disagreement of any noticeable magnitude regarding which scenes actors would appear in or which lines they would take.

Another exciting element that became noticeable during the latter portions of the process was that the actors were picking up on the repetitions of language and themes and trying to incorporate that into the division process. The most striking examples of this occurred in the division of STRANGELY! and Previously Frozen. In STRANGELY!, one actress requested to be in the scene because she found numerous repeated lines from a previous scene that she was also in, and made the connection
between the character repeating lines that the actress, as a different character, had previously heard and the process by which Anne’s identity is fragmented by the text recreating the development of and stories about Anne. In *Previously Frozen*, which the actors had first determined to be a meta-commentary on the show, three actors noted repetitions of lines from scenes they had previously been in and sought to achieve the irony prescribed by the text by playing with shifting who spoke the repetitions in a metatheatrical manner.

Any way you approach the division, the actors engaged in the process with a sense of excitement that led to strong choices, and that displayed a growing understanding of the intricacies of the text. Further, all of the actors commented on how enjoyable the process was. Between their heightened understanding and enjoyment of the process I believed that the actors felt some sense of ownership over the text.

The next phase of division was to determine the specifics of each scene: setting, scenario, conflict, and basic relationships. The main thrust of the actors’ intentions, which I reinforced, was that the scenes should be as distinct from one another as possible. In all but one instance the scenes are entirely disjointed from one another in order to create as wide a possible scope for the isolation of the perceived facets of Anne’s identity. This choice reflects and highlights the lack of consistent structure within the show and allows the actors more breadth in potential character choices. This also allows the masks to have a greater role in defining character and character relations visually. At the tail end of the division
process I asked each actor to provide me with a gut impulse on traits of each character as a foundation upon which I could design their masks.

This process of division and determination was by no means concrete. During the first few rehearsals of any given scene, the scenario or relationship could still have been altered, and in some cases actors requested to swap lines for practical or character-based reasons. While these choices were somewhat arbitrary, they allowed the actors to feel more ownership over the text and this enabled them to more easily describe where they thought the characters were heading. This required me to be flexible as a director in the early stages of the process in order to best incorporate, and in some cases edit, the ideas of the actors and designers. Of course this flexibility did have limitations; after our first full run two weeks into the rehearsal process I could not accept any further switching of lines or choices we had made.

An important element to note at this juncture is that this division of the text is only possible because of the first element of openness previously discussed. Further, the choice to allow the actors into the process of division rather than presenting them with a fully divided script both highlights this openness and attempts to utilize an element of openness when, by necessity, having to close the text for performance. The idea of maintaining openness despite closing the text for performance is something we will return to throughout this chapter. Because of the radical openness of the text these attempts at maintaining openness are a direct reflections of the “feel” of the text.
The next element of the process to highlight was the most specific foundation for the mask work. The first week or so of rehearsals after winter break were spent with neutral mask exercises. The benefits of the neutral mask exercises are threefold. The first, most practical, benefit is that these exercises gave actors the opportunity to begin working in mask. Given the design approach, the actors had little time to work with finalized masks, so any opportunity to put actors in mask and allow them to adjust was extraordinarily useful. The second use of the neutral mask is that since it prevents vocalization, any acting choices made via the mask are of a physical nature. Thus by utilizing the masks in exercises, all conversation after must be rooted in a physical vocabulary. This allowed us to develop a different way of discussing character once we began working on the scenes in earnest. Finally, the combination of neutral mask and improvisatory exercises works to extend the actors’ physical expressiveness. This translates directly into the actors’ ability to create distinct physical characterizations for their numerous characters. For the actress playing Anne this translated to finding a wealth of ways to express herself without becoming repetitive.

These exercises, while useful, do present an issue by compartmentalizing and dividing the text for the actors. This could prove problematic in performance unless the actors had some method to connect all of their disjointed roles. This also coincided with a crossroads in the scenic design process, when the designer required a series of words to utilize. This provided an excellent opportunity to offer the actors some voice in the design process and force them to connect their roles in a linguistic manner. The actors were asked to select a single word, either from the
script or stemming from it, that they felt encompassed the various roles they had to play in the show. These seven words were then used as the basis for word art around the playing space and audience seating.

This is one of the clearest examples of the actors’ influence on the design process, but not the only one. The process of designing masks was structured to accommodate actors’ ideas. In order to preserve the actors’ sense of ownership it was necessary to ground mask design in what the actors were playing with in rehearsals rather than presenting them with a design that they had to conform to. This process started, after the initial division of the script, based on actors’ impulses about characters. I utilized these impulses to begin sculpting and creating masks. Because I was creating all of the masks myself, there was a difficulty in finishing masks in a timely manner. To counteract the delay between the initial impulses and discussions, I provided actors with continuous pictorial updates of how their masks were developing. Occasionally the actors provided feedback about the designs or provided input about color choices, indirectly furthering their ownership of the text and the characters they were playing. In some cases, these pictures sparked conversation about what the designs were based on, which in turn led to conversation about the specifics of different characters. As the rehearsal process continued, these conversations forced the actors to specifically verbalize components of the characters as they related to the masks.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the use of neutral mask allowed the actress playing Anne to maintain a high degree of openness in performance. By design, the actress selected and was given lines that had the least apparent literal
interpretation. Throughout the rehearsal process the actress was given as much free reign in the interpretation of the dialogue as possible. Further, we attempted to maintain an element of spontaneity in the blocking for the actress. This gave her the ability to alter slight elements of performance from evening to evening, but in a manner that did not affect other actors directly. On a slightly different note, I did not attempt to control her reactions to the information she was presented on stage. This was the greatest element of openness in the performance itself, because the actress was able to alter small elements of her performance. Further, these small choices in reaction were left to the audience’s interpretation because the neutral mask obscured her facial reactions. That is, though she reacts physically to what she hears, because we cannot see the face the exact nature of the reaction is not always clear-cut so the audience can interpret the reactions in a variety of ways, each implying a different view of Anne.

During the rehearsal process, I instructed the actress to keep a journal of her reactions while watching scenes. This was to force the actress to listen attentively to what was said about the character of Anne and to work through her own reactions, and then to determine Anne’s reactions. The process forced the actress to consider the attempts to define Anne from multiple perspectives so that the actress in some way had an understanding of the effect the production should have upon audience members. Over the course of the rehearsal process, the actress was able to deepen her understanding of the repetitions of the text and find many different reactions to the more closed performances of the other six actors. In performance the actress chose to alter reactions only slightly, but had the opportunity to radically alter each
performance if she so chose. The only way to define the success of these attempts to maintain openness are via the actress’s thoughts on the process, so the success here will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In addition to the neutral mask, the actress playing Anne had a variety of character masks. These provided an interesting challenge of perspective for the actress. While the masks still denoted different characters, more specifically facets of Anne, the actress needed to conceive of her character as a single entity throughout the performance. To facilitate the cohesion of the various masks into a single identity we developed an exercise that was translated directly into the performance. Initially the actress was tasked with finding various objects while in neutral mask in order to acclimate her to movement and action while wearing the mask and without a scene partner. This exercise then became the actress searching for the various character masks she wore throughout the performance and assembling them all together. This visually established the connection of each of the character masks to Anne. Further, as discussed in the analysis, this sequence occurs while various messages develop the incongruous, one-dimensional readings of Anne. The actress was then able to articulate her relation to the various character masks, and began to develop a method of presenting the different character masks to the audience before putting them on. It suggested that the character had knowledge of the connection of the masks and attempted to highlight this information for the audience. It should also be noted that she is the only character to display this knowledge.
The process by which other actors worked with their masks is somewhat different. Whereas the neutral mask for Anne was analogous to the tradition of masking as discussed in Chapter 2, the character masks for the other actors function in a reciprocal manner. Based on the previous elements of discussion surrounding the other actors, I will more succinctly articulate the challenges they faced and their work in this process. To recap, the actors developed their physical vocabulary through neutral mask exercises. These exercises combined with their exploration of the text informed the design of their character masks and led to the actors distinguishing their different characters. The actors then needed to reconcile the distinct, disjointed characters with the need to create a single arc for the purpose of performance. Where the actress playing Anne had the neutral mask as a constant point of reference, these actors had their own faces to return to. With that in mind it proved useful to discuss each of their characters in terms of their difference from the actor’s own physicality and presence. Those distinctions led to the actors’ own identity serving as the source of inspiration for scenes in which they were unmasked, rather than a mask. That is, the actors were performing themselves when unmasked. Further, when masked the actors found elements of their own physicality to exaggerate. This means that the actors’ masks effectively became reflections and interpretations of elements of their own identities. This mirrors the function of Anne’s masks as discussed in Chapter 1.

A parallel process that also demonstrates the attempt to maintain openness in the performance was the scenic design. The initial concern we worked through within the scenic design was creating a space in which the disjointed events of the
text could take place. This necessity led us to utilize black rehearsal furniture as much as possible. The distinction of the spaces for each scene was left to the actors and was satisfactorily accomplished. The first iteration of the design aimed at encouraging an element of audience participation. The audience would be encouraged to write on large paper surfaces describing their reaction to Anne throughout the show. This would have allowed us to track the evolution of the audience’s understanding of Anne. However, this had two inescapable issues. The first is that such activity would hinder the audience from following the already dense text. Further, once one audience member writes their opinion we feared that other audience members might be persuaded to give up their individual interpretation of the production. In other words, we feared that the openness of the performance would be affected negatively.

The next iteration of design sought to correct these issues by placing the writing surface on the floor and organizing seating to minimize travel distance. After a series of discussions with faculty advisors, we were still unsatisfied with this design because of how distracting the activity could be. Through discussion we decided that what excited us most about these two designs was their focus on language as a design element. The proliferation of words around the audience reflected the “inadequacy of words” described by the text (Crimp, 14). We decided that the inadequacy of the words would be highlighted if the sources of the words were unknown. Without a source to which to attribute the words, the audience is unable to effectively read the words. This ambiguity serves to open the performance significantly. If the words are consistently present then they always provide a
reference for the audience to return to that which silently comments upon or reflects the action on the stage. This is where the impetus was derived for the actors’ word exercise previously mentioned.

The next way in which the design evolved was to encompass the audience, with the words selected by the actors, within the playing space. Each of the seven words was set on the floor so that the existence of the words defined the playing space and then the audience was surrounded by the words, which were affixed to the risers on which the audience sat. In addition, the character of Anne was provided with a specific space in view of the audience at all times so that the visual point of comparison for what was being discussed, Anne, was always present for the audience. Another evolution of the design was to remove the words from Anne’s space to highlight the inability to capture Anne via words, which is the failing of the text.

All of these different elements taken together display the utility of the masks as a guiding principle of the rehearsal and design process as well as highlight the attempt made to preserve the openness of the text as much as possible in performance. In many cases those two ideas seemed to be complementary to each other in ways that I would not have initially predicted. Of course, the only way to analyze the effectiveness of the process is based on how audiences reacted to what they experienced. It should be noted that while a good portion of this material was not made explicit to the actors, there seemed to be an understanding of the importance of the ensemble nature of the production and the actors’ ownership of
their characters and the text itself. Whether this held true or not will be more fully explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 4
Post-Production Analysis

The production of Attempts on Her Life ran from Thursday February 14\textsuperscript{th} to Saturday February 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2013. Following each performance a talkback was hosted with members of the audience, actors, and crew members in order to discuss the show and see how audience members reacted to specific elements of the production. The focus of the discussion was how the audience reacted to Anne, how the use of mask in the performance affected the perception of Anne’s identity, and whether masks facilitated the creation and distinction of characters for the other actors. Although there was a lot of material to digest and process with a short turnaround time, the audiences seemed excited to discuss the complexities of the production. In particular most audience members seemed to grasp the difficulties of their perceptions of Anne and the implications such difficulties made on a larger scale.

The talkbacks were structured to give audiences the ability to voice their opinions, but were framed with questions that aimed specifically at discussing the effect of masks on the audience perception of identity. Fortunately the audience was very excited to speak to their perception of characters, via the masks, at length. Most of the discussion regarding Anne specifically followed a very similar pattern. The audience would first hone in on the text itself; the failure of language is manifested in the inability to define Anne’s identity via words.

An interesting train of thought that played out over the course of the talkbacks was the audience's focus on words. One evening in particular the audience
spent a good deal of time discussing the presence of words throughout the scenic design. Given the scenic design and the wordiness of the text this was to be expected; however the audience had some interesting comments. The audience said that the seemingly meaningless words surrounding them put them in a questioning frame of mind. This frame of mind then translated into their spectatorship and led them to regularly question the veracity of anything said.

The aims of the scenic design as stated in Chapter 3 were also accomplished.⁶ A written response to the show highlighted that the words, “made it clear the boundaries between set, stage, and audience were about to be blurred,” indicating that the audience did indeed feel they were encompassed within the performance (Sen, 1). Additionally, the audience seemed to be able to identify the setting of each scene with little to no confusion; on a practical level the design succeeded. Further, there was a sense that for some audience members the repetition within the text was a way to keep the show together. This makes a great deal of sense when you consider that the repetitions within the text are the most concrete way to measure what has changed over time. Anne has no real point of reference or origin, so despite the fact that she is everywhere within the text she does not provide as strong a method of corralling the text as the text’s repetitions. However, the audience was also emphatic regarding the failing of words in the production. They believed that words did not convey emotion; they alternately said “words don’t do anything.”

Another common response was that other characters were wholly responsible for structuring Anne’s identity. Numerous audience members picked up

⁶ These goals were: 1. Encompass the audience in the playing space 2. Draw audience attention to the failure of language
on the fact that when Anne spoke about herself she only questioned, contradicted, or translated what others said. None of Anne’s lines defined her on her own terms. This even extended to the song Anne sang about herself, which the audience saw as “literal,” in the sense of repeating the various identities posited throughout the text and “as an intermission,” in that it did not require active analysis on the audience’s part. One audience member in particular connected the way in which Anne’s identity was constructed over the course of the performance to the structure of the show. The audience member had some difficulty further elaborating on this idea, but it seemed that this individual had picked up on the distinct difference of tone in each scene and the variety of ways in which attempts at defining Anne were carried out. Though it is also possible that this audience member was referencing the undivided text with its implied multitude of voices in each scene attempting to define Anne.

There were a wide range of interpretations and opinions with regard to Anne’s identity in particular. The audience formed consensus in their inability to totally define Anne, though there was a wide variety of specific interpretations that still maintained we could not completely define Anne. As one audience member put it, “you can observe all of this [about Anne], but it doesn’t add up to much.” Further, a number of audience members made the point that the neutral mask invited the audience to project their interpretations of Anne onto the actress, whether or not she said anything to confirm or deny those interpretations. From the audience response it seemed that the neutral mask worked as I had hoped it would. The

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7 The spectacle of scenes 5 and 14 allowed the audience to engage the text in a more passive manner and in comparison felt like intermissions.
audience was able to see past the physical reality of an individual playing the role of Anne, and instead dealt with her as “a blank canvas.”

Another element of the neutral mask that the audience noted was that it was the most consistent element and gave the audience the impression of Anne having an unchanging nature. For some in the audience this proved frustrating, because even though it appeared that Anne did not change it was still impossible for the audience to discern an identity. Further, the audience in the final talkback began to extrapolate universal elements from the production. They discussed Anne as a phenomenon that occurs throughout life. As one member of the audience described it, “we try to define ourselves but the world defines us anyways.” Additionally, one audience member applied the problems of defining Anne to the rest of the actors asking “who are any of these people?” This interested me for two reasons. First, out of the approximately 200 people that saw the production only a single audience member asked such a question. To me this implies that the overwhelming majority of the audience accepted the identities of the other masked actors without question, which implies that both the acting and the masks were successful in creating many distinct identities. Second, the audience member specifically referred to them as people not characters and I think this is a subtle but important point. The audience experienced the actors as people with distinct identities, not as characters constructed by actors.

On the topic of the other masked actors the audience was consistent in their interpretation. The masks strongly facilitated the audience’s ability to believe the actor’s shifts in character. The audience also read far more into the masks than I had
intended, though those issues could have been mitigated with more time to work on the masks. Generally, the audience related more to unmasked characters and felt that these characters were in positions of discomfort. Further, the audience noted the distinction between masked and unmasked characters guiding whom to identify with in scenes. Specifically, the audience pointed to the unmasked characters in the scenes *Tragedy of Love and Ideology*, *Faith in Ourselves*, and *Untitled (100 Words)* as being particularly easy to identify with given the presence of unrelatable masked actors. One audience member also noted that the visual of the masks provided clues to the style of the scenes and helped to further differentiate them.\footnote{The audience member pointed specifically to scene *Mum and Dad*, see appendix B for a visual.} They pointed specifically to scene 6 in this regard, saying that the distinction between the two groups of actors made the conflict of the scene more evident than it would have been otherwise. This audience member noted that this could have been pushed farther and I would concur. Unfortunately some audience members began to read into elements that I had not considered. They attempted to draw specific meaning out of color choices, or perceived trends in the masks, or the message behind an actor being masked or unmasked.

These confusions all stem from some level of failure in the implementation of the masking. The largest culprit was lack of time. I did not have enough time to construct all of the masks I had intended to because of the way I had structured the masking process. As a group the actors and I justified these choices however there was no clear overarching logic behind which characters were masked versus unmasked except that I could not physically produce enough masks in the
approximately three and a half week rehearsal period. However, all things considered the introduction of the masks seemed to cue the audience to the questions of identity within the text as well as easing the creation of various identities for the actors and further complicating the ambiguities of Anne’s identity.

There are two moments in particular that I believe deserve mention due to the audience’s response. The two moments come from the beginning and ending of the production. The opening scene consists of Anne searching through a room finding the masks she wears throughout the performance while listening to voice mail messages that occasionally connect to the scenes that come after. The audience noted that the scene set the tone for the entire performance and made it clear that there was no narrative plot. Additionally connecting the messages to the actress in front of them quickly set up the contradictions and impossibilities implied by the text regarding Anne’s identity. The final moment I want to discuss is the last moment Anne is on stage. I blocked it so that at the performances’ end the six actors on stage freeze then Anne steps down from her seat, acknowledges the audience and exits via the upstage door, but before opening the door removes her mask. The audience consistently pointed out that this moment inspired chills and a sense of discomfort because they still could not identify Anne. In the talkback one audience member said that Anne conveyed the idea that “I’m not just a face behind a mask, you don’t know me,” in those actions. The moment resoundingly rejected everything posited about Anne, and created one of the most visceral moments in the performance in such a way that the anxiety of the piece, the inability to control the perception of one’s identity, was strongly realized for the audience.
Finally, a result that must be noted is that there was almost no confusion for the audience that the actress in neutral mask was Anne and was the subject of the different scenes. This entity may have had many different facets that were explored when she was in character masks, but the physical presence was a single identity that the audience was able to consistently engage. Additionally, the variety of names used in the production could have acted as a barrier to the audience accepting that the masked actress was Anne. There was also no explicit moment of the actress in neutral mask saying “I am Anne,” and given the nonlinear, scattered nature of the show that assumption could easily have been called into question, but was not. Without the audience accepting the actress in neutral mask as Anne none of what I wanted to explore would have been possible.

In addition to the talkbacks, I had two separate post-mortems, one with the production staff and one with the actors. As with the talkbacks, the actors were free to speak their minds, but I provided specific questions to generate conversation. The questions I used aimed to probe the actor’s experience in the process and determine if the masking process gave them a significant entry point to the text. This post-mortem was held a little over a month after the production closed in order to give the actors some distance from the production so that their comments could have some level of objectivity. Additionally, one actress could not be present so I held a separate post-mortem with her alone; her comments occasionally differ greatly from others and this will be noted when it occurs in the coming pages since she was uninfluenced by the opinion of other actors.
The actors’ reactions provided some unexpected insight into the rehearsal process. As mentioned previously, this was the first major exposure to mask work for all of the actors. Between the seven of them, only one actor had even worked with a neutral mask prior to this production and this was not something I considered during the process. Specifically, because the actors had not worked with masks they each had a preconceived expectation of how the process of masking should work. This expected process seems to fall more in line with the masking process of Commedia. The actors did not connect all of the table work process to the initial character discussions to the masks in performance. As one actor put it, “the mask solidified the character,” more than creating the character. While this is entirely accurate it seemed that the actors expected the distinct characters to be self-evident in the masks, as in Commedia, rather than the process as I had constructed it. The actress I spoke with separately did note the specific connection between the table work and the eventual use of masks. In reality, though, it seems that understanding the precise mechanics of how the process developed did not affect the actor’s ability to successfully utilize the masks as a method for engaging the text or in performance.

Each of the actors felt that the masks were an immeasurably useful tool in rehearsal and performance, though the most cited use was not something I had anticipated. In Chapter 3, I highlighted the need to construct a tightly knit ensemble, however one actress pointed out that this began to pose a problem for her in rehearsal by increasing the difficulty of differentiating the relationship between characters in different scenes. It happened to work out that there were three
pairings of actors that occurred multiple times throughout the production and each of the actors agreed that this was an issue prior to the introduction of the masks. Apparently, the actors felt that the ensemble feeling was so strong that they could not significantly distinguish the differences in character relationships between scenes. However, this issue was completely ameliorated by the addition of masks. Despite the fact that it was still the same actor, the visual reminder afforded by the masks and the changes in physicality the masks inspired were enough to allow the actors to significantly distinguish the relationships of their numerous characters. As one actress put it, the process of masking succeeded in “making people unfamiliar.”

The confidence with which both the audience and the actors pointed to the masks as the reason for the ease of switching characters is both exciting and to be expected. On one hand, it highlights the efficacy of the masks in establishing new identities for the actors, which, whether the actors recognized it or not, provided a strong tool and guiding principle with which to approach the text. On the other hand, one could argue that this effect is solely based on the visual changes afforded by the mask, but the actor’s comments suggest that the process by which the characters were created, culminating in the use of mask in performance, was what provided the greatest level of distinction between characters.

The actors highlighted the distinction of characters in their discussion of the neutral mask exercises we started rehearsals with as well. Additionally, the actors agreed on the efficacy of the neutral mask exercises as preparation for further mask work. Two actors provided specific reasoning for why all of the actors appreciated the neutral mask exercises. One actress said that the neutral mask exercises put her
into a mindset of “what do I need to work on in this specific character in this specific mask.” For her, the neutral mask was a more universal starting point that highlighted the demands of a mask without the particular requirements of a character, allowing her to isolate the performative demands of the mask.

Additionally one actor commented that the exercises made him “hypervigilant of physicality before putting on a mask that forced physicality.” He was able to develop a physical vocabulary to approach masked performance. These comments were generally agreed upon by all of the actors and would imply that neutral mask work served as a strong starting point for the mask work in this process in which none of the actors had extensive prior mask experience.

The element that the actors seemed unable to connect to the process was the initial table work. When asked about ownership of the text the actors were a bit taken aback. The unanimous view of the actors was that they felt ownership of the text in the table work, but lost that impression as soon as we began working within that framework. One actress made the point that ownership of the text and the scene were two different things. It seems that any closing of the text created a sense of rigidity for the actors. By agreeing on a division of lines and an interpretation of any scene the actors gave up control and instead felt compelled to fit their acting to the perceived requirements of the scene. Strangely, from my perspective the actors still retained a high degree of ownership given the limited ability to alter lines, the control over character, and the ways in which the text could be read to fit the scenarios we created. Though I do not know whether this hindered the actors at all,
it may have been a useful tactic to highlight their ownership of the text throughout the process rather than just in the initial table work.

Overall, the audience and actor reactions to the production and the process were positive. The majority of what I hoped to achieve via the masking process was understood by the audience and was useful to the actors as a means for working with this challenging script. There are, of course, numerous elements of the production and process that I would alter given the opportunity to remount this production. I think the single largest element that could be improved is the masking. Given more time it would have been feasible to increase the use of mask to lessen the audience’s questions regarding the choice of whether an actor was masked or not. With more time or other people able to help produce masks I could have been more consistent in the logic behind actors being masked/unmasked. Further, it would be interesting to attempt the production with Anne only ever in the neutral mask, so that Anne is completely stripped of her ability to speak for herself. Then Anne is completely divorced from the discourse that seeks to define her. However, given the already difficult nature of masked performance finding an actress willing to perform a hundred-minute show entirely in neutral mask would be challenging. The rehearsal time frame was already compressed even for the amount of mask work that was utilized, and focusing more of it on neutral mask work would have made it extraordinarily difficult to achieve a successful performance. I am not convinced that such an approach would be more effective than this one, but it could prove interesting. As discussed in Chapter 2, the structural differences between Anne’s language and that of the other characters presents a very noticeable
distinction that I think works in a way comparable to removing Anne from the discourse entirely.

Given the areas that could have been improved I was still overwhelmingly satisfied by the production. The audience response was suitably perplexed by the material, but equally enthusiastic in their attempts to engage with the production. One audience member excitedly noted that I must have had “lots of faith in the audience to understand and process how this [the show] works.” I would agree with that assessment and I think the production was a worthwhile exploration of an interesting thematic concern from an exciting angle.
Conclusion

The central focus of this thesis was how the application of masked performance techniques could focus and highlight the theme of identity within *Attempts*. Specifically, I was interested in how masked performance affected audience interpretation of identity of characters: was fragmentation of Anne’s identity highlighted by the neutral mask, and did character masks increase the audience’s belief in the actor’s creation of distinct identities? Based on actor and audience responses I believe the approach held significant merit. The masks sparked significant conversation amongst the audience during talkbacks and the actors were appreciative of the masks as a tool to approach the text.

Of course, the production was not without flaws. I believe the majority of the issues stemmed from a lack of time and failure in my execution rather than in an inherent flaw in the premise. The confusion regarding the exact use of masks was rooted in the audience’s assumption that every masking choice was loaded with some deep meaning. While we justified the choices in the process they were not necessarily exactly reflective of my aims. In a perfect world I would have been able to create masks according to the process I outlined for almost every single scene. The initial idea was that each non-Anne actor would be unmasked in two or three scenes, the final two scenes and one other scene per actor determined during the process.

The second area that could have been improved was the actors’ utilization of mask in performance. The masks succeeded as visual signs, but there were times when I was not entirely satisfied with the actors’ use of the mask as a tool in
performance. This is a function of numerous factors mostly outside of my control. Mask work is a somewhat specialized skill, and the majority of my actors had not previously worked with masks. This required us to spend time working on basics of masked performance at a rapid rate, and beyond those introductory exercises it was difficult to find time to coach the actors on masked performance. I do not think this affected the final production in an overwhelmingly negative sense, but they are definite areas to improve.

In this production I made a number of significant directorial choices in order to fully pursue the line of inquiry in this thesis to its logical conclusion. The combination of physically inserting Anne into the production and the use of masks in order to attempt to maintain the openness of an already radically open work was challenging. Of course, the challenge allowed me to carefully explore the practical implications of the theoretical justifications for the choices. The production could have been a mess had the theoretical justifications of the choices made not succeeded. However, the production was an entertaining and thought provoking piece of theatre and displayed the practical use of the theoretical justifications.
Appendix A: Talkback and Post-Mortem Questions

Talkback Questions:

1.) What is this play trying to do?

2.) What theme(s) are communicated?

3.) What is your perception of Anne at the end of the play?

4.) How did that perception change throughout?

5.) Did the masks help or hinder the actors’ abilities to create multiple identities/characters throughout?

Post-Mortem Questions:

1.) Is there any connection between the table work and the use of masks?

2.) Did the masks enhance the story that was being told?

3.) Was the approach towards using masks effective?

4.) Did you feel that you had ownership of the text?

5.) How did this experience of working in an ensemble compare with other ensemble experiences that you have had?

6.) Any other comments or thoughts?
Appendix B: Images of Masks

All Messages Deleted:

Note: This is the mask Anne wears throughout the show. Her character masks are those followed by an asterisk.

Tragedy of Love and Ideology:

Faith in Ourselves:
The Occupier:

The Camera Loves You:

Mum and Dad:
The New Anny:
The Threat of International Terrorism™:

Untitled (100 Words):

STRANGELY!:
Note: The masks in scenes *Tragedy of Love and Ideology*, and *The New Anny* require faces behind them in order to have the full effect of the mask.
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