

AN INTOLERABLE PIECE
OF WRITING

PEDAGOGY AS
PERFORMED ABSENCE

SIMON MORRIS

Publishing the Unpublishable
/ubu editions
2007

An Intolerable Piece of Writing
Pedagogy as Performed Absence

Simon Morris
Composed in 2000

Publishing the Unpublishable 008
©2007 /ubu editions
Series Editor: Kenneth Goldsmith

[/ubu](http://www.ubu.com) editions
www.ubu.com

Table of Contents

Pedagogy as Performed Absence

Chapter 1: The Absent Professor	3
Chapter 2: The Ignorant Schoolmaster	26
Chapter 3: The Teacher as Storyteller	59
Chapter 4: The Conversation as Encounter	80

the absent professor

simon morris

So you are going to be the student?

Have you ever read, um, 'The Lesson' by Ionesco, French-French Theatre of the absurd, and he umm, he explores this sadistic relation with the student and the teacher, and that's...that's very good.¹

Yeah.

Ionesco, so...oh, no that's all one name. Umm, I don't know how you spell it.

But I've got a copy of it (laughing)...

¹ "The PUPIL, like a good girl, settles down to wait, drawing her legs back under her chair, her briefcase on her knees: a glance or two around the room, at the furniture, at the ceiling too; then she takes a notebook out of her briefcase and turns the pages, stopping a little longer over one of the pages as though preparing a lesson, having a last run through her notes. She looks a polite, well brought-up girl, but vivacious, dynamic, and of a cheerful disposition: she has a bright smile. As the drama runs its course her general bearing and all her movements will gradually lose their animation, she will have to close up: she will slowly change from being happy and cheerful to being downcast and morose; after a lively start she will become more and more tired and sleepy: towards the end of the drama a state of nervous depression should be clearly apparent from her expression; it will make itself known by her way of speaking, her tongue becoming thick, words coming painfully back into her mind and just as painfully off her tongue: as though aphasia were setting in: self-willed at the beginning, almost to the point of being aggressive, she will become more and more passive, until she is nothing more than an object, limp and inert, lifeless, one would say, in the hands of the Professor: So that when the latter comes to make the final gesture, the Pupil no longer reacts: rendered insensible, her reflexes no longer function: imprisoned in a motionless face, only her eyes can express her indescribable shock and terror: This transition from one state to another must of course be achieved by slow degrees, imperceptibly. Enter the PROFESSOR. A little old man with a pointed white beard: he wears pince-nez and a black skull-cap, a long black schoolmaster's gown, black trousers and black shoe, a white stiff collar and a black tie. Excessively polite, very shy, a voice subdued by his timidity, very correct, very professorial. He is constantly rubbing his hands together; now and again a prurient gleam, quickly dismissed, lights up his eyes. In the course of the drama his timidity will slowly and imperceptibly disappear; the prurient gleam in his eyes will end by blazing into an insistent, lecherous, devouring flame: apparently only too inoffensive at the beginning, the Professor will grow more and more sure of himself, excitable, aggressive, domineering, until he can do exactly as he pleases with his Pupil, she having become as putty in his hands. Obviously the Professor's voice too should change from thin and piping at the start, getting louder and fuller, to an extremely powerful, braying, sonorous instrument at the end; whereas the Pupil's voice, after being very clear and resonant at the beginning, will fade almost into inaudibility. During the opening passages the Professor could perhaps stutter slightly." -Eugène Ionesco, *The Lesson*, Penguin Books, p. 182f ISBN: 0141184299

...that I'll get you later.

So Ionesco's the name and it's just called The Lesson.

Sure, sure.

There's nothing there but the desire of the student. If the Professor is not there, the student has gone expecting a Professor.

So long as there is a concept of a Professor. The Professor creates a field of knowledge but doesn't, if they are absent, doesn't guarantee that knowledge.

Insistence, yeah, there's an insistence in teaching...sure.

2

An insistence would suggest that you have to keep on saying the same things but they'll have different meanings when you say them. Because when you teach, people don't listen, people form identifications, and so for that reason you are trying to, in a sense, disrupt their identifications.

You are saying something that's kick starting the teaching process. And it could be a piece of nonsense almost...because it's the way that the student works with that you are trying to get hold of.

Yeah, because you're not actually giving them anything to work with. This idea came from, first of all some research I was doing on classroom performance of teachers and students. I was trying to, what I call 'interrogate the classroom'. And, what I did in that was...I used Winnicott's idea, his claim that the parent has to at some point stand down from their role as the authority figure and let the student or in that case let their child take over, and have their own head as it were. He says that they've got to be ready, be willing to die, in a symbolic sense, when they're challenged³. And that's the hardest thing someone can do...is to be

² "I've been quoted a lot as saying "I like boring things." Well, I said it and I meant it. But that doesn't mean I'm bored by them. Of course, what I think is boring must not be the same as what other people think is, since I could never stand to watch all the most popular action shows on TV, because they're essentially the same plots and the same shots and the same cuts over and over again. Apparently, most people love watching the same basic thing, as long as the details are different. But I'm just the opposite. If I'm going to sit and watch the same thing I saw the night before, I don't want it to be essentially the same - I want it to be exactly the same. Because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away. And the better and emptier you feel." – Andy Warhol, *Andy Warhol: In His Own Words*, (ed. Mike Wrenn), Omnibus Press, 1991

³ "If the child is to become adult, then this move is achieved over the dead body of an adult." D.W.Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst*, Penguin, London, 1986, p. 158f

dead. So from that, I got the concept of the 'dead teacher'. There's often a correspondence between teaching and parenting and the idea that at a certain point the student will provoke a challenge and you've got to be willing to let that challenge go, you've got to be dead. That was my first formulation of it, the teacher has at some time or another, to let them grow, that's education in its widest sense...you have got to let them push you off the pedestal you've put yourself on.

But you can also, to answer your question about the practicalities of this. You can also put yourself in that position of being willing to fall, you can let them see you are willing to fall or be dead by subverting your own position as a teacher. And the subversion of your own position can be anything from admitting that you don't know to subverting the expectations within that context of the classroom. So that might be the teacher not getting on with the work. You know, I love that situation in teaching when the student is saying: 'Can we get on with something?' Because, I say, well hang on a minute aren't we reversing things...I'm supposed to tell you to get on with things and here you are begging me to get on with the lesson. What's going on here?...beginning to change the roles, in other words, beginning to play dead. And that dead is like, for a Lacanian, I guess, is like...Lacan explains it through the dummy in the game of bridge. The dummy in the game of bridge is someone who is there but is not there. Do you play bridge?

No, neither do I. [*laughs*]. But as far as I know, the dummy is there, the partner of someone, but in that particular round, or whatever it's called, they don't play. And they just put their cards on the table and in French the notion of the dummy is called 'Le Mort', the dead or something of that sort. So that was the first formulation of this idea that there's got to be a sense of present absence. You can't just go away, I don't think, as the absent Professor in the Winnicottian view of this.⁴

5

So they've got to provoke a belief in nothing but you can't do that by presenting a nothing, because probably there isn't a nothing. What is nothing?

⁴ "However, it is different when, as a matter of deliberate policy, the adults hand over responsibility; indeed, to do this can be a kind of letting your children down at a critical moment. In terms of the game, or the life-game, you abdicate just as they are coming to kill you. Is anyone happy?" D.W. Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst*, Penguin, London, 1986, p. 160

⁵ "I have nothing to say and I am saying it." John Cage, 'Lecture on Nothing', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, NH, 1961, pp. 109-126. ISBN: 0-8195-6028-6

Trust you to have your files of notes and be flicking through them for the perfect quote again... [laughs]

6

Yeah, yeah. When you talk about nothing and you are reading that, it reminds me of something Lacan would call the lack. And that, of course, is a fundamental part of human structure. We lack...we cannot find the signifier, we could say on the level of words, we cannot find the signifier to represent ourselves. So, we've got a symbolic existence that we use words to articulate who we are and what we are but we can't actually put ourselves into those words. They always come from the Other, those words, so we always 'lack' a way of representing ourselves. But that lack is intolerable so we fill it with a variety, a semblance of objects and those objects can be literally anything: from shopping to creating works of art. And I think what you are talking about with the exhibition about nothing. And what that quote reminds me of is this lack, where as for me, the teacher is not a lack...they are more on the level of...they have a substance...they have a bodily substance.

But I wonder if that's a contradiction. But I wonder if a virtual teacher then is not what I'm talking about? A virtual teacher, might be, in my terms, a contradiction in terms.

Because if you don't have a teacher, how have you created, what I called the field of knowledge. But having worked with Winnicott's ideas, I then went on to Lacan's ideas using discourse theory. And realised that what I was trying to talk about was the fact that the teacher has to embody the object a. In other words they have to embody a bit of existence that is missing to provoke the student's desire, without alienating them. So, in other words, we don't want a Master discourse. If the teacher is present, in the normal expected sense that we have in schools and in Universities, then that is automatically a Master discourse if they start to teach in traditional ways. But if they reject that teaching...

Well because the students come with expectations. A) Most of them will feel very insecure if you reject it. But you can reject it by... well, you can't get someone

⁶ "If you want to apply bio-bibliographical criteria to me, I confess I wrote my first book fairly early on, and then produced nothing more for eight years. I know what I was doing, where and how I lived during those years, but I know it only abstractly, rather as if someone else was relating memories that I believe but don't really have. It's like a hole in my life, an eight year hole. That's what I find interesting in people's lives, the holes, the gaps, sometimes dramatic, but sometimes not dramatic at all. There are catalepsies, or a kind of sleep-walking through a number of years, in most lives. Maybe it's in these holes that movement takes place." - Gilles Deleuze, *On Philosophy, Negotiations, 1972-1990*, Columbia University Press, 1991. This quotation was referenced by Francis McKee in his essay, 'From Nothing to Zero in No Time', in *Nothing*, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, 2001, p.21

through an exam syllabus. I think its going to be a very difficult balancing act to teach 'A' levels or degree if you're working with a student who needs a qualification in that very pragmatic sense. But I think the people, the supervisors with doctorates have the opportunity to be absent in the sense I'm talking about because they're supposed to be, or my reading of this...is that they're are supposed to be trying to provoke 'your' relation to knowledge, not give you 'their' relation to knowledge. Research has something of the symptom of the person who is researching in it. It's got has something of their desire. I can't express this in Lacanian terms because its too sort of complex, you would need to know a lot of background for it. But, that for me, is the difference between an ethical teaching and a moral teaching and a moral teaching is bound up with ideals and a transmission of knowledge where as I would say an ethical teaching is a transmission of nothing which is maybe where it comes back to what you are talking about.

So, what you're transmitting is nothing...because once you start to transmit something, you put yourself in the position of the Master and it's very difficult to break that down.

7

Students will find ethical teaching or the 'nothing' teaching intolerable in the majority of cases because most...I would claim that teaching and pedagogy in its traditional forms puts us in the position of the hysteric. It puts the student in the position of the hysteric. And the hysteric loves a Master even if they might later hate that Master, they work with the Master. It's a very ambivalent relation. Once you refuse to be the Master, where's the boundaries, where's the framework, where's the modus operandi.

8

⁷ "Every something is an echo of nothing." John Cage, 'Lecture on Something', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, NH, 1961, pp. 128-145. ISBN: 0-8195-6028-6

⁸ "As well as by Robert Rauchenberg's work, John Cage was also inspired by his visit to the entirely soundproof anechoic chamber at Harvard, where, hoping to experience silence, he was overwhelmed by the noise of his own body; the beating of his heart and the rushing of blood demonstrated that such a proposition was impossible. This realisation gave Cage 'permission' to compose 4'33", the piece of silent music that he had long been contemplating. It was premiered in 1952 in Woodstock, upstate New York, in a now legendary performance by pianist David Tudor. In accordance with Cage's 'Tacet' instructions, Tudor sat at the piano without playing, for three 'movements' which in total lasted the four minutes and thirty-three seconds of the piece's title. Despite cage referring to it as his 'silent piece', 4'33" is not about silence at all, but rather about its impossibility. It makes the audience listen to the ordinary ambient noises which they would otherwise ignore and treat them with the respect usually granted to music. This is more than a provocative musical gesture. Whether or not Cage intended it as such, 4'33" is a profoundly utopian statement that repudiates the nihilism implicit in emptiness; instead, it treats it

Which is not dissimilar from what you were saying earlier...that Nothing is impossible to represent. My own encounter with that silence Cage is talking about was when I was on a plateau in Spain. I had climbed up the side of a mountain to get to a plateau and I thought 'wow, there is an absolute silence here' but there wasn't but I could only hear it as silence because I could hear a wind on a very general level and that was what I took as silence was actually the sound of wind...I thought was quite interesting at the time. But, in pedagogy maybe I'm saying we have got to become the sound of that wind. That's what the absent professor, as you call it, is. So you are talking about an absent professor who really isn't there.

Oh yes, that was not a book...it was the journal of the Lacanian school...

...called Ornicar.

I think it was all the early numbers.

O-R-N-I-C-A-R...I think.

I don't know.

No one apart from Lacan, put his name to his articles (laughs). So he had to take the Master position, he felt there.

But, I think that's very important. That's precisely what ethical teaching is...is where it is a risk, it is a wager...it is a bet and what you are risking is your own expectations about what it is to be taught. But a lot of people would reject that straight away. They would just say: 'well, this is a waste of time.' And in your own case, you were saying you hadn't met your Professor or supervisor whoever it was and you were unhappy about that and you were thinking about changing. But you were keeping on working.

So you want someone to judge your work with external criteria?

That's not the same as having a supervisor. Talking to other students about your work is very different situation from talking to a supervisor.

as a space in which anything and everything is possible - any noise and all noises become music. This notion is as relevant and necessary now as it was then. In the early 1950's, Cage's silence offered a sense of possibility to counter the seeming inevitability of nuclear holocaust. Fifty years later, as that threat has (apparently) receded, 4'33" suggests that there are possibilities other than those which form a part of the relentless onward march of technologised capital towards global dominance." Charles Gere 'Nothing, Apocalypse and Utopia' in eds. Graham Gussin & Ele Carpenter *Nothing* Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, 2001, p.60f

Your supervisor is there to keep desire open. He or she is not there to judge your work, they are not there to comment on it. They are there in one sense, to make you keep on working. And that's important and they don't have to be immediately present to do that. That's what I'm saying.

No, that's what they've got to resist is embodying some knowledge, and to be able to judge yours. You said, they will tell me whether it's crap or not. From a position of a supervisor, I would argue that's assuming a field of knowledge, it's assuming certain ideals, it's assuming a position and where as if you are talking with students...that's a different type of work because there's an equality on that level where your sharing experiences but that may not be sufficient to keep your desire going...so you will create a fiction around the supervisor that reflects your own symptom, I suppose.

In psychoanalysis, we don't call it training - we call it formation. But what do you think that is?

No one's taught me. No one's insisted that I go to any lectures.

It's not been an academic training in that sense. And yet the school, it's got the name of a school. Lacan refers to the school in 'Television' as a sanctuary away from the malaise of civilisation. You return to your basic...we would call it the S1 in psychoanalysis. It is the first signifier of who you are, it's the first mark in language that you make and that, in a sense, contain all your S1's, for want of a better word, your essence as a person. But it is always an alienating kind of essence and for that reason, you try to return to that and work with those ideas to inspire you. That's where your inspiration comes from. Your inspiration doesn't come from the Professor, it comes from the S1. But the Professor has to make you...by constantly frustrating your questions to him. Is this right? Is this wrong? By constantly frustrating those, he will force you back to take responsibility and that's why we can introduce an ethics at this level...make you take responsibility for your own desire to know and you'll realise then the limitations of your own knowledge as well. It's those kind of things.

Well, isn't that the same thing? Isn't that exactly what we're saying?

Well, fine, so who is this person that's got the...so who is this big Other that has the use of language in the way you want it? There isn't one.

All these Masters that you dream of, exactly. But, they're not there.

But, we're getting closer to your need for a Master in this and the nothing, the virtual professor is probably something that's fairly scary in that sense and you're going to be a virtual professor which is odd too. You're not putting yourself in the role of the student, you're putting yourself in the role of the professor that is not

there. And the Professor doesn't have knowledge as such that they transmit. They have a knowledge about desire and what we call in psychoanalysis truth – which is close to this S1 I've been describing. So, that leaves you ambivalent..and I think it's interesting the projects that artists take up. To me, the honesty or the truth or the ethical stance of the artist is that they are dealing with these S1's for very often, an imaginary Master. But that person, there will be a dialogue somewhere with somebody. And for you it might at present be someone like Pavel or it might be me at times or it might be one of the other people you talk to who become...

[*laughs*] Well you see, you've got this complaint all the time. What's this big deal about the University and why does it matter so much? Why did you want to do a Ph.D.? What a stupid thing for an artist to want to have?

So both of those, I would argue, a critical framework and working in a University are nothing to do with art as such, they are about getting a social position...

Ah, but that's exactly what I'm saying.

And you haven't seen your Professor or your supervisor but you're working harder. So these things are being used, on one level, if we don't take them too seriously, they're being used to stimulate your desire but I'm saying, if we take them too seriously, they turn into something that we serve. So, if they're stimulating you at present, fine, they're working for you but it's when you start to work for those that's important. And I think that's what's nice about people like you or me who've done doctorates later, rather than straight after a degree or an MA or something is that we're more likely to bring bits of ourselves. Because I was the same as you, that I came to my doctorate with a notion that I wanted to explore. And my doctorate on one level seemed absurdly easy or simplistic because all I was doing was exploring my own ideas and you're doing the same. But the University made me push those a little bit further. I learnt absolutely nothing from my supervisor and that's what was so fantastic about him. He knew nothing about Lacan, he knew nothing about psychoanalysis.

No.

No, no that was my analyst. My supervisor knew nothing. So, I would go and tell him. And as I told him, I would get excited about my ideas. But he would sit and say nothing. It was a very analytical role he played as well. And he...

Yeah, yeah and then you left and you were all raring to go again and this was fantastic. But what had he done? He'd simply sat in the chair and fulfilled a position...

Yeah.

Yeah. And I think what he was doing was very much, playing the role of the object a, of, of stimulating desire, of making themselves, what Lacan would call at other times - a lump of trash. And, they just take it. And what they are doing is giving you the opportunity to work out on them. And that's why...

Well, I call it the Saint. I think the teacher, the good teacher is also very close to the Saint. The good teacher is also a hero because it's a heroic position to deny your own satisfaction for somebody else's. Because usually the teacher doesn't function in that way, rather the teacher puts over their point of view all the time as teachers typically do, is denying, what we call in psychoanalysis, the jouissance of the student, the satisfaction of the student, is assumed to be identical with that of the teacher, is to have this piece of knowledge, and the teacher always knows best what you want.

Sure, yeah.

Yeah, but why do I want to know that knowledge? I've got my own projects.

As the supervisor?

Sure. But I'm saying that, my supervisor, sitting there, listening to me learn some things...

Sure, but actually, they will make him a little bit more...but that's not what he's there for but he's got his own research interests, he's got his own programme of work which has got no tangency to mine what-so-ever. So, he listens, out of the goodness of his heart, I mean I hope he, when I go, he just vomits and it all comes out again. Because he doesn't need my knowledge, he's got his own. If he takes my knowledge, he becomes alienated from his own knowledge. We might have an intellectual discussion about little points because he can see issues of structure and so on. But I wouldn't expect him to want to know what I want to know.

We've had lunch a couple of times.

Yeah.

No, he's in the education department. He's a psychologist. So it would seem obvious that if I'm doing something on psychoanalysis and pedagogy to have him as the Supervisor.

No, on the contrary they teach you how to be a Master in the classroom.

No, they teach you a series of defences. I think the average person who goes from University back into a School is quite an immature person still and they have to construct an identity to protect them against from what I call the 'cacophony of the classroom'. There's just so much noise in that classroom. And, how do you as a teacher stop the, I don't know, twenty or thirty different responses that each child in that classroom needs to make. How do you deal with that? It's an impossible situation. I mean, Freud calls it one of the impossible professions. Because you can't deal with every person as an individual so we try to read them as a uniform mind, a sort of mass that we work with and that doesn't tap into any ethical notion of pedagogy as far as I'm concerned. It simply works on a moralistic ideological level and the teacher gets their rocks off to it.

When I became a teacher I guess. I couldn't because...I was in my early thirties when I became a teacher and I just couldn't believe the weirdness of the classroom experience. And the demands that were going on. I'd got a psychoanalytic interest at that time. What was happening in the classroom just amazed me. The way that different students would respond to different situations. And I started experimenting and saying and doing different things in the classroom to see how it would provoke responses.

No, it always sends me to sleep. I have yeah, because I've done observation stuff. But no, it's terrible, because putting someone in a lesson...if you teach from your defences or if you teach as I'm suggesting, from maybe a symptom as well. Then you can't put other people in your classroom and have the same lesson. And that's why I think teachers are very uptight about having lesson observations, why they hate being inspected...it's because actually a lesson is an incredibly, even though we pretend it's not, it's an incredibly personal experience.

It's a performance built around a lot of your own needs, I think...that clash at times with the needs that the students have got.

Yeah. But also you've got a relationship going with the class where you've got, you've...what I think you do and I call this the chaos period for the first six or eight weeks. You are defining where people are, where are the boundaries in this classroom. You can go in and just impose them but I think it's much more interesting to go in and have chaos for eight weeks which you can afford to do in a six form college context...it's probably harder in an ordinary school. But you can go in and have chaos and out of that chaos in the end will emerge a shared notion of what the barriers are, what the lines are and you looked at that as part of a relationship like you would in any kind of relationship. Someone else coming in will not understand what's going on in your classroom, because you've already set certain lines and so on. Lesson observation presupposes in one sense, I think, that the structure of every lesson, is identical, whoever's teaching it and

there are certain premises that are correct and certain that are incorrect and I would say that is just a load of nonsense.

Who is the big brother?

No that I'm not sure about, I haven't really thought about.

Yeah, yeah.

There's exhibitionism in that but there's also...the big brother to me isn't such a Master as a super-ego. It's quite horrifying, the disembodied super-ego and that is a role that certain teachers can play. They become the super-ego of the student and that's a very...almost sadistic role because you instruct them, you command them to certain forms of behaviour because you know best. There are certain things you will put forward and you will get your satisfaction from doing that but the students don't get theirs. And that's why pedagogy needs re-inventing.

And I think, from what I understand, given the educational structure that we've got, that the two groups that actually come closest to that are primary school teaching and doctorates which is quite amusing either way round...you can have a little bit of your own desire to know still. The good primary school teacher may be forced to meet National Curriculum views and so on, and requirements. The primary school teacher was there just to capture the enthusiasm of the child, not to tell them what their enthusiasm was and not even to channel it. And it's interesting, often kids up to ten and eleven, will be very spontaneous, will be very excited about their relationship with knowledge, with that field of knowledge. But actually once they get to twelve, thirteen, fourteen and start doing more syllabus based work where they have to do certain things. They lose it, they become bad students, they rebel against it.

There's an answer and there's someone who knows the answer who is in a position of authority.

No, no.

It's the students that feel the problem, not the teacher who gets the satisfaction. Although, the teacher will get some satisfaction too.

But what I found when I became a teacher working at a comprehensive, which was my first job, is that some students would work incredibly well for me. I would go the staff room and say, hey 'X is just fantastic' and they would say 'what, that's the worst student in our group, really stupid, really thick.' I would say, 'No, I'm talking about this person, they're really clever.' And it would appear to me, they would say: 'Well, ok. they're just not good at my subject but they're good at

yours.’ But I don’t think it is that. I think it is the personality of the teacher and it is what we call again, the transference that you establish with that student but my lessons will fail the students who want an authority figure and there are students who want an authority figure in lessons and often they come from private schools, I’ve noticed too. And those students will be a real pain in the arse, because they will try and force me to become an authority figure, in the classroom, for them. Which is fine, I understand that but it is not how I necessarily want to teach but just as I can’t satisfy those students, and they probably won’t learn quite as well with me as they would with an authoritarian teacher. So equally, it works the other way...so I can justify it to myself. There are some students that love that style where there isn’t a great deal of pressure but it’s always a compromise because they’re in education for certain ideals and certain ends and I have to teach the syllabus. Where as now, what we’re doing, is much closer to...we are both finding out things. We are going off in our own trajectories but for a moment, we just bumped into each other and there’s a little point where we’ve got similar interests. So, I think for me something like the virtual Professor means these things we’ve been talking about. Someone taking up the position of the object a. Someone who isn’t working in an institutional setting but is working with the student’s desire by not imposing anything of themselves. But at the same time, this Dublin project, I think you run the risk of having the students up in arms and walking out, saying: ‘This isn’t a course’.

9

⁹ “But here among the scorpions and the hounds, the jackals, apes and vultures, snakes and wolves, monsters that howl and growl and squeal and crawl, in all the squalid zoo of vices, one

is even uglier and fouler than the rest, although the least flamboyant of the lot; this beast would gladly undermine the earth and swallow all creation in a yawn;

I speak of boredom which with ready tears dreams of hangings as it puffs its pipe. – Baudelaire (prelude to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857)

Both John Cage and Ad Reinhardt attended lectures and courses given by the Zen master, Daisetz T Suzuki, at New York’s Columbia University in the early 1950’s. Zen quickly became a central part of their thinking, and through it they came to view the emptiness of boredom in a newly positive light. If the experience was one which could be characterised by a sense of feeling trapped in the present, lacking incitement to respond to the outside world, then, though not an end in itself, it did at least seem to offer a means by which to remain centred on the here and now. Their approach was not to disavow boredom, but to attempt to hold on to it.

“I have nothing to say and I am saying it,” Cage proclaimed in 1949. Many of his compositions, performances and writings can be understood as investigations into the possibility of expressing “nothing”. While he did not deliberately court boredom, he was not afraid of using it as a tool: “In Zen they say if one finds something boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two and so on. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all but very interesting.” – Sophie Howarth quotes Baudelaire and Cage in her article ‘Pretty Fascinating Boredom’, *Tate*, Issue24, Spring 2001, pp. 60-66

But boredom. You are using a range of social criteria to assess the effectiveness of the course. Getting bored, that's not the teacher's fault, that's the student's fault.

I would say the student's fault but that's a little bit too strong. It's a conflict of interests. I think, too often, our students want us to entertain them. And I think that's the problem.

Yeah, exactly. The worse it gets for you, the worse it gets for them. Because you can never get them what they want. Because you don't know what they want. It's only they who know what they want.

As an art teacher, you must know that. You can't read...how do you teach art? Especially as it comes from, as I'm suggesting, a symptom. You don't know your student's symptoms. Your own projects that I know about. In fact, I know about most of your projects now. To me they fit around a common core...

Because you don't know their interests.

But there again, you sit down with one or two of your students and say 'let's have a chat', maybe like we are. They will probably be very alarmed about that or defensive or go away and say that was a real waste of time. We as people working within a state system of education can't undo those expectations. It's too big a task so what I would say, teaching within schools and universities can only ever, at best be what I call moral teaching. We can be good moral teachers but that is not what I think is an ethical pedagogy which is what I'm talking about when the teacher becomes dead or invisible. But there still, because there defines the field of knowledge but they don't give a guarantee. You know students blame us for their exam failures as well and things of that sort which is fine within the system as it is set up. But you won't blame your supervisor if you don't get your doctorate...well you might do...actually! [*laughs*]

What amazes me. I can remember when I was doing my doctorate reading in the Times Higher Educational Supplement about a student who is suing his supervisor. He said: 'Well hang on, my supervisor should have told me this was a load of crap.' But you know, a doctorate, certainly outside art, you are the expert in your field. How is your supervisor supposed to know anything? Whether that's going to satisfy an external examiner because you are discovering new knowledge. And I just felt that was a rejection of responsibility for one's own knowledge and a need to blame somebody else, that just appalled me. That person should not be doing a doctorate, if that's what they think it is. Because that's basing it too much on somebody else.

Expecting them to give the guarantee. It's not just giving you answers. It's expecting them to guarantee your knowledge, to say 'Yes, that's right Simon'

which is actually what you want them to do. You don't want them, from what I gather, you talk about a critical dialogue or whatever you called it earlier. What you want is a...

Validation and guarantee. And I say, even that is beyond the ethical teacher and that's your need for approval coming out rather than anything that's intrinsic to the pedagogic act. We've got a very narrow definition of pedagogy at present. Part of what my research was trying to do was to establish another line of enquiry. I think you can go back to the ideas of Socrates which are referenced in Plato's text, 'Meno'. Plato presents a reported dialogue between Socrates and a friend, Meno. Commentators seemed to have overlooked this work or played it down. But there he is, Socrates, celebrating his one claim in life is he knows nothing, he only knows about desire. But he doesn't have any knowledge and he never gives his own knowledge to students, to the people he works with. He asks them questions¹⁰.

Well, he was killed for corrupting the youth of Athens.

Well he made other people, he asked so many questions that what it did, it released other people's desire to know and what's the worst thing that can happen to a state is for people to have their own desire. It's what Freud tried to capture in 'Civilisation and it's Discontents'. Freud tries to show us that if we all follow our own desires, we don't have a civilisation. I think that's very important at present, actually. As a society we are becoming, which is why we as pedagogues have problems, as a society we are becoming more liberal, more goes, there is more pluralism, there's not one way of doing things any more. Postmodernism is a kind of response or reflection of that. Well, what I think we're doing is ...we're creating something that is very good for the individual but bad for society. If you're going to have a society, I think you have to go back to someone like Plato who is very strict about the way we would teach people and the way that people can behave but you can't a society of individuals, the two are contradictory.

Oh yeah, yeah.

Yeah...I've never completely understood how that was meant because Lacan has a lot about the written and the spoken and the spoken has a very different quality from the written for Lacan.

What's inscribed?

[laughs] You've confused me.

¹⁰ Plato presents Socrates in a dialogue with Meno, saying: "This knowledge will not come from teaching but from questioning. He will recover it for himself." Plato, (Translated by W.K.C. Guthrie), *The Meno in Protagoras and Meno*, Penguin, 1956, ISBN: 0-14-044068-2

Well, you've taken some notes, you're going to take bits of, chunks of this knowledge and try to simulate them into your own viewpoint. That's what I dislike, actually about the way in which psychoanalysis is used in a lot of disciplines is people will take odd little bits of it and use it themselves. And actually, it's a complete structure – you can't take bits of it.

11

It's got a centre as opposed to it's got nothing. Has the artist got nothing at its centre? Is that why we've got this preoccupation with nothing?

Does that mean you read it out to me? Oh, right.

So this is something he read out, or...

So here, we've exactly got the difference between writing and speaking. The students heard him speak, they didn't hear this.

What, read it?

This strikes me as sort of, something, that once it is written down is very contrived and is creating something else. Where as, I can't imagine what this sounds like...

Yeah, I mean, he says you've got to ignore the spaces as well, perhaps...(reading from John Cage's 'Lecture on Nothing' in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, NH, 1961, pp. 109-126. ISBN: 0-8195-6028-6) "I'm here and there is nothing to say. If among

¹¹ "On the one hand, the demands of form and conventions of distribution often necessitate academic rigour for writers, while on the other artists tend to use critical theory in a pragmatic mix-and-match method. They use what works and discard the contradictions. One very real reason for this is that as students we were studying contemporary critical theory without having had a background in philosophy. We were reading Foucault, but had never read Kant, reading Jameson without having studied Hegel. Most of us who survived this trial by fire later went back to filling the gaps. In fact, Craig Owens once took a seminar to walk Gregg Bordowitz, Jason Simon and I through Marx's *Das Kapital*.

There are other, more important reasons why an artist's relation to reading theory is different from an academic's. Artists are not interested in illustrating theories as much as they may be in testing them. This is why artists choose to ignore contradictions in a text, or may choose to explode these contradictions. The artwork may be the lab experiment which attempts equally as hard to disprove as prove a point. The artist may not be terribly interested in the object of an experiment but merely in learning the method. For artists, reading philosophy is like acquiring new tools for your tool chest – some tools you need every day and others are required only for specific jobs. Critics improve the tools, artists improve their application." Mark Dion, *Field Work and The Natural History Museum*, in Alex Coles (ed.), *The Optic of Walter Benjamin, de-, dis-, ex-,* vol. 3, Black Dog Publishing Ltd., London, 1999, p.39f ISBN: 1-901033-41-4

you, there are those who wish to get somewhere, let them leave at any moment. What we require is silence and what silence requires is that we go on talking. Give any one thought a push, it falls down easily but the pusher and the pushed produce that entertainment called a discussion.” At present, I find I’m reading quite a lot of poetry. And I find, reading it aloud is really weird. How do you read poetry out aloud? Again, it’s broken down into different ways. I quite like to buy tapes of poets reading their own work but those are terribly disappointing because they’re just ordinary reading of it somehow. So, I don’t know, I rather think this is very pretty written down, but I bet it doesn’t sound like that.

Once you’re reading it from...you see, he can use his voice, the tone of your voice and so on. To give a reading of what you’re speaking. And here, we’re getting a speaking of what you’re reading. You could almost say he’s trying to reverse the process and make you slightly more self-conscious of certain things or conscious of certain things. Yeah, it looks very pretty.

Beautiful, in what sense?

Yeah. In analysis, you get a situation that is not dissimilar. An analysand will come along with certain expectations. They think that you know something that they don’t know and they want that knowledge from you. And they will often get very frustrated or very upset or simply leave analysis and you don’t give them the information that they want.

12

Anna O. (laughs). I think that was Anna O.

Well, yeah...that’s very early Freud. Up until 1909 Freud was very pedagogic in his view of psychoanalysis. It’s caused a lot of problems, I think, with pedagogues using psychoanalysis. You see, he saw the two as synonymous – the patient had a problem simply because they didn’t know something. Later it became obvious that that not knowing was structural issue and it couldn’t be filled by a piece of knowledge. Because Freud found increasingly he couldn’t get that kind of result from working in that way. Just telling someone something does not enable them to apply to themselves or learn from it, or whatever. Therefore he was left with having to abandon that more pedagogic view. And certainly now, you would never try to tell your patient what you thought was wrong with them. But you would simply work to keep them questioning, producing material, working with that material. You actually really keep them at work. So, early Freud is a little bit strange. And it’s certainly not what Lacanian analysts would practice now and probably not a lot of IPA analysts wouldn’t practice it either. It’s an important point, yeah. One could argue then, that one has cured the conversion

¹² Richard Appignanesi & Oscar Zarate, *The Case of Anna O in Freud for Beginners*, Icon Books Ltd., Cambridge, 1992, pp. 26-33

hysteria that's causing them to have a problem with their arm wasn't about the fact that you've given them that bit of knowledge but it was the analytical process in general that was at work. But Freud eventually got very frustrated that giving these patients that knowledge often made matters worse, rather than better.

They've got to discover that themselves. You don't know...he used to construct a meaning for them and for what they said and now that is seen as not being possible.

There's a truth. There's no definite meaning but there's a subjective truth.

I guess you could say that...

Well, no it's not. In the four discourses there's S1, S2, A and the Barthes subject, S with a slash through it and they fall into certain positions: of agent, object, product or truth. And in the analytical situation the S1 falls into the position of truth and that's supposed to be where you can confront your symptom I guess.

It seems to me that you define the student's basic position, and I think you're falling into this at times with some of the things you say, as the position of wanting a knowledge from a Master. And that's an alienating process I think. It's what we could call in psychoanalysis 'the big Other'. But if that's the case, if that's the basic premise on which we are used to education in this culture, well, how's your virtual project going to work?

The invisible teacher could get...and I'm basing this on something I read about in Chinese teaching. No, not contemporary Chinese teaching. But the Chinese teacher would take a question. The students would come individually and talk to him and he would give every one the same answer. So, you know, your lesson, in one sense is getting their questions – they bring a question to you - but you're giving the same answer to each person. In other words, you give each person a piece of nonsense. But they think because it's come from you, they will try and make some sense of it but each person will begin to make sense of it, exactly in their own terms. So you will begin to work with them on their terms rather than on your own terms.

And then, you know, with a bit of luck, they will start talking to each other and say 'hey, but he said that to me'. It's got to be something very general or very bland. But you can work with, the fact that they think you have the knowledge, they will take that answer seriously. But because it's a piece of nonsense or because it's a general thing, they will have to put their own meaning into it.

They are all there?

Oh, right, I see. And you would appear on a screen?

Why isn't this a real course?

That's what I'm a little bit suspicious about. I think oppositional positions simply celebrate the same structure. Because they just inverse. But what you've got to do is break out of that structure into something else. And that's real oppositional stuff. So, you're no longer dealing with opposites but you've undermined the very structure itself.

I don't know, to me it's Lacan still but quite possibly.

You've got to not oppose their views, you've got to subvert them so that you come to a different position or you come to a different structure.

Yeah, what's the course called?

Do you have to pay for this?

But, I like this [John Cage's 'Lecture on Nothing']. It's reflecting on the experience of being there as a teacher and that is a teaching in itself. That's pointing up, sort of...it's always self-conscious, yeah. It's aware there's a fiction being created, there's a lie being done.

I can remember a while ago, doing something at York...when I was going to give a talk at York University on my research. I decided to keep it in fitting with a psychoanalytical thing. There were two things, I went on the wrong day for the first one. So, actually, I was there and there were no students on the day and the other day all the students were there and I wasn't. And I found that the lesson everybody remembered was the lesson that I wasn't in where everybody turned up - so these were the lecturers, the postgraduate students were there waiting for me to come and talk. And I didn't turn up and over the seven or eight years I worked in that department they never forgot that lecture and so the lecture where I wasn't there had the most impact. I suspect, they've all forgotten the fantastic ideas I said!

On subsequent occasions when I went in and said my ideas, they forgot about those. But the absent lecture they remembered sitting in a room for.

No, they didn't actually, they just couldn't understand what was happening. And, you know that feeling yourself. You sit there for twenty or thirty minutes. Well, they must be going to come. When do you decide you've had enough and go. Actually, you can sit there for a very long time before someone actually walks out.

One of the things I did which I was thinking about, for this. Is I started with a manifesto, I didn't actually deliver it in the end, what I didn't want it to be...I just gave a list of ten points. That was it. That was all I was going to do. Because I thought, if you then reflected on the points, you would learn something about pedagogy rather than me telling something about pedagogy. So, I think, it was a matter of creating a space or a question but not an answer. So, the teacher always creates questions rather than answers.

But the tricky thing is, how the hell do you do that?

But, I think maybe, you do it by talking a bit of nonsense because you work as the...the other thing I say the teacher should be, apart from a Saint...is a buffoon. They've got to be a jester because the jester invokes truth. And the buffoon or the jester...

(laughing) I prefer buffoon but there you are. It's one of the chapters in my doctorate actually, something like 'from buffoon to Saint'. The buffoon makes people think by invoking everybody's truth. Not by telling them any truth. You talk nonsense and nonsense is one of the best things to get people going.

13

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

But it's got to be a kind of...it has to be a...it can't be an empty nonsense...it has got to have something that people to hook into. But its got to be...oh, I know, a word we use in psychoanalysis all the time, there's got to be a level of equivocation, it has to resonate on many levels. It hasn't got to be direct.

But, the problem for us as pedagogues, working this way, is how the hell do you do that? How do you create that space?

14

¹³ "Don't for heaven's sake be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense." - Ludwig Wittgenstein. Quotation reproduced in Joseph Kosuth, 'Teaching to Learn: A Conversation about 'How' and 'Why'' in *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966-1990*, Gabriele Guercio (ed.), MIT Press, 1991, p. 253 and in Kenneth Goldsmith's *Soliloquy*, Editions Bravin Post Lee, New York City, 1997, ISBN: 0-935724-89-3

¹⁴ "Modifications in the adaptation of Lacan's work began to suggest that the spectator is not so much constructed and held in place by the apparatus and the film text. The structuralist description of the spectator as fixed in place by an (imaginary) unified self-image projected onto the screen was replaced. Instead the spectator was now considered capable to 'play' or 'struggle' with different positions. He or she could occupy different and contradictory positions – male/female, protagonist/victim – and thus was able to exercise conflicting fantasies within the self." - Patrick Phillips, 'The Film Spectator', *An Introduction to Film Studies* (ed. Jill Nelmes), Routledge, London, 1996, p.146.

No. But there's a slippage. If you are different characters. There's an undermining of any firm ground. And that's something that the buffoon or jester does. They undermine always. Or, what we talked about, right at the very start...they subvert. The position is subverted.

Again, that's the tricky thing. Subverting a position because...

No, no, no. My point is that the position is already there. The fact you walk on.

You've already got it. You've got to subvert but as you do that subverting, you run the risk of them walking out or grumbling or reporting you to the person who runs the course - that you're not doing it properly.

No, no, exactly. But the students will then express this as a disillusionment with the course. This course is crap. At least they won't be able to say 'Well, we are wasting our money', they can just say: 'We are wasting our time'.

That's a nice idea isn't it.

15

I remember the art teacher when I was at school got us all into a room, closed the curtains and turned the lights off and said 'I don't want anyone to talk.' And like idiots we sat there for about an hour and a half because we were good school boys in absolute pitch dark silence. And no-one spoke. And at the end of the double lesson he stood up, turned the lights on and said 'ok you idiots off go.' And you know, that was a very...Well, the next time he said 'Ok. you can do anything that you want.' So my friend and myself got some rope and tied him to his chair. But, he was really angry and upset about that.

But again, he said you can do what you want and we were resentful about this man, who, in a sense, had made fools of us last time. So we wanted to get our revenge, I guess, so we tied him up. But you weren't allowed to interfere with the Master of course and that to me showed that he wasn't the laid back trendy he was pretending to be. Actually, he wanted the role of mastery still.

You are directing the treatment and that's why people come. But people confuse your direction of the treatment because you are looking for certain things in the

¹⁵ "In Argentina, Graciela Carnevale welcomed opening visitors to a totally empty room; the door was hermetically sealed without their knowing it: The piece involved closing access and exits, and the unknown reactions of the visitors. After more than an hour, the 'prisoners' broke the glass window and escaped." - Lucy R. Lippard, 'Escape Attempts' in *Six Years: The dematerialisation of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, p. XX

treatment. They confuse that direction of the treatment with knowing something specifically about them. You don't know about them. By the end of analysis, after five or six years you will know something about them but only because they've told you. And you're not really very interested in it anyway. You're only interested in it because they are paying you. That's your interest in that patient, is the money you get when they've finished with you. They're not telling you anything that will ever be useful in my life, particularly. You direct the treatment but I don't think...power is where...I would define power as the ability to suggest things to people and make them act on that suggestion and I'm not doing that. I may break sessions at certain times in a Lacanian framework but I'm not telling them what to think. I never tell them what to think and indeed, some patients don't like that. They want you to tell them what to think and you don't make a judgement about what they think. You are very absent but you do, finish it at a certain time because you think that that is something that doesn't fit in the pre-scheme they've given you. So what you are doing is waiting till there is something odd in the story that they are telling you.

It's actually remarkably easy.

No, well, I can do but that's different from someone lying in a slightly darkened room, sort of a dreamyish like state, speaking...you know, they sit there...I say ok., so...well, actually, they will come in, and I will say look, 'come in'...

What I would say is 'come in'. If they were on the couch which they are now, I would say, you know, 'please' and then I would go and sit behind them and I would probably not say anything. They would just start talking because they know that's the situation and if they don't talk I might say 'well?' or 'so?'. And that's all I would say.

I would say as little as possible.

No, there is a theory that supports that.

There will be an element of that. But your own analysis is supposed to take away your subjective slant so that I don't have my desire in that situation. I can become a lump of shit, I'm a dustbin.

I can remember when I went for my first interview with an IPA analyst. She was an old woman, probably about seventy, and she just looked like she'd listened to all the shit in the world. It was just amazing.

No, no...people tell you fascinating things. It just makes you think 'wow, life is just'...we all go around thinking it is normal, that we all share the same views but actually as soon as you get underneath it...

Exactly.

What my view is...on the news you hear things like the Leeds riots and people are saying 'How does this go wrong?'. But my question is 'How do things keep going right?'. These people I work with are professionals, they have good incomes, they are respected in their jobs but God, their lives, like everybody's lives, they are chaotic.

But with analysis, it's fantastic. In a session, because I will be listening to stories without listening in too much detail to the intricacies of them. And suddenly there will be a word or a phrase that just doesn't fit in that story or fit in that person's life and then I will stop the session and I won't say anything about it, or I might make some very non-committal comment about it. Or they might be saying something that seems so clearly to me that they're talking about their Father but they think they are talking about their next door neighbour. Then, I might say to them, 'What about your Father?' and they might say 'What about my Father?'. So 'Tell me about your Father and they might just ignore that or they might start telling me about their Father. And they may or may not see the connection I'm making.

It would be impossible.

What I've got to do. They could try but what you learn to do is learn to remove yourself entirely from that situation. I'm simply a logical position. And I don't have an identity.

Yeah.

Yes.

It's called the desire of the analyst.

And my desire is a different kind of desire.

I'm simply methodological.

That's what I am.

Yeah. I've got to go to Paris to talk about that fairly soon, it's called the pass and I've got to tell them the results of my own analysis. And only one other person in the UK has ever managed to get this. So, I'm going to see if I can be the second person. But you have to be able to tell them what your S1's are because you have several of them, what your fundamental fantasy is.

No, there are several S1's.

Different ones. Master signifiers are what they are called. And they will attach to S2's and normally we only deal with the S2's, and in analysis tend to get back to the S1's by mapping out the...you can't really articulate the S1 but you can map where it is...

Yeah, that kind of thing.

You can give it a name because it comes from the Other but...and yeah I know what mine is, I know what my fantasies are.

That's been done without anyone ever telling me...

Yeah, I've always had an interest in knowing that.

The desire of the analyst is not for the patients good and its not for your good. The desire of the analyst is simply to take up this position in relation to knowledge.

I don't know about that. What's interesting when I do this so called pass. I don't go and sit the exam. Somebody else sits it for me.

No. I write to the school in France and say I want to do the pass and they will assign two people to me. And I've got to go and talk to them about my analysis. And they then go and talk, they are interviewed, in detail, by a panel, separately, about what I've told them. So, I've got to go and transmit the knowledge of my analysis and keep it's particularity. So that somebody else can tell it to somebody else and not lose that discovery of what I've found. And that comes back to...

Well, yeah. That's what you are trying to avoid, you are trying to avoid the transference between myself and them.

That's right.

Yeah, yeah. And that comes back to these things we are talking about in teaching . It's about a transmission. And teaching is about transmission but this is trying to break it down so it is not a teaching...

Yeah.

You can't be precise because you don't know the desire. And that really is what my doctorate was about. And I call that an ethical teaching as opposed to a moral teaching which transmits what I would call 'the goods of society', transmits a certain knowledge, a specific knowledge.

Yeah.

If I want to, if I believe I ...as a teacher I'm taught, if I want to educate individuals I will work as an ethical teacher but that will not fit them into society but if I'm working and employed by a state organisation to produce good citizens, I only need to be a moral teacher, I don't have to worry about this. The ethics doesn't come into it and I think, that is what is difficult for us as teachers that we've got a situation where you've got to really say look 'I'm working on the side of society, if I'm on the side of society I don't care about alienating these people, I don't care about their desire, this is what they've got to know to get their 'A' levels or degree'. But what I'm trying to say in my doctorate is there is another side to teaching which is the ethical side, which is where you work with people outside civilisation, you work with them to enable them to approach knowledge in a different way, in a personal way.

the ignorant schoolmaster

simon morris

Well, I wanted to start by asking a question. You've come all this way...what are you looking for?

Um hmm.

Um hmm.

16

¹⁶ "If you want to apply bio-bibliographical criteria to me, I confess I wrote my first book fairly early on, and then produced nothing more for eight years. I know what I was doing, where and how I lived during those years, but I know it only abstractly, rather as if someone else was relating memories that I believe but don't really have. It's like a hole in my life, an eight year hole. That's what I find interesting in people's lives, the holes, the gaps, sometimes dramatic, but sometimes

To put that story on hold for a moment. What interests me about what you've just read is the gap between holes and lives which you've just talked about according to Deleuze. And what Howard's talking about when he talks about the gaps in stories. He's talking about...he describes being an analyst listening to the discourse of an analysand and all of a sudden something doesn't sound right. And it's at that point he says...and I mean I have no experience of these sort of situations but he narrates it...I only do it from books as it were...he narrates it as ...you know, quite often he stops the session at that point. That's not a hole in someone's life, that's a hole in the story of someone's life or a story about someone's life that they're telling him and I like the gap between...they're two very different kinds of holes.

17

Yes and no. One of the things that I wanted to talk about as soon as I was reading Howard's conversation with you is the asymmetry or the gap between teaching and learning. And that's why I'm still troubled by the story of Jacotat, if I think about it. Because the more teaching I do, the more I probably want to forget that story.¹⁸ Even when you think you're teaching, you're not teaching what it is you think you're teaching. From the point of view, we all learn. Remember...I don't know... all the things you've learnt, all the words you've learnt - so many things you've learnt without being taught. And that's one of the things Rancière talks about because Jacotat talks about is the fact we learn to speak in our mother tongues. No one teaches us how to speak – we learn from people in our environment but no one ever set out to teach us. I like that asymmetry. The fact that we are learning things all the time. And I guess in preparation for seeing you today - I just went and collected stories. You were going to arrive with a whole bunch of quotations and to defend myself, to protect myself probably my

not dramatic at all. There are catalepsy's, or a kind of sleep-walking through a number of years, in most lives. Maybe it's in these holes that movement takes place." - Gilles Deleuze, *On Philosophy, Negotiations, 1972-1990*, Columbia University Press, 1991. This quotation was referenced by Francis McKee in his essay, 'From Nothing to Zero in No Time', in *Nothing*, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, 2001, p.21

¹⁷ A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many points. This second element which will disturb the studium I shall therefore call punctum; for punctum is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole – and also a cast of the dice. A photographer's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)." – Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.26f

¹⁸ Forbes Morlock, 'The Story of the Ignorant Schoolmaster/The Adventures of Telemachus, For Example', *Oxford Literary Review*, (ed. Caroline Rooney) Volume 19, nos 1-2, 1997, 105-132.

response was I need an equal arsenal, it will be an arsenal of stories. Um, so, I've been sort of collecting stories but partly around these sorts of questions...the gap between teaching and learning. Because, I think one of the beauties for me of Rancière's presentation of Jacotat is...he plays it entirely straight... it could have been Fénelon's *Télémaque* or it could have been any other book. It's really, he doesn't press that point at all. It's very much, he doesn't explain...it's very much for the reader to decide. He doesn't tell you a lot of *Télémaque*. It's very much for the reader, Rancière's reader to decide how to take that. And as it were, my sort of interest in *Télémaque* started because the English translator of Rancière's text positively asserts it doesn't matter and at that point I just sort of thought, somehow the way Rancière says it in French, it's much more open, it's not an assertion, it's much less certain. And the beauty of that for me was that gap, did it make any difference that this book that, you know enabled everyone to learn so much. Was it ah,...

And yet I think his sincere belief was that any book would have done.

Sorry, Jacotat. And that's part of the problem. I think one of the beauties of the way the thing...one of the beauties, for me of Rancière's book is that Rancière's book...it doesn't tell it as a story, it's not a narrative. But at the same time, it explains absolutely nothing and it's extremely difficult at points to tell who is speaking. It's clear it's Rancière's voice all the way through but the point of view is much less certain, and I, I, I love that. So, already we've started to confuse he/he. Is it Rancière or is it Jacotat that we're talking about? And I think that's actually a confusion that Rancière's book is very happy with. It's approaching as a point of view. Because, I think that's one of the sort of things that's very beautiful about stories – is that stories don't belong to anybody.

19

Yeah, and I guess one of the questions that I came with today. The title you gave me was 'pedagogy as performed absence'. And one of the things that is, I think clear and its very important for Jacotat is that his method isn't syncretic. It's not that he knows nothing. It's that he can teach things he doesn't know, um, or in some cases teach that he has nothing to teach which is very different from knowing that he knows nothing. And I guess what I was interested about your pedagogy as performed absence. It's never...the Jacotat story is never an invitation to autodidacticism. It's not that you can teach yourself. It's not something someone can do on one's own. Learning is a relationship as teaching

¹⁹ "All great storytellers have in common the freedom with which they move up and down the rungs of their experience as on a ladder. A ladder extending downwards to the interior of the earth and disappearing into the clouds is the image for a collective experience to which even the deepest shock of every individual experience, death, constitutes no impediment or barrier." – Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, Fontana Press London, 1973 p.100f

is that requires two but the teacher doesn't need to know what it is the student's learning. And I like that a lot. The whole question then for me around pedagogy as performed absence became this question: What's the minimal presence that a teacher needs in order for pedagogy to happen? I mean this is a virtual course. Your words are never actually being spoken. I'm a ventriloquist's dummy in some sense, as part of the exercise. No one actually ever hears you speak directly but there is still a presence there and I'm curious...at what point...how minimal that can be? And one of the things for me is very much...goes with the Jacotat line and the other comes with things Howard was talking about, there's also psychoanalysis. How little present can an analyst be in an analytic situation, um and still be there?

20

21

Yeah, very strongly. And at times, like, the whole point about Jacotat. It's also a story of liberation. I mean, one of the things with Jacotat...in the end he was offered all these fantastic jobs and the rest of that but one of his commitments was not to teach those that were already learned more but was actually, for example to get illiterate parents to be able to teach their children to read. This whole notion that you could teach what it was you didn't know. And there was something about the position and the function of the teacher which was important. But it didn't...I mean, Howard's phrase is 'fields of knowledge' and it has some relationship to knowledge but also that there's, there is also a dislocation as well – so that it would be possible to teach what you didn't know and that being quite...for him liberating...emancipatory.

(laughs) To which, I wish I knew the answer...no idea.

And that's what I found most resonant about what Howard was saying. And for all of it being quite liberating...one of my worries about the project is...logorrhoea...the sheer volume of words that might be imposed on the students (laughing). That we can, you know, we may well today spend an awfully long time talking about the absence of a Master discourse or how not to speak as a Master but the fact that when you transcribe it...and I'm aware the longer we

²⁰ "It's very simple. Art that claims to be about nothing, absence, silence, emptiness, vacuity, nothingness, ugliness, meaninglessness, uselessness, trivia, the negligible, the absurd, boredom...never is." – Pierre Bismuth, 'Never believe an artist who says their work is about nothing: the culture consumer's fear of the void' in *Nothing*, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, 2001, p.181

²¹ "Every something is an echo of nothing." John Cage, 'Lecture on Something', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, NH, 1961, pp. 128-145. ISBN: 0-8195-6028-6

speaking the more pain you are going to have later in transcribing it. But also the more difficult it is going to be for people to read because it just becomes a longer and longer and longer and that's an imposition which is a form of Master discourse. You know, minimalism in itself doesn't have any particular value but there's a flipside to that and what I loved about Howard's relationship with you is just, the sheer flow of anecdotes and stories, because in a sense they...they somehow break down the potentially monolithic nature of the text. One of the things that always frightens me about everything you do is you never put page numbers on anything. So I always feel as soon as I have more than about five pages of anything from you, I feel lost. Sometimes there aren't even any paragraphs. Just like, words, words, words...they go on endlessly. And I don't know where I am with them. And one of the things I like very much about Howard's intervention...is the fact that one of the ways of controlling that is anecdote, is story. There are lots of bits I don't know where it's going. I mean the whole thing may have a flow to it but equally there is a variety and succession of stories. Howard as teacher, Howard has taught. The stories that you've learnt...by which you've learnt to teach and I, and I think that the question of the story is really interesting. And I also wonder what the relationship is...because we could just swap anecdotes each day...what's the relationship between a conversation and a storytelling session...or even an exchange of stories, in a pub, for example. That's not a conversation. It is an exchange. But I'm also...we're supposed to be in dialogue with each other but actually, I'm not sure that that's what storytelling sessions are about and yet I'm really grateful for the stories when I was reading, you know, when I was reading Howard's piece.

For me, to go back to the question of emancipation. I think one of the things that is at the base of, at least Rancière's thinking about Jacotat but it's his whole model which I just found opened up an awful lot for me. Of learning as catching up. Um, forget the sort of Gradgrind model of school as just fact, that caricature. But even the most liberal and progressive education which seeks to be emancipatory still presumes a gap, a lag, the student is somehow behind the teacher – he is trying forever to catch up, um...and Rancière and Jacotat (I almost want to hyphenate them at this point because all those stories, those texts are several years old for me so it's almost like a story I'm trying to remember.) But Rancière-Jacotat's point...their interest in it or his interest in it is something...what it presumes from the beginning is inequality. Inequality exists – we must try in the most liberal progressive kind of way to eradicate inequality...the beauty of storytelling is we're all equal so rather than beginning with an assumption of inequality and obviously there are all sorts of inequalities but at that level – beginning with inequality and then seeking to erase it which is the most progressive model of education, in a sense why not begin with an assumption of equality. And one of the beauties of stories is they don't belong to anybody. My story, your story. You tell me a good story, I'll go and tell it to someone else. It was your story, someone else's before yours. Much as you might want to try and own it (laughing) – the very nature of a story keeps you

from doing that – these things are...you know, you were talking about repetition - these things are very repeatable. And so that the listener...one of the things with listening to a story - you're the listener one moment, you become the storyteller the next...um, in passing that on. Um, what happens if you begin with an assumption of equality rather than inequality? And crucially for them then, it's not something that could ever be proven but it could be verified and storytelling/exchanging stories is a classic example, I mean a classic place in which that verification takes place. And it frees you from this model that's all part of our experience of being at school, of being behind. It doesn't matter how well you are doing or whatever, you are somehow always behind. And even if you are ahead of your peers in a particular class at a particular moment, you are still always behind the teacher and you are trying to catch up.

Yeah. And the teacher then comes along as the liberator. Let me make you equal. The promise that I offer you, if you just follow my courses, I will make you my equal. But, hey, STOP. What happens if, you know...maybe there is something deeply pernicious about that. Maybe the teacher and the student were already each other's equals. But at that very moment, the promise of education is also premised on an inequality. Even the most, you know, let me make you my equal... but you're not.

Yeah, both that question of being present at the event. But also...and that raises questions of the transference, the importance of not being present at the event. So one of the things about ghost stories is that ghost stories are quite often told at one remove. So that this didn't happen to me. I mean your story is about something that's happened to me and that increases...but equally it's possible with ghost stories...this didn't happen to me but it happened to someone I know, a really good friend, whom I really believe. So, there's already a whole question of independently of whether you believe in ghosts, is then, well, I believe my friend and that sort of, by implication I've already been a listener to this tale...now I'm the storyteller, you're my listener but in a sense there's also that possibility of doing it at one remove replicates...replicates that structure. So, sometimes rhetorically, I don't know, but it makes a better story to not to have been there.

Yeah, I think, completely, and...there's never a question then of your own gullibility. You know, with a ghost story or something like that, it's sort of the sceptical person can just, always, sort of see you in a bad light. You were a bit naïve weren't you or what was the weather or all the other possible explanations and try and grill you on that basis where as, in fact, if you weren't there, you can't possibly answer any of those questions...you know...you could...the sceptical listener to you...might...you know, you might be able to suggest that you've equally been a sceptical listener the first time you heard it. I didn't want to believe it but he seemed so sincere...he really...

And these stories circulate. Can I give you an example of that. Because, I love the way stories...and I might actually, you can cut this out later, read them out. Stories subvert academic discourse, a bit like jokes. And so this is a story told twice. The first time is by - I'm going to read it as it is - by Zizek. Ok. "There's a well known, very Hegelian joke that illustrates perfectly the way truth arises from mis-recognition – the way our path towards truth coincides with the truth itself." (And then he goes on...)"At the beginning of this century," (which, the book's from the last century) "a Pole and a Jew were sitting in a train, facing each other. The Pole was shifting nervously, watching the Jew all the time, something was irritating him; finally, unable to restrain himself any longer, he exploded: 'Tell me, how do you Jews succeed in extracting from people the last small coin and in this way accumulate all your wealth'? The Jew replied: 'OK, I will tell you, but not for nothing, first, you must give me five Zloty (Polish money).' After receiving the required amount, the Jew began: 'First you take a dead fish; you cut off her head and put her entrails in a glass of water. Then, around midnight, when the moon is full, you must bury this glass in a churchyard...' 'And,' the Pole interrupted him greedily, 'if I do all this, will I also become rich?' 'Not too quickly,' replied the Jew: 'this is not all you must do; but if you want to hear the rest, you must pay me another five Zloty!' After receiving the money again, the Jew continued his story: soon afterwards, he again demanded more money, and so on, until finally the Pole exploded in fury: 'You dirty rascal, do you really think I do not notice what you were aiming at? There is no secret at all, you simply want to extract the last small coin from me!' The Jew answered him calmly and with resignation: 'Well, now you see how we, the Jews...'²²

So, no footnote or anything in Zizek. What's really odd is coming across the same story in Sam Weber's book, 'The Legend of Freud'. OK and he tells it less...I mean Zizek is a great storyteller. Sam Weber is a great reader (laughs) but not as good a storyteller. So, his account of it is a little bit different: "All I can do here and now is to meet my frustration at so much uncertainty by resolving to tell you the following story which I heard many years ago and at which, if I remember correctly, I once laughed." OK, which is a bit of a foreboding introduction and then it goes into small print. "A Jew and a Pole are sitting opposite each other in a train. After some hesitation, the Pole addresses the Jew: "Itzig, I've always been a great admirer of your people, and especially of your talents in business. Tell me, honestly, is there some trick behind it all, something I could learn?" The Jew after a moment's surprise, replies: " Brother, you may have something there. But you know you don't get anything for nothing – it'll cost you." "How much?" asks the Pole. "Five Zlotys," answers the Jew. The Pole nods eagerly, reaches for his wallet and pays the Jew. The latter puts the money away and begins to speak: " You will need a large whitefish, caught by yourself if possible, you must clean it, pickle it, put it in a jar and then bury it at full moon in the ground where your ancestors lie. Three full moons must pass before you

²² Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London & NY: Verso, 1989, 64

return to the spot and dig it out..." "And then?" replies the Pole puzzled: "Is that all?" "Not quite," smiles the Jew in response. "There are still a few things to be done." And, after a moment's pause: "But it will cost you." The Pole pays, the Jew speaks, and so it goes from Cracow to Lemberg. The Pole grows increasingly impatient, and finally, having paid all his money to the Jew, he explodes: "You dirty Yid! Do you think I don't know your game?! You take me for a fool, and my money to boot - that's your precious secret!" And the Jew, smiling benignly: "But Brother, what do you want? Don't you see - it's working already!"²³

And there's a footnote, and the footnote... I have to find it in the... the footnote is what I love. These things in a proper academic book have to be authorised. They have to be referenced. The footnote simply says: "This joke was told to me by Jacques Derrida."²⁴ What I love is the similar, I mean this is one of the things you were describing, one of these stories that is clearly going around. Zizek can live with it as a story. And it's a story, obviously, he's telling it, it's a story about psychoanalysis, a story about the transference, it's a story about lots of things, it's a story about anti-Semitism but, but it begins with an assumption that you walk into a room and there's someone... I mean the mistake, not the mistake - the whole thing happens begins because the Pole gets onto the train and believes the Jew has the answer in the same way you walk into a classroom. In a sense it's not just about the analytic transference but it's something else. But, I love the fact the stories clearly gone round and so Sam Weber's telling more or less the same story but with some additions, different details like it's a whitefish and there are three full moons and in a sense all these details don't matter at all, I mean, it's the same story. But also his anxiety that it has to be footnoted at the end. And clearly once upon a time and I don't know whether this is to do with his relationship with Derrida, he remembers laughing when he heard it. By implication, he no longer laughs whether it's because he realised it was too serious because he's now uncomfortable with his anti-Semitism or he's now uncomfortable relating a story in an academic book. I mean, it's a brilliant book on Freud for it's texts. I don't know what it is but the way that they differently deal with the same matter in a way, really intrigues me.

I think they are going to expect a lot of jokes, and I think, sadly they may be disappointed. Though Howard's a good storyteller and you've got him giving a repeat performance which is great. Because, I think, one of the things that is interesting about that and I also, partly, have more stories, maybe to talk about, to tell you in a bit, the part about learning is about taking something, anything seriously, including things that are jokes. I mean, Freud wrote a book on jokes which is a desperately unfunny book and there's something about that, that is a real problem. But it's also about learning, is about taking something seriously, the story of Jacotat and Fénelon, it could have been anything. The important thing is,

²³ Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, 117

²⁴ Footnote number 28 in Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, 172

you begin somewhere, that you take something seriously. There's a little bit more to Jacotat's own experience than that and therefore the experience that he tried to make possible for others. But it's about taking anything seriously. And that's why, I think the difference in tone between Žižek and Sam Weber. Is Sam Weber, it's not a joke for him. Whatever it is, it's not a joke for him any more. He's not laughing when he's telling it. And there's less pleasure in the telling of it for him. So I'm worried that the students in the curating course are going to be disappointed because there won't be enough jokes.

And I guess that's also a question for a curating course which just comes to mind, how do you curate jokes? I mean, just having been to see a show. The Arte Povera show and there's a lovely piece by Michelangelo Pistoletto which is just a set of bars. He noticed that a lot of people got tired in galleries and were leaning against the walls. So he just built an apparatus that people could lean against, when they got tired in exhibitions. But of course, now, from a curating point of view, (laughing) this a valuable art work and you are not allowed to touch it. So, that's, presumably one of the problems, it's obviously cyclical and artists are deliberately, constantly trying to create uncuratable things and curators are constantly trying to catch up with them...again, I don't know, I realise that's how the language of catching up and retardation and the rest of it works. But how do you curate jokes? Partly because jokes are all so ephemeral. I mean, bad stories die but good stories get told again and again. As long as they need to be told. And sometimes they get fossilised in books and people discover them. And, you know, it becomes a different story and they come to life again. But bad jokes and bad stories just die. But presumably, when you're a curator, you can't let (laughing), the pieces that don't work in a collection any more, you're not allowed to quietly just put out the back door.

25

And I guess thinking about it, I'm intrigued by the...I have no sense of humour so as a result, like, somehow, someone almost who studies things from the outside, intrigued by the way jokes work, something happens too quickly. Something that would take X amount of time to explain, when you laugh, it's happening despite you, in an instant. But I'm also interested in the ways in which, the mistakes that happen when, all of a sudden, you take jokes seriously or take a metaphor

²⁵ "Many Conceptual works will not fit any clear typology, just as many conceptual artists resist any restrictive definition of what they do. One reason for their frequent opposition to the museum is its insistence on such categories: often with absurd consequences. When removing Kosuth's One and Three Chairs from exhibition, the major museum that owned the piece was reputedly uncertain as to where it should be stored, there being no department of 'Conceptual art', and hence no specific storage area. Eventually it was stored according to the logic of the museum: the chair was stored in the design department, the photograph of the chair in the photography department and the photocopy of the dictionary definition stored in the library! So in effect they could only store the piece by destroying it." Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art*, Phaidon Press Ltd., London, 1998, pp. 10-12

literally, when you're deliberately overly earnest, when you're studying, when you're learning about that. I'm interested because I...I wanted to come back to, at some point to the question about Howard and 1909 and Freud as pedagogue. And where we learn from...

Well, I...partly, sorry to have all these...can I read you some more stories?

So this is a text of Freuds on the History of the Psychoanalytical Movement. It's 1914, Freud for the very first time, is worried...enormous anxiety of ownership...it's a bit like owning stories and owning jokes. It's a question of who owns psychoanalysis. Adler and Jung have left the movement. They have every right, if they wanted to, to set up shop calling themselves analysts. What's to keep psychoanalysis Freudian? And on the History of the Psychoanalytic movement, Freud has a variety, at this time, of responses to that question. One of which is to simply tell the story of the history of the psychoanalytic movement which in some ways is a way of making it his. And one of the ideas, anyway, the key ideas is what he calls the sexual etymology of the neurosis, i.e. the neurosis have sexual origins. And he talks about the parentage of this idea.

So, the three stories are all about eminent men, from whom he might have learnt something. And there's a real ambivalence here because the key is he's both going to have learnt something from them and yet they didn't know what they were teaching him. If they had known what they were teaching him then the key ideas in psychoanalysis would be theirs and not Freuds. So Freud needs to have learnt from somebody so that he somehow isn't responsible, completely, he didn't invent it. He learnt it and that's different. But at the same time, they can't have taught it to him, because if they did, then they would be the Masters and potentially the owners of a key concept in psychoanalysis. So he tells the three stories and if you don't mind, I'm going to read them. But, it's partly, I'm just interested in what they have in common.

So, "One day when I was a young house-physician, I was walking across the town with Breuer." Whose Josef Breuer who is the...Howard mentions the story of Anna O. So he was Anna O's Doctor and I think that is also a key, we may want to talk about that key deferral...that psychoanalysis, the cathartic method starts not with an experience of Freud's but an experience of which Freud heard the story from someone else. So, the cathartic method happens when...Breuer develops in his treatment of Anna O but Freud never treats Anna O. He only ever hears about it at one remove, a bit like a ghost story in a sense. So anyway, he was walking across town with Breuer. "When a man came up who evidently wanted to speak to him urgently. I fell behind. As soon as Breuer was free he told me in his friendly instructive way that this man was the husband of a patient of his and had brought him some news of her. The wife, he added, was behaving in such a peculiar way in society, that she had been brought to him for treatment as a nervous case. He, (that's Breuer) concluded: 'These things are always *secrets*

d'alcôve! I asked him in astonishment what he meant, and he answered by explaining the word *alcove* (*“marriage-bed”*) to me, for he failed to realise how extraordinary the *matter* of his statement seemed to me.” The German saying *‘secrets d’alcôve’* is a French phrase in a German text where now it is a French phrase in an English translation. So, first story, second story: “Some years later, at one of Charcot’s evening receptions, I happened to be standing near the great teacher at a moment when he appeared to be telling Brouardel a very interesting story about something that had happened during his day’s work. I hardly heard the beginning...[Don’t you think about stories, I like is how much do you need to hear, just like how much does the teacher need to be present?]....I hardly heard the beginning, but gradually my attention was seized by what he was talking of: a young married couple from a distant country in the East – the woman a severe sufferer, the man either impotent or exceedingly awkward. ‘Tachez donc,’ I heard Charcot repeating, ‘je vous assure, vous y arriverez.’ Brouardel, who spoke less loudly, must have expressed his astonishment that symptoms like the wife’s could have been produced by such circumstances. For Charcot suddenly broke out with great animation: ‘Mais, dans des cas pareils c’est toujours la chose génitale, toujours, toujours...toujours...toujours’; and he crossed his arms over his stomach, hugging himself and jumping up and down on his toes several times in his own characteristically lively way. I know that for a moment I was almost paralysed with amazement...[I like the word paralysed here because, of course, one of the key symptoms that Anna O experiences is paralysis]...I know for a moment I was almost paralysed with amazement and said to myself: ‘Well, if he knows that, why does he never say so?’ But the impression was soon forgotten; brain anatomy and the experimental induction of hysterical paralyses (again, paralysis) absorbed all my interest.” OK, so we have one thing, these things are always *secrets d’alcôve*, then, again in French, *des cas pareils c’est toujours la chose génitale, toujours, toujours...toujours*, and then one more story: “A year later, I had begun my medical career in Vienna as a lecturer in nervous diseases (so the student is gradually becoming a Master – he’s gone from being a student to being a teacher and here he is a lecturer) and everything relating to the aetiology of the neuroses I was still as ignorant and innocent as one could expect of a promising student trained at a university. One day I had a friendly message from Chrobak, asking me to take a woman patient of his to whom he could not give enough time, owing to his new appointment as a University teacher. I arrived at the patient’s house before he did and found that she was suffering from attacks of meaningless anxiety [...and I like the phrase because I’ve got no idea what meaningful anxiety would be...], suffering from attacks of meaningless anxiety and could only be soothed by the most precise information about where her Doctor was at every moment of the day. When Chrobak arrived he took me aside and told me that the patient’s anxiety was due to the fact that although she had been married for eighteen years she was still *virgo intacta*. The husband was absolutely impotent. In such cases, he said, there was nothing for a medical man to do but to shield this domestic misfortune with his own reputation, and put up with it if people shrugged their shoulders and said of him: ‘He’s no good if he

That he wasn't supposed to learn. I mean, the beauty of that bit of translation is like, you know, Brouardel always says these things are '*secrets d'alcôve*', and you know, Freud at that point hadn't yet been to, even when Freud was in Paris, he wrote letters to Martha about how bad his French was, um, so Brouardel, in the best sort of magisterial fashion said, 'The young man probably doesn't speak French very well, it's a question of translation, I'll just... '*secrets d'alcôve*' is French for marriage bed, its alright.' Freud desperately wanted a translation, but what he didn't want was a translation from this realm of jokes, stories, anecdotes, oral transmission to knowledge, you know, Howard's 'field of knowledge' to something that we can write down or in a case, and I suppose, this is a little bit like Sam Weber, having to footnote a joke (laughs). Its a little bit like, all of a sudden, Freud wants a translation from the joke to a bit of knowledge and in the process of making that translation, he's created knowledge, he's learnt something, as it were, that no one taught him and its, I guess its back to...one of the things, I guess that...interests me about this asymmetry.

Coming...but not just any misreading, misreadings that have to do with the position of the two people, in the story...so in each case it's the storyteller, it's the listener who....it has to do with the position in each case of the listener and the storyteller, um and it could be an analytic situation, it could be in a teaching situation but all of a sudden someone's joke is someone else's serious statement of fact, um, but that isn't, its not the other way round...its not the teacher as it were, the student tells a joke in class and the teacher turns it into a whole new theory, I mean, positionally, it matters where they are in relation to each other, it matters, the Jew and the Pole, you can't just reverse those roles, the Jew doesn't go up to the Pole on the train and say, 'Excuse me, but tell me, how do you Poles make all your money?'...so it is about a joke, it is about a translation or a mistranslation but one that is entirely predicated on assumptions that two people have, call it, you know, the Jew/the Pole, the teacher/the student, the analyst/the analysand and they are not all immediately all assimilable to each other but the assumptions they have about each other.

26

²⁶ Two psychiatrists, one says to the other, "I was having lunch with my Mother the other day and I made a Freudian slip. I meant to say, 'Please pass the butter,' and it came out, 'You fucking bitch you ruined my life.'" (p.105)

Two friends ran into each other at the door of a psychiatrist's office.

"Are you coming or going?" asked one.

The other replied, "If I knew, I wouldn't be here." (P.127)

I went to see a psychiatrist. He said, "Tell me everything." I did and now he's doing my act. (p.119)

"The joke has many vital functions. To disarm. To display. To dazzle. To signify. To release stress. To seduce. To penetrate. To create common ground. To bond. To establish a private language. To warn. To distract. To induce tension releasing respiratory contradictions

I realise, just sort of...as a punter, going to exhibitions that I realise, that one of the things I guess I like about, you know, the, the, is watching other people...is happening to lots of other people in exhibition spaces, is laughter, or the smile, which is a smile, not the smile of being overcome by beauty or pleasure in a sense, it's a more intellectual thing, it may not be quite verbal but its very much the pleasure in a joke, its similar in a way to the way people take in pieces at a time, which I, yeah...(voice fades)

Flipping back through the Jacotat thing today, having sent you a copy earlier, I was reminded that there were two key words in that...Jacotat says there is a fundamental inequality in wills between people, we're not equal in wills but there are two fundamental human faculties that we all possess equally, one of which is raconter, to recount, to tell stories and the other is divine, to guess or to figure out, um, and I was interested, I'd forgotten in a sense, that one of the things that took me from that piece to the bit that I was doing with you on Freud is that Freud when he is talking about constructions, the key word that he uses again and again is erraten, which in German, is roughly, one of the ways you could translate it, it's a sort of a riddle, it could also be to figure out...so that one of the things a construction is, in psychoanalytical terms, it's a story that the analyst tells the analysand. I mean, most of them, I, I only know this from reading, so, but this isn't, but these aren't my stories but most of the stories, one imagines being told in an analytical session are stories the analysand tells the analyst and the construction is a story that gets returned. Is one of the few times where the analyst tells the analysand a story about the analysand which may or may not be true, but that's a story that the analyst tells. So that's an instance of raconter, at the same time, in order to be able to tell the story, beyond simply interpreting something more...something longer than that, is the analyst has to...Freud uses it again and again, is to, is to figure out, erraten, or it sometimes gets translated, divine which I mean, to divine which must be related to the divine.

I think...well, I don't know, for me...the whole thing is so foreign. Part of my fascination with the story of Jacotat is I don't get it. I know it works, its worked on

(yuks). To accumulate, release, and balance bioelectrical charges (howls). To bond attitudes. To avoid working. To prevent violence. To restore physical health. Humor regulates the bodily humors – it is a cultural exo-enocrine system that triggers physiological changes from without the body. Jokes keep you loose.

There are as many kinds of jokes as there are kinds of jokers. Smart. Stupid. Dirty. Blue. Scatological. Eschatological. Existential. Twisted. Archetypal. Phenomenal. Occultly moral. Dumb. A put-down. A send-up. A twisted truism. A koan. A big lie. An opalescent fib. An extravagant and ingenious whim. A nasty jape. A racist slur. An in-group thing. An obtuse wisecrack. A joke is a blessing (or a curse). A joke is a charm or taboo, a way in or a way out.

But the primary function of the joke is criticism with a vengeance. A revolution of the mind. The joker rearranges social orders by altering people's perceptions. The transformations of the serious into the funny. The joker is always making a point. Not all jokes are mean, but all jokes mean. That's the point."

O'Brien, Glenn 'The Joke of the New' in *The Richard Prince*, (ed. Phillips, Lisa) Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1992, 111

me. It's a story that I, I haven't thought about, haven't told in the last couple of years but before that I just, would endlessly, and quite dully I think (laughs), not quite the ancient mariner, but just sort of go up to people and, and want to tell the story. I don't get it. Is it by telling it, that it would help to figure it out? For me, it was important for me to retain the two terms, but I don't know...are you mistranslating?

I mean in the very best sense...

27

But Howard also said that boredom is a student's responsibility, is the student's fault, not the teachers.

Yeah...I think.

But, I think, for me anyway, one of the pleasures and sort of breakthroughs with going to the movies was learning to enjoy being bored...was not having to see, I mean, you know, mainstream, strongly narrative film and all of a sudden going and looking at work that was less strongly narrative and which the time, I mean even the slower edge of European arthouse stuff was just realising that there was this enormous space you were being offered when something is happening slowly enough that you might be bored, that is actually in a sense is also a gift, which I suppose from a commercial point of view, doesn't really make a lot of sense because you're actually the person whose given the money to have this experience...

Um.

But the reason, I guess to go back to the memory thing that I would be...for my ear, I would want to call it a mistranslation. It may be very productive...is simply that, there is still by implication, an original event to be remembered when you use memory. Where as, the thing about raconter as retell a story, is...a bit like your friends at the party, you know, someone tells a story and then three years later, here's the same story again and Chinese whispers – its gone the rounds, there's no original. In fact, you're rather suspicious that the story may have happened to your friend in the first place.

28

²⁷ "In Zen they say if one finds something boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two and so on. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all but very interesting." – John Cage is quoted by Sophie Howarth in her article 'Pretty Fascinating Boredom', *Tate*, Issue24, Spring 2001, pp. 60-66

And in Freudian terms, that's sort of one of the big debates around the whole status of...as I understand it reading...I mean, I don't know whether it's a key concept in psychoanalysis but this notion of the construction is. Are you constructing an event from an analysand's early childhood, telling them a story about their early childhood which they don't remember, as it were, returning a memory to them, which they've repressed in some way. Is it that? And it's supposed to hearken back to or provoke, I mean, it's a substitute for a memory, um and then you get the sort of, the case of the Wolfman, the pathos of the Wolfman, at the end of his life, sort of saying about the primal scene: 'I spent all of my life trying to remember the scene and I still can't remember.' I mean, his utter faith in the primal scene as a story told to him by Freud about his early life and at the same to the end of his days, I mean, when he's interviewed by an Austrian journalist and he's probably in his seventies, 'I can't remember, I still can't remember.' As if his life had been devoted to remembering this event. So, there's this question...memory implies that the event actually happened but there's another side to this whole question of construction which is that actually the construction is also an intervention, the analyst is telling an analysand something to make something happen and as long as that something happens, it doesn't really matter whether it's a true story or not, whether what the analyst has constructed, say as an event in the analysand's early childhood, whether it really happened or not. I mean, empirical verifiability is the least interesting...its interesting to lawyers but its not otherwise...and scientists but its not actually interesting to analysts as long as in the process that construction as an intervention works and acts in a sense as a substitute for memory...it can be a wholly adequate one. I mean, I don't think Freud would have been bothered, he would have been bothered probably by the fact that the Wolfman was talking to the Austrian journalist (laughs). Or at least there's a whole psychoanalytic...Aisler and the gang were very bothered by that, threatened by that. Exactly those...they are very uncomfortable with this whole possibility of empirical verifiability or by implication, falsifiability but I'm not...but I think they are being quite unanalytic in those anxieties.

Yeah, and I don't know...because it's not something we ever played as kids but I'm interested by Chinese Whispers in terms of how one plays it, as a participant in a group, presumably one of the attractions is knowingly distorting for possible added effect but I suspect, quite early on that actually becomes, that wears thin very quickly. And actually, then the joy becomes to play the game as one of a group, to literally collaborate, because the result then doesn't...I mean, is to make that move from owning it, somehow the gap between the beginning and the end...'Well, if I just distort it, if I make a clever substitution here, in some sense I'll own the final product', which I suspect is actually...I don't know, we

²⁸ "The storyteller takes what he tells from experience —his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale." - - Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, Fontana Press London, 1973 p.87

should get a group of kids, a group of students, why not (laughs), to work out what the attraction of Chinese Whispers is. Um, but, but, otherwise, I think, then in the longer term it probably becomes more interesting to have the sincerity to try and be as faithful to what you've heard as possible...because then the result is collaborative in a way that you don't own. And it somehow, is, somehow giving up that sort of, very immediate desire to own.

Yeah.

You're asking about, earlier about psychoanalytic history and stories in that —and there's some interesting work been done by non-analysts, not that analysts are necessarily by obligation, opposed to this — around the whole function of gossip within the psychoanalytic community. Because this is obviously an organisation which as a practice, one of the things it takes very seriously, is the family romance...is stories about families and in itself, in a sense is, one of the ways of understanding it as a community, or groups of analysts, is that it operates the symptoms on the very model it itself is interesting in theorising which is partly to do with families, um, transmission and the rest of that, but by reputation, analysts are terrible gossips. Um, and this very compulsion, um, and I guess one of the things that interests me is, outside of...for someone whose relationship to psychoanalysis is simply through books, and is reading texts...is I just love the stories because it is just a completely mad history. It is a practice that I have an enormous respect for, not only as a therapeutic one but for way of understanding. I teach texts, I guess, I learnt how to read texts from people who had been teaching me about psychoanalysis at the same time, the stories about it getting started

are amazing because all the rules, all the rules always got broken. Um, (laughs) the coincidences also always happen to the point where, now in the house here, we've got an idea, I mean, the joke is, because I'm forever going off and reading stuff and linking stories about, you know: 'what links the Wolfman to the thin man?' and those sorts of things or just telling extraordinary stories about you know, you won't believe what so and so did over so and so's analysis or what took place, the idea is, its not a joke, the idea is to set up a journal, I mean it is a joke but I'm not laughing, to set up a journal that's called 'CHAT', which would be nothing but salacious psychoanalytical gossip. Unfortunately, it couldn't be like 'HELLO' because the pictures wouldn't be very good. I have a feeling that analysts aren't very photogenic and given that it's a strongly, deeply, deeply anti-visual culture, in the sense it's not about looking, I mean or it may be about fantasy, its not without relation to the visual but its not actually, you know, the classic position of the analyst in the chair behind is there's no eye contact, so in some ways its deeply anti-visual. That would kind of defeat the HELLO, um, point, yeah, part of which the fact is...you can imagine what a group of esteemed analysts would look like...

But, it's just the idea of there being a collection of this stuff.

What do you mean?

Um.

Yeah, because I...I don't think that things are automatically joined (laughing). It's not as if the world is a great big web and everything is always already connected. I think what I'm really intrigued by about storytelling, is storytelling is connecting. Its not narrating or describing already existing connections.

It's not history.

Well, (laughing) yes, it is history but that's because I'm deeply suspicious about what historians might...well, that notion of history maybe, but its partly about making the connections which is also about the making of sense. And you've been using the word nonsense a lot but I guess storytelling's are one way of making sense, um...and I like them very much as that, partly because they are never the only ways of making sense and you can always tell the story a different way. I mean, if it doesn't make sense as something for you, or make sense as too much, or make sense of the wrong thing, make sense of something you are not interested in or not troubled by, you can take the same story and tell it in a different way.

But I also like the idea that we...I don't think we keep repeating in order to make sense of something. I think we keep repeating to stop making sense, to keep from making sense.

29

No, no I think for me repeating in that sense is not a way of achieving something. By implication, that's still, the Zen-like state you talk about is still, its desirable, its a goal, its somewhere you're not at the moment but you can achieve where as I think repeating is actually, and possibly even repeating a story, is both communicating, say telling the same story again and again, but is also holding on to in ways that don't go anywhere, that deliberately don't go anywhere. That

²⁹ "I've been quoted a lot as saying "I like boring things." Well, I said it and I meant it. But that doesn't mean I'm bored by them. Of course, what I think is boring must not be the same as what other people think is, since I could never stand to watch all the most popular action shows on TV, because they're essentially the same plots and the same shots and the same cuts over and over again. Apparently, most people love watching the same basic thing, as long as the details are different. But I'm just the opposite. If I'm going to sit and watch the same thing I saw the night before, I don't want it to be essentially the same - I want it to be exactly the same. Because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away. And the better and emptier you feel." – Andy Warhol, *Andy Warhol: In His Own Words*, (ed. Mike Wrenn), Omnibus Press, 1991

nothing is accomplished by doing that, but, but by something you don't want to give up. I have no idea (laughing).

30

II

So, I guess I want to ask you and also, by implication, Howard, about how are we going to define the minimal presence of the teacher? I mean, we've talked about performed absence and, and you've been talking about the fact...that its very clearly not a complete absence and I'm wondering what the minimal requirements are. In other words, for Jacotat the minimal is, is that the, the teacher doesn't have to, can be an illiterate parent but has to both attend to the student working and learning, i.e. has to watch as it were, probably something like watch or observe, just that learning is being done, as it were, and verify so that the student then recounts, the child may learn to read and be able to point at any other student...and Mother or parent can say 'where's that sound?' and even if he or she can't read, it doesn't matter whether its right or wrong, has to somehow to be able to verify, so its not, so were not talking about being an auto-didact, you don't teach yourself, and I'm kind of curious with this project what the minimal presence is, because there's also something about psychoanalysis that involves the analyst having a minimal presence...um, eye contact is cut off, all sorts of external distractions, so you don't see, you don't feel judged by the person, your analyst's facial reaction, there's just a voice, I mean, two people sharing a room...

Freud would, just to hypnotise.

In the case of Jacotat, yeah, they knew he was their teacher, they were going along as Flemish speakers to lectures in French. Um, he didn't speak any Flemish, they didn't speak any French, um, and yeah...yes, there was a hierarchy. And equally, the law students then, at the University then asked, asked that he be come and asked to lecture to them in law. When he freely admitted that he knew absolutely nothing about the Flemish legal system and he never learnt anything about Flemish...either...he never learnt Flemish and he never learnt about the legal system. That wasn't the, no, he's there as a teacher and I think equally there's something about the analyst who, the, the caricature of the analyst is the analyst doesn't even say anything. Not only is the visual contact cut off but there's almost, there's the most minimal of auditory contact, so there's just the grunt...um hmm, um hmm. In fact, a friend of mine worked in a counselling practice in the States and I didn't realise she had a sense of humour

³⁰ "I have nothing to say and I am saying it." John Cage, 'Lecture on Nothing', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*, Wesleyan University Press, Hanover, NH, 1961, pp. 109-126. ISBN: 0-8195-6028-6

at all until – she’s very earnest, working in a University, she cares about the students so much and, you know, I always just thought she was...American. Um, and one day she was saying: ‘Yeah we had a meeting at our counselling practice as to what message we were going to put on the answering phone/answer phone and she said my suggestion was that we should just have: um hmm...um hmm...umm...um hmm.’ (laughing) And at that point I realised, yes, this is a whole person, but, but, there’s this very minimal, possibly even non-verbal auditory contact and yet there still needs to be that presence. Um, and I don’t think, I mean, it’s funny, because you know that I enjoyed finding out that Freud hated the phone. You can’t do analysis by phone. I mean, I know that there are stories about people being analysed on mobile phones in traffic jams in LA. Speak to their analysts whilst their commuting, kind of thing. But, I mean, in orthodox terms, I don’t think you can.

Yeah.

Um.

And, in a sense, I mean, I think its somewhere apococraphly where someone says...Lacan talks about the artwork as being in the place of the analyst...um...which I think is an interesting idea that you go, you approach an artwork or an analyst with two things in a sense; with a desire, you want an answer, you want something solved, you want something fixed, you want an answer to some question, I mean you go with a desire; and a belief that that person or that object has an answer or knows the answer and of course, we all know, the secret of analysis, which is anything but a secret, is of course the analyst doesn’t have the answer but nonetheless that doesn’t...that in no way, that can never compensate for, or replace the belief that you approach the analyst as the Pole approaches the Jew in the train with the belief, and without that belief, without that conviction, that minimal, um...nothing happens. So, I’m just curious with this, with your programme now, with *performed absence*, to what extent...and I’m partly curious and it relates to other things, I’m really intrigued, I’m fascinated by what Howard’s saying and I guess one of the things I’m also curious about is to what extent, and I’m interested in the distinction between moral and ethical teaching but to what extent can you only have, and this sort of relates to the question about absence, to what extent can you only have an ethical teaching? Could teaching ever be exclusively ethical without a moral component? Either in one person’s practice or collectively, in an educational institution, could you have a purely ethical teaching, um...either individually or collectively? Or is there always necessarily, in the same way there always needs to be a minimal presence of the teacher, does there always need to be a minimum oral presence...um...even if that somehow, is not what its about, is it the material that has to be gone through for what it is that is about to happen?

Um, the other thing that I think would be, actually thinking about it, given that you've talked about, you talked about, you always get your classes to do your work, I mean, you are a teacher as well as a student. You know, you are getting classes to do work for them. I mean (laughing), one of the things that would be fun, to get them, one possibility would be to get them to think about, 'What question could you possibly have asked?' Given that you are bound to get a lot of nonsensical answers, non-sequiters, you know, wanky academic bullshit. Um, for them to devise questions that could possibly have prompted the ludicrousness or the pomposity or whatever it happens to be, or the interesting (laughing). You know, what could have provoked...these answers? With itself, as it were, I know the text you gave me had blanks, where the voice of the Other, which in your case is your voice, had been taken out. For them to imagine what the question might have been that led to such an answer.

Because, inevitably we all know the questions are more interesting than answers.

(laughing) Come on Simon if you didn't believe that questions were more interesting than answers you wouldn't have staged the whole thing so that you get to ask all the questions and other people have to do the answering. I mean, you're interested in the project, partly, to ask questions...not exclusively of other people, also of yourself.

But, they may not be interesting to you, precisely because they're your questions, um...now and precisely, because you've already worded them, they may already seem like they're already answers. But there's clearly something, I mean, you know, (laughing) you've just driven across the country to ask me questions. There's clearly something about projects and going and interrogating people and an eclectic mix of people and deliberately finding, you know, and provoking people, um...I mean, if you're not provoking them – because you're not (laughing) an aggressive questioner – but if you're not provoking them in that way, the very projects you set up are designed to provoke. Um, and actually, I was reminded – having now, at times been despairing of that other project you've got me involved in, where you've set Liz and I up to swap texts, and it's a little bit like, I almost feel like we've been set up as parents in a world where the child somehow, one of those moments in the family, when the child gets to organise these fantastic arrangements between the parents or make things happen and I somehow feel the power resides in the person asking the questions and the excitement...too, which I think is what's interesting.

And, I don't know what Liz meant by Machiavelli, but what I think is interesting is its also a question of play, of trying things on, of: 'I'm serious about this, but, but I don't know the answer to it, I don't know if this will work, I don't know what the final product will look like, but I'm curious and can I get other people to play my game?' And I think its partly in the way you approach people which is very sweet (laughing), but its something almost that, but I'm just, sweet and enthusiastic,

and not too earnest, um and its really, I want to play this...but can I get other people to play this game...but its not your game. I think the other thing, the way we were talking about stories...you don't own the game but I think that's one of the things you set up, in terms of your work, are quite often...almost games, but, but there is a real spirit of play and collaboration in the play. Sort of, can I get other people to play the game and what will the game become as a result of having, as opposed to devising rules, a purely formal thing where you devise it and everything is known in advance to you except individual responses but the whole system, part of it is: 'How is it going to work out?', is 'What will the game be at the end?', 'What will the game turn out to have been?' By the time we finish we will have a set of rules for something that we've done...but, but somehow you invite other people to join you in that and I think that's also, you know, you are attracting people with the power of your questions, I mean, and getting people involved.

And I think, what, I also like is the double roles. Because you're obviously, when you present yourself with Howard, you're just starting a PhD and you are determined - Howard's opening question is 'So, you're the student' - you are determined to be a student, determined to go around with all the privileges of that position, just go up to anybody you are the least bit interested in, go up to anyone who takes your passing fancy and ask them a question (laughing). So, you're willing to let anyone, you're willing to try out hundreds of people in the role, you're auditioning teachers all the time.

Yeah, and yet at the same time, you are also...very clearly, you've been a teacher, you just told me you were a teacher, even before you did your Masters. So, in a sense you've been a teacher for at least as long as you've been an academic, I mean, an adult student. And I think that those two roles are...incompatible. And one of the things I was really interested in, I think I've got it right but I don't remember now, is Howard talks about 1909, 'Freud was a bit of a pedagogue until 1909'...and I want to know what happened in 1909. Um, because I think the thing that is partly interesting, even in relationship to Freud is 1910, the IPA, what becomes the IPA, the International Psychoanalytical Association gets established. Psychoanalysis is institutionalised, both in Vienna and in the world at the same time and if you look at their initial constitutions, Freud's name is there at the beginning, I mean, the initial documents in both cases, Freud's name is there at the beginning but up until then, Freud is a bit of a pedagogue for Howard and at the same time, he's also a bit of a student. Um, and there's a, and I think...I've probably got it wrong, I think it's Carol Gilligan anyways, did some really nice work about...Freud's interlocutors, his analysands started being largely female. Freud's very happy in letters and correspondence in the nineteenth century to talk about, you know, uh, Cecily M., I think is her case study, as being his teacher. Freud claims he not only learnt from Charcot and Chrobak and Brouardel, but he learnt from his patients, I mean they weren't his students because they were actually, he was, it was a medical situation - he was

the Doctor, they were the patients - they were ill. But in a sense, they taught him how to treat them.

Um, or sort of reciprocated...and largely female...and one of the things that happens over time as Freud's institution, practice becomes more institutionalised as more and more of his analysands become his students...they are coming into analysis with him in order to learn practice analysis – they may or may not be completely neurotic individuals but they are not there to have their neurosis cured, they are there to learn how to do psychoanalysis and as a result they are more male than female. And so, I don't know exactly what happens in 1909, but one of the things Carol Gilligan talks about is Freud becomes much more closed at a certain point when he stops, his analysands stop being women in the majority and um, when he, as it were, stops listening to them and stops learning from them. And I wonder if there's not a point, we can call it 1909, we can call it any date, but some time in that period where, all of a sudden, Freud stops being both a teacher and a student. I mean, you know, the thing that Howard doesn't like, the pedagogical side of Freud, is also the side where Freud's still learning, um and then after that Freud obviously, a key number, a whole lot of psychoanalytical concepts don't exist in 1909. But I'm not sure where Freud, you know, he tells us in the bit I was reading where he learnt the sexual etymology of the neurosis. But where he learnt about the death drive. Um, it would be the later concepts, ego, id, super-ego. I'm not sure that Freud ever learnt those. Um, he invented them, created them, conceptualised them but I'm not sure he learnt them, in the same way he does, say, the sexual etymology of the neurosis. What are we all doing teaching. You teach, I teach. It's a way to make a living. But part of it is do with the fact, that for all of us, I think there was a real pleasure, and a really strong emotional experience and pleasure in learning. It could have been school learning, it could have been something else. Um, but there is a way, a sense in which those things are related and a lot of people, I think, end up teaching because they've liked learning so much um, and don't want it to end. It's not that, now they've learnt, they feel obliged to go, and you know, and repay a debt to society or any of that other sort of, ah...you know, economy of exchange or reciprocation or something like that. It's actually, they teach to go on learning as a way of continuing that experience rather than that has come to an end. Um.

Um.

Yeah.

And which is also why, I think. It's both, we're talking about accidents and coincidences. It's both an accident that you've started off with Howard, um, but it's also, and one of Howard's interests as well as pedagogy is psychoanalysis, um but that psychoanalysis is one of the places that is most strongly formalised, or theorised if you want, maybe that's a better word, um, the relationship between theory, and, and, theorised, both the relationship between theory and

practice and the indissociability, um...of them. Because there is no...I mean how do you learn to become an analyst? You know, Freud, there's some wonderful...actually, I should, I should read it to you...

Oh yeah, and it's only, it's only a very few of, I mean, more than a handful, but it's very, very few, probably fewer than twenty of the initial analysts who weren't analysed. Um, some of them were analysed in odd circumstances that is part of what, what I enjoy, um, about the early history of psychoanalysis - it's there also, it's a game they're making up, um and there is a sense, although there are, there are hierarchies implicit in that, you know, everyone's not playing equally, it's also a game that their...it's more than Freud that's making it up. Um, they're actually thinking about that relationship and part of it's... you know, you read the opening pages of the introductory lectures and they're unbelievably seductive because Freud's basically saying: 'I can't, here I am lecturing to you, come to a lecture hall to learn about psychoanalysis. I can't teach you psychoanalysis, nobody can teach you psychoanalysis. I could tell you, and I like the phrase, in English it works out nicely, I can tell you 'about' psychoanalysis as if around, you know about/around, we can circle about psychoanalysis but I can't actually teach it to you. I can neither cure you nor teach...

Um.

Yeah, I think psychoanalysis...

Yeah, um...

Yeah, and I think something can happen where you can also learn. Um, because, you know, one of the things that clearly, although there are didactic or pedagogical analyses. You know, you go into analysis, you know, training analysis to learn, one of the functions of which is to learn to be an analyst, it's a requirement of being an analyst. But it's not a formal pedagogical exercise, it is also an analysis, um, at the same time. And I gather they have quite different fields, and possibly aims and certainly in terms of how long they last and the rest of that, from historically, there will be differences between those and what one would argue are more, more clearly therapeutic analyses, but they may only be differences in degree and not in kind. Um, there's something about psychoanalysis being a process, from which no one is exempt...and then, you know, the big question becomes...except Freud?

And that's, you know, one of the things, you know, classically about beginnings. Um, you know, Freud comes in to the story of, you know, Charcot's already started telling Brouardel the story, but whatever the story of psychoanalysis is, everyone, always comes into it after the beginning. Um, including, I mean I would argue, probably thinking about it, Freud probably comes in...I mean, you are in a sense, if psychoanalysis begins with Anna O. as you were talking to Howard

about, you know, Freud's already...that's a story that's already started, um, ah, Brouardel's relationship with...Brouardel's treatment of Anna O.

What do you mean?

Well, for Jacotat, it clearly doesn't matter, you want to learn anything in the world, you start with Fénelon's *Télémaque*, which I think is (laughing) one of the joys, the outrage of it. And clearly when he was working with small children, that wasn't necessarily always the case. But this idea that you learn to learn and having learnt to learn, everything else can follow. And I do, from that, I find quite troubling, because I know, I only have Rancière's account of it. This notion of, there's a boy in the neighbourhood who is quote/unquote 'retarded' and again this is the whole language of catching up. Um, you know, and there's obviously a question, you know, in terms of...without state provision and the rest of it, what's going to happen to him. Jacotat teaches him Hebrew. He'd rather the boy learnt...he doesn't teach him because Jacotat teaches nothing, I don't know whether Jacotat knows Hebrew or not. The boy learns Hebrew (laughing). And then goes on to become a lithographer – he has a craft, he has a trade. Now, I have absolutely no idea whether the boy's Hebrew is Hebrew or not (laughing). I mean, that is to any Hebrew scholar, to any written scholar or to any Hebrew speaker I have no idea whether communication would have been possible or not. The boy learnt and having learnt in some sense, you learn to learn, um, and having learnt Hebrew or Fénelon's *Télémaque*, everything else can follow...um.

Yeah.

But the flipside of that, having just seen it recently, the flipside of that for me is the scene in *Bande a Part*, um, the Godard, which is just wonderful in a language school where there's a whole bunch of late adolescents...do you know the scene?

In their early twenties, there is a language school and clearly there are a couple of guys, clearly they are the heroes of the film and they are there just to pick up girls. Um, but the teacher is very funny, because she gives them, the translation exercises, from French to English, she gives them are, bits of, French translations of Shakespeare (laughing), clearly the kids don't even want to be in school, or they want to be there but their interests aren't learning what the extents of the curriculum is and the exercise is to be given French translations of Shakespeare and then you have to translate them into English (laughing) which is...um, but no, that's the scary thing about the story of *Télémaque*, or Fénelon's encounter with *Télémaque* is the kids, you know, what he was impressed by is, not that they learnt to learn French but they learnt to write French so well because they had learnt to write French from Fénelon, they were writing Fénelon's French which to me is just...I've never tried it but, but it's such an

exciting...I don't know what the framework would be under which it could happen, but maybe that's the power of it as a story that, that...

Partly, because he was working on the text as a pedagogical exercise for the Duc de Bourgogne. Is that...

Yeah, it became his story.

The question of ownership of stories because you asked me to save the...and I'm now going to get the title of the film wrong...I think it's Close Up but it's a film by Kiarostami. Um, and its about a filmmaker. The story goes, and I don't know in what order to tell all of this, but the story goes: a bloke insinuated himself into a bourgeois family in Tehran by impersonating Mohsen Makhmalbaf who is at that point the most famous Iranian filmmaker and he said he wanted to make a story, he wanted them to star in his next film. And they got all very interested in this. Um, and then, of course, it turned out, he was just a nutter. Um, and then, what happens, is the nutter then gets thrown in jail and tried, ok, for impersonating Makhmalbaf and goes to prison, um and you know, at various points, along the way, there are a whole variety of lessons that are learnt...apparently. Including, for example, the fact that the Father said: 'Well, I knew all the way along that the guy was a fake but I thought it would be good for my children to learn this, they were in their late teens, early twenties. It would be a good lesson on the way the world works. For them to learn all of this. So he instantly distances...it didn't happen to me but I thought it would be a good, I would teach...it would be a lesson for others. I didn't need to learn the lesson, I already learned it, but my children didn't learn it, so they needed to be taught and it would be a good learning experience for them. He's already distanced the authority of the patriarch. Um, but the beauty of it is, this is a film (laughing), where all of a sudden, the guy gets out of prison, Kiarostami comes up to him and says 'I'd like you to star in a film of exactly those events, I'd like you to play yourself, I'd like you to restage the whole thing for the camera.' So, he's playing himself, playing someone playing Makhmalbaf. Except, I think the film ends with Makhmalbaf actually meeting, whom he'd never met, the guy, Makhmalbaf is actually the one who meets him out of the gates of prison at the end of the film...I think. So, you have this wonderfully involved film and you really don't know what you're watching, because you don't know, you're not entirely clear to what extent it's restaged and to what extent, people's...you know, the Father's knowledge 'I knew all along', to what extent, obviously the whole thing because its repetition, you have the luxury of hindsight, so hindsight's intervened to make it a different story. But also, the beauty of it is, it's a great film and it's not Kiarostami's. Kiarostami doesn't know if it's his or not. You know, he was in interview. He said, he cannot bear, I mean, I saw him at the NFT, he cannot bear to look at any of them again, when he's finished a film, he cannot bear to look at it again, its too painful and he said he was in Italy for eight days on an eight day seminar, and they did nothing but talk about this film, 'Close Up' or 'Close

something' um, and he could look at it again and again because he didn't feel it was his. Um, this whole question of something's happened but whose story is it to tell? Is it Makhmmalbaf because it was his identity in the beginning that was appropriated, which is the cause of the whole thing, in the way you can appropriate something or someone's whole life story, um...is it the nutter who...is it the family that got taken in...whose story is it to tell? Um, and Kiarostami didn't feel it was his.

Yeah...no, exactly.

Um, and at some point, I think that's the key point of the power of a story, is the categories of fiction and documentary.

And that maybe because we haven't talked about it, is the performed side...of performed absence. Because one of the things I think is, and it comes up in relationship to the film is, when you watch is, what's being performed, whose performing for the camera and if they are performing, they are performing being themselves but being themselves, as they were the last time around, possibly, if you take that, you know, it's a documentary of a fictional event or...but it was a real experience for people but it turned out not...it turned out to be based on a fiction, i.e. this person was Makhmmalbaf because he wasn't, um, and that question of performance, I think is really interesting because one of the things...and I think that's so true of teaching specifically from our own experience as learning...as learners. Is...when are you performing as a teacher and when are you not and whose in control of that because that for me, is the beauty of those Freud anecdotes. Is...these are guys, it's after work, they've done their lecture for the day (laughing), you know, they're at a party, they're socialising or it's a walk, they've seen their client, they've done their...they're no longer the medical teacher, they're not performing as medical teacher when they relate the joke...

Because for him, they can say all of these things precisely because they are not performing as figures of authority, you know, it's not magisterial when they say that, I mean, yes, they're aware of hierarchical imbalance, that's what's making them uncomfortable, maybe that's what's causing them to joke with their students in the first place but they're not performing as those who have knowledge. Um, that performance has ended, they've left the consult, the room at the space of the consultation, they've left the medical amphitheatre, they've left the lecture hall, they're not teaching, um, but for Freud they haven't stopped performing as teachers and it's that gap in performance, they don't think...I mean, you know, one way of understanding the story might be...they don't think they're performing but Freud's still, I mean, you know, something happens because they don't think they're performing, they're not aware they're performing...

Um.

I don't know. I have a feeling of, a notion of it being quite a hierarchical society, um, and quite highly structured...and I think one of the questions becomes...in a teaching situation, there is a hierarchy or there's an assumed delegation of roles...um, you'll be the student, I'll be the teacher, um and there are implicit hierarchies in that which aren't reversible. And, there's a performance that both parties take on and we'd happily interchange between the roles, not necessarily with the same person, um, but we happily take that on and yet at the same time...what happens at the end of the day? Someone you've been a teacher to...I mean, you know, with your students. It's like, how do you behave when class is over? Can you just go to the pub with them as equals?

I mean, not, not in any sense...but, but, you're somehow aware that you're not the person you are with other people with whom you're not...sorry, let me start again, because that was just a long sentence. But, with those people, outside of the classroom situation, the so-called learning situation, with those people, you are still the person who isn't currently teaching. The person who in other circumstances is the teacher. Where as, presumably there are lots of people in our lives with whom you don't have that problem, that difficult situation, I mean most of...

Um.

Yeah, there may not be lots of levels but one of them isn't that, that assumed delegation or distribution of roles.

You're getting tired.

Say more.

31

³¹ One often has occasion to observe the remarkable degree to which the public simply accepts an artist's statement about a work of art and, in a way, maintains its trust in there being a faithful correspondence between the statement and the realisation; as if the statement was not a production in its own right with its own logic and motives but offered unmediated information about the way the work is to be perceived. And yet it must be allowed that a work may be motivated by circumstances that are alien to its definition, quite simply because this definition corresponds either to what the artist wants to show (as opposed to what can be seen in the work), or to the position that the artist wants us to adopt with regard to the work. To call into question the meaning or value of the statement would not, however, imply calling into question the artist's good faith or intelligence. It is not a matter of knowing whether the work is or is not what it is said to be, but of understanding the motives behind a choice of definition and being aware of the possible gap separating it from what it designates.

It's very simple. Art that claims to be about nothing, absence, silence, emptiness, vacuity, nothingness, ugliness, meaninglessness, uselessness, trivia, the negligible, the absurd, boredom...never is. We could even say that for the observer who is not taken in or deluded by the statement, such works produce precisely the opposite effect. How can it be that nothing is

But you've said it all...for me. And I hope this doesn't sound like a word game. It's 'about' the conceit of nothingness. Forget conceit for a moment. About, around and about, to walk about. About, about is never...if you about somewhere you're near enough to it but you're never there.

Yeah, I mean, sort of like, as a presupposition, like, sorry this is, I guess I'm intrigued by the...and I don't know what the etymology of about is...but to be about something is never to be there. It's to be around...

I don't think we're ever out of the story.

And when we listen to a story we become...the story ends up always being about us, I mean, it's not only about us, its also always about itself and its also about its own telling.

Yeah, whether we...I think there are ways...I mean, not to talk about it now...but I think there are ways of that to be the case beyond simply questions of identification...it's not simply a question of identifying with a person's story or not...or negatively identifying with them...God, I would never have done that...it's about more than identification but, and again this word 'about' keeps on circulating...but just thinking of circumambulation, circumlocution, to walk around, to be about something...

(laughing) No, I just love the phrase, your phrase: 'identifying your S1's'.

Well, I don't know it sounds like filling in a tax return. No...to successfully complete this form, you will need to, or this process, you will need to identify your S1's. Having identified your S1's, da, da, da...I don't know, I mean I don't speak 'Lacanesque', I don't know what follows from having identified your S1's. But, it almost sounds like, you know, emotional bird watching, if there were such a thing. As if there were particularly rare or desirable ones to be observed.

always something, and what is it that makes an artist want to obtain this dimension of absence if, ultimately, they already know that the undertaking is vain, the project impossible? I ma not going to try to analyse the ways of formally expressing nothingness here, or the strategies of formally incorporating nothingness in the actual making of an artwork. I would simply like to show that the use of this concept of nothingness, as applied to the artist's statement about the work, constitutes a strategy designed to dash our hopes as viewers.

But what are these hopes and on what are they based?" - Pierre Bismuth, 'Never believe an artist who says their work is about nothing: the culture consumer's fear of the void' in *Nothing* (eds. Graham Gussin and Ele Carpenter, , Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, 2001, p.180f ISBN 1 902854 09 8

Yeah, and I think its strange, and I don't know how the French works but the notion of the pass is both to pass, to pass on, to transmit but also in English, it's pass/fail.

I...

Yeah, but the French enjoy being scathing about psychoanalysis in England, well Lacanian psychoanalysis in England...so I don't know.

But I think it's that play for me partly, going back to what Howard was talking about with you and supervision. That play in pass between passing on, which, like a story...it's no better, to tell a story, recount, raconter, we all do it, it's something we don't know how not to do. There's no particular, there are no skills...well, I suppose there are minimal skills involved but it's something we are all equal in, we can all do it. It would be stupid to judge people on whether or not they could pass things on. It's like, who doesn't know how to gossip. I mean, we can claim not to gossip, to gossip or not to gossip, but who doesn't know how to do it. We are all equal in our ability to pass things on and yet at the same time, there is also implicitly this judgement: pass/fail...ooh, so there's also somewhere, and you're not being judged on your ability to transmit, but in the process...through the process of transmission, there will ultimately be a judgement, um, a judgement as to whether something has been accepted or not and, and...

I don't know, um, but at the same time...and I'm sure its incorrect as a model, but, but, my way of understanding it would be, to go back to things we've already been talking about, would be Breuer, Anna O. Freud's the one who passes, I mean, Freud's the intermediary. Um, I'm sorry, I don't know how to put this but in a sense Breuer is the...I mean, Howard, there's Howard and the two people he tells and then, the people who are going to judge that telling. OK, in a sense there is also Breuer and Freud who is the intermediary who tells the story, I mean...and we know now historically, Freud completely lied, you know, whether he misremembered or not, but, but, wilfully misconstrues, mistranslates, um, the story of ANNA O. and Breuer's treatment of Anna O. You know, you go and read Jones's biography and her questions of phantom pregnancies and, you know, there are enormous, sort of...all of the, all of the Freud bashers are out there in the archives going you know, 'Freud was deceitful', and, you know, he was completely unreliable as someone passing things on but maybe the key isn't...I mean, as if what mattered were how well it were passed on, as if psychoanalysis didn't begin in the pass, in the very action, the fact that it didn't happen to Freud, that Freud's an intermediary and that, you know, the reader and then the psychoanalytic...the, as yet to exist, psychoanalytical world as the recipient who judged, um and they judged Breuer, and the pass was successful.

All those things, yeah.

And in what language are we going to...might they, might they not be the same thing.

But, I think, to go back to the PhD. What's really funny is, your teaching, to me...may be your in that situation of being in a double. The PhD's the strangest thing in the world because...it's ultimately the point at which you are deemed to have caught up. You can't do any more degrees, you can't have any more, I mean, you can change fields, but you can't have any more formal education than getting a PhD, that's the end. So, if education, as a process, which we were talking about earlier, is entirely about catching up, the degree is about the moment where it's formally admitted that you've caught up. So, once you've got that, you've passed.

But, that's the, for me...one of the things that's quite fascinating about...I have no idea what the beginning of education looks like but, as an end of education in every sense, um, as an end of education, there's something...very difficult about that. You write a dissertation as if you were the equal of the person reading it, as if you had no teacher, you are, at this point doing original research. Um, you have somehow writing it, you've already brought it to an end, in order to be able to write it, and yet, and the person reading it, reads it as if you were his or her equal, the examiner reads as if you were his or her equal and yet until they've passed it, you're not. And there's that weird gap between, that moment as it were, where you're catching up and once you've got the degree, you've passed, you've caught up. Um, but, but as you know, you've already caught up before then (laughing), that's what the whole process of doing a doctorate is formally about. It's very strange, you spend all these years writing this, researching and writing and doing this doctorate which is the activity, you know, and in the process of doing that, you have caught up. But, sorry, does that make any sense, there's that gap between the process by which you have caught up, by which the gap has closed, um but then you haven't written the dissertation yet, and then you write the dissertation and all of a sudden...someone says you've passed.

Yeah, exactly. There's no equality until they've passed it and yet they have to read it as if you were their equal, um, ah...which I think is quite a difficult situation to...I've forgotten one of the other meanings of the word pass, or one of the many other meanings of the word pass is to pass as something you're not. To pass as white, to pass as straight...I mean, whatever...but, but to masquerade.

Yeah, yes, that's also...

To overtake, to walk past but also to pass as something, and I think that's...possibly gets back at the question of performance where the storyteller is always never quite him or herself, the storyteller is always this thing called the storyteller.

This entity, yeah. Which isn't to imply that lots of people aren't acting...you know, we're not all acting umpteen roles in daily life but the storyteller is always also performing as a storyteller as well as being him or her, or performing other roles that he or she has, more regularly.

I don't know. Why can't you teach a story? What's the difference between me saying to you: 'Tell me a story' and 'Teach me a story.'

And I can learn it. I can, I can decide to take it on board.

But does that not sound odd to you... 'teach me a story'. I mean, your ill in bed, you're unhappy, you want distracting in some form or another, tell me a story but the implication is always that next time, the other person is ill in the bed, you know...you can tell a story. And of course, the injunction, tell me a story, the demand, tell me a story is almost always met by: 'Oh my God, I don't have any.' That, sort of, being put on the spot, your first reaction is not to have any, but that's another matter...

Um, you might say to someone, 'teach me how to tell a story.'

And there is an art, in the sense of there, being a craft. Um, and, and, but, but, that's not the same, there's still a big gap between, I mean, 'Teach me how to tell a story well', um, that's a... 'Teach me to tell the story the way you tell it.' That's not the same as 'teach me a story'.

Can I tell you one last story. I mean, it feels like a last story. Um, it's a story about teaching and I'm afraid it's no way near as fun as (laughing) Howard's stories about teaching and learning. But I was just reminded and it was something that bugged me enough at the time that I've remembered it. But I was teaching and a student came to me about a paper and to talk about the class. Bright student, um...interested, politically engaged, one session to go in the class, I mean you know, we'd meet twice a week for thirty weeks and sort of said to me: 'What's this course all about?' So I replied. It was a course, it happened to be on Freud and it happened to be on fiction. And he said: 'To be honest, I haven't liked the Freud that we've read and I haven't liked the fiction either.' And he'd wilfully written essays on texts that we hadn't read in the class and they were interesting in their own way but he said, 'What's this course all about?' I was, sort of like...oh shit...you know, panic...on my part. So we talked about listening and about being a listener. And, and I guess for me, it's partly, I would substitute at the same time, a reader, and being a reader but, but, um and there's that, always that gap between the oral and the written, which I know we haven't explored, but it comes back by the very nature of the project, um, the fact that we are speaking to you (laughing) and we have to read, at some point, we or someone else has to read as written what we never wrote. Um, but we talked about, lets just say, about

listening and about being a listener. Um, off the record, this course would have been teaching you after Freud about being a listener with all the ethical and political consequences of that. It would teach you that if it could, you know, because, I think, it can. The student said a variety of things in response. Um, you know trying to work it out and finally said to me, 'You mean, it's not about the conclusion, it's about the process.' Which, you know, as a statement, you and I, not only have you and I heard many times before (laughing), we've all heard...but as a statement I think I'd been making since the beginning of term so that's why...he went off really, his final words to me are, 'it's not about the conclusion, it's about the process', he went off excited, and he said: 'If I'd known that from the beginning, this would have been my favourite class.' (laughing) And, I just was so upset by this. I was angry, angry at him, angry at myself. Um, because it was a course about psychoanalysis and I had not thematised this, it was nothing except about process. Um, so, I had a sense that I had failed because the student was only understanding, you know, the course, apparently in the last week when I had been trying to teach Freud from the very beginning as a way of listening, psychoanalysis as a process. And we've talked about that, that now, a process in which knowledge is positional from the very first class. So, and that's the things Howard was getting at, um, you know, very much when Howard's talking about the fact that Freud didn't, one of the ways he said Freud saw pedagogical, may also be shorthand for...anyway, as he later elaborates, Freud stops saying 'this is what's the matter with you' - he found other ways of intervening, that could be the case. Anyway, so I thought I had been saying exactly this. Anyway, anger hadn't yet subsided. I was telling this, needing to tell all this stuff to friends, long suffering friends...things I can't work out, keep getting told as stories, again and again, until finally the penny drops and, um, I can stop telling them. Um, anyway, um, I was reminded of my last question to him which is, you know, I sort of said to him. I do remember having said to him towards the end of our talk 'Why didn't you have a sense of the course earlier, what is it that we've done today, this meeting between you and me that's actually, why has this all come up?' And he said: 'I think it really helps to come and talk to you personally.' Now, I thought that was really...I remember thinking at the time that this is really weird because we hadn't talked about anything personal. There was something very odd about this because it was anything but a personal conversation, on his part or my part. In what we would normally understand as being personal. In fact, I hadn't been saying anything I hadn't been saying all term. Anyway, I was Hoovering. You go home, you Hoover. I mean. Domesticity and cleanliness have this wonderful side effect which is it gives you, the mechanical activity gives you time for things to slide into place. (laughing) I was Hoovering about two days later. Um, it's either cleaning the house or cleaning yourself in the bath or the shower and these things always collapse, or fall into place and all of a sudden I broke out laughing because the joke was on me. That I'd been taking, my frustration was and my inability to teach this guy was I had been taking it all personally. I had been taking it a little bit, I suppose like Breuer and not like Freud. Breuer's mistake, and the reason Breuer isn't the father of

psychoanalysis is that Breuer thought the patient, Anna O. had fallen in love with him. Where as, one of Freud's key assumptions is, because he'd heard the story first before it had happened to him was what happens if this is happening to me not because I'm Sigmund Freud, young attractive Viennese Doctor, what happens if its just because I'm sitting in the chair marked 'Doctor'. Um, um, so I'd been taking it personally. It is the process, after all. This is what I'd forgotten (laughing), it is the process, not the conclusion...and I'd been teaching this remark, since the beginning of term, precisely as a conclusion, um and the student rightly needed to hear it not as a conclusion, but to engage with it as a process. Um, so at the conclusion of the course, the beauty of it was...the student was really telling me and I suppose, you know, one day I'm angry - three days later, I'm quite pleased because I realise I've worked something out, I've learnt something. The student is telling me 'the course is over.' (laughing) Um, he thought he was telling me he needed to go back to the beginning to start again. In order to get anything from the course he'd have to go back to the beginning and do the whole thing again. And actually, what he was telling me was anything but that, he'd worked out that he had got something out of the course. Where more than that, he'd worked out it was something about working out. At which point...absolutely nothing, you know, more I could say. Not spoken to the student since, hasn't made any contact, that's fine. You know, he was constructing an ending but also, I've been constructing, in telling this as a story, I've also been constructing this as an ending, I suppose. Anyway, the student...yeah...THE END.

the teacher as storyteller

I may do later.

Are you going to start?

Yeah, you come here to...what do you come here for?

Yeah.

Um hmm.

OK, so what I mean more is...just remind me of the parameters of the project.

Um hmm.

So, I'm the foil through which they speak or I'm the person that pass...Forbes towards the end of his conversation talks a lot about the pass. On the way through, you can pass through things, or pass things on or pass things in an exam sense. And what I liked is the idea that I'm passing on Forbes's text to the next person. If you don't give the next person Forbes's text, that you're going to interview, what they've got to go on is this conversation. This conversation is premised on us having a realisation about Forbes's text. And it's also, Forbes's text in turn is, is premised on my text, or our original talk, I say text but talk is I suppose what I mean...but, but what I was getting at, really, is this idea of ...are we still working with a theme of performed absence?

Um hmm.

Yup, yup.

32

It's great we've got this the wrong way round. So we've had five minutes. I've said two sentences. You've spoken for the rest of the time...so what are we going to do?

OK...what I thought we were meeting to talk about, was...your notion of performed absence and the fact it meets my notion of pedagogy as a kind of absence if it's going to be ethical.

Yeah, and that my...how I got to that position in terms of defining pedagogy like that is through my interest in psychoanalysis, and so there's a lot of psychoanalysis in my first text, first talk, there's a lot of psychoanalysis in Forbes's first talk, or the second talk in the sequence and I thought that was quite interesting, that, that...we are still working around, presumably, this idea of a, a performed absence...for the teacher? Because this is a piece of work that you are carrying out on pedagogy.

Yeah.

OK, yeah.

The science of teaching, did you say?

Pedagogy is the science of teaching as performed absence. Because, I actually think, if you look at in a dictionary, pedagogy is defined as a science or an art. Umm, because I seem to remember having this discussion with somebody else. Because I've already seen it as much more at the level of an art, rather than a science.

So all you're doing though, when you say, something like: 'Freud is taught by his patients'...Freud is in the position of the student at that moment. Why is that surprising?

Because they are both processes?

Seven people.

³² "The Taoist concept of Wu Wei which literally translates as 'no action'. In essence it is concerned with the moment before thought, the empty space, the pause that exists before all action" - unsourced

Umm...I remember when I was doing some research at York. I got involved in a project there with a group of educationalists, who were coming from a feminist background in terms of educational theory and we were trying to discuss whether or not, um...women should be...whether there was a different form of pedagogy for women as opposed to men, or girls as opposed to boys. I think the position I was taking, was one that I had got from...I think it was Jane Flax, umm, either Jane Flax or...is she called Jane, I can't remember if she is called Jane Flax, or Gallop, might be Jane Gallop or it was a combination of ideas from both of them which was...pedagogy is a form of...um, imposition, and one or both of those writers, feminist writers using Lacan, umm had the idea that pedagogy has to be...a phallic discourse. You always, umm, well she feels, you sodomise your student because she uses the male teacher and the male student, you sodomise your student, you penetrate the student with your knowledge and they're in a passive position. And it's equivalent for her to buggery.³³ Um, and therefore

³³ "The Marquis de Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom* is a group of dialogues staging the sexual/philosophical initiation of a young girl. Also published under the title *The Immoral Teachers*, this book can be read as Sade's major consideration of the pleasures and dangers of pedagogy.

Philosophy in the Bedroom has been the pretext for essays by both Jacques Lacan and Luce Irigaray. The essays discuss widely divergent aspects of the text, making very different points. But there is one point that both Lacan and Irigaray make. Both the "master" of the Freudian School of Paris and the teacher dismissed from the Lacanian department at Vincennes point out that Sade's dialogues lay bare an institutional structure that is usually covered over. According to Lacan, Sade exposes the "anal-sadistic" in education; according to Irigaray, what is exhibited is "the sexuality that subtends our social order." Taking my cue from this, I propose to examine what is laid bare. Such an examination is a classic Sadian scene: the object is stripped and her or his body carefully examined and commented upon before any intercourse with it.

One of Sade's contributions to pedagogical technique may be the institution, alongside the traditional oral examination, of an anal examination. The Sadian libertines have a technical term for such an examination; they use the verb *socratiser* (to Socratize), meaning to stick a finger up the anus. This association between the great philosopher/teacher and this form of anal penetration recalls the Greek link between pedagogy and pederasty. A first glance at the sexuality Sade exposes behind the pedagogical institution could certainly suggest pederasty. The "master" in *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, Dolmancé, is an advocate of buggery, who indeed refuses on principal "normal" penile-vaginal intercourse. The only schoolmaster by profession in Sade's fiction, Rodin, who appears in *Justine* and *The New Justine*, likewise will only penetrate asses. Both Rodin and Dolmancé are 36 years old and have anal intercourse with their students who are just pubescent, between 12 and 16 years of age.

Pederasty is undoubtedly a useful paradigm for classic European pedagogy. A greater man penetrates a lesser man with his knowledge. The student is empty, a receptacle for the phallus; the teacher is the phallic fullness of knowledge. The fact that teacher and student are traditionally of the same sex but of different ages contributes to the interpretation that the student has no otherness, nothing different from the teacher, simply less.

This structure and its sexual dynamic became explicit in Sade. The student is an innocent, empty receptacle, lacking his own desires, having desires "introduced" into him by the teacher. If the

emancipatory kind of pedagogy, which is what Forbes talks about a little bit and which is what a Marxist would look at in terms of education as liberating. She, those two Lacanian feminists, if that's the right term for them, they would see pedagogy as never, umm...emancipatory but always oppressive. So, why I'm saying this...is because if we're talking about a performed absence so the pedagogue takes up some position, which, which Forbes mentions quite nicely as: 'yeah, how do we go about achieving, um...this performed absence?' But he never comes to any, any kind of conclusion as to what that might be like. He maybe says, it's a bit like the analysand/analyst relationship um where you...and he tells a couple of stories, a couple of amusing stories, because his stories, for Forbes, the story (laughs) always seems to have to be a joke as well...when he tells them...

That's what he claims, yeah, but he always tells his stories in the form of jokes.

But the real thing about that for me is that, if there's an absence...that can be less oppressive because in the absence...like he speaks of Jacotat and *The Story of the Ignorant Schoolmaster*³⁴, um the schoolteacher who teaches students who speak a different language from him...Law of which he knows nothing about but he manages in some way to teach them. That absence is not an oppressor, uh...way of teaching and I think that's very, very interesting in what comes out of what Forbes is talking about and that what we've got to try and find if we are really going to be emancipatory in our teaching, and if our teaching is not going to be sexist, we're going to have to try to get some kind of umm, absence, so that the absence opens up a space for desire rather than oppression which is the antithesis of desire. Oppression is always somebody else's desire imposed on somebody. The teacher always knows best...what the student wants and that, that I think is very important in psychoanalytic texts about teaching as well. So (sigh)...for me, I think our project is very much an emancipatory project and yet at the same time, as a psychoanalyst, I can't see it as an emancipatory project, because, although psychoanalysis could be seen as a kind of praxis, although I'm a little uncomfortable about that, umm, I don't think that in the end, you emancipate the subject because they are always split. So there's a limit to how far we can go in our discussions of pedagogy. And that's we can go as far as the split subject but in the end...

There and not there...how do you mean?

phallus is a sign of desire, then the student has no phallus of his own, no desires, is originally innocent. The loss of innocence, the loss of ignorance, the process of teaching, is the introduction of desire from without into the student, is the "introduction" of the teacher's desire." – Jane Gallop, 'The Student Body' in *Thinking Through the Body*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p.43

³⁴ Forbes Morlock, 'The Story of the Ignorant Schoolmaster/The Adventures of Telemachus, For Example', in Knowledge, Learning and Migration, *The Oxford Literary Review*, ed. Caroline Rooney, vol.19, nos 1-2, 1997, pp. 105-132

Well, the split subject is a Lacanian notion that there's always, let's say an unknowable part of the subject. So, if we are dealing with a Lacanian subject, there's always a part of them that is not on the side of the symbolic but is on the side of the real and the real is unknowable. In fact, I wrote something before you came [*starts to fumble through his notes*] because, strangely, like um, like Forbes, soon as I had something to work with apart from just the conversation with you I started to have to make notes about what he had said, about maybe what I wanted to say and I felt that was a little bit artificial, and I came up with, um, this little, this little idea that I noted down about the real...umm...yeah, ohh, it's not as, as interesting as I thought because its approaching from a different angle but because psychoanalysis is precisely about an encounter with the real, psychoanalysis can never be taught, um, but that doesn't mean other things can't be taught. Umm, I'm saying since there's always a bit of the real that comes with the subject and the real is where we construct the fantasy and the symptom to help us to live, we will never, we will never emancipate the subject from themselves. We can maybe try to emancipate them with our teaching from certain kinds of oppression. When I say our teaching...I mean the performed absence. We can try and get rid of a certain level of oppression and if we are talking about sexist issues in teaching, there must be a level of oppression that remains there but the notion of a performed absence for me is much more about...um...an ethical teaching which goes beyond the mere morals of a society, or whatever, which I'm not sure where that leaves us with, with things.

That's right, that's in a sense what I'm saying.

Yup. Yup.

Um hmm.

No, it's not possible to...and Forbes mentions this. You can't psych...he talks about, I think LA - people rushing to work or meetings and having psychoanalysis on their mobile phones in their car and I don't think that's...what I would consider to be analysis. There has to be a presence, even though it's a presence that as Forbes says is a non-visual presence and its maybe, urr, not an auditory presence either, virtually silent presence.

35

You umm, in Forbes's text that I read where he starts talking about performed absence, you've put a heading 2 or two strokes and I thought that was interesting that you're...since we're beginning to talk about transmission, whether it should

³⁵ "In Shinto Buddhism and Taoism is carried the concept T'ai Hsu, the great nothing, and it is at this point that anything can happen. It is these empty spaces that make a room liveable. Thus, while the tangible has advantages, it is the intangible that makes it useful." - unsourced

be oral or written, um and for me, and that's why I keep calling it a text. Forbes hasn't spoken to me, he's, he's...I've read something he's written so its not a discourse, even though its written as a discourse, it doesn't come over as that, um, it comes over as a text. And, but I wondered why you put, and you've also put things in brackets sometimes and I wondered how much intervention that was on your part...in a classic, maybe, kind of teacher way, to frame the discourse, and to give it a meaning so your intervention on Forbes's text, although you are trying to reproduce everything he says, you know there's the punctuation, there's the paragraphs, and thank god for the paragraphs because, you know, when you see huge pages of text, it's very off-putting. But, that is your attempt to create a meaning out of his words and to render it as a text in a way that um, it's not spoken. And I wonder if that's moving away there, the teacher is becoming very visible. You like to offer these lectures as the, you're the kind of invisible teacher on one level but actually, you're becoming increasingly evident, when I looked at that text, as the person that had organised that and your interventions are very subtle but they are nevertheless shaping the meaning of that text for us.

Um hmm.

36

So you're saying there were two definite parts, umm...to have not acknowledged that would have made it artificial, but isn't the whole thing artificial? You travel with specific questions, this is not a conversation.

(laughing)

Is what clear for me?

Yeah.

³⁶ "Somebody asked me but I didn't do it, in Germany to, to make a monument about the...holocaust and I said I didn't want that because I don't want to make monuments about the holocaust. But I told them that I think that the best solution to make a monument about the holocaust will be to make a monument very, very fragile and monuments that you have to rebuild every week. Because if you make a monument in bronze, after some time you forget completely why the monument was there but if you have to rebuild the monument every week, you must to repeat the prayer every week and you must to think about the monument and if the monument is destroyed-this time is very dangerous and for this reason I think it is much better to make very fragile monuments and not heavy monuments. I try to, to make pieces who are very open to plenty of interpretation and not to say something but to say a story and the story, everybody can listen to just what they want to understand." – Christian Boltanski in *Christian Boltanski*, edited and directed by Melvyn Bragg, Phaidon, ISBN 0-7148-6045-X

Well, I find it highly constructed but now that you mention...that, or what you mentioned earlier was...he sort of prepared it in advance. Maybe it's that construction I notice.

So there's a high level of construction in the Forbes text. It's, it's not a natural conversation is it?

Sure.

So, Forbes text is preoccupied with storytelling. And what I'm unclear about having read it though, is that there's a series of, well I started counting them at one point, umm, but there's a lot of stories that he actually tells but these are stories that he's read somewhere or he's heard from someone that may have been written down in several different places that sometimes he compares the same story told by a couple of different writers. Now, how does that storytelling notion link to the concept of pedagogy or performed absence? That's what I was a little unclear about.

OK.

Right, so his text is in itself an example of the theory that he is trying to put forward. Sorry, if I can put it like this. What I notice in particular is, the...the text that we've got from Forbes is set up around what he calls a gap, I believe it is. In other words what he is positing is there's an asymmetry or what he later calls a hierarchy between the teacher and the student. And knowledge is on the side of the teacher.

Yeah. And the student is passive which is maybe a very traditional model of teaching, yup. And what amazes us though, is we learn to speak without a formal teacher. Um, without that asymmetry becoming present. Now, why he then...so that, that is the first few pages of his text because I think I'll call it a text rather than a conversation where he's establishing this asymmetry. He then introduces the story and as soon as you read the story you realise it's a joke which, which is a nice little thing because he then talks about jokes quite a bit too. But he introduces the story because it dissolves that asymmetry for Forbes. Do you feel he's saying that as well? That the, the story, is a way, what he says is that the story doesn't belong to anybody umm, and it's always repeatable, and it comes from nowhere or from somewhere. But you have it, you pass it on, anyone can tell it.

Um, he talks about Chinese Whispers.

So, what is the story. It's a mode of transmission that's non-hierarchical.

OK. So what he says in his text is the story explains nothing. So, in other words the story doesn't have a meaning. So, you can't make a sense out of the story and yet, of course, it does have a certain meaning, especially if it's a joke because in the end we laugh at something, we make a meaning of it or maybe, if we don't laugh, we don't make a meaning of it.

And he shows the detail doesn't matter because he quotes two different stories, sorry, the same story told by two different people. And the detail is irrelevant almost. Or maybe...

OK, so you begin to own the story in the way you tell it. And he speculates quite a lot towards the end where he says, nobody says teach me a story, they say tell me a story. They might say teach me how to tell a story but they won't ever speak of the story being taught as such. But we all...and I guess this is his point, even though he doesn't say it explicitly, we all learn these stories. And he gives a...he introduces a personal side, because interestingly he keeps saying how much he enjoyed the anecdotes we shared in our first meeting, which I'd forgotten about, and how it was a very personal conversation. His is a very formal one and yet he does acknowledge that, you know, for him *The Story of the Ignorant SchoolMaster*, the person who teaches without any knowledge of what he's teaching, by taking a position, that's a very personal thing for him. That story has got a very personal meaning because he tells us that for a couple of years, everyone he met, he told that story to, in a variety of ways. So we can take over a story and try to make it our own in a sense but it will always escape us, we always pass it on, umm, somebody else gets it and this is presumably a model for teaching, that he's coming out with, that is you don't put yourself in the place of the authority...and you and I have spoken before about the way *The Symposium* starts³⁷ with these ideas of love being transmitted through a series of different characters, the reliability of which we know nothing and they took the events that have been described, took place a long time ago. His story about Jacatot takes place in the French Revolution, over two hundred years ago. Umm, he's got it from vaguely unreliable sources. He doesn't know how much is Jacatot's ideas, he doesn't know how much is...

Yeah. And I, reading his account in the article that you gave me. Umm, I don't know how much is his interpretation either but I've gone on to write that same story into a paper that's being published in a psychoanalytic journal and so it goes on with nobody quite owning the story. And that's maybe a model of a kind of pedagogy that diminishes authority, that diminishes the place of the big Other and I think that's very important if we have discovered something like that.

Ulysses. The Odyssey.

³⁷ "In fact, I'm well prepared to answer your question" – Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill, Penguin Classics, London, 1999

Right, so we've got a rough understanding of what's in the paper, umm, but what I think is interesting, is I would disagree with Forbes about the necessity to, umm, remove the asymmetrical structure. So, if we've agreed that the story is the vehicle that removes the asymmetry and makes us equal or reduces us to an equality. If I've understood that correctly from you, I may not have done but that's the...that's the risk that the next person who listens to this or reads this, that you're going to interview next, has to deal with, whether I've understood you correctly or not. But I would say, actually, we must maintain the asymmetry because...but, we have to position it differently. So the traditional asymmetry is on the side of the teacher as knowing, the student as unknowing. What psychoanalysis does is reverses that and puts the student, if we are going to use this simple dualism, the student and the analysand is the one that knows and for Lacotat, the student is the one that knows. It's just that they don't yet know they know and the teacher is the one that doesn't know. And to make the desire to learn grow, we need the asymmetry. Umm, we've got to have someone who stands there...

And I want to...

Yup. And what Forbes picks up on is something I call the fields of knowledge. And I think what the teacher does is operates in a symbolic or what I prefer to call structural position, they take a structural position where they represent the field of knowledge and then the student goes to work. I mean Lacan says in seminar one, and I probably quoted this last time, I can't remember that the teacher's job is to kick-start the student by any old means. Uh, by a sarcastic comment he says, umm, by a flippant remark. The last thing he's got to do is represent the embodiment of knowledge. Umm, somewhere else he says there's got to be an insistence in the umm, the willingness to know but that's not imposed by the teacher telling knowledge. It comes out of the student and their own needs to know something and the teacher has to, in a sense, guarantee that the quest is valid. Not necessarily, that the knowledge itself is valid, that's not the teacher's job. Now whether that tells us anymore about what...well, what Forbes helped me understand a little bit is I've been taking performed absence to mean teacher, in the sense that I understand the ethical teacher or the teacher who is absent whilst being present, the teacher without knowledge. This asymmetry is implicit in the performed absence for me. But what, what Forbes did, is he split the two words up and he looked at what absence is and then at what performance is. How do you perform an absence? Which, I hadn't thought about that before, and I think that's quite interesting too. How do you perform a nothing? And it comes down to, for him, I think in the analytic situation, ummm, as the 'umm, hmm' that the analyst says and he tells a little joke about the analyst answer phone probably has 'umm, hmm' on it rather than you know 'I'm out, would you like to leave a message after the beep'. The analyst answer phone will just say 'umm, hmm'. Umm, that seems to him to be the absence that is performed, becomes encapsulated in that little 'umm, hmm'. I must, I must pick a bone with what

Forbes says, though because he, in a sense, assumes that the analyst listens and creates a construction and the analyst, certainly within a Lacanian orientation...is not interested in construction. Construction is too much on the side of meaning. And the analyst is not party to it.

Umm, hmm.

Yeah, but the interpretation is...is not aimed at understanding what the patient's saying but it's aimed at provoking new speech in the patient. So your interpretation will have...

Sure, but you're not trying to give them meaning in your interpretation.³⁸ You're not saying 'Well, this means that'. You're saying something that they think 'Whoa, how does that fit with what I've been saying?' And then they're off with more material. In the end I...recently I was complaining in supervision which in the Lacanian school is a very central part of belonging to the school. The IPA have supervision, I think for a couple of years and then you can practice but it plays a very different role for Lacanians. And in supervision I was in a sense, complaining that my obsessional patients I found it very difficult to get any notion of meaning out of what they were saying or to construct anything where as the hysterical patients I found it much easier to construct a, kind of, reading of what they were saying. And the analyst...my supervisor said 'well, you're not there to create meanings', umm, but...yes, he's right, we shouldn't look too much for meanings or in other words for knowledge because what I'm looking for is the real, not for knowledge. And the real is without knowledge. It's not just outside knowledge, there is no knowledge of the real. Umm...if you're outside knowledge, it presupposes a knowledge but the real is not presupposing anything. So, that's what I mean when it's something more than not knowledge, it's the impossible. So, why we have a construction, is I might make a construction but that's to help me direct the treatment. It's not for me to communicate to the patient and I got from reading Forbes, I felt he was suggesting at times that it was about instructing the patient in some way. In which case we are reducing analysis to pedagogy in a traditional sense again. There's also some clarification needed, that...I obviously said something about Freud stopped teaching, seeing psychoanalysis as a teaching in 1909. And, I can't quite remember why I said that now. But, I think it was around, I can't remember my case histories in detail, whether it was Dora or...some other case, but I think it was Dora. Which again, is a case which feminist commentators on Freud and psychoanalysis have looked at in detail. But, up to then, he thinks you can communicate this construction to the patient and they'll get better, it's the missing bit of knowledge. He realises at that time, because of the failure of the

³⁸ "The analyst asks neither that the subject get better nor that he becomes normal; the analyst requires nothing, imposes nothing. He is there so that the subject may gain access to the truth of his desire, his own desire, and not so that he may respond to the Other's demand." – Jacques Lacan, <http://www.mythosandlogos.com/Lacan.html>

case, that's why I think it's Dora, that...there's nothing he can do. Umm, he can't communicate the knowledge, so what's his function, he has to rethink. It cannot be the pedagogic function of supplying missing knowledge. He realises that supplying that doesn't make any difference to the patient. In a traditional sense he has to be someone who simply holds open the field of knowledge for the patient to then find that knowledge. But that sounds a bit tedious and long winded.

Um. So, what I would agree with, what I would agree with Forbes...is...you've got to have a gap for, if this is what he's saying, you've got to have a gap...then he says, the story comes into that gap. And I'm saying well, the gap in itself is enough...I don't know what fills it. The student's work fills it.

So, if you're saying that our conversation is deliberately to deconstruct meaning by removing one of the voices in the conversation then...that must be very frustrating for you because your meaning on this conversation never comes through clearly. I've noticed this before in your work, as well, that you always put yourself at the mercy of your collaborator which is a very, uh, presumably, a very masochistic position to take as well. That, you must always rely on someone else to give it it's form, it's meaning or whatever, and you are effaced in that. Now, is that the complete removal of the teacher, is that the death of the teacher? You...so, the person who reads this text of what I've said will miss all the interesting things that you've said and the insightful comments you've had which are probably much more profound than mine.

Yeah, no one will ever hear that, you see (laughs).

Um, hmm.

Well, you say...

But you are actually, so you say you've got nothing interesting to say on this but actually, even more than me, who will appear six times if we do the twelve interviews as you intend with me going in between each one to transmit it to the next person. Umm, you will be the person that knows most at the end of it because you've interacted with all of it...in a first hand way.

Well...

Sure, but you're, you're...

You're constructing your knowledge as you go along but so am I. You know, we all are...I'm not teaching you. I mean, the position both of us are taking, we're not teaching anyone. We're constructing knowledge in front of each other...perhaps.

And is that the kind of teacher we are trying to be or is that the kind of teacher we are trying to talk about, this ethical teacher?

Um, hmm.

We were all...but that example you give of working with a class when I'd forgotten the answer actually removes the asymmetry which made us all equal that brings us down to, in a sense, Forbes's point. I'm saying, on the one hand, that I think it's necessary to have...umm, asymmetry but on the other hand I'm saying to you, one of my best lessons was when I forgot the answer or I couldn't understand a little bit and we all worked it out together. Umm, but...would the students have, I guess the question for me is, would the students have worked on that problem in the same way if I hadn't been the teacher that forgot it? So, there was something to prove. So if they had been reading that book jointly as a group. They had come across this page. They don't understand it. They go and ask the teacher...who understands it. But, by taking on the role of the teacher who knows nothing, who didn't understand the problem, ummm...I was able to...get them to work in a way that they wouldn't work before. It might have been motivated to be better than the teacher or might have been to help the teacher. It could have been all sorts of reasons they wanted to work.

But I still had to have the...

Yeah. Yeah But I think I was still their teacher.

But there, I think I was still obviously the...I was holding that together, probably. It wouldn't, that event wouldn't have taken place without me. So what they wanted in there was not the knowledge of the teacher but simply, the presence of the teacher. Umm...so what students' value is not your knowledge...yeah...

³⁹ "One night in Max's, I was sitting between Paul and Allen—we were all supposed to be leaving the next day to give a few lectures out west, and I suddenly just didn't feel like going, I had a lot of work to do. After I'd been complaining about it for a while, Allen suggested "Well, why don't I just go as you?" The few minutes after he had said that were like one of those classic movie scenes where everybody hears a dumb idea that they then slowly realise maybe isn't so dumb. We all looked at each other and thought, "Why not?" Allen was so good looking that they might even enjoy him more. All he'd have to do was keep quiet the way I did and let Paul do all the talking. And we'd been playing switch-the-superstar at parties and openings around New York for years, telling people that Viva was Ultra and Edie was me and I was Gerard—sometimes people would get mixed up all by themselves between people like Tom Baker (I, a Man) and Joe Spencer (Bike Boy) and we just wouldn't bother to correct them, it was just too much fun to let them go on getting it all wrong—it seemed like a joke to us. So these anti-star identity games were something we were doing anyway, as a matter of course. The next day, Paul and Allen with his hair sprayed silver flew out to Utah and Oregon and a couple of other places to give the lectures, and when they came back, they said that it had all gone really well. It wasn't until about four months later that somebody at one of the colleges happened to see a picture of me in the Voice and compared

But when you say, 'it's what they think you are', that immediately reminds me of Lacan's concept of 'the subject's supposed to know'. So...and, and Forbes alludes to it in his text where he says, you know, it's the well known joke of psychoanalysis that you go to the analyst to find something out but we all know the analyst doesn't know it. Um, but, that's the field of knowledge that I'm talking about. You've got to have someone who, who at least...acknowledges there is some knowledge and that is...but they are not going to impose knowledge on you because, by doing that, they are...preventing your own relation to any knowledge emerging. And maybe that's why, you know, you look at very, very intelligent, let's say A level students who are going to be going on to doctors – I teach a lot of A level students who are going to be doctors - and they are going to get, well...at present I've got some who are going to get six A levels. And they are very good at relating to that piece of knowledge they are given but I don't see these students able to think for themselves...in situations. Urrr, I don't see them being able to work with knowledge. They tend to be people who get very scared by...um...things out of the ordinary, that don't fit into their little knowledge based ideas and world and...I wonder if they will make good doctors in the sense that the doctor always works with people, not with knowledge. And...yet we're training them to be doctors by asking them to get very high grades at A level. The doctor is someone that evokes...maybe what I would call a transference in the patient. It's not about someone who really knows but we seem in society to have to get these very, very clever people to keep this illusion that the doctor knows. Very often the doctor doesn't really know what's wrong with you. Urr, they just guess and give you something and that's enough.

Transference is, is based, for Lacan, it's based on love and it's based on this position. The matheme that Lacan comes up with for transference is 'the subject's supposed to know'. So transference is when you think somebody knows something...urrrrr...that you want. And, that is also the basis, for Lacan, for, for love. Urr, he reads...I can't remember which seminar it is – it's the one on

it to the one he'd taken of Allen on the podium and we had to give them their money back. When the local newspaper out West called me for a statement, what could I say except, "It seemed like a good idea at the time." But the whole situation got even more absurd. Like, once I was on the phone with an official from one of the other colleges on that tour, telling him how really sorry I was when suddenly he turned paranoid and said: "How can I even be sure this is really you on the phone now?" After a pause while I gave it some thought, I had to admit, "I don't know." We went back to the colleges that wanted us to redo the lectures, but some of the places didn't want us anymore-one college said, "We've had all we can take of that guy." But I still thought that Allen made a much better Andy Warhol than I did-he had high, high cheekbones and a full mouth and sharp, arched eyebrows, and he was a raving beauty and fifteen/twenty years younger. Like I always wanted Tab Hunter to play me in a story of my life-people would be so much happier imagining that I was as handsome as Allen and Tab were. I mean, the real Bonnie and Clyde sure didn't look like Faye and Warren. Who wants the truth? That's show business is for-to prove that it's not what you are that counts, it's what they think you are." Andy Warhol, *POPism: The Warhol '60's*, pp.247-248

transference – urr, I think it's maybe 8, seminar 8, urr but the seminar on transference is um, the first, it's very hard to read actually, the first something like fifteen chapters. OK, so he's spending, um, probably six months almost out of a year's seminar, doing a reading of *The Symposium* because he sees *The Symposium* as the paradigm for transference because he reads the love that – I can't remember who it is now – Agathon maybe, no, umm...but anyway, he sees the love between this person and Socrates as, as a classic form of transference. He uses that as a sort of metaphor to discuss it. So, so love and transference are bound together but it's an issue of knowledge at the basis of it all.

Yup.

Where as we see...

Yeah.

And, and maybe that, that leads to a potentially, very abusive position. So once you're in that position of 'the subject whose supposed to know', you can either take the position Jane Gallop or Flax, that I mentioned earlier, takes, of you can bugger the student with that knowledge or you can do what the analyst does and not use that knowledge. So you...keep a space open and that's what I think we're trying to get with the ethical teacher. How do you keep that space open? And Forbes is saying, by telling stories, i.e. by not having an asymmetrical relation but by making us equal, teacher-student have equal ownership. And that's maybe one model of this transmission, it's not the one I'm talking about, I don't think.

Yeah.

So, but your model of the teacher is one that, um...provides and I think I have this as well, is a kind of emancipation for the student, you...in the sense of it's a real liberal concept, I think. You have access to more knowledge than them, so you've still got the asymmetry. You're putting knowledge on the side of the teacher but you show them these blobs of knowledge but not in a masterful way of saying you've got to be like this or that, you just say here, you plonk it on the table and they can look at it but then you're not saying well, this is what you've got to learn from it, you leave the actual learning alone. Forbes has difficulty with that and I had difficulty with it...earlier when I was doing some work. I don't understand what, what learning has got to do with teaching. That, that to me is really weird. Learning and teaching – have they got anything to do with – I know in psychoanalysis, Miller, umm, says something like, urr, teaching and knowledge are opposites and I think that is very, very true and it's very hard to...to find your way through that little maze once you start to think of it like that. Because we so usually associate...teaching is how you learn...but actually, we all know full well

that it's not how you learn. You learn so little from your teachers often or so, maybe you learn a lot from your teachers but not what they think you're learning.

40

Yeah.

Umm.

Yup, Yup. Yup.

So that's, I was going to say, so, so you learn to, if you want, turn your back on the teacher but actually, you better not turn your back on the teacher or you will get bugged. Um, but you, the way that teaching is presented at present, of disseminating or transmitting knowledge is you can absorb that knowledge and get praise and society's rewards for absorbing that knowledge, good A levels, good job or whatever it might be. Um, or you can say...no, that's not the knowledge I don't want...but that seems a...a difficult position to take because knowledge is already stacked on the side of the teacher and to not take the teacher's knowledge is to almost...agree – because you, you, the system would classify, classify you as failing if you don't take the teacher's knowledge- you would not be a useful member of that society or whatever.

So...

That reminds me vaguely of what...what, what you're saying reminds me vaguely of what I would call, what has been called the de-schoolers in the nineteen-sixties and seventies like Illich who were saying that actually...because if you're right...what, what they're saying is...society uses knowledge simply to rank people. It's got to somehow decide who does the...society has a problem in terms of distributing labour between competing sort of jobs. Whose going to get the good jobs with the good money and whose going to get the bad jobs? And all that teaching is about, according to them, is to structure society so that the people who get the terrible jobs and the worst pay. We can say to them, 'well, sorry, you just didn't learn properly at school. If you had done your lessons properly, you could have had the good jobs, the good pay and the good lives and therefore you deserve to be treated like a shit.'

Yeah, because school if that's the case is going to ossify your knowledge and you are always going to associate it with responding to the Other, the Other of knowledge whereas the analyst or the ethical teacher always positions themselves outside...owning that knowledge. Which is Forbes's idea the story

⁴⁰ 'He drove his kind of realism in to me so hard I bounced right into non objective painting' – Jackson Pollock on studying under Thomas Hart Benton at Manhattan's Art Students League, *Esquire*, Dec, 1983, reproduced in Simpson's Contemporary Quotations, 1988.

circulates, it's never owned. So, we've got a situation there that's...um, you've got a relation to knowledge but you don't own it and so Socrates says, you know, I know nothing. And that...it's, it's as simple as that in some respects. But that's not traditional teaching, that's not what gets you through school.

Um, um.

Oh, yeah.

Um.

Um, um.

...define.

Urr, yeah...you can sort of delineate it but you can't define it.

So, you are, so what we're trying to explore though as well, or what you're trying to explore in this series of works, if I've understood it is...by having me repeated after every speaker is...they, the next speaker only gets my text from now, not my earlier text. They only see this text...and they don't see the previous speaker's text. They only have it second hand from...our discussion.

They have my first text, do they?

OK, OK, I like the idea that they have my first text because that's the starting point and then they hear...Forbes's reactions, as it happens in this case, to my first text. Then they've got their response to my text, their response to my reading of Forbes's reading of my text and then it gets nicely messy. And you meanwhile can say what you want and tell them what you want. You've got access. You're in a privileged position when you go and speak to your next person because, um...you've got access to all of them, you can fill them in on the bits they don't know about, if they need filling in. I actually vaguely know that you're going to see...a woman next, so I deliberately, although I'd forgotten the references and I tried to find them before you came. And I couldn't find them. That's why...

Because we hadn't introduced any feminist reading into our discussion at all. Umm, and I began to remember that I had actually done quite a lot of work on that but it was probably ten years ago. I can't remember the kinds of conclusions I was coming to. But I was supposed to be writing a paper for a book, which in the end didn't come out on...a feminist pedagogy from a psychoanalytical perspective. Umm, dealing with very practical things, because it was a very practical book, about whether males and females should be educated together, umm because there are all sorts of practical concerns with that problem. I mean, what I was trying to say earlier is, although we are having a very theoretical

discussion, I think it's, has got practical implications, not in a state system, although you're saying tonight to me, you're beginning to...I think you're saying, you're beginning to put some of the things that we talk about, about the minimal, the more minimal role of the teacher into practice in your own work, in your own teaching.

But, but when I didn't turn up because I'd completely got the wrong date. They remember that...because it was so unusual. But they only remember the absence. It didn't create work. Umm, so that, if we are trying to define where the absence stops, the absence stops when it doesn't produce anything. That's the bad absence. So, too much presence and you just bugger the student. Too much absence and you bugger the student by not...well, you don't oppress the student but the student gets nothing. And I know Forbes talks about boredom and actually boredom has a huge value, umm, for Forbes. [fade in: noise of jet-engined aeroplane overhead] And he quotes, sort of, films, European cinema...um...and although he doesn't quote...the same film...[noise of jet-engined aeroplane overhead reaches maximum volume] (laughing)...I've got in mind something like Antonioni's umm, L'Avventura where, really very, very little happens for about, well, it seems a very long time in the film, but probably about two hours, very little really happens, umm, [fade out: noise of jet-engined aeroplane]...and that's, that's...I think that's not a nothing. That's a space for desire to open up. But I think when the teacher is not there at all, the field of knowledge doesn't come in to existence. So just like the film is there and just like John Cage when he does nothing on the piano, is actually there as the pianist, there has to be a presence that's physical and the nothing, the teacher who doesn't turn up. Yes, sure people remember that and they talk about it, rather than the lectures you did turn up to. But, only because it's so surprising or maybe because it's so destructive that they were left with this nothing. You know, because there's always the question when the teacher didn't turn up, do you give them 5 minutes, do you give them ten minutes, do you wait the full hour. Sure.

I doubt if they'll notice any difference (laughing).

So my reading of Forbes's thirty-two page text. Is it a reading you can recognise?

Well, is that what you would have...got out of his...is that what you got out of his text in the sense of, do you feel I've represented it for the next person who has to read Forbes through me? Is that a rendition you could go with?

Are there are themes you want to pick up on that I haven't mentioned?

But she won't hear that tip. Well, of course you can tell...actually, you can, when you go to see her, you can say: 'actually, Howard spoke a load of absolute crap about that paper, what he really said was this...' None of us will ever know apart

from her. So, that's quite nice, you still have, actually, a lot of control over this project even though it's...you're removing yourself. And I picked on silly little things like brackets and the '2' mark. Urr, but actually, your real power is none of us ever hear what you say and that's what gives you your power over this project.

So, so we fucked up in which sense?

Tonight (laughing) ...was it good for me?

Ummm.

offstage voice] Can I get a drink for anybody?

How about a pizza?

offstage voice] Shall I go and get one?

Yeah.

offstage voice] There's a nodding from both directions...

Yeah, if you can be bothered.

offstage voice] I'm not going to Leeds now, because it's too late.

We're probably going to stop in five or ten minutes.

Yeah.

offstage voice] I was going to, but...

So, so...

offstage voice] I did!

You're confused about?

I think the problem was...because there was something weird about how it started and I think, the problem was, because I made that little joke about it. I started interviewing you, as it were...so all the speaking was coming from you and nothing from me. For a start...

No, now.

You think we fucked up the first one or the second one?

...was the fuck up. Because...because of what? Apart from you lost the microphone head and left it at home and things like that (laughing).

OK

So, so you, you're worried that tonight didn't have a clear enough structure?

In retrospect...

Umm, um. But I see...

So, but I see part of my role as attempting to transmit elements of the previous text to the next person. So I have to talk about that. Where as I was much freer...in my first one. So, my first one was what I think about pedagogy and psychoanalysis. Subsequent ones, I see myself as taking a different role which is interpreting or taking bits out of other people's texts...and passing them on to the next person, really. Um, like the Chinese Whispers that you alluded to. So, I'm, I'm picking up Forbes's text and handing it on to the next person.

Um.

Um, hmm.

Um.

You're more conscious of the structure, but what structure?

Um.

Because I see my role has changed since the first one because the first one was...was trying to get, trying to get it kick started, with some, almost provocative kind of statements or a different reading of pedagogy and pedagogy that fitted with your performed absence. Well, I don't know much more than I said that night.

Um.

Um.

Um.

Um.

But what you are going to see...presumably is different people going off on different tangents from my text with my original one with the commentary that I offer on somebody else's text. And you'll see...will we go round in a circle, will there be a development, will it just be a mess? I don't know...that's quite interesting.

No.

No. I think, I think actually...well, well then I'd hear you, wouldn't I? And, that's not the point.

Oh. (laughing)

But I'm interested in why you think it's...why it's you. Why? What's different? What haven't you done this time?

You didn't get your quotes...you didn't get your...

Well, I wasn't listening to your quotes, tonight.

Not, not, not with real...I wanted to see...

What was that?

Oh yes. Yeah.

Well, one of the things I like to do, in a sense is frustrate your position here, or subvert it or play with it, or whatever...um, because...you come with certain expectations...I guess...or that's almost what you're getting around to saying. And sometimes we don't do those expectations. I mean, one of the things I would like to do...sometimes is, is maybe, what we almost started doing. Which is where I actually say very little. You know, it takes ten minutes to transcribe what I've said but we've sat here for, you know two hours but you've been talking. That would be fantastic because it would mean nothing to the next person.

Um.

Easy to transcribe (laughing), yeah. But very unfair on the next...person, if I'm going on to...if I'm trying to transmit something. I think it will have a...there will be a certain kind of architecture that we can...see at the end. Or, you know, if you're making this into a book, it's not our...it doesn't matter about us seeing but I think there will be an architecture made out of this in the end. You know, what has happened? We don't know.

But...

No, but one of the things I thought tonight, when we started, and I spoke for a very short time and you spoke for a long time, I thought there should be little timings down the margin. Or something...

Yeah, I don't mean in terms of space. I mean, you just put...you know...umm, let's say we started at eight o'clock, so you put eight o'clock. And then, you put a mark at ten past eight and then a mark at twenty past eight and sometimes there will be pages and pages in that ten minutes and at other times, there will be one line in ten minutes but then we know, oh, Simon clearly spoke for nine minutes here or something, or whatever.

Yeah, we don't do that.

(laughing) Yeah, I'm really disappointed to know that.

Yes, yeah.

But, I hear this from patients. Umm, they say things to me like: 'well, can't you give me some advice?' And I'll say: 'Well, what advise would you like?' And they say: 'Well, I don't really know.' You know, 'What is it you want advising on?' 'Well, what should I do?' 'What should I do, in what respect?' They are never precise enough because the advise that they want, doesn't exist, perhaps. Um, they've got to...they can't quite articulate the question, precisely enough. No one says to me: 'Can you tell me what advice I need to know...in how to deal with...this situation, when this happens and that happens?' It's always much, much vaguer.

Um.

Because it's an anxiety or...the problem itself attaches to some anxiety.

No...you don't put you in.

Tonight?

I thought that was the deal. Why, what were you thinking of?

I mean I...one of my...my, my reservations about this project is...a person does talk a lot of rubbish, or, I talk a lot of rubbish when I'm just talking like this and the idea that this might be published is...a bit of a problem. But you know...in the end, this is not about, this is not an academic exercise, urrr, it's me making things up on the spur of the moment, sort of thing. And...certainly I remember in analysis, in my own analysis...it was quite a while before I could just talk crap. Umm, maybe I've learnt that too well now. But, it was quite a while before I could

just say whatever I wanted in front of my analyst. For, you know, probably a year or so, I wanted to say things that I thought he would like or...I would like him to think about me. Oh, what an intelligent person or something like that.

It was a big relief when I didn't have to talk sense all the time.

Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Um, but this is slightly different because other people...that was between me and the analyst and nobody else knows that. But, um...you know, this is, this is hard because someone will read this and if they read it in the wrong way...it puts, probably us all in a bad light because none of us prepare it. And, its interesting for you if you're going to ask academics to talk like this, how they'll feel about their texts not being open to revision or whatever. Or do you offer that to people?

More?

No, I've got other bottles...of course.

What are you...because I think I've...you know, I've probably said things I'd disagree with later. Umm, but what are we going to call this, what's it going to be called as a project?

Performed absence?

But can we have a little subtitle ...I quite like that, but, but can we have a little subtitle like spontaneous conversations? Just so that...

Yes.

So whose is the Wild Pansy Press...is that yours as well?

Oh, right.

Yeah, let's stop now.

the conversation as encounter

simon morris

umm (.) I don't know what (.) how did you want to start?

yeah

I've got a kind of a list of different things from reading the story (.) *the teacher as storyteller* and the first text (.) that kind of [resonated] (.)

umm (.) and also then (.) I had questions about how (.) about your role in this as well and the structure of it (.) I don't know...

right...

I was just interested in that thing about...what (.) what it was to return to Howard each time (.) Howard as translator (.) because it suggests that there's an important (.) umm (.) in [psychoanalysis]

that you're stressing that in someway (.)

and teaching (.) [I guess]

[mm]

I see them as triangles though (.)

because it's the artist (.) the work of art and in (.) in Sharon's book *In the Place of the Object*⁴¹ (.)

there's the Lacanian argument (.) like you're saying (.) that the artwork takes the place of the analyst (.) there's-there's the artist (.) the work of art and the critic and then you've got the analyst (.) the analysand and presumably the stories that are being told as well and I've always linked it as well to architecture where you've got the architect (.) the piece of architecture and the occupant and then you've got this (.) kind of (.) with teaching (.) I'm not quite sure *where* the work is located (.) it's somehow between the tutor and the student but whether it's...and the point at which it's their work (.) the student's work and the point at which it's the teacher's work is constantly in flux but I've always seen them as (.) sort of triads (.)

(be art)

(I thought we'd gone away from that) (.) what was Lucy Lippard talking about?

well (.) there is (.) I mean (.) I suppose I'm saying the critic just from Sharon's series of shows that she curated with other people but what the critic sometimes

⁴¹ Sharon Kivland & Mark du Ry (eds.), *In The Place Of An Object*, Journal Of The Centre For Freudian Analysis and Research, Aldgate Press, Special Issue 2000

found threatening was this argument (.) that if the analyst took...if the work of art takes the place of the analyst (.) there's no room for the critic anymore to analyse because the relationship is with the artist and the work (.) so what happens to the critic (.) is the critic (.) sort of threatened by that? I'd-I'd never really seen (.) I mean (.) the way I see it is that (.) I'm really interested in the difference between writing and criticism and I think Susan Ruben-Sulloman talks about this (.) um (.) differentiation where there's writing and there's writing about writing and that's the literary critic's definition (.) so (.) there's the *about* that makes it criticism (.) yeah (.) because you're writing (*about*)

something else where as I'm more interested in the slippage between those two (.) between critical and creative writing where there isn't such a thing as *about* (.) it's-it's as a critic (.) maybe if you're commenting on a work of art (.) you try and take aspects of that work to drive the writing (.) so you're never writing *about* the work (.) but the work informs the way that you do writing (.) so at that (*point*)

you can say that it becomes (.) possibly (.) (*an art work*)

yeah

yeah (.) it's what we (.) yeah (.) there's (1.0) we've got this new sort of programme here (.) which is a Ph.D by Design programme and um (.) (1.0) it consists of a portfolio and a piece of writing and what we talk about a lot is the relationship between the writing and the portfolio (.) is-is the writing theoretical or critical? what role does it play in relation to the work (.) the project work - whether it's the art work or the architecture and I'm really interested in writing (.) in sort of (.) parallel processes so (.) instead of the writing being about the portfolio (.) the writing follows the same thematic as the portfolio (.) um (.) investigation (.) and so it's not (.) say-say you're interested in (.) I don't know (.) ephemerality you wouldn't write about ephemerality (.) you would make ephemeral writing and that's where I think it gets really interesting (.) so you're *doing* it rather than talking about (.) *about* doing it

exactly

(*yeah*)

I think (.) well (.) God (.) there's loads in that (.) one thing that immediately springs to mind is [listening]

as an active role (.) and that's something that I think Suzi Gablik's talked about and it's maybe a bit kind of um (.) well (.) no (.) it concerns a kind of ethics in terms of the relationships that people construct with each other (.) in her view (.) in the making of a piece of art work (.) is about including the users in the process in that (.) sort of (.) I don't know (.) the closest I can think of it is the-the Beuysian [social sculpture] (.)

so she's saying (.) it's not just about the artist speaking or someone speaking it's actually about listening (.) [that the]

artist's role should be actually (.) about listening (.) and I think that's the same with teaching I think listening is a really active role but I think all of this is caught (2.0) because Derrida is talking about the voice as this kind of (.) um (.) illusory presence but that the voice has been associated with presence in some way people's attention has been (.) has been around writing as this kind of dangerous medium or the medium that is full of slippage and I feel at the moment (.) I'm really interested in the slippages in the voice and maybe that's why analysis is useful (.) psychoanalysis is useful in that (.) in that area (.) umm (.) but also this um (.) brilliant (.) brilliant phrase that I came across that really fits with this project (.) actually in terms of slippage of meaning which was in Homi Bhaba's *Location of Culture* (.) but he's actually (.) um (.) quoting Lyotard and the point that he's

[]

making is that even (.) even when one person is speaking (.) somewhere else
 their story is already being told so then (.)

it's less about (.) maybe (.) the trace of the voice but more about multiple tellings
 and that's a way of (.) kind of (.) deconstructing the-the presence of one [person]

so (.) that if many people are telling at the same time (.) you can't locate meaning
 in one place

[it's resonating]

42

I think there is something to do (.) there is something to do with (.) um (.) certain
 spaces (.) a lot of it operates through memory (.) I think (.) that certain spaces
 bring to mind certain stories so that in each individual (.) you might connect a
 story with a particular place (1.) one of the dangers of that (.) I always think (.) is
 that you can end up with the phenomenological viewpoint (.) so...which is quite
 dangerous (.) I think (.) in architectural design (.) which sort of then (.) is a sort of
 determinism (.) if you design a space that brings light in through the window in a
 certain way and has a certain texture on the floor and a certain dimension (.) you
 can produce a certain *effect* in some way (.) but for me...and that I find really
 narrowing (.) because it's quite *tricky* as a way of teaching design because it
 suggests that one place will always determine a certain kind of meaning but I do
 think there are coincidences between spaces and stories but (.) I think (.) what's
 also quite interesting is (1.0) the slippage that occurs (.) so (.) in some of the stuff
 I've been writing about where I've been (.) um (.) looking at the stories that come
 to mind when I think about a space or a particular place where I've lived and the
 story that comes out – it could start either way round (.) but memory shifts that

⁴² Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov*, *Illuminations*,
 Hannah Arendt (ed.), Fontan Press, London, 1973, pp. 83-107

story and it was something I was reading in (.) I think it's Mica Bahl's book called (.) um (.) *Just Looking or Looking* (.) something like this (.) she-she talks about the...when you're telling a story about something that has happened in the past because there's a slippage between what really happened (.) if you like...you may not believe that anything really happened and what you're telling about it but that's where the (.) kind of (.) dramatic moment occurs (.) it's the moment when you might not get it quite right (.) is where it (.) kind of (.) comes to life in some way (.) and I think for me it's more about architecture (.) if it's a resonating box is a place that triggers memory and I think that's what's really interesting (.) but I don't know whether particular materials or particular kinds of space have intrinsic qualities that allow that to occur (.) I think it's more about the relationship that someone has with a particular space (.) so it's always about the relationship (.) not about the space in itself

(yeah (.) yeah)

(I mean)

I mean (.) but it might be the idea of the absent place becomes interesting and one student of mine is doing this (.) I think it's going to be a fantastic project about alibis [phone rings] she's someone who (.) (she teaches architecture)(.)

she's doing a master's course (.) no (.) that's fine (.) it's not (.) it's just the computer bouncing a sound

(it's not) a real call (.) it's (a phantom call)

[laughing]

I know (.) it will do that occasionally and sometimes the computer might tell us something (.) I don't (know what)

(.) it sometimes does (.) um (.) so (.) yeah (.) she has a life where she has got three kids (.) a very sick (Mum)

teaching (.) (studying)

lots and lots of stuff and she was saying that she finds that she's always creating alibis about why she's late at (.) (for something)

and she got really interested in what an alibi might be (.) um (.) I think the Latin (.) I can't remember exactly what the Latin meaning is but it's a sort of (.) absent

place (.) I think (.) is the definition of it (.) of an alibi (.) so we were thinking it's really interesting if you (.) um (.) in a sort of (.) court of law (.) when a murder has occurred and they call in the witnesses and the witnesses end up not describing often the event itself but when they describe their alibi or why they weren't there (.) you get this whole new cartography of places (.) that are associated with the event but the event might not actually be ever (.) might (.) might not be described at all (.) so it's about describing a space by not describing it (.)

by describing (another space)

which I think (.) I don't know (.) I'm really interested in that idea

(describing it) yeah (.) yeah

yeah (.) do that (.) I'll definitely disagree with them [laughing]
[laughing]

(mm)

with dolls – a different kind of object from the reel – she dances...⁴³ “She plays
notion of the daughter spinning to make room between her and her mother,
resonates strongly for me.”⁴⁴ “Irigaray's

“I imagine being five again spinning round and around in the middle of a room only stopping when the furniture, walls and floor begin to revolve around me, when everything around me slips out of place.”⁴⁵

but does he do it in the corner of a gallery then or (.) ur (.) or against (.) near (.) it has to be near a wall in some way

⁴³ “She plays with dolls – a different kind of object from the reel – she dances, ‘this dance is also a way for the girl to create a territory of her own in relation to her mother’. In her dance she spins around de-stabilising existing connections between herself and her (m)other. She creates, a vital subjective space open to the cosmic maternal world, to the gods, to the present other.” - Jane Rendell quoting Luce Irigaray in ‘Travelling the Distance/Encountering the Other’, *Here, There, Elsewhere: Dialogues on Location and Mobility* (ed.) David Blamey, Open Editions, London, 2002, p.53

⁴⁴ *ibid*

⁴⁵ *ibid*

[space](.) yeah

“I was experimenting – experimenting with the cameras in the room, with the mind, with the props and the actions. I was experimentative when something seemed to happen. Then I would repeat it, refine it. The refining usually meant heightening the experience. I was interested in spinning, and I would often spin in front of the camera. I got to a point where I could spin for 30-40 minutes. I would bang my outstretched hands against the wall, that helped me from getting disorientated and dizzy. The intuitive action that I kept returning to became an involvement. I still make actions and sculpture that relate to spinning. There’s this aspect of getting to something repetitive, going with that repetition to the point of discovery and then sort of letting go in that space.”

yeah

[no (.) no (.) it’s OK [laughs] no (.) it’s really exciting]at the moment