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# The Dissemination of Responsibility: Exploring the Audience as Bystander in Theatre

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The College of Wooster

The Dissemination of Responsibility:  
Exploring the Audience as Bystander in Theatre

by

Helen Rooker

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Senior Independent Study Requirement  
Theatre and Dance 451-452

Advised by

Dr. Jimmy A. Noriega

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## Abstract

This study focuses on finding how theatrical technique and process changes when the audience is reframed as bystanders. I hoped to find ways that theatre artists could fight against the bystander effect in life by bringing it into our theatres. The study was written in conjunction with a production of *Nine* by Jane Shepard. *Nine* is a piece about two women who are imprisoned. The audience does not know where they are, how long they have been there, or who has taken them—just that they are regularly raped and tortured. The play is treated as a focal point for my work around the bystander effect.

Through an analysis of the theatrical techniques used in *Nine* we are able to frame the audience as bystander from the point of view of the actors and director. The audience's own view of themselves is less significant to that of the director and cast, because change in the theatre starts with us, the artists. Throughout the study Brecht's theory of the alienated spectator and Boal's theory of the spect-actor are both used to demonstrate ways in which the bystander effect takes hold in theatrical audiences.

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## Introduction

The foremost definition of theatre, from Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* says, "a man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (9) This definition, however, focuses on the man walking, not on the people watching him. He engages the piece of theatre and the audience receives it without any action on their part. How do we redefine our theatre when it is focused on the audience? How do theatre artists use awareness of their audiences onstage? Are they aware of them in a way that influences their work? How can my own theatrical work keep the audience in mind? This study looks at what happens when theatre artists reframe our audiences as complicit in the action happening before them. The critical question this study seeks to answer is: How does reframing the audiences as bystander influence theatrical techniques and performance?

For this study I directed a play called *Nine* by Jane Shepard. *Nine* is a piece about two women who are imprisoned. The audience does not know where they are, how long they have been there, or who has taken them—just that they are regularly raped and tortured. Shepard names the characters 1 and 2, never giving their real names or anything substantial about them. The play focuses on how they survive, the rituals they use carry the weight of their situation, their hopes for rescue or escape, and their resignation to being imprisoned forever. It is a tragic work, ending with 1's death and no hope for 2's freedom.

I chose to direct *Nine* in relationship to the questions posed earlier due to the tension between the play and its audience. In reading the piece questions of spectatorship, of *watching*, are clear. The women are stuck in a world where their

regular torture and rape is watched, controlled, and goes unprotested. Their captors violently mistreat them while the audience sits silently complicit. This is why I chose to relate the play to the bystander effect. The bystander effect states that when a large group of people watch an event or crime occur, few (if any) will choose to involve themselves. Those who stand silently along the sidelines are considered bystanders (Darley). The audience of *Nine* can be read as a group of bystanders when implicated by the cast. While this is contrary to our standard reading of audiences, it was how the cast and I worked with them throughout the creative process. I realized while in the early stages of working with the play that I did not have a way to tell the audience they were bystanders in a concrete way. I chose to reframe the cast's work to construct the audience as bystanders, as opposed to attempting to reconstruct the audience's understanding of themselves within the theatrical space.

### **Literature Review**

The way that theatre artists use and manipulate their audiences is a question of distance, which can be articulated differently depending on the theorist (Ben-Chaim ix). However, most can agree that through the manipulation of this distance (whether emotional or physical) the audience's perception of the piece is also shifted. Bertolt Brecht (the main theorist this study will examine) uses this distance to articulate his Epic Theatre. His work tries not to sweep audiences up in the performance but rather to stimulate intellectual responses.

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was a hugely influential German theatre artist and theorist. His work with audience alienation is heavily present throughout international theatre today. Brecht was a violently antibourgeois artist, whose radical work had him

exiled from Germany in 1933. He would not return to Germany until 1949, when his company, the Berliner Ensemble, was born. Brecht's work was critiqued for his unusual aesthetic and boycotted for its Communist opinions. Despite its controversial nature at the time, his work is reproduced to this day and his theory heavily influences many modern productions, including my own work with *Nine*.

Walter Benjamin, Brecht's close friend, is one of the best theorists to help understand his work. They shared a "scavenging, magpie temperament, receptive to the often fragmented nature of modern art and literature," as well as a, "historical imagination and similar humanism" (Benjamin viii, ix). The two men were close friends throughout the 1930's until Benjamin's death in 1940. Benjamin committed suicide to avoid capture, which Brecht considered to be the first death to German literature caused by Hitler (Benjamin xix). This close relationship makes Benjamin's writings on Brecht's work an essential source in understanding his ideas and significance.

Brecht's primary theatrical idea that carries through most (if not all) of his work is his concept of Epic Theatre. Epic theatre is gestural and intellectual, and "casts doubt upon the notion that theatre is entertainment" (Benjamin 9). His work was juxtaposed to the theatre of the 1920's and 30's, which was driven by emotion, as opposed to intellectual response.

He saw opera as his primary theatrical enemy because its purpose was mere pleasure. In his philosophy it did not carry enough substance to qualify as anything but fun entertainment. In opera, the methods of performance functioned to further the pleasure of the production not the intellectualism (Brecht 35). In response to the opera around him, Brecht chose to push forward a theatrical style where the raw material was

“exclusively the gesture as it occurs today—the gesture either of an action or of the imitation of an action” (Benjamin 24). His work was based on the modern world around him and the interpretation of an action. He pushed for audiences who thought about what they were seeing onstage, as opposed to watching passively and being swept up in the performance before them.

Epic Theatre “attacks the basic view that art may do no more than lightly touch upon experience,” thus pushing its audiences to think about the work before them as opposed to enjoying it as basic entertainment (Benjamin 10). The etymology of the word “entertainment” is particularly important in this instance. The word “to entertain” comes from the French “entre” and Latin “inter” both of which mean “together” and “among” and the Latin “tenere” meaning “to hold” (“Entertain”). By definition, entertainment comes from a place of agreement; to entertain is not to cause discussion or tension. Instead, it is home to similar opinions that do not cause rejection, the perfect opposite of Brecht’s desired responses to his work.

In his early work, Brecht tried to strip all emotion from his audiences and performers. He wanted to create characters played without empathy, “coldly, classically, and objectively.” As his work evolved, Brecht wrote,

The rejection of empathy is not the result of a rejection of the emotions, nor does it lead to such. The crude aesthetic thesis that emotions can only be stimulated by means of empathy is wrong. None the less a non-Aristotelian dramaturgy has to apply a cautious criticism to the emotions which it aims at and incorporates.  
(Brecht, quoted in Ben-Chaim 26)

He argues that emotions may be given to the audience as long as they are controlled and empathy can be useful if treated as only one method of acting and used minimally (Ben Chaim 26-27). Brecht's later work with empathy fits beautifully within *Nine*, as the play tries desperately to invoke an emotional response from its audience, but does not quite allow for an empathetic one. The character 1 dies, and the reaction 2 gives is designed to leave the audience swimming in emotions. It would be difficult to invoke a truly emotionless reading of the script, and my work has a closer relationship to Brecht's later writings wherein emotions are used as a tool as opposed to simple response.

Brecht's theories of the ideal Epic Actor are in direct contrast to my work. His actor would change their manner and style of acting depending on what they were performing throughout a single play. Stylistic conventions bowed to the multitude of dialectic possibilities provided by this performative adaptability (Benjamin 11). In the alienation of the audience, the actor sought to arouse astonishment rather than empathy, though not entirely rejecting it (Benjamin 18). Brecht eliminated the fourth wall allowing his actors to directly address the audience. Conventional actors connected with the audiences based entirely on empathy and were too tied to the psychological operation of their characters for Brecht. His actors would perform both what the script asked from them, as well as perform what they were *not* doing. When they said, "you'll pay for that" they were also performing *not* saying "I forgive you" as intentionally as possible (Brecht 137). In contrast to "conventional" actors those in Epic Theatre would not allow themselves to be transformed into their character onstage. The Brechtian actor "reproduces their [character's] remarks as authentically as he can; he puts

forward their way of behaving to the best of his abilities [...] but he never tries to persuade himself (and thereby others) that this amounts to a complete transformation” (137).

In *Nine* we did not try to force this sort of work. Neither actress had experience performing in Brechtian style theatre, so we chose to use more conventional acting techniques for the sake of the production. My work sought to tie the audience to the characters while conversely alienating their association with the women’s circumstances. The characters of 1 and 2 were able to function in constant tension between audience identification and alienation. Thus, the cast of *Nine* was not able to work within Brecht’s acting style, and was closer to more traditional and realist methods of performance.

Brecht’s work was performed in theatres that were “purged of everything ‘magical’ and [where] no ‘hypnotic tensions’” distracted the audience (Brecht 136). His designers would begin their work “with ‘the people themselves’ and ‘what is happening to or through them.’ He provides no ‘décor,’ frames and backgrounds, but constructs the space for ‘people’ to experience something in” (Brecht 231-232). While plays like *The Threepenny Opera* and *Mother Courage and her Children* did make use of projections (a more “magical” theatre technique), they were there to tell the story before it happened—eliminating tension, surprise, and other such dramatic elements. Breaking down the audience’s expectations of theatrical story telling allowed Brecht to subvert and reframe these expectations, so audience members were forced to think about his subject material. In explaining his goals with the alienation effect Brecht says,

The production took the subject matter and the incidents shown and put them through a process of alienation: the alienation that is necessary to all understanding. When something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up. (Brecht 71)

In his alienation, Brecht was seeking to produce a quality of questioning and thought in his audience. To allow an audience to sit back as a passive spectator would have been the death of theatre. The production of thought was, to him, more significant than any other goal of theatre. If something were the most obvious thing in the world it would require no emotional or theoretical work, and theatre without these is useless. To fully and effectively reframe an audience member as a bystander they must be willing to go through the alienation of understanding; every audience member must work to comprehend the theatre before them.

Brecht's theatre required a specific sort of audience member to break down the passive spectatorship of theatre audiences during his time. One of the ways he wanted to achieve this audience was to create a "Smokers Theatre." Brecht believed that a man "in the stalls with a cigar could bring about the downfall of Western art. He might as well light a bomb as light his cigar" (Brecht 8). Allowing him to smoke would not only surprise the audience, and break them out of their stupor, but also provide the actor with the perfect brand of audience to perform for. The audience member smoking would create a space impossible for the actor to "play unnatural, cramped, and old-fashioned theatre" (Brecht 9).

In close relationship to Brecht's concept of audience alienation is Augusto Boal's spect-actor. In Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* he summarizes his work in saying that

there are three parts and degrees to theatre in which the spectator is asked for their direct participation (Boal 131). These are: *Simultaneous Dramaturgy*, in which the spectator must intervene without their physical presence on the stage. In this case, the spectator would propose the subject for the performance (Boal 132). *Image Theatre*, in which audiences participate more directly by sharing their views on the subject of performance (Boal 135). In *Forum Theatre*, the third degree of spect-actorship, the spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action to change it (Boal 139). Boal's work was oriented around "theatrical techniques for rehearsing solutions to shared struggles" (Cohen-Cruz 43). This work with the spect-actor was Boal's step beyond Brecht's alienated spectator. Boal wanted the spectator to "take on the role of Actor and invade the Character and the stage." He says, "The spect-actor is not fictional. He exists in the scene and outside of it, in a dual reality. By taking possession of the stage in the fiction of the theatre he acts: not just in the fiction, but also in his social reality" (Boal xxi). While Brecht wanted to intellectually stimulate his audiences, Boal sought to physically activate them as well (Cohen-Cruz 45). My original intent with *Nine* was to use a version of Boal's Forum theatre that forced the audience onto their feet to intervene in the performance.

In her more recent book *Engaging Performance: Theatre as Call and Response* Jan Cohen-Cruz works with engaged performance, where the greatest insight is found in the process. It is art in which the "efficacy of the project for community partners must be equal to what the artists gain for themselves" (Cohen-Cruz 175). In defining Boal's work she says, "while not everyone might choose to get actively involved, Boal's techniques provide the option to do so; hence one can say there are no spectators in [the theatre of

the oppressed]” (Cohen-Cruz 62). In his work Boal did not force his audience to participate but they were intentionally disturbed because they were spectators who did not want to be involved. Boal’s work provided opportunities for engagement while also giving the option to accept or reject them (Cohen-Cruz 63). Brecht’s work, by contrast, sought to “disallow simple identification with his characters” and to position the “spectators to analyze the situation” (Cohen-Cruz 21). He prioritized pushing the spectator to take action towards the offstage injustices over encouraging them to take action within the theatrical space. He distanced them from the play so that they could work towards a critical and reasoned reflection (21). While both theorists sought to manipulate their audiences towards active dialogue with their work, Boal asked for their participation in the theatre and the theatrical process while Brecht sought to activate them outside of the theatre.

My own journey to the final production of *Nine* went backwards in the Brecht to Boal evolution. I began with Boal’s spect-actor, hoping to use my audience as bystanders in such a way that they would feel driven to become part of the production they watched by verbally or physically intervening—but this changed. My original desire to use Boal’s concept of the spect-actor was drawn from my attendance at and reviews of the recent London and Broadway runs of *1984*. *1984* featured gratuitous torture and grotesque violence, motivating audiences onto their feet. Audiences were vomiting, shouting, and walking out during the performance runs (Andrews). Audience members who spoke up during the play were those who chose to take an active role as spect-actor.

After attending *1984* and upon further research of *Nine* I was driven in a different direction. The production's torture was incredibly shocking; while I expected it after reading the reviews, I was still surprised by how much it influenced me as an audience member. At the show I attended not a single spectator was driven to participate. While some people left, the complete lack of engagement led to the realization that if something as painful to watch as *1984* would not reliably drive people to speak up and intervene, nothing I would create with *Nine* could either. There were very clear lines that *Nine* could not cross. I could not show explicit torture or rape onstage and I never wanted to. Because of these restrictions, I worked my way backwards. While Boal's spect-actor would not work for me, I would move towards Brecht's alienation instead. I chose to create a theatrical space wherein the audience would be implicated in the action as a bystander through Brechtian technique.

The hope to use alienation techniques to force the audience to confront themselves as implicated spectators throughout *Nine* is not enough to be the exclusive directorial concept. My goal became to evolve Brecht's alienation towards reframing the audience for myself and the cast of *Nine* as bystanders. The Bystander Effect states that the more bystanders (people watching an event or crime occur, but not directly involved) the less likely any one of them is to intervene. There are several reasons this may occur. If only one bystander is present, any pressure to intervene in a situation must come from him. When there are more onlookers present, however, the responsibility is shared and so no one intervenes. Additionally, potential blame is diffused when there is a group of bystanders, so they are all safe in remaining passive. If a bystander can see that there are other bystanders present, but cannot see everyone's

responses, they can assume that someone else is taking action, therefore their own inaction can be excused (Darley). I used an examination of the Bystander Effect to consider my audience as spectator in the theatrical space, but not as spect-actor.

The “diffusion of responsibility” that bystanders feel is where my drive for directing *Nine* began. When sitting in the theatre watching *1984*, I felt the drive to stand up and beg for the action to stop. I felt the drive that so many other audience members felt, but I stayed in my seat. Some of this comes from being a well-trained audience member and the desire not to put actors in a situation where the audience was rioting in the aisles. However, I also felt the excuses of the bystander effect taking hold. I did not want to stick out, I believed that someone else would stand up before I did, and if they got to their feet then I would follow. I reasoned that I was towards the back of the house, and could not do too much good anyway. All of these excuses were ones that I wanted to push audience members to feel while watching *Nine*. I wanted to use tricks pulled from Brecht and *1984* to cause them to recognize their position as bystanders within the theatrical space. It is, however, nearly impossible to know what an audience feels while watching a play. *Nine* would thus need to be about pushing the cast and production team to read their audience as bystanders.

### **Chapter Breakdown**

In the following chapters I will analyze *Nine* and fully layout my concept for the production. Through the analysis of the piece my concept will help to expand upon how I used Brechtian technique and theory to push the cast and myself to reconsider our audience. I will go on to give some artistic inspiration behind the design elements of the play and expand upon the final scenic, lighting, costume, and sound designs.

Cohen-Cruz says that the process is where the greatest insight is found, so in Chapter 2 I will expand upon the rehearsal and performance process. We experimented throughout our work with *Nine* to come to the final blocking and characterization. Following this, I will give the actor, audience, and director reflections. These reflections are where the bulk of my work's relationship with other theatrical theory will appear.

As part of the Independent Study process I was also able to travel to New York City to see three productions: *M. Butterfly*, *Farinelli and the King*, and *Sleep No More*. These I use to give additional examples of techniques I used in *Nine*. I saw all three of them after directing *Nine*, so they are used as contextualization for my work within the wider theatrical world.

## Chapter 1: Play Analysis and Director's Concept

*Nine*, by Jane Shepard, was first produced at the Circle Repertory Lab in New York City in March 1995 and published in Shepard's book *Kickass Plays for Women* in 2005. Shepard has worked in many New York companies, including Circle Repertory, The Public Theatre, and Ensemble Studio Theatre. She is the recipient of The New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, a Jane Chambers Award, and The Robert Chesley Playwriting Award (among others). Her play *Nine* was also released as a film in 2000 and won the Honorable Mention Award at the Rochester Film Festival.

The play is not produced often, and very few reviews appear online. There are several reasons why this may be. It has choppy and confusing dialogue as well as vague stage directions and themes. One of the reasons I chose it for this study was this vagueness, but it does make it a difficult piece to work with. One of the few available reviews calls it a play that is "bleak and dark" that manages to engage its audience without preaching to them (Irwin). In a description that helped me to contextualize the piece, a reviewer of the Lion and Unicorn Theatre's production says:

The orange suits of Guantanamo Bay detention facility and the hoods of Abu Ghraib are not on view and it is not clear to what exactly these women have been subjected (partly perhaps because their convincingly American speech, with slurred vowels and lacking consonants, makes the quieter dialogue extremely difficult to follow) though we know enough to imagine, nor is there any indication of where this could be taking place. That is itself part of the story, for sadly we know it could be anywhere: in the hands of what the West thinks of as a terrorist stronghold, in their US itself or in a British basement. But this is not just

a stark reminder of the extremes that may be adopted in the name of our protection but also a glimpse at how human beings can find ways to sustain a will to survive. (Loxton)

As one of the only reviews online this review was influential in my direction of *Nine*. I was able to be aware before working with the cast of the difficulty of the language. The wording is incredibly specific, and I knew that we would have to work closely on why every line was or was not significant. This review, however, gave me an extra level of awareness of how an audience would struggle with it. In my past theatrical experience I have found that as the rehearsal process went on lines become so familiar that it can be easy to allow the specificity they require to slip. We become so used to them that we do not always notice that they will be difficult for someone hearing them the first time to catch. This review was a reminder not to forget this.

Shepard does not give much context to the play, and the Lion and Unicorn Theatre's review made clear that the audience to that particular production was aware of the uncertainty. The lack of orange suits and hoods was always going to be a part of *Nine*. This review was comforting because it was clear that the audience would be able to see the wider connotations of the imprisonment of the characters. The audience was able to see the play outside of the theatre, which would be integral to my work with the piece.

### **Textual Analysis**

*Nine* is a two-part play about two women, named 1 and 2, imprisoned in an unknown place. The script does not state a time period, but because of the language, it is clear it is set contemporarily. The women are in "a locked room, a cell or basement"

and are written chained to the wall by the neck (1). Shepard never gives the women's names, only their numbers. 1 is the more outgoing of the two. She sings loudly to keep 2's spirits up, and tells her stories to help her stay alive. 2 is less selfless. She desperately needs 1 to keep her alive, and does less to help 1. 2 cares deeply about her "tells," which are verbal tricks and sayings that she and 1 compete to complete. The tells are phrases such as "a rolling stone gathers no moss," "There's a will, there's a way," and, "Over hill and under dale." She uses them to keep herself and 1 (to a lesser extent) sane. The piece focuses on the many ways that they are able to keep alive facing horrible circumstances.

The play opens with 2's return from being raped by their captors. The women never explicitly say what happens to them when they are taken from their cells but they imply their sexual abuse by saying, "they went inside" (5). 1's opening lines beg 2 to tell her how she is hurt, and to show her range of movement. The women repeat several times their ritual of checking each other over for injury. They make sure that they can bend their fingers, roll their neck, straighten their legs, and that their teeth have not come out. They trade their tells back and forth while 1 checks 2 over for injury until 1 cannot remember the ending of "a stitch in time saves \_\_\_\_." The rest of the play is spent with 2 taunting 1 because she does not know the end of the tell.

As part one continues, 2 becomes unable to contain her terror. The abuse she has just faced takes over, and she cannot contain her pain. She begs 1, "If I go down I—...If I die here—" (11), unable to finish her sentences. 1 takes pity on 2, giving her a new and more personal tell: she can see a sliver of moonlight through a crack in her cell. She tells a childhood story that she argues is the most precious tell of all because she is the only

person alive who knows it. As a child she fell in a pond and was drowning, until a moonbeam caught her eye and guided her to the surface. "I was saved by a moonbeam" she says, "I was saved. I was saved. By a moonbeam" (13). At the end of part one their captors come to take 1. The women recognize the familiar sound of their entrance, and are terrified. 1 *begs* 2 to tell her the end of the tell, but she refuses. 2 first says she won't share until just before they take 1. Then, just as the door is opened, she changes her mind, telling 1 she will tell her when she comes back.

In the blackout between parts, 1 is taken and severely beaten, but not raped. When she returns the beginning of part two the dialogue is reminiscent of the opening of the play. 2 repeatedly asks her questions, trying to check her over for injury. 1 answers drunkenly or not at all because of her extreme pain. In part one 2 was physically and emotionally crushed by her assault, while in part two 1 is physically broken by her mistreatment, but still emotionally able to communicate.

In part two, *Nine* takes a decidedly heartbreaking turn. Part one introduces the audience to the women and to ambiguously explain the situation they are in. In part two the audience understands the stakes of the play and who the characters are, thus they are more easily able to tie themselves into the emotion of 1's pain. The beginning shows us 1's pain, but allows some comedy to come through. The women repeat a well-loved set of tells: vicious swears and insults hurled at each other. They continue until 2 cannot go on, overcome by the lingering pain of her earlier rape and begins to break down. 1 asks her to tell her name, trying to keep 2 in the moment. 2 reacts violently saying, "I was never here. This room never heard my name. The first time they did those things to me, it wasn't me anymore" (30). Her name becomes a token that she can keep to herself,

just like she holds onto the end of “a stitch in time.” “She’s got the name. And they’ve got nothing” (30). As the play quietly melts to its conclusion the lines become increasingly intimate. 2’s ability to take control over her name gives her back some of the agency she has lost in this abusive space.

Finally, their captors come back. The audience hears the same sounds they had heard at the end of part one indicating their arrival, and the women react drastically differently. 2 begins to feel the fear of being taken again, and 1 can barely breathe. Slowly, quietly, 1 dies, asking 2 to save the end of the tell: “a stitch in time.” In the final lines of the play, 2 repeats “I’m saving it” like a mantra, completing one final ritual to keep herself sane (34-35).

1 and 2’s names are hidden from us. The audience is left lost, not knowing if the characters do not have names, or if they are withheld until well into part two of the piece. Using simple numbers for the women dehumanizes them. It makes them interchangeable and unimportant. This namelessness is only written, however, so audiences may not even know they are referred to numerically. The women never mention their numbers; they may not know they have them. When viewed this way the women become nothing more than objects, something further emphasized by the violence of their captivity.

In contrast, however, their withheld names also give them a secret and power over their lives. When speaking about her name, 2 says, “it ripped out of my body and flew away, *shuuu!* Far away! She’s gone. She’s got the name. And they’ve got nothing” (30). She takes back her own agency through claiming her name. 2 is the more angry character, she takes her fear and hurt and channels it into explosive rages against their

captors. 1, on the other hand, angles her anger towards 2 when she does not share information. Each woman's entire world is the other. The only good things in their lives are each other, even if they are not always kind. While their existence revolves around when they will be taken, the time they spend together is not spent actively focusing on their captors. Instead the dialogue is quick and simple. It is basic conversation between two women who have no one else to try to talk to except for their captors.

The women speak by rules that the audience does not understand. After a run of tells they pass back and forth:

1: A stitch in time.

2: Yeah?

1: What?

2: Finish it

1: I did

2: Fuck you, you lose, you don't remember the whole thing. (6)

There is some unknown to their rules thanks to their shared history. The audience must track the conversation closely to understand what's happening to them. The lines are mostly short and seem inconsequential. Despite their seeming inconsequentiality, however, even the tiniest lines carry the entire plot of the play. Early in part two the women trade angry swears that evolve into a ritualistic moment. Later, their sworn insults take on a loving tone. After 2's outburst taking back the agency of her name 1 begins to fade. 2 does everything she can to bring her back. 1 still has her name, driving 2 to try to bring her back by desperately asking, "And what do I have? (*Doesn't answer.*) What do I have? (*1's eyes are closed.*) Hey! Fuck you, don't doze off on me. Tit-head!"

(31) Earlier 1 had called her “tit-head” and 2 had responded with “Tit-head? That’s deep” (26). She is recalling their joking ritual in the hopes of waking 1 up.

Theatre artist Antonin Artaud’s work with his theatre of cruelty is particularly relevant in relationship to the broken dialogue used throughout *Nine*. While not all of his work relates directly, his desire to create theatre emphasizing sensory violence over enchantment and theatre that overwhelmed the spectator does. Artaud emphasized a more gestural approach to theatre, one that prioritized dialogue less. He did not seek to destroy text, but rather to put it in its place. He argued that the stage speaks its own language, and it must be permitted to do so (Arrandale 105). The theatre space in *Nine* implies the details of the women’s captivity as much as their dialogue does, meaning that both must find ways to communicate together. His emphasis of sensory violence over sensory enchantment too aligns with the play. Artaud’s theatre should “overwhelm the spectator in such a way that he cannot be left intact” (Gassner quoted in Arrandale 105). *Nine* is a play that reads as determined to convince its audience to remember it after they leave the theater. Through 1’s death and 2’s emotional reaction it hopes to transfer the pain to the audience. While it does not shatter its audience, or put them in a position where they are not left intact, the play does do its best to invoke a strong negative reaction. Artaud’s theatre tried to do something similar through forcing the emotions of subconscious upon the audience. In *Nine*’s ending 1’s death did not provide these subconscious emotions, but 2’s emotional farewell and lack of hope did.

The women care for each other deeply, but have tension between them. The tell “a stitch in time \_\_\_” carries deep personal resonance between them. Since 1 does not know the end of the saying, 2 considers herself a winner. She refuses to tell it to 1,

saying she will when she comes back. Once 1 is injured 2 tells her that she will give it to her if she sits up. She never does and it becomes the device that carries the plot to the end.

The tell ends: “a stitch in time saves nine” giving the play its title in addition to its primary plot device. When examining *Nine* without knowing the end of the tell, the title can be read in several ways. In my own work, I intentionally read it independently from the central tell to expand my thinking. The two women could be the ninth pair to be held captive; they could be the ninth pair in the space total; or they could be numbers 8 and 9 or 9 and 10. These ways of reading the title expands the possibilities of the space the women are held captive in. If the women are not alone, or not the first, the world of the play is larger and the audience can be further implicated within the wider world outside of *Nine*. Women everywhere are mistreated, so opening the play to consider those outside just the two women gave me a larger context to place the audience within.

The play itself describes, “A locked room, could be a cell, probably a basement” (Shepard 1). In my own work with *Nine* I was working with how the production could be read as normal. The space was almost generic; it could have been a dark room anywhere on earth. While the women were clearly American from their accents, the space had no cultural signifiers to give away where it was set. I hoped to normalize it through the plainness of the space, their clothes, and the characters’ speech. Not only were they anywhere, they were also anyone. The text was clearly based on conversations the women had had before, so it was also normalized because this space

was the women's normal. They had been there long enough for everything else to fade away.

### **Director's Concept**

In directing *Nine*, my goal was to implicate the audience in the action onstage. I hoped to force them to reconcile their own presence in the theatre with the presence of the women's lives in front of them. This took on many forms over the course of the rehearsal period. I originally hoped to have audience members wanting to stand up and walk out, or to ask the performers to stop but *Nine* is simply not the script with which to facilitate this. The audience was my primary focus while conceptualizing the production. I wanted to understand how my own work to implicate them as bystanders influenced the actors I was working with.

The first question I asked was: What is the purpose of directing this play and why do I want to direct it? William Ball in *A Sense of Direction: Some Observations on the Art of Directing* says that when choosing a play it should be "something you consider worthy of your time, something you find fascinating" (Ball 23). *Nine* was a play that I both enjoyed reading, and felt was worthy of my time as a director. I wanted to implicate the audience to reframe their internal narratives about what they were watching, which is at its most basic, women's abused bodies. I was not hoping to ask the audience to stand up and change what was happening onstage before them. I would, instead, think about how seeing this play could make them want to change the violence against women in the wider world. I chose to consider ways in which making the audience want to go out and *do* something would change my own directing process. How could I force these audience members to think about the abuse of women in their

own lives? How can I push them to hate what they're seeing onstage so much that they leave the theatre ready to change the world? In directing *Nine*, what happened onstage when we wanted the audience to feel something specific was significantly more important than what they felt.

The audience would not necessarily know that they were the bystanders in the piece. If they chose to read the program note they would understand more of where I was coming from. However, their opinions did not matter to me as much as looking at the work by the production team and cast. The staging of the show was constructed to alienate the audience; we would see them as outside and complicit. Ideally, they would feel this about themselves as well.

I decided to allow the first part of the play to be an introduction to the characters and the world of the piece. We allowed the audience to understand the world that they were part of painfully slowly. The script's total lack of explanation meant that we had to work on ways to tell the audience that the women had been there for a while and been mistreated since their first day. The first step to this was thinking about every possible way to be comfortable on a concrete floor. The cast worked with what it meant to have nowhere to sit when tired, and nothing soft to lie down on. We worked within the very blank set to give them some sort of control over their space. The set was two 10'x8' boxes taped onto the floor that shared their center wall with a bank of glass windows above (see appendix for images). Each woman had one box to work in. These windows were where an added character appeared. I added the character "them" to allow the captors a representation in the play. I did not give him lines, or any actual stage time, he

appeared and disappeared like a ghost. His presence shook up the women's world, and made the simple blackout between parts a significant part of my conceptual work.

I added the character of "them" for the very specific purpose of giving the audience a visual tie between the captors and the captured. He was only seen onstage for his cross through a bank of glass windows high above the women, and only heard when he crossed into the space in complete darkness. I played with several names for the character. I considered calling him "3" to make him an active character with 1 and 2, but settled on "them" because it gave him an individual presence. He was able to be a single representation of a large group of capturers. He could be tied to the audience in this way. To 1 and 2 everyone in the space was part of "them" and I hoped to use the character to help the audience see their own implication as a part this greater oppressive presence.

In directing *Nine* I would use the character "them" as a tool to manipulate my concept. The piece would be staged with minimal theatrical splendor, emphasizing the total lack of anything except for the women. Through their dialogue and blocking they could have been in the space for forever or just a few weeks. I hoped to work with "them" and the actresses playing 1 and 2 to discover how we saw the audience as part of the oppressive *other*. The audience would be framed to the characters as a complicit part of the abusive space they were trapped within. This would not, necessarily, be the goal for the audience's understanding. I hoped, rather, to treat them as Brecht's alienated audience. Pushed from the passivity of spectatorship to be activated against the violence against women outside of the theatrical space.

## Production Design

The design elements of the production all came from very specific places. Each aspect to the show would have to work together to help build the space to both alienate the audience and force them to reconcile themselves with the suffering onstage.

Because I came at *Nine* through a theoretical lens with the bystander effect I wanted to be sure to look at it through an artistic lens as well. To do this I began by working with inspirational images that would carry over to all aspects of design, from scenic to poster. I wanted to use contemporary art to keep myself tied to today with both my active directing, and research behind it. I was careful to root the production in the conceptual here and now, so using abstract modern art was helpful. My reference images were photographs that I felt could push my ideas of space and emotion within *Nine*.

I originally thought of *Nine* as a piece of installation performance art. I could envision it placed in a gallery or museum with an ever-changing audience with added scenes to help elongate the work. While I moved away from this concept, I found that installation art felt similar to my original intent. Some of the images that informed my directing of *Nine* thus came from installation art. I worked with them to both help communicate my goals for the production to the cast as well as help me begin to understand the space itself.



*Figure 1* MyeongBeom Kim

This installation piece by MyeongBeom Kim balances play and violence in a way that aligns with 1 and 2's relationship with each other. The women use ritual and games to keep themselves alive, and I was drawn to the playful terror of this piece. It connects with the way the women find happiness in a terrible situation. I considered what a game would feel like to these women if torture was their "normal." How does torture redefined and normalized interact with a woman's natural inclination towards connection to those around her? How is the friendship between 1 and 2 framed if when one of them is tortured the other gets to be safe? Especially when safe is such a relative term. I thought about the neutral of the space as what in the outside world would seem

negative. If the neutral is a “bad” this piece helped me to think about how a “good” thing would read to those who are visitors in 1 and 2’s space as audience.

*Figure 1* worked to build the characters of 1 and 2 as well as the atmosphere of the space. They are playful in the face of terror, and terrified in the face of utter destruction. 1 and 2 are broken women, desperate for connection. They have simple, childlike moments with each other, while also pushing each other away because of their fear of getting too close. They fear the other’s betrayal, as well as the ever present *other* of their captors.

I knew the scenic design of *Nine* would be minimalist because the relationship between the two women would be prioritized above their relationship with the space around them. While the space was a significant building block to the construction of the implication of the audience, the audience’s primary focus would be the women. Installation art pushed me away from the stage direction in *Nine* which states “A locked room, could be a cell, probably a basement. At rise: two women each chained by the neck to opposite walls” (1). I was drawn to my final scenic design of two white boxes outlined on the black floor from these images as they allowed me to think independently of what was given so specifically in the script. I also thought about the light as a scenic element to the production. I would be designing the space out of both light and scenic elements myself so they became tightly connected.

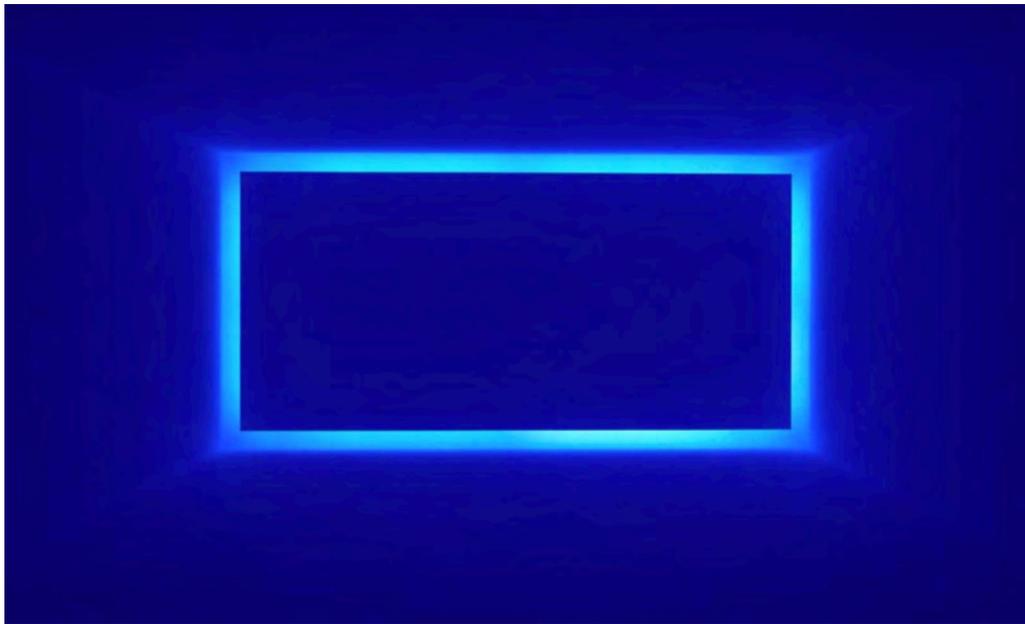


*Figure 2* Liza Lou

This image of Liza Lou's *Maximum Security Fence* gave me more a concrete idea of what the space would look like if it was literally a prison. The way that the walls and barbed wire established a menacing air to the space was exactly what I wanted to create, but without the on-the-nose prison overtones. This piece aligned with the review for the Lion and Unicorn Theatre's production of *Nine's* rejection of the overt prison themes. This image helped me to see the white boxes as three-dimensional translated onto the two-dimensional plane of the floor. It also appeared in the way that I planned to work with the actresses playing 1 and 2, as I could use this image to help them see the abstracted space as more literal throughout the directing process.

The lighting design was tightly tied into the scenic elements. In my own training as a lighting designer I've always been drawn towards using the light to sculpt the space as well as light the actors. The light in *Nine* would establish the space in a specific and

constraining way, forcing the actresses to work around it, and not the other way around. Using the light this way also helped to establish the constrained feeling that would be pushed onto the characters throughout the production. The images I found that helped me settle on the final lighting plot and cues were largely drawn from James Turrell's installation work which I have seen both in person and in his online portfolio of work. His body of work using fluorescent and LED colored lights helped me to solidify what I wanted from the lights; however, a few select images pushed me the farthest. I ended up drawing quite literally from his work, translating it into a theatrical language.



*Figure 3 Rondo Blue James Turrell*

Turrell's collection *Shallow Space Constructions* features a number of works including *Rondo Blue* that forces the space to focus exclusively on light. His work uses a complete absence of light except for very specific colors into clean lines. The *Shallow Space Constructions* are bright lights recessed into a wall. When viewing works such as *Rondo*

*Blue* the light causes the space to vibrate, with the box swimming to fill the viewer's entire vision. This electric relationship between viewer and light was exactly how I wanted to emphasize the space and the women within it. I used a similar warm blue to the warm ultramarine used in *Rondo Blue* and a purple from different angles to make set (plain white lines on the floor) vibrate with energy. During the preshow of *Nine* these were combined with a loud hum, to give them even more life. It gave the piece the contemporary feeling I wanted through the color and sharp lines, while also building the relationship with the audience through the energy of the colors. I hoped to draw my audience into the space of *Nine* through the light similarly to the way that Turrell's work draws his viewer in.



*Figure 3 Carn White James Turrell*

Turrell's work *Carn White* from the *Projection Pieces* series gives the viewer an experience of intense desire. It is created by a single light from across the room shaped to create a three dimensional shape. You feel as if you have to move closer, to push in, to see what happens when you touch the light. The second your shadow blocks the

projection, however, the illusion is shattered. This shattering of the audience's focus was exactly what I wanted to let the light convey. I knew while working on the design that there would be two moments when I would use the booth lights to remind the audience that the space was larger than just the two women, and the breaking of the boxes of light I would establish would be part of this. I would use backlight to silhouette the women, and light the audience, allowing them to see themselves within the space while using the booth lights to add depth to the space above them. The audience themselves would only be lit in moments when the captors were encroaching on the women's space. The audience would only be able to see themselves and each other when the captor's presence was felt viscerally. While this would not necessarily force them to see themselves as complicit in the captor's attention, lighting them only in specific moments meant that they were built into the space itself. In these moments they were as much a part of the set as the walls of the theatre.

As with every part of the production, I was determined to use the costume design to pull the audience into the story. I did not want to establish the women as tied to the military (as I had originally planned when proposing the production) and I wanted to make it clear that the costumes they were wearing were not their original clothing. I wanted to use two similar, ill-fitting costumes, to give them a close relationship. I chose to hold off choosing the clothing at the beginning of the rehearsal process, as I wanted to see what would happen during rehearsals. If I had shared images with the cast I would have been pushing them in too clear a direction, and I hoped that the costume choices could become a character choice. I knew it was likely that I would go shopping with the two women playing 1 and 2 and choose their clothing

together. Not having a costume designer facilitated making the costumes a character choice. It allowed me to give the actresses a chance to exert some control over their environment, which I hoped would tie them closer to the production and increase their desire to commit to their characters.

Fortunately, we had a sound designer to help us with the production. My original hope was to have huge, loud, menacing sound in each of the moments when the script called for some sound. This would evolve after I was able to see a production of *1984* at the Hudson Theatre in New York. The sound designer, Tom Gibbons, did not use preshow music, but rather used a loud mechanical hum/soundscape. This soundscape allowed the audience to instantly know that they were in an unusual production space. I drew inspiration from this experience and asked Vincent Meredith (our sound designer) to find something similar that we could use. This would later morph into balancing silence in the space with the sound of the hum. The theatre has an inherent hum to it already, so I wanted to make sure that what we had was present enough that when turned off it would be shocking. The hum would need to be loud enough to drown out the already existing sound and when turned off would create the illusion of complete silence. In lighting design it is often said that you never go brighter than 90% so that 90% becomes your 100%. The audience gets used to whatever you give them, and it becomes unnoticeable. This way if you need to go to 110% you can. The hum had similar philosophy. Silence (0%) was actually a moderately present hum (15%), so that when we went to even quieter than the silence we were used to, the audience would be forced to notice. Leaving it on for almost the entire production except for a few key moments would allow it to fade into the background of the audience's awareness,

furthering the significance of silence. The loud sounds of doors and footsteps would then be able to pop as the hum would fade into the background by the time they happened. I only turned off the hum in one specific moment. During the blackout between parts, the character I added as “them” (the captors) crossed through the windows above the boxes on the stage, and entered the room. We went completely black, and the audience heard his footsteps and 1’s scream and sobs. She audibly fell to the floor and whispered a final “no.” At this moment the hum was abruptly stopped, and the audience was forced to sit in total silence hearing only the actors breathing and footsteps. In this moment the audience was completely silent and still, unwilling to break the tension.

## Chapter 2: Rehearsal and Performances

I began working on *Nine* in March 2017 with concept, design, and theory. Moving forward I cast the show through a series of auditions and callbacks in conjunction with the Senior Acting Recital that would be Act I to the Senior Weekend event. *Nine* would be Act II. The two acts ended up sharing one actor, Italia Colby who played 1 in *Nine* as well as a character in the recital. Chantelle Rhoden played 2, and Phillip Wells was cast as “them,” the character I added. Auditions took place the first week of September and the performance dates were September 28, 29, and 30.

The first read-through on September 5 gave the actors their first full picture of what the show felt like. During callbacks I left the plot and purpose of the show intentionally vague, so that we could feel genuine emotion at the first read-through. I wanted to know the cast’s initial reactions, and have a tangible moment to remind them of if they began to forget the impact of the piece as we went through the rehearsal process. At 2’s monologue where she reclaims her own power in the space by withholding her name, both actresses began to experience the emotion of the piece. By the end of the read-through, both were in tears. It was clear that throughout the production process it would be important to give them emotional space away from the piece. They would need time with each other to bond so that they could build a safe emotional boundary between themselves and the damage the abuse had caused in their characters. One way we did this was having them work with the piece as if they had read about it in the newspaper. We also all wrote in journals regularly to help keep track of what was and was not working and to help the actresses to track how their work with the piece evolved.

At this first read-through we went through the concept for the show. I wanted to be completely transparent with them about what they would be portraying, and the ways I hoped to push them in the performance. We talked about strategies to frame the audience as bystander from within the piece. This was everything from turning to face upstage from the audience in moments of accusation, to treating them as the eyes of their captors and finding ways to feel accusatory towards them.

As we moved through the rehearsal process we wrestled with the gravity of the space. Both the actresses and I struggled with reasons why the women would choose to frame much of their movement facing the audience if their captors were upstage of them. We decided that the doors to their boxes were downstage. We were careful not to frame them as cells because I wanted to make sure we did not begin to frame the show as prison, or any kind of legal detainment. The women were to be there unfairly captured, kidnapped, or stolen. The cast also worked with what they felt when Wells was present above them. I discovered that they wanted to move away from him, to push back from where he was, trying to shove themselves to the farthest wall of their boxes. This meant that when he was present during performance they would turn their backs to the audience and watch him and when he was not they would feel more free to move throughout their space. The opening to the piece had Rhoden in the upstage corner of her box, away from the "door." Colby later took moments to back up into that corner. When she knew Wells was about to enter she pushed in that direction, keeping as far away as possible from both his entrance to the room and where he would enter her box to take her.

Rehearsals began with experimentation. The actresses improvised the script for several days before we began to formally block. As we moved forward each night, they were sent home with a list of questions to think about. They did not have “homework” but it was important they work on their characters outside of the rehearsal room. Since this was not a faculty directed production, I worried they would not do much additional work without some sort of framework. These questions were all character based, and we would work through the answers during each subsequent rehearsal.

Much of the work in the rehearsal room was building the characters and finding the blocking from that work. I spent nearly all of my time outside rehearsal trying to find ways to guide the actresses to work on their characters and to remind them of the audience’s presence. Since we were framing this production to see how our work changed when we framed the audience as bystander, we spent a fair amount of time working with accusing the audience. One very beneficial exercise was taking the accusatory moments of each character and framing them downstage. Rhoden struggled with finding a strength and anger, so we spent entire rehearsals pushing her to express it towards Colby and then the audience. This helped her to find more varied emotional depth throughout the production, as well as find ways in which the audience was complicit to her character’s suffering. When addressing Colby she had a more subdued aggression, whereas when we pointed her towards the audience she was more comfortable in expressing extreme anger towards a large unnamed group. This was likely because she knew Colby, and the anonymity of the audience felt safer. She was framing the audience as bystander because she was more comfortable with them in that role. Colby was an individual she was attacking, while the audience was a large group

where the responsibility was diffused throughout. They were all complicit, whereas if she was expressing her anger to her scene partner Colby was framed as directly responsible. The angry moment ended up being directed to 1 but I learned how we could continue to read the audience as complicit from Rhoden's struggle.

One moment in *Nine* especially lent itself to playing with who the audience was in the space. When 2 refuses to give 1 the end of the "a stitch in time" tell, 1 baits her by hinting she may have told their captors that 2 knows *something*. The audience has not known if the women are being tortured for information, or for sadistic pleasure until this point. 1 says, "They ask questions," giving the audience a small glimpse of why the women may be there (Shepard 21). This "they" asking questions was represented literally by Wells, but also more theoretically by the audience. Through the rehearsal process Colby and I worked with which "they" it was who asks the questions—the audience who asks themselves questions throughout the performance trying to understand, or their torturers. In this specific moment, it was the audience. She has begun to reveal to them the truth of their captivity. When saying, "they ask questions" we also played with how "they" were watching. Was it through cameras? Or only when Wells was in the space? Or was the audience "them." Throughout the play the audience was "them," part of the oppressive group watching the women. While this moment did not read as strongly, its blocking evolved as Colby worked with who was watching and who was asking her questions.

Our work on how the audience was implicated was not primarily for the audience, but for the cast. We wanted to discover what it looked like when we framed the audience as bystander for ourselves, not so much for them. There were numerous

moments when there was a subtle turn downstage, a cross away from the audience, or an intentional upstage directionality for several lines to allow the cast to be ever aware of their audience's presence. They took on the type of presence that video cameras would. The audience was an ominous act of watching, and of being watched. These choices were not always beneficial to the performance. Instinctually, the cast wanted to directly address the audience when their lines revealed the more painful truth of the plot. They often did not notice when they did this.

When 2 reveals that she was raped and 1 asks how many people were present, both actresses wanted to face downstage. The amount of time it took to finesse the scene to balance the women's desire to accuse the audience and explain to them was something I had not anticipated. Eventually we settled on Colby breaking down left and facing the audience, though not addressing them. This meant that she was able to express the fear and pain of the reveal, without falling into being too actively accusatory. The audience could be distanced from her glare, as well as the action, so they could think more critically to understand what the specific lines meant. If this moment had been a pointed accusation I was concerned that it would alienate them so far from the action that they would be lost. We were implicating them more subtly than saying literally "you are actively at fault." Part of the blocking for this moment was to allow Colby to stay within the performance; I believe that by opening night she was no longer aware that the moment was implicating the audience, too caught up in the moment.

The cast's awareness of the audience did not give the audience an awareness of themselves; rather the cast's act of ignoring the audience alienated them. The audience

was separated from the cast by very clear boundaries through all of part one of the play. Once Wells broke the boundaries of the space, through his presence above as well as steps in the darkness, the atmosphere of the space was more tense. His entrance meant that the play was not contained to the lines on the floor or the safety of the light, it was instead a piece that could appear from anywhere. There could have been characters in the audience for all they knew. The shattering of the safety built by the clear lines of the boxes on the floor separating the characters from audience left them rattled. Even though it was my choice to put Wells in the space, I found myself instinctually stressed every time we went to blackout during performance. We pushed 1's screams in the darkness to almost horror movie levels of panic to intentionally violate the audience's understanding of what type of show they were seeing. They were pushed to question the rules of theatre, and the rules they expected to see performed for them.

The performance process was typical. Stage management took control of the show at tech, and the show ran and opened smoothly. Opening night, however, was not well attended, nor was it a particularly enthusiastic performance by the cast. Both Rhoden and Colby were a bit nervous, and their work in relationship to the audience meant that having few people there did not give them as strong a presence as we had anticipated. We knew that the house would be small, but it still threw them through part one of the play, they picked up at part two as the emotions of the piece began to affect the audience's reaction to their performance. Subsequent performances were both well attended and well received. The audience was a wide range of students, community members, and Wooster faculty. Students from the theatre department, fraternities and sororities, as well as sports groups found their way to the theatre due

to the draw of specific actors. This meant that some of the people seeing the show were members of groups with a history of mistreatment of women, specifically fraternities whose parties have had a significant number of date rape drug incidents. While the intent of the show was not to speak to members of these groups about the violence that occurs against women simply because of their gender, it ended up doing so. There were also members of the college's administration in the audience, who went out of their way to speak to members of the production team after the show. After the weakness of the first night, I did not anticipate having a full house, but both following nights were sold out with a waitlist.

The performance run of *Nine* manipulated Brechtian alienation in several ways. It first and foremost manipulated how the audience thought. Brecht's goal with the alienation effect was to produce a subject matter working with a process of alienation that "is necessary to all understanding" (Brecht 71). Brecht believed that, "when something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means that any attempt to understand the world has been given up" (71). *Nine* was not a play that answered its audience's questions easily. They could not sit back, enjoy the performance, and turn off their brains becoming a passive spectator. The performance required significant thought to sort out the actual backstory of the characters. 1 and 2's very names alienated the audience. In many plays the main few characters' names will be established clearly and early on. While the work I did with the actresses playing 1 and 2 included them discovering names for their characters, we never shared them. I did not know the names they chose until after the performance closed and I did not allow them to share them with each other either. Neither actress decided to share the name with

the other after closing, choosing instead to hold their characters only for themselves. The audience was pushed away from the women as characters. Brechtian technique says, “instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with things” (Brecht 23). The lack of women’s names meant that it was harder for the audience to relate to them. They were further pushed away by the total lack of information. The audience had to dig through every line of dialogue to discover the plot and understand the characters of the piece.

The emotional alienation of the audience was intentionally built to force them to think and come to grips with the production. They had to reconcile their expectations for a theatre piece that would explain itself to them with the reality of a piece that felt like they were walking in part way through. The actresses and I spent significant time in the rehearsal space working on what the women’s lives in the space would look like. How many ways would someone figure out how to sit on the same small amount of very hard, cold floor for months or years? When two people are only ever safe with each other how many inside jokes do they have? What stories would they share? We would improvise in rehearsals to find answers to these questions, and they would be sent home thinking about them.

One way we worked with their relationship was thinking about how the women loved each other. Several times the characters make sexual jokes or innuendos, and the actresses had to reconcile these moments with the angry or violent moments between them. Through a journal response both actresses decided they felt that their characters were not in love. They were more like sisters, long suffering, but platonically loving. It was clear that the sexual violence they both had experienced in the space would have

been damaging. The sexual jokes were possible because of the safety between the two. They could not even touch each other, so their jokes could never be acted upon, and they were kept together only when they were not being hurt so they created a safe space between themselves.

The space between the women was equally important physically as it was emotionally. This is exacerbated when considered in relationship to the distance between the women and the audience. Between the women there was the same white line as between them and the audience. The audience intentionally was unsure as to what these lines meant. They could have been barred cell walls or invisible fences. One audience member went so far as to ask if they were supposed to be a science fiction-like force field between them. No matter what the audience assumed the women were trapped in, it was clear they could not cross the lines. At moments 1 would bounce off of them as if coming up on a brick wall and stopping herself so as not to hit it. When 2 sang to 1 as she died they lay facing each other across the centerline. They did not touch, but were as close as they could possibly be. This was a change from Shepard's description of the stage; in her text there are lines where the women reference being able to touch each other, but for this production we reframed them as jokes or impossibilities. I wanted to strengthen each woman's isolation from both her partner and the audience. Neither could feel any physical touch except for that of their captors, and the audience was intended to feel that viscerally.

One way we increased this was through Wells' entrance to take 1. He entered the space in a blackout and walked until he touched Colby. She did not scream until he reached her and when she was "thrown" to the floor Wells helped to increase the sound.

When Colby had simply fallen on her own and chosen when to scream the moment felt less grounded. Even though there was no visual difference between the two, Colby's verbalization was significantly more effective because she had some measure of adrenaline waiting for an unseen Wells to reach her. In this moment the walls between characters may as well not have existed, but as soon as the lights came on to reveal the women, they were even more present than before. We had a slight light change to help the lines appear before the women did, so the audience was told first about their re-imprisonment and then 1's pain.

The light also functioned to accentuate the wall between the cast and the audience. There were very clear lines cut into the lights so as to further isolate them. In the preshow/intermission, the boxes were lit on the floor in such a way as to make them almost vibrate off the ground. We used LED's in cool and warm blue and purple from the sides to highlight them so sharply that the lines appeared to glow against the black floor. The women entered them and were broken off from the rest of the space until their captor began to enter. Nowhere in the theatre was lit except for the boxes until Wells' character's entrance. His light from the windows above the stage was increased with an intense light shone straight into the audience's eyes. It was the only moment when the audience could see each other as easily as they saw the performers onstage.

The scenes before and after this moment had the women (primarily) focused towards the audience, but at the moment the light turned on the women faced upstage. The audience saw only their backs as they came to grips with the fact that one of them was about to be taken. Wells' character appeared and the women's faces were

completely hidden. Earlier the audience had been watching the women, but now they watched “them” and were seeing the same view as the women. To have the women’s backs to them while watching Wells’ cross above was intended to allow them to associate themselves with the characters of 1 and 2. His physical entrance onto the stage following the blackout was thus even more powerful. I was hesitant to lean into the fear of the moment; I worried it would sound cheesy or feel too horror-movie like. The effect, however, was more important than these concerns. The trust built up by the consistency of the earlier half of the production was shattered. Sitting in the house during performances I felt my heart rate leap during the blackout. I knew exactly what was going to happen, and had direct control over the intent of the moment, yet I still was mildly terrified for what was going to happen. The instinctual fear of the dark, especially in a theatre space that could have ended up more interactive than anticipated left audience members stressed and alert. The piece did go on to follow the same rules as it had in the first half, but it was more suspicious.

The final blackout left the audience silent, unsure if they were going to be forced to listen to more suffering or if they were supposed to clap. They did not applaud until the lights came up and the women bowed. This moment was as tightly choreographed as the rest of the piece. The women stood facing the audience, and deliberately took hands. This was to give the audience one small moment of catharsis. The piece itself did not give it to them, but they were able to see the women have some sort of physical contact. The women took one bow before exiting and deliberately cutting off the moment. We considered not having any curtain call, but decided it would be too jarring. The shortened bow meant the end still felt strange, but the performers had the

opportunity to thank the audience, and the audience to thank the performers. I intended it to feel clipped so the audience would be mildly confused. My hope was that they would be forced to question what they had just experienced. I wanted them to take a moment to think critically of the piece.

### Chapter 3: Responses and Reflection

In hindsight, there are plenty of things I would change in my work with *Nine*. There are moments in the video from closing night where I can see my director's hand moving the actors in a way that would not be there if I were a more experienced director. These moments are ones that I have no choice but to learn from. More significant, however, are the moments when I did not fully trust my concept. There are ways that I could have involved the audience more that I deemed too risky during rehearsals that could have been effective. Wells' character specifically could have been more committed. There were different locations I could have placed him in, but I chose the one I did to highlight the height of the space. I do not believe his character would have had the power he did had he been located on the same level as the women.

One of the original ideas for the character "them" was to place him in the audience and have him enter through the aisle in a blackout. This would have forced the audience to see themselves as an active part of the piece. It would have made them suspicious as to whether there were more plants in the audience or if they would be forced to participate. Using an audience plant could have given me the opportunity to push the concept of implicating the audience to the extreme, but it would not have implicated them as bystander. Because Wells would have entered from the house members of the audience would have been concerned by their own vulnerability as audience members than reading themselves as implicated. The actresses and I would also have had to change our reading of the audience. They would have been part of a active, more obvious, whole instead of part of a watchful, consuming neutral. The

audience space would have become an active performance space as opposed for a place for the bystander to observe from.

If I had chosen to fully commit to placing “them” in the audience, I could have cast multiple men to represent them. This would have meant that the women would be able to have multiple focuses for their oppressors. While this could have been effective, it would have easily become confusing for the audience. To see someone above and then another person in the audience would make the physical layout of the space muddy. The women also would have treated the audience more as active oppressor, instead of potential but dormant savior.

In her guided reflection of our work, Colby said that people she knew in the audience were upset by the piece, and a few wanted to walk out because it was so troubling. Of her family’s response she said, “they were all especially upset by the fact that there was nothing they could do to stop any of the things happening” (Colby). Specific audience members appear to have been feeling the effects of their own passivity more than the bystander effect. If the effect was in full force they would have felt able to intervene. Because audience members saw themselves as “audience” they did not see themselves as fully complicit. This tells us that our work was not as effective as it could have been, though audience members were still aware of their position in the space.

Despite the discomfort that Colby’s family felt, they were participating in the production as active spectator. Brecht says, “the spectator was no longer in any way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play” (Brecht 71). Audience

member permitted to participate in the show passively would not have felt any desire to stand up and participate. In her reflection Rhoden says, "With the screaming, the portrayal of pain, and moments of uncomfortable silence, the audience was forced to be present at all times during the piece." Onstage she was able to feel their presence, saying, "the production seemed to thrive with the audience so close and connected with the performance" (Rhoden). As an audience member I was able to feel the same energy Rhoden did. The piece held more strength when there was a full audience in attendance, one that was present because of their active engagement. In the audience you could feel the moments when we collectively sat still and did not want to draw attention to ourselves. The audience was engaged, on some level, intellectually through Brecht's alienation. They were not, however, participating physically as Boal's spect-actor would have been. The bystander effect, if fully forced upon the audience, would have pushed them to feel enough pressure to be spect-actors so that at least one of them would have stood up. If they were to stand they would have thrown off the bystander effect. Perhaps they felt safer in numbers and did not feel the need to participate. This is an aspect of the bystander effect, but alone it does not demonstrate its full presence. If it were in full force Colby's family in the audience would have felt more aware of their ability to stop the performance.

"Them" was the character that I found gave me the most opportunity to frame the audience as bystander. Wells' character went through a fair amount of evolution over the rehearsal process. In early rehearsals he only looked at the women, but by the end he was entering the space, which allowed the character to have a physical presence onstage. One idea we had for his character was to have him enter 1's cell and light a

cigarette, allowing the audience and 1 to see him. This would have taken some of the effect of Brecht's smoking audience member. While he would not carry the disruption of a smoking spectator, he would be breaking down the rules of the theatrical space. Live flame and real cigarettes are rare onstage at the College of Wooster, and we likely would have been encouraged to use an e-cigarette, but the scent of a real one would have lingered in the space, dirtying it. To dirty the space would have allowed it to feel more real. The stigma that goes alongside cigarettes would have built Wells' character (in some audience members eyes) as a more tangible "bad" character. I chose not to have Wells smoke for both health reasons and because I wanted to emphasize the fear that the women felt when taken. Because he was invisible he was more intimidating as he could come from anywhere and do anything. In his higher position he had all of the power in the space and when he entered in the blackout the fear of the women was transferred to the audience. "They" were, conceptually, the most important character in the play. He affected the way that the entire piece unfolded for the audience through both the visual of his presence, and the long lingering effects after he left.

As active watcher "they" took on the role of oppressor in Foucault's Panopticon. Foucault says, "The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (Foucault 221). It is a central tower surrounded by a ring of cells that are backlit. From the circular windows of the tower the watcher can see every cell and its occupant clearly. It "automates and disindividualizes" power, creating a homogenous entity.

Physically I created a similar effect in *Nine*. The windows in the space provided a visual place from which “they” would watch, and the audience formed the ever-present watcher of the guard in the Panopticon’s tower. The theoretical Panopticon was the ultimate machine of observation.

The Panopticon was also a laboratory; it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals. To experiment with medicines and monitor their effects. To try out different punishments on prisoners, according to their crimes and character, and to seek the most effective ones. To teach different techniques simultaneously to the workers. (Foucault 223)

The vagueness of *Nine* meant that the theatrical space I created aligned with the many purposes of the Panopticon. The absolute power of the observer and the audience as an extension of “them” in *Nine* is an example of how the women were in the position of captive of the theory.

The purpose of the Panopticon is to “induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 220). As captives of the hypothetical Panopticon 1 and 2 were always watched. The audience became part of the oppressive machine and they wielded power within it. Though we did not work with this in the rehearsal space, the audience’s presence was the only reason that the actresses did not cross out of their boxes. This is because of the practicality of performance but also because the audience represented an extension of “them.” As audience they were part of the automatic functioning of power through their constant watching of the “inmates” (1 and 2). The construction of

the theatrical space framed all of those watching as the ones in power, making the watchers bystanders of the violence. The bystander holds power, as they are always in a position to stop the action before them, so everyone in the space except for 1, 2, and “them” were bystanders.

After the show closed and we had the chance to take a step back from *Nine* I asked each actor a few questions in a guided response. Wells chose only to answer: “How do you feel your work implicated (or didn’t implicate) the audience as bystander?” In response he said:

Much of my role in *Nine* took place in the dark. Limiting the audience's senses to hearing meant eliminating some of the tells that an audience member might use to rationalize the behavior of characters on stage; an audience member does not necessarily feel bad for the plight of the characters because they can see that the action is just part of a play. But what if I had actually hurt someone on stage during the blackout? Who among the audience would rise to check the actors during an extended silence, if any? (Wells)

Wells references the safety of being a theatre audience. You can watch the action without feeling any sense of responsibility or fear because you know that the play was staged for you to watch it. Our work with *Nine*, however, eliminated this. Wells’ questions: “what if I had actually hurt someone onstage during the blackout? Who among the audience would rise to check the actors during an extended silence, if any?” helps to understand this. While rehearsing the moment we were worried that Wells may bump into Colby, but we were not concerned she would be seriously injured. If she had, however, it would have taken a significant amount of time for the stage manager to

realize it. This is part of why we added a line after she fell. If Colby did not give the line Wells could check on her and Lopus, the stage manager, could halt the show. The audience, however, would likely not have intervened. If we had shown Wells dragging Colby out of the theatre instead of implying her removal, the audience would not have felt the distress of the blackout. They would have been upset by the visual of the violence, but it would have felt tangible. They would have known that any distress performed by Colby would have been manufactured. The blackout, however, meant that they did not know what was coming, and it felt more viscerally violent. We broke down the way they would expect her to be removed. The blackout when Wells entered the space was short, and there were no moments of silence more than a few seconds. I did not want us to find ourselves in a situation where the audience was so uncomfortable in the silence that they thought they were supposed to applaud. The lack of a moment of silence increased the tension in the house. They were very still during the blackout and froze when the hum went silent. In her reflection Colby said, "The feeling that you get from an entire audience holding its breath very much changes the feelings of the audience" (Colby). She and Rhoden both were hyperaware of the audience in moments like this one, as both passive watcher, and audience.

It would have been interesting to see how the audience would have responded to a drawn out silence after Wells slammed the door upon exiting. How long would have they waited in the dark before someone felt the need to force change? If we had had a longer performance run or had arranged an invited audience for a dress rehearsal it would have been fascinating to play with. This would have taken the audience's presence and pushed it so far that they would have had no choice but to step out of

their role of audience/bystander and enact change on stage. If we had been more easily able to predict how they would do this we could have had the blackout last every night until an audience member chose to intervene, and then the play would have continued. This would have allowed them to become the “man who walks across an empty space” that Brook refers to (Brook 9).

In his reflection on *Nine*, Wells continued, “The audience is a bystander in the sense that they trust us as playmakers that everything will be alright in the end, just as so many people foist the responsibility of action during disaster onto other people.” (Wells) It is clear that the actors were acutely aware of the ways they were working with audiences as implicated bystanders. Wells was only present during my initial explanation of the concept of the piece and some of the work we did building it into the show. I did not require him to do the nightly thinking or weekly journals that Rhoden and Colby did. I was thus surprised by how much thought he had put into the presence of audience in relationship to the stage. His work may not have evolved with the audience framed as bystander, but the character shaped how we included them in the piece. Without “them” the audience would not have read as much like bystander to myself or the actresses. We were able to read them in relationship to Wells’ oppressive presence and alone they would have felt more like voyeur or watcher than bystander. They would have been a neutral party, because we did not know what an oppressive party would look like. If “them” had not entered the space, and broken the physical boundaries of the boxes by existing outside of them, the audience would not have read in our work as able to do so. Because of Wells they became a large group who could intervene but chose not to.

Another way we worked to try to frame the audience as bystander was by trying to convince the audience to stand up and help the women in more subtle ways. Wells suggested the worst-case scenario that they would have felt the most extreme need to intervene in the action. When considering the audience as spect-actor over bystander, I hoped to add smaller moments when there would not be as much pressure for them to intervene. The moment that failed most spectacularly was “the hair tie moment.” Colby has long thick hair, and we worked to have her to break a hair tie, or to shoot it outside of her walls. The hope was the audience would think it was a mistake and that she was supposed to put her hair up, and pass it back to her. The audience member would step out of role as bystander.

I would have liked to see how different audience members were effected by the moment, and if they would choose to help her. In the end it was an incredibly awkward moment and we could not get it to look smooth, so it was cut. It was a more minimal moment that could allow for audience participation. It was a way to force interaction without, in that specific moment, framing the audience as bystander, but merely reminding them they were present. If it had worked later moments when they were asked to physically intervene may have been effective. They would have been subtly told that they could participate without repercussions so during the blackout they would have been aware that they were allowed to intervene. Because I chose not to include moments to try to force the audience to their feet loosing this moment was not a huge loss. I was looking at how our work changed with the reframing of audience as bystander, so experimenting with ways to have direct participation may be a potential area for future work. Playing with how to implicate them in our own eyes gave us many

of our more effective moments like the blackout between parts, 2's description of her sexual assault, and the power behind 2's name monologue.

A tool that is commonly used to disrupt audiences' expectations is the house lights. Theater artists hoping to disrupt their audience's stupor will either leave the house lit or light it during the performance to force the audiences to suddenly become self aware. It forces them to realize that they are still present, not allowing them to forget that they are part of a group watching the piece. I chose not to do this because I did not want the audience to be focused on themselves and forget to connect to the play. Unanticipated light on audience members makes them supremely uncomfortable and self-conscious and the other tricks I was using (the hum, Wells' character, and the strategic blackouts) alongside the text was enough to disrupt their expectations. The very purpose of this piece of theatre was to disrupt the audience's instinct to sink too deeply into the stupor of spectatorship, to alienate them just enough that they would remain aware of the act of theatre before them. If the house had been up they would have been distracted by each other as well as their own instincts to perform "good audience member."

Audiences reacted positively to *Nine*. While I chose not to conduct post-performance surveys or interviews, there was plenty of conversation after the performance. One audience member said "I'm going to go home and sit on my bed with my comforter over my head. I liked it, but damn was that intense" (Snedeker-Meier). There were a large variety of people in the audience over the three performance nights. This meant that there was a mix of people with experience seeing live theatre and those with little to none. The moment when audiences did not know if they should applaud or

not was tangibly uncomfortable. I warned Colby and Rhoden before opening that the audience would likely not want to applaud until they actively bowed due to the weight of the material. Tristan Lopus (the stage manager) and I worked closely on how long to leave the blackout and uncomfortable silence to allow the emotions of the piece to linger just long enough for the audience not to forget them after the obligatory applause. Later, audience members complained that they were confused about when to clap, but the purpose of the moment was effective. I considered not staging a curtain call, and leaving the piece open ended and lingering, but decided against it. If the cast had left in the blackout, I suspected the audience would feel the need to applaud the empty theatre and that would almost entirely negate the purpose.

Despite everything I would consider changing if I were to restage *Nine* or go back in time to fix it, the work we did helped to contextualize my own conceptual work with the bystander effect. Through framing the space as an example of Foucault's Panopticon it is clear that audience members participated in the theatrical event as bystanders, and as Brecht's activated spectators though not as Boal's spect-actor.

## Chapter 4: Other Works

After directing *Nine* I traveled to New York City to see three theatre productions with highly varied audience-performer relationships. These three productions provide a wider context to *Nine* they also helped to give me a deeper understanding of the ways in which audiences are manipulated in theatre. These shows were *M Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang December 16 2017, *Farinelli and the King* by Claire van Kampen December 16 2017, and *Sleep No More* by Punchdrunk, Felix Barrett, and Maxine Doyle December 18 2017. Each production had a different interpretation and use of their audience in terms of both physical location and level of interaction between audience and performer. The selection of these productions in New York was twofold. New York is seen as a hub of American theatre. *Nine* was heavily informed by my own theatrical experiences in the United States and the United Kingdom, so I chose to use works that grew out of those performance traditions. *M Butterfly* is an example of drama marrying performance styles from across the world. It uses American and Chinese traditions to tell the story and manipulate its audience. *Farinelli and the King* used a historical Western performance style to create the production's atmosphere *Sleep No More* used newer immersive techniques from the UK and USA to build a one-of-a-kind experience for its audience.

*M. Butterfly's* presence in theatrical canon allowed it to function as a control in this study. Its script calls for moderate interaction with audience members through intentional breaks of the fourth wall. This version was envisioned as a journal or memory, partially functioning through direct address to the audience. It was a rewritten script from the original produced in 1988. *M. Butterfly* is a play surrounding an actual

event in which a French man fell in love with a Chinese man disguised as a woman. In the actual event Bernard Boursicot (renamed Rene Gallimard in the play) fell in love with Shi Pei Pu (renamed Song Liling), a Chinese man who convinced Boursicot that he was, in fact, a woman (Wadler 1). The play surrounds the central question: did Rene know that Song was a man and not a woman?

This version is Rene's personal, logical account of the story, from first meeting until he brought Song to France and their relationship was discovered. The story is Rene's tale. Despite this, Song takes control of the narrative from Rene in moments to tell her side of the story. She reveals that she was a spy manipulating Rene through much of the story. When it is revealed that she manipulated Rene he begins to slip further into despair, ending the play with his suicide. Here this version of the play deviates from the original script. In the original Rene commits seppuku, a ritual self-disembowelment, while Song watches dispassionately. This production staged Rene's death more tenderly, with Song rushing to his side and draping her body over his. The final image of the play is two moths circling above their embracing bodies.

This work's presence in theatrical canon, as well as proscenium audience layout juxtaposes *Farinelli and the King*, *Sleep No More*, and *Nine* perfectly. Seeing a piece of theatre from the typical seating layout means that the audience can simply sit back and watch the production, audience members are not surprised or thrown out of their expectations for the performance. Each person is able to take part in the passivity of spectatorship though they are aware of their own position as audience member throughout. *M. Butterfly* manipulates its audience just enough through varied performance traditions, and strategic gendered readings of characters so as to force

each person to constantly reconcile the juxtaposing elements within the play as well as themselves as spectator against the performance before them.

This particular rendition of *M. Butterfly*, however, did do a few unusual things to disrupt the passivity of its audience. It reframed the production as logical direct address, as opposed to the original more frantic version. It opened with Rene Gallimard explaining that the play is an account of what happened to him. He clarifies that it is his version of events. The play looked, in these early moments, like it would be a version of the story told only from his perspective; and while he was the main player, he was by far the least interesting character. As the play progresses other characters evolved from passive elements in *his* story, to truer depictions of themselves. Song Liling takes agency over the narrative in moments in a way that she does not in the original script. She forces Gallimard to see the dirtier parts of the plot, parts that he did not know at the time. She forces him to see her betrayals as more than betrayal, but the actions of a desperate person seeking freedom. In Song's corrections of Rene's narrative she several times mentions "his audience," saying, "I want to tell your audience the whole truth" (Hwang) Through Rene and Song's direct address the audience is reminded of their presence as audience, alienated from the ease of total passivity.

The most significant time that the audience was thrown from the narrative was in a moment of full male nudity. When proving their gender, Song Liling strips naked before Rene and the audience and remains naked for several minutes. Nudity onstage often throws an audience. It causes an internal conflict. The decision must be made to try to look past the nudity, to keep the eyes above the waist, or to read it as apart of the consumable art in front of each individual audience member. As Song removed her

clothes the audience held especially still, not looking around at each other or making much, if any, sound. Even the coughs that interrupt the production throughout stopped.

There is inherent discomfort in trying not to feel or look like a voyeur in a public space. Despite the common understanding in the house that the audience is there to attend the presentation of a piece of art audience members become uncomfortable. Earlier in the work there is a similar moment when a woman appeared topless. The audience is stiller in this moment as well, but less so, and not at all quieter. The gendered reading of the male and female bodies allow the audience to be more comfortable looking at an already sexualized female body, than a vulnerable and desexualized male body. Song is confusing because the character is presented as both male and female. The earlier female nudity is easily read as merely the sexualization of a character. It is accepted because Rene consumes her nudity her alongside the audience. The play itself tells the audience to read her as a sexual object. Song, however, appears nude for a clear purpose of confrontation. The audience struggles like Rene struggles to reconcile the male body in front of them with the feminine voice and gendered performance they have seen from the character earlier in in the play. They are forced to think critically about the moment, bringing in a hint of Brechtian alienation.

The production used a hyper-stylistic theatrical language to communicate with the audience. While Rene and Song both addressed the audience directly, the lighting, set, and costumes all lead to the strong presence of the theatrical fourth wall. The set was made up of minimal props and ten-foot flats, which flipped and danced across the stage to construct walls for each scene. These flats were given different images and textures to facilitate the changing scenes, and made the stage feel huge. The height of

the proscenium when combined with these flats shrank the actors, making them feel both insignificant due to their size, and hugely important because they were the only movement in the massive space once the scenes were established. Director Julie Taymor leaned into the theatricality of the play, as well as the dramatics of the story, playing both to their maximum, and pushing the audience away from being too closely tied to the play. In naming this phenomenon Brecht says, "The audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place" (Brecht 92). While the audience of *M. Butterfly* was partially an unseen spectator, they were always aware that they were at an event that was not really taking place. The way that both Song and Rene reminded the audience of their presence as spectator pushed them to remember that they were a part of an audience. The direct address meant that they were not permitted to forget where they were.

The Brechtian alienation of the audience was, in part, due to the references to traditional Chinese theatre. Many techniques from the Peking Opera were built into *M. Butterfly*. The production had a team of Peking Opera trainers, consultants, and puppeteers. The company Chinese Theatre Works who helped with the piece "preserves and promotes traditional Chinese performing arts [...] and creates original cross-cultural productions." (*M. Butterfly* Playbill). Through the cross-cultural work of performers from Chinese performing arts traditions and actors trained in contemporary western traditions the production *M. Butterfly* used alienation techniques from both. It even went so far as to alienate the characters themselves from each other and the performances they see within the play. When Gallimard visits the Opera, he is confused by the performance and lost as to how to read it. Song, too,

struggles to identify with aspects of Rene's life and how he chooses to present his story. In the moments when she chooses to interrupt his narrative and take control of it, she uses Chinese techniques. Brecht says, "above all, the Chinese artist never acts as if there were a fourth wall besides the three surrounding him. He expresses his awareness of being watched" (Brecht 92). This is how Song confronts the audience. The moments where she takes control it is clear she is always aware of her act of performance. It is important to note, however, that Brecht's analysis is based on a 1935 performance by Mei Lang-fang's company in Moscow. The age of the analysis of the performance tradition, especially from someone without significant experience with it means that his generalizations may not be wholly accurate. They do, however, fit well into the ways in which *M. Butterfly* balanced alienation from both Western and Chinese traditions.

*Farinelli and the King*, a play about King Phillip V of Spain and the castrato Farinelli, is a play celebrating what theatre was at the time of Phillip's rule. Unlike *M. Butterfly* it is the pinnacle of anti-Brechtian theatre. It does not alienate its audience once. Instead it opens its arms to them and enfolds them in the warmth of the production. The plot follows King Phillip's illness and subsequent recovery upon the arrival of Farinelli, one of the most famed castrato singers of the day. Phillip was plagued with what is now called bipolar disorder. He was known for reforming Spanish tax code and increasing the country's influence in Italy through crippling depression. His erratic behavior could have lead to his deposition but his wife saved him by bringing Farinelli, the famed castrato opera singer, to sing for him (Cote). The play uses Farinelli's singing to ground the King each time he begins to stray from sanity. To facilitate the opera sung throughout the play, Farinelli is double cast. One man plays his

character while a countertenor sings the arias in identical clothing beside him. The pieces sung are all Handel works with both Farinellis onstage together, often performing in sync. In the program insert the playwright says that the play does not feature the famed castrato vocals because the barbaric practice is no longer practiced. A castrato is a man who was chosen as a young boy for his beautiful voice. The boy would be castrated to keep his voice from breaking. The sound has not been heard in contemporary music, but it was said to be beautiful because of the light high voice of a young boy with the lungpower of a grown man behind it (Cote).

Throughout the play Phillip's reliance on Farinelli's music increases dramatically. He brings Farinelli to the countryside with him to conduct experiments on the relationship between music and the stars and to escape the Spanish court. The play opens a dialogue between music and health. The program insert for the production says "Farinelli wasn't just a famous artist serving the king; he was his personal physician" (Cote). The piece takes moments where the King speaks to a live fish, holding a two-way dialogue between them, and reframes them when Farinelli arrives. When he begins to sing the audience can see Phillip's entire demeanor change. His sanity returns, as does his willingness to focus on the world around him. After beginning to sing for Phillip, Farinelli never again sang publically. Throughout the play he struggles with hating his voice and fame because of the tension between the trauma it caused him and the beauty of the music he can create. The play ends on an inconclusive bittersweet note, with Farinelli alone onstage watching his musical alter ego sing the final aria.

*Farinelli and the King* has audience members sitting in the house, boxes beside the stage, and onstage with the performers. The onstage seating allowed audience

members to feel fully a part of the action, as well as part of the performance for their fellow audience members. Both these audience members and the action were lit nearly entirely by candlelight. There was very little use of modern theatrical lighting sources or traditions. A small amount of conventional fixtures were used to provide minimal color and fill in areas that the floor mounted candles and chandeliers could not fill. The piece was not theatre for social change, nor did it have a clear “message” as theatre often does. Rather, it reveled in the beauty of the music, candlelight, and action. The play felt more like a series of photographs of the lives, tragedies, and loves of the characters than a full drama about them. It was theatre that wanted you to fall in love with theatre, music, and the beauty of them both. Though it was not an opera, it had the elements of beauty for beauty’s sake that Brecht so hated. The methods of performance, like the opera of Brecht’s day, functioned to further the pleasure and beauty of the production of the piece, not the intellectualism that Brecht so desired (Brecht 35).

*Farinelli and the King* used its audience in an historic way. Placing audience members in boxes in view of the larger audience is a longstanding tradition. The boxes do not provide a great view of the performance, but they give the spectators with the money to purchase seats in them exposure and an opportunity to show off their wealth. The boxes also historically separated the wealthy from the masses. Onstage seating allows audience members to see a new perspective and to have a closer experience with the action before them. When seated onstage they are able to see the entire audience as the performers do, as well as participate in the show in a more intimate way. The use of candles for the majority of the lighting meant that sitting onstage also carried the warmth of the flame. Onstage you could smell the smoke and beeswax and see the

flickering light across the entire theatre. These elements created an unparalleled beauty and delicacy to the production. I found myself swept up in the performance, despite my awareness of the goals of the performance.

While sitting onstage audience members are a part of the action. During preshow Phillip's wife, Isabella, wanders around the stage, interacting with the audience members seated on stage level. An audience member seated far upstage asked her, "We won't be forgotten back here will we?" She took a moment to comfort them and to wish them a good show, endearing her to the stage right audience members. In moments of extreme energy Phillip climbed the banisters of the boxed-in audience seats, hugging the columns tightly, inches from kicking spectators in the face. He took moments to speak directly to them in moments of madness or depression. Audience members seated onstage were not permitted to use bright lights from their phones so as not to distract from the atmosphere during both the stage action and the interval. *Farinelli and the King* also took moments to acknowledge the audience at large. When the entire village was to attend Phillip and Farinelli's concert of music drawn from the stars, the audience was used to represent the audience within the play. Phillip cast specific people as the gardener and his family, and local girls of ill repute, and spoke to them as their new characters. While *M. Butterfly* acknowledged its spectators to alienate them from the spell of spectatorship, this piece used it to allow them an entrance into the production. Since audience members could see each other the entire time they became a background to the play and Phillip's use of them made them into an official part of the play.

*Farinelli and the King* used audience members in a relatively conventional manner, but provided them with several options for ways to interact with the piece. The onstage seating allowed audience members to interact with the piece in a more direct way, as well as experience the work from a (likely) new position. The physical layout of the theatre made it feel far more intimate. Being onstage drew audience members so far into the production they were rarely thrown out of the trance of the show. This was caused almost entirely by proximity to the action, and to the warmth and inclusion of the stage itself. The lighting meant that there was no wall between audience and performer. Both those in the house and onstage were lit nearly as brightly by the chandeliers as the action onstage.

Unlike *M. Butterfly*, *Farinelli and the King* used its moments of audience manipulation to bring them further into the fold of the production, as opposed to alienating them. *Farinelli and the King* asked its audience members to be so swept up in the production through the music, beauty, and theatrical elements that they forgot they were part of an audience. *M Butterfly*, by contrast, used its hyper-stylized performance and direct address to alienate the audience so that they could be nothing but an audience. *Farinelli and the King* was the perfect opposite of Brechtian alienation. Audience members were so welcomed by the production that they did not find themselves thrown out of the action, and they have little to no time for analysis or thought during the production. When attending *Farinelli and the King* I was able to see very little similarities of my work with *Nine*. The style of performance was too focused on the beauty of the piece. *Nine* did have the audience close enough to the action to feel quite intimate, but that is where the similarities stop. There was no overlap between

*Farinelli and the King* with my hope to find out how we work to implicate the audience as bystander.

The third New York based production I saw for this study was *Sleep No More*. Unlike the other two, this production was not on Broadway. Instead, it is an interactive experience through five floors of a warehouse called the McKittrick Hotel in Chelsea where audience members have no directed path and do not see a linear story. The actors rarely speak or recite lines when not having one-on-one interactions with audience members. These interactions are scripted, sometimes public, sometimes private, and always unconventional. Audience members wear white masks while wandering freely through the building. The production feels like a marriage between haunted house, film noir, and stage play. It is a retelling of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* set in the 1930's with an extended cast list. The directors expanded the production to include stories of the side characters of the play and stories that fit within the same atmosphere as the work.

On the front cover of the program are the Latin words "Ulula cum Lupis cum Quibus esse Cupis," which loosely translate to "howl with the wolves if you want to." These words best sum up the intensity and otherworldliness of traveling through the McKittrick Hotel. It is nearly impossible to write dispassionately about *Sleep No More* as it is an experience that thrives on its ability to draw out an audience member's desire for *more*. The production's manipulation of desire and reality clings to audience members after they leave. Isabella Burton who first attended the production in 2012 and had seen it eleven times by 2014 wrote, "most of the devoted *Sleep no More* fans I know have seen the show between fifty and sixty times; outliers of my acquaintance

have seen it up to 150 times.” She continues, “my addiction to unreality has become part of real life” (Burton). The show easily becomes addiction in its audience members and they return time and time again. Burton writes that her first one-on-one experience with a cast member, the initial moment of unreality was “unrepeatable.” The significance of first experiences like this one is where the power of the production begins to appear. The magic that an audience member experiences is something they will chase with every subsequent adventure to the McKittrick. The manipulation of an audience member’s desire to experience the play and experiences within it over and over allows the company to hold onto audience members for years like a drug.

The program available after attendance to *Sleep No More* provides context to the production, as well as cast bios and other explanatory paraphernalia. It is a bound book, a clever solution to providing an audience member who will be on their feet and wandering for the three hour production with a program. In its description of Punchdrunk, *Sleep No More’s* parent company, it says:

[It is] A game-changing form of immersive theatre, in which roaming audiences experience epic and emotional storytelling inside sensory theatrical worlds [...] The company’s infections format rejects the passive obedience usually expected of audiences; their award winning productions invite audiences to experience a real sense of adventure, and rediscover the childlike excitement and anticipation of exploring the unknown. Free to encounter the installed environment in an individual imaginative journey, the choice of what to watch and where to go is theirs alone. (The McKittrick Hotel, 7)

The use of the term “infections” agrees with Burton’s assessment of the performance style of *Sleep No More*. This description also provides the perfect statement of the manipulation of the audience. It “rejects the passive obedience usually expected of audiences” which is in direct opposition to works *Farinelli and the King* and in a way *M. Butterfly*. Both of these productions allow their audience to be part of a collective passive obedience, one where they are unaware of their position as audience, and one where they are aware. *Sleep No More*, however, forces its audience to stand up and fight through the production itself. It slaps them across the face with one-on-ones, as well as softly embraces them into the fold of anonymity through their masks.

The masks that audience members wear are otherworldly. Standing in a large group in dimly lit spaces, they almost feel like they are part of a pack of ghosts. They look a little like the masks worn by plague doctors during the bubonic plague outbreaks in the United Kingdom. The directors, Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, chose to mask the audience to heighten this otherworldliness.

Handing out the masks is like assigning seats in an auditorium. It establishes each individual as part of an audience, and creates a boundary between them and the action. The masks create a sense of anonymity; they make the rest of the audience dissolve into generic, ghostly presences, so that each person can explore the space alone. They allow people to be more selfish and more voyeuristic than they might normally be. Hidden behind a fictional layer, they lose some of their inhibitions. It’s an important part of the dreamlike world we are trying to create. (The McKittrick Hotel, 24).

This boundary allows audience members to part ways from the people they came to the performance with, and to cling to other audience members they may not know. In the early minutes of wandering the hotel audiences tend to stay clumped together, not wanting to venture off alone due to the slightly intimidating atmosphere. They begin by entering a staircase with multiple levels and no guidance. Audience members must choose for themselves which floor to exit onto, but they are not yet used to the individuality they must become comfortable with to experience the full heights of the production. Thus, they follow each other. Slowly, audience members begin to separate, venturing off in groups of two or three, before becoming brave enough to venture out alone.

As the play progresses audience members are able to choose what sort of experience they want. Many who are used to the ways of standard theatre choose to follow the main characters of the *Macbeth* story being told to them, but those with a more adventurous set of desires choose to follow the smaller characters or simply wander until they find something interesting. The production layers multiple stories. Every audience member is herded into several key moments in the *Macbeth* story that is the backbone of the piece, but smaller stories that fit the film noir/*Macbeth* theme are layered in with multiple characters outside and alongside the cast of *Macbeth*. Directors Barrett and Doyle describe the storyline as “a collage of different narratives drawn from sources we found relevant, but many of them do emerge from the world of the play” (The McKittrick Hotel 21). They built the production in evolving layers from score, space, script, dance and devised work, and then to its final configuration.

The final configuration allows audience members so much freedom that some choose to simply flip through books in a study or steal candy from one of the shops on the second floor. These innocent interactions, however, are not the norm. One of two scenes that the entire audience attends is a scene from *Macbeth* where the witches show Macbeth his future. This is staged as drug-fueled rave full of haze, strobe, and nudity. When the scene concludes the characters scatter, and audience members must choose whom to follow. Very few choose to follow the boy-witch, the only character fully nude in this scene. Similarly to *M. Butterfly* audience members avoid giving him extra attention in the hopes not to seem voyeuristic. However, as directors Barrett and Doyle say, “they [the masks] allow people to be more selfish and more voyeuristic than they might normally be. Hidden behind a fictional layer, they lose some of their inhibitions” (The McKittrick Hotel 24). Thus a few audience members inevitably follow him each time. When he finally stops running, audience members find themselves in a tiny bathroom while he showers off the blood from the rave. The boy breaks down in the shower, collapsing in sobs, and audience members confront their consumption of this boy’s vulnerability for the first time. He mutely asks audience members to help him dress. They give him what he asks and he meets the eyes of whoever has helped him teary-eyed. If audience members are attending this scene as the last of the three iterations it goes through during one night of performance, he takes his helper’s hand and leads them to the final banquet, where Macbeth is hung in front of the banquet table for all to see.

This is one of the public one-on-one interactions. There are also, however, private ones. In one of these the porter draws an audience member into a small room

and locks the door so other audience members cannot join. He takes off their mask, so they can see each other fully, and guides them to sit next to him. He slowly and defiantly puts on lipstick before breaking down. After a few minutes he stands the audience member up, pushes them against the door and clings to them in tears. This is another moment of significant distress from a performer, but it is not voyeuristic like the boy-witch's bathroom scene. The porter chose this audience member specifically, and asks them for comfort, as opposed to being followed and consumed. He asks for physical comfort from them, instead of having them force their presence on him. The performers avoid touching audience members wherever possible, but in one-on-one interactions, physical interaction is embraced. The long hug between audience member and porter gives him a significant place in that audience member's experience of the performance. Like Burton's experience, this is one moment when the production begins to own its magic. Individual audience members in interactions like this one begin to loosen themselves into the role of active spectator and loose themselves in the world the play builds for them.

In *Sleep No More* the audience has moments where they perform scenes with the cast. While they do not know the script or blocking, they are carefully guided. In a one-on-one a bartender plays a game with three audience members for a shot of tequila. The audience members must be coached through tossing salt over their shoulders, choosing cards, and how to play. When one audience member wins, he gives them their shot. This public moment is not particularly well attended. It takes place after a scene by most of the leads from the *Macbeth* plot, and by this point most audience members have decided to track either these main characters or just wander, so many leave. The four or

five audience members still around for the drinking game leave when they realize that they will not be included, so it becomes an empty bar. The loud music playing, along with totally silent interaction by masked audience members and bartender give the moment the atmosphere of tension and overwhelming significance that is present in nearly all one-on-one interactions throughout *Sleep No More*.

This establishment of atmosphere is the way that *Sleep No More* most significantly manipulates its audience. Unlike *M. Butterfly* and *Farinelli and the King*, the audience is very much part of the action of the production; it could not exist without them. The physical interaction as well as occasional verbal interaction between audience and performer allows for both groups to begin mingling. In one interaction an audience member passes notes between Elizabeth Lindsay and the porter. This person is marked with Lindsay's red-lipped kiss on their forehead. As they go through the crowds of audience to return a paper boat to Elizabeth Lindsay, the audience parts. The audience member has become an active part of the performance and is thus treated as a pseudo-performer by fellow spectators. Lindsay holds their hand throughout the next several minutes of performance, and then brings them to a private room to thank them. Once they are alone she gives the audience member a gold ring and tells them the story of how James crossed the sea because he loved Anne, but his ship was drowned. She pulls the audience member into a closet and screams the rest of the story while salt water rains down on them both. The moment is thrilling and terrifying, forcing the audience member to question the reality around them. By this point in the production the space is a full-sensory experience. Every room has different scents, temperatures, music, and aesthetics. The first time Lindsay gave her note to the messenger she gives

them a shot of salt water to drink, asking first “do you trust me?” The moment expands the experience to include taste. While audience members can always return to the bar at the entrance to the McKittrick, the moments when they are given drinks open the experience to become full bodied. Because they were asked to pass notes the audience member became a spect-actor. One-on-ones are most often given to audience members who clearly want them. The audience member must situate themselves close to the front of the audience and use their eyes to communicate with the performers before them. The person passing notes could have chosen not to help, or to simply keep the note for themselves as a souvenir, but in choosing to help the porter and Lindsay they choose to be an even more active part of the performance, taking on the role of pseudo-performer.

The moments wherein audience members are tied closely and personally to performers give them the opportunity to experience the show in a new way. The main characters rarely have private one-on-one interactions. They more often have small public moments, like asking audience members to help them dress, or having them sit at a table with them holding hands. The smaller characters like Elizabeth Lindsay and the porter are for members of the audience who hope to see a more intimate and subtle version of the performance. The show provides big fight scenes, raves, and murders that audience members can choose to watch, but these are not the spirit of the performance. It is, rather, a production that has taken such care in creating the small details that it is a more intimate experience than even a show like *Farinelli and the King* where the audience sits onstage and can have conversations with the actors.

These three productions help to place *Nine* in the larger context of American theatre. My own work with *Nine* used the Brechtian techniques demonstrated in *M. Butterfly*, and juxtaposed them with the intimacy of *Farinelli and the King*. The manipulation of Brechtian technique through the pieces as well as the lack of Brechtian technique makes these works perfect comparisons for *Nine*. My work used my own theatrical history to build the production and use techniques I had learned from seeing live performances. These three plays demonstrate a wider context of how theatrical performance manipulates audience/performer relationships. The distance between audience and performer in these three plays perfectly aligns with the ways that they were asked to experience the productions. *M. Butterfly*, the one with the audience furthest away, alienated them, and gave them time to act as typical audience member. *Farinelli and the King* pulled its audience into the fold of the performance through their onstage seating. *Sleep No More* gave them a radically close experience, welcoming them so closely into the production they became pseudo-performer themselves.

With *Nine* I used techniques that can be seen each of these three plays. I used alienation techniques that are seen in of *M. Butterfly* to push my audience to think critically about the production. My lighting and set both used techniques that also appeared in the piece. *Farinelli and the King* shared the intimacy that I used in several moments in *Nine*. My goal at the end of the play was to tie them closely to the cast and emotions at the end. I hoped to convince them right at the end to fall in love with the characters, so that when they left the play would stay with them. *Farinelli and the King* did something similar, intentionally manipulating its audience through their physical closeness to feel emotionally close to the characters. *Sleep No More* and *Nine* share

techniques of enhancing moments through fear and discomfort. There are moments in *Sleep No More* that make audience members nervous or scared, and these I used in *Nine*. The strategic use of darkness and characters who could come from anywhere are shared by both plays. I saw *Sleep No More* in 2014, three years before working on *Nine* and it stayed with me. I originally hoped to bring the audience into my own work in ways that I had learned from the piece. While I moved away from this idea, it was an early inspiration and starting point for *Nine*. These three plays were significant because they allow me to open my work from that of scholar and theatre artist to that of audience and consumer. Our work in theatre could not exist without its audiences, and I hoped to create a work that relied on their presence in more ways than just box office fees and physical presence. These three plays demonstrate the techniques I brought into *Nine* in the wider context of professional theatre currently being produced in the United States.

## Conclusion

All of my work with *Nine* comes down to one important fact: framing theatrical audiences as bystanders is an important tool for contemporary artists. The world is in a moment of tension, and in the United States art as protest and art that forces its audience to think is especially significant. The presence of bystanders is even seen in the news cycle. In a recent article titled “Dealing With The World Right Now is Exhausting, but the Consequences of Being a Bystander are too High” author Amos Guiora writes that nothing is as exhausting as today’s news. The United States is a hotbed of political tension, and no matter what side you stand on, it is a lot to have to try to comprehend. Guiora says, “To be a bystander is, presently, a dangerous option. Its consequences are significant. In that spirit, public engagement—on whatever level and whatever one can do in the context of daily life and its stresses and complexities—is, truly, the call of the hour” (Guiora).

The culture of Americans sitting in front of the television, watching the same news channel that they watch every night, watching the same group of people tell the same set of biased news is one of the factors that allows the bystander effect to exist on a large scale. We do not see the other side of the argument, or we do not care to. It has, however, gone beyond voluntarily choosing news with the same bias every time.

Public engagement is truly the call of the hour and *Nine* was an experiment in this. I sought to discover how the work I did could implicate its audience enough to encourage them want to be a part of public engagement; to make them want to stand up and *participate*. Today nothing is as important as watching news channels you disagree with, or reading newspapers with a different opinion than your own. We cannot allow

ourselves to become neutral and passive spectators. The larger potential of my work with *Nine* is convincing artists that it is important to consider audience members as bystanders in a distinct and intentional way.

With *Nine* I wanted to make audiences hate the performance they were watching. I wanted them to hate the violence staged before them so much they stood up and told the actors to stop, or walked out, or stepped onstage to physically disrupt the performance. I wanted them to engage, but more importantly I wanted them to think critically. I hoped they would be so driven that they felt like they were complicit in what they were being shown onstage, as well as how it appears in the world around them every day. While I wanted this, my larger focus was how our own theatrical work evolves when we reframe the audience as bystander.

In daily life you can either choose to be a bystander or be made one. Typically people choose not to intervene; they choose to stand by passively. In *Nine* I decided to make the audience into bystanders. I chose to remind those in situations of oppression that those watching are complicit in their pain. While *Nine* was not a piece of theatre that used audience interaction, it used its audience as an additional facet of the piece. The spectators were as much “them” as Wells was.

I hoped to find ways that theatre artists could fight against the bystander effect in life by bringing it into our theatres. Through *Nine*, I found that we can alienate our audiences and make them feel the emotions of the bystander effect, but we cannot always know when or if we were effective. Our work must seek to build the bystander effect into our art, and then make our audiences hate it. The effect changed our work with *Nine* drastically as we moved through the rehearsal process. I found that the

actresses' awareness of the audience during the piece was not as strong as I anticipated, but my own awareness through the process was extreme. With every moment of blocking I found myself wondering if I was sufficiently implicating the audience. The addition of "them" allowed the audience's alienation to increase past that which the text supplied. The audience did not feel themselves driven to become spect-actors, but those involved in the theatrical process read them as *potential* spect-actors...constant bystanders.

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Appendix

Poster



Poster by Rebecca Snedeker-Meier

## Selected Production Photos



Image 1 photographed by Jacob Lautman  
2 (Rhoden) and 1 (Colby) face off when 2 finally shows her face.



Image 2 photographed by Jacob Lautman  
2 refuses to tell 1 her name



Image 3 photographed by Jacob Lautman  
1 begins to fade while 2 consoles her



Image 4 photographed by Rebecca Snedeker-Meier  
2 sits after 1 has died with the moonbeam across her face



Image 5 photographed by Jacob Lautman  
1 and 2 watch as “them” (Wells) crosses above

## Director's Note

An audience viewing live theatre is typically safe behind the fourth wall, since they are not forced to participate actively in the theatre they are watching. In this production, the audience seeing *Nine* should think of themselves as a group of bystanders. As we watch we need to ask ourselves... are we not implicated? Who are we to look at the bodies onstage before us? We as the audience have taught ourselves that we are not at fault, but this work is being performed for us. It is not for the actors or director, or anyone else within the creative process, it is for the audience. And who are we to simply watch? Who are we to turn off our brains and demand entertainment from what is happening onstage? This piece requires examination. The audience is implicated, and I encourage you to think hard about it.

I elected to direct *Nine* as the practical part of my Independent Study because it is a piece in which I am able to challenge the audience to be aware of their position as viewer. It is an intentionally vague piece, giving little detail on the specifics of the story. It chooses not to give the location or date; it doesn't even have names for its characters. They are simply 1 and 2. This vagueness combined with the voyeuristic quality to the audience's viewership pushed me to think of the audience as bystander. Throughout the play they become another character. Their place in the production is that of bystander and witness. Thus the work becomes the perfect venue to think about the bystander effect, wherein bystanders are unlikely to intercede in an event, especially if it is a violent or illegal one. The audience takes on this role as bystander over the course of the first part of the production, cementing themselves in the story as 1 and 2 live their lives in a captive and abusive space.

## Play Analysis

The first word that comes to mind when reading *Nine* is: confusing. It is, in a sentence, a dark story about two women kept in an unknown and abusive space with little hope for survival or freedom. The author decides not to give the character's names (calling them 1 and 2), so they are also anonymous. The atmosphere feels dark and oppressive, like the air holds more weight than it would normally.

The inciting incident is 2's return from being raped. It seems almost "normal." Normal is relative though, here it is in the sense that the women have gone through the ritual of checking each other for injury after returning many times. The women fall into a rhythm. 1 checks 2 over, they push and pull at each other with their "tells" which are phrases they pass back and forth like "Rolling stone carries no moss" (6). When 1 cannot remember the end of "a stitch in time saves \_\_\_\_" the action turns. Throughout the piece this will be a constant through line. It drives the significant conversations between the two women right before 1 is taken to be beaten, when she returns, and all the way until her death.

Throughout the piece it is clear that the women have been here a while. The timelines of their lives are their periodic beatings/sexual assault. Each time one of them comes back a new "day" starts. The only reason that this time one of them has returned is significant is because of the tell: "A stitch in time saves \_\_\_\_." The play feels like the audience walked into the action, like there could have been hundreds of parts before part 1. It would be interesting to see the play performed in a gallery space with additional parts written or improvised so that audiences can wander in and out of the action.

The play reads as if it could have a hundred themes depending on how it is directed. That is one of the reasons I chose it. When just reading it as an objective viewer, the theme seems to be how abuse and isolation affects women. The reason it exists is to create a dialogue about the oppression of 1 and 2 as both characters and representations of women all over the world.

Basically all of the factual information about *Nine* is unknown. The location in the script is “a locked room, could be a cell, probably a basement” (1). We do not know where on earth this room is, nor do we know the date or time. There is no information about the world the women come from except that they speak English. All of their (very few) lines about their pasts could take place anywhere and at any time. 1 says, “I fell in a pond once, at night, when I was really little” the only other information we get from this monologue is that it was cold when she fell in the pond (13). The only time 2 indicates something about her past is “I am not the kind of person this happens to. And what you see here, isn’t me” (30). Because of the contemporary English, it is clear the play takes place within the last ten or so years, but that is all we know.

The play takes place over several hours, or possibly a day, in the women’s lives. The only jump ahead in time is between part one and part two. This is an unknown length of time, although it is likely several hours at least. There are significantly fewer lines about 2’s injury after 1 returns, so she has had enough time to collect herself and some of her pain has eased while 1 was gone.

## Character Analyses

**1:**

1 has been in the space the longest. Her primary goal is to keep 2 sane and calm. While she looks after herself, she spends more time oriented towards 2 than 2 does for her. The only thing we know about 1's backstory is that she fell in a pond when she was little, and was only able to find her way to the surface because she saw a moonbeam (13). She tells 2 the story because she is trying to convince her that she can truly see a moonbeam from her cell. This moonbeam does not exist. 1 reveals its "existence" because she wants to give 2 a tell, as well as something to hold onto. If a moonbeam could save 1, maybe it will save 2 as well. Because the moonbeam in the cell is fake, there is some question as to whether the pond story is true or not.

1's only selfish moment throughout the play is right before she is taken. She begs 2 to tell her the end of the tell before she goes. When 2 refuses to tell her, 1 is furious. The only thing she cares about anymore seems to be 2, her physical wellbeing, and the end of the tell. She does not want to go with their captors, but when the time comes for her to die she accepts her fate. When finally driven to tell the truth, she says, "The truth is I'm played out, and you're probably hemorrhaging. [...] We're not gonna get saved. [...] Whether we die in their hands or in this room is just a detail. [...] The truth is, we're all we have, and we don't even know each other's names" (29). These few lines make it clear that 1 has known the truth of their situation all along. Since she has been in the space the longest she has seen other women come and go. One of her lines is "one woman I knew counted up to 25" (5). She has always known that they are going to die here; she just did not want 2 to know.

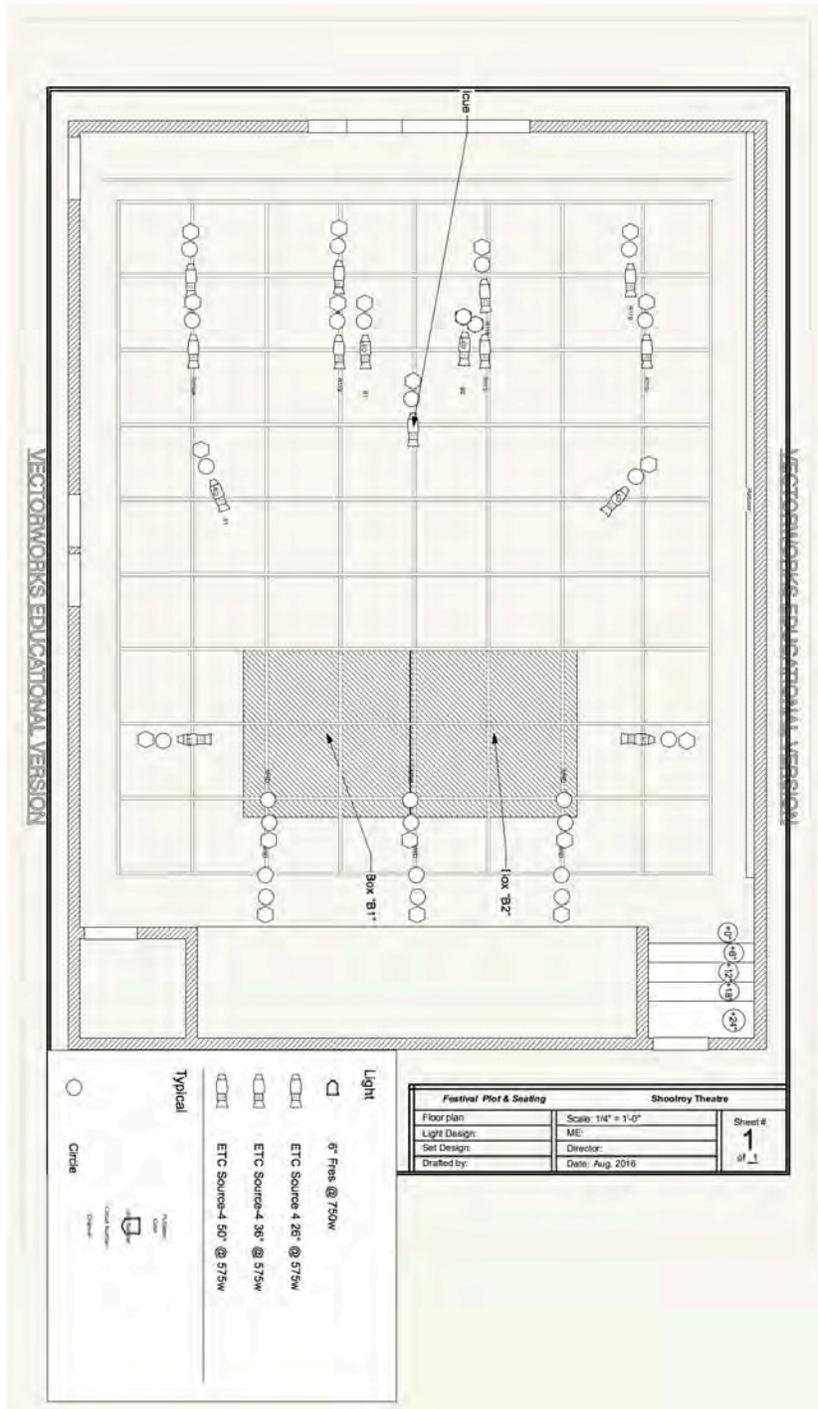
**2:**

2 is the dreamer of the two women. She convinces herself that they will somehow survive this. While she does not fully believe it, she needs to. 1 tells her about the moonbeam because she needed something to cling to. 2 also clings to the tells. They are something she introduced 1 to. Through the tells she is able to keep her memory sharp, as well as give herself something else to think about besides the horrible world they live in.

The ages of the characters is unknown, but the time they've spent in the space is the more significant "age." 2 is younger. She came to the space when 1 was already there. She is the driving force behind why the women do not know each other's names. When 1 asks her to tell her name, she says, "You can't have it! You can shoot me or cut me or fuck me to death or whatever it is they'll do, I don't give a shit, that'll be the end of this shell and everything that comes with it! But nobody will have killed me. Because *I* was never here" (30). She takes ownership over the only thing she has left. Their captors ask them questions, and they have nothing to tell them, so she does not even have a secret to cling to. While 2 could cling to her name, she does not. She thinks of it as gone. "She's gone. She's got the name. And they've got nothing" (30).

2's only goal is to survive. She wants not to be stuck in the hellhole any more. Once she realizes that 1 is dying however, she begins to cling to the final word of her tell. Her final line is, "I'm saving it" repeated over and over (35). She clearly has reached a point of loving 1, and she uses 1's final request to ground herself.

# Light Plot



Light plot with scale boxes shown on the floor  
Lighting Design by Helen Rooker

## Director's Journal

Rehearsal 9/6/17

2nd readthrough.

I'm concerned about how short the piece is feeling.

I'm concerned about getting the cast fully invested and slow. (I feel like I almost can't until lines are down?)

Tomorrow I want to just work w/ part 1, how they feel throughout. I have questions to talk about throughout the "act."

I want to see how it changes when they're aware and thinking about audience, us. when they forget them. This may also have to wait until lines are down sadly, as at least until we're to full runthroughs to choose

if there are some points when they know we're there and others when they forget? Not sure yet.

Rehearsal 9/7/17

We got through 4 pages. Good, clearly we're slowing down.

Next time I want them to tell each other a story. To totally forget anyone watching and just tell the story.

Also - Bring in songs.

Chanelle finally got mad I showed out how to work her, how for her to work & recent line readings. She struggles not to get embarrassed, but I think we're working away from that.

9/13/17

Started on Pt 2. We're moving quicker which is good. I've added time to rehearsals, I thought this would be too much at first, but now I'm realizing it's never enough.

We need to continue to figure out their "hurtiness" it looks forced and I don't like it yet. I figured it out with Chantelle, but it needs refining, and Tolly is struggling to escape "hangover" and get to "dying." we'll get there, but not for a few days. Hopefully the long rehearsals this weekend will help.

## Tech Journal

Tech was pointless, it helped that I did the lighting design and worked closely with Umay's sound design.

I don't like the direction sound is moving. It's too haunted house not enough menace. I ~~will~~ will be adjusting them as we go.

I think it may end up that I cut a lot and use Phillip more. As we do notes on Monday and 1st dress on Tuesday I'll check on how those sounds are/if they are going to be any different.

We did a tech runthrough on Sunday and it was good. I am considering deleting the CD that turns on back light with Phillip's lights, it may be too much. Tolly's screen is still lame.

9/14/17 rehearsal.

We're well into part II. Had to end early so we wouldn't be left in an awkward place for the next day, which was good, we've sped up now that we're all speaking the same language, more or less. Chantell still takes a few more phrasings of things to follow what I'm trying to push her to do, but that's ok, it forces me to think harder and thus have a clearer idea of what I want.

Notes Rehearsal 9/25

Fixed Tolly's screen and found in one fell swoop. killed SO "sequence" and added Phillip's cross earlier while they're still talking and then in B.O. he will come down, x to Tolly grab her, then x away and slam the door. Thus the sound isn't cheesy and Tolly's screen is motivated.

Still worried about other SO's and that are light etc. Things to look at during 1st dress tomorrow.

I'm worried they'll speed way up when we have an audience.

## Final Dress

We're ready. The pair isn't quite where I'd like it to be, and I wish I had a second Phillip because I still wish he'd come out of the audience but I'm proud of the work we've done.

I'm having the girls do one last journal then I need to collect them. I think they'll be helpful.

I'm excited to open and see the responses. I hope the house sells well.

I've learned you're never totally ready. If I could I would use another week or two for rehearsal.

## Opening Night.

Well. The house was tiny which is embarrassing, but that's ok. I didn't feel too amazing about tonight but I think that's cause I'm still nervous.

The lights dimmed for Part I and my heart rate shot up - even though it's not even my part.

I didn't realize how hard it is to trust stage managers. I trust Tristan with my life, but for some reason I can't seem to let go. It's hard not to text what needs to happen and I feel like an asshole.

## Closing Night.

This was great. I finally feel like I can relax. I think part of it is the amazing feedback from everyone.

The girl from phys txt says I "don't need to be in school" anymore.

The President says it's touching and meaningful and ~~Kim~~ so grateful

Mom and Dad liked it, so did Billy's family lol.

"I'm going to go home and sit on my bed with my comforter over my head. I liked it but damn was that intense" - Savel's friend.

10/2/17

The relief just hit.

I can focus on everything else now. I can relax and write. I can realize the rest of this fucking thing.

I looked at my planner and I don't have anything to do after 2pm all week... and it feels amazing.

The relief is more than when I was SMing. It's like it went out of my control & opening but I couldn't relax until it closed. I wonder if it's the same after more shows? or if longer runs the relief is earlier & you don't cut back every show? I wonder how I'll feel after my 10th, 20th, 30th show?

## **Director's Prompt Book**

**PART ONE**

(A LOCKED ROOM, could be a cell, probably a basement.)

At RISE: TWO WOMEN each chained by the neck to opposite walls. 2 is slumped, unmoving & withdrawn. 1 watches HER, silent for a time.)

1: Hurt?

(Silence.)

2: Hm?

1: Are you hurt?

2: No.

1: They didn't hurt you?

2: No.

1: I didn't think so.

(SHE waits.)

Can you sit up?

2: Yes.

1: Come on then.

2: No. I'm very tired.

1: Tired from the day?

2: Huh?

1: Tired from the day?

2: I don't want to talk now.

1: Just tell me this. ①

(2 doesn't move or reply.)

Just tell me what you're tired from.

LQ109  
lights up  
SQ 19  
Hum

① 1x VSR corner

---

Noun: Cells

pg 1

Action: 2 wakes up and 1 addresses her.

Atmosphere: Tired

How should the audience feel: Neutral, building towards investment.

Tempo: Slow

Meaning/Purpose: Introducing them to the audience

Cause of change: Lights up/ first lines.

---

2: No.

1: Are you tired from working?

(Silence.)

Answer me.

(Silence.)

Please.

(Silence.)

Hey.

2: Please let me rest. (5)

1: You just said you were tired, and so, is it tired from rest or tired from work or just worn out from your day? One gets weary in a number of ways.

(2 rolls closer to the wall.)

Because if it's weariness from just the day--

2: From work, from work, I'm tired from work. Now just...let it go.

1: Ah, she's tired from work! She worked too hard. She's worn out. Okay, very good, I see that. That's fair enough. Can I see your face?

2: Shuttup now.

1: Okay, fair enough, you're tired, you've worn yourself out, it's been a long day, I've had 'em myself, I just need to see your hand.

(Nothing)

(2) Come on, your hand. Just one. Your hand. One. Then you can rest. After I see your hand.

(2 lifts a hand, drops it.)

(3) Oh! No, I didn't see that, I'm slow on the uptake, so show it again; hold it up here in the light. Let's go!

(2 thrusts hand up again.)

Wiggle....

⑤ 1 fows to 2

① 1 sit back on arms



② 1 sit up x legs

③ 1 upon knees

---

Noun: Doctor

pg 2

Action: 1 begins pestering 2 to see if she's alright.

Atmosphere: Calm.

How should the audience feel: Balanced between irritated and caring

Tempo: medium slow.

Meaning/Purpose: Building audience to understand that 2 has been tortured.

Cause of change: 1 begins pestering at 2 to see her injuries

---

(2 wiggles fingers.)

1... Bend.

(Bends fingers.)

Good.

(Drops hand.)

Other hand.

2: Fuck you.

1: Fine, but with your other hand.

(Nothing.)

Don't make me sing.

(1) (No reply. 1 SINGS in an incredibly annoying voice. No response. SHE takes a breath to sing on.)

Show me your other hand...

(2) (2 holds up her other hand.)

Good, wiggle.

(Wiggles fingers.)

Bend.

(Bends, rather limited, but hard to tell from injury or lack of motivation.)

Uh! Bend again.

(2 bends fingers again, stiff but functional.)

Fair enough.

(2 drops hand.)

1: Now face.

2: No.

1: Come on, campers. Show me face.

2: They didn't go for the face.

① \_\_\_\_\_

② \_\_\_\_\_

1: Then show it to me.  
2: Listen. You don't owe me anything.  
1: I've got a Tell.  
2: I don't care.  
1: It's one you never heard before.  
2: I don't want to hear it.  
1: It's a funny Tell. Funny's best.  
2: Then tell it, I don't give a shit.  
1: Show me your face first.  
2: Go to hell..  
1: Show me your face, I'll give you the Tell.  
2: Forget it.  
1: What's the big secret? (2)

*(Pokes 2's back with her foot.)*

2: There's no secret, I told you they didn't go for the face! I don't want to talk about it, I don't want to talk to you, it's over, let it go, I'm through. Do me that much.  
1: Dream on.  
2: Fuck you!  
1: In your dreams.  
2: You're not doing me any favors!  
1: You're so right.

*(2 jerks up.)* (3)

2: Look! I don't have to -

① 2 sit up slowly,  
refocus, face of SR crossed legs.

② 1 x DS to corner, face 2.

③ 2 start to stand, realize pan.  
Slump to side US corner.

---

Noun: Tell

pg 4

Action: 1 brings up the first tell

Atmosphere:

How should the audience feel: Understand women and present, all before has been leading to this moment.

Tempo: Still medium slow ramping up to mid speed.

Meaning/Purpose: The audience is let in on the secret (tells).

Cause of change: 1 uses a tell to grab 2 to show her her face.

---

1: Okay. *(SHE stops, pain lower down.)*  
*(1 watches her quietly. Gentle now.)*  
They went inside, huh? ... Breathe.  
*(2 breathes, a vocal sound escapes.)*  
Air.  
*(2 breathes silently a moment.)*

2: Many.

1: Many?  
① *(2 says nothing.)*  
Two?  
*(2 says nothing.)*  
Three?  
② *(Nothing.)*  
Okay. Straighten your legs.  
*(2 obeys.)*  
Better?  
*(1 allows her a moment.)*  
One woman I knew counted up to 25.

2: 25?

1: Yep.

2: Hm-mm.

1: Yeah.

2: Can't be done. After 4 or 5... you lose count.

1: Well maybe she was just weird.

2: She was.

① I break DSL corner

② I turn to face Z

1: ① You can't remember beyond 4 or 5 and she can recall up to 25.

② (2 settles back, weak, but relaxing.)

2: She's a better man than I.

1: You're still alive.

2 (Pleased) Fuck you.

1: Call 'em as I see 'em.

2: There's a will, there's a way.

1: Over hill and under dale.

2: Rolling stone gathers no moss.

1: A stitch in time.

2: Yeah?

1: What?

2: Finish it.

1: I did.

2: Fuck you, you lose, you don't remember the whole thing.

1: A stitch in time.

2: No. Not the whole thing.

1: That's all there is to it, a stitch in time!

2: Meaning?

1: Meaning... a stitch in time... is a good thing!

(2 stifles a laugh.)

Try to repair the rips early, don't leave the damage, because if you wait 'till later it'll be much worse. A stitch in time.

① 1x USL and sit in corner

② 2 decide to stand,  
Stand x DS 12 corner,  
Sit with line

---

Noun: Ritual

pg 6

Action: Both settle into ritual of the tells.

Atmosphere: Calm but ramps up into anxious when tells  
degrade.

How should the audience feel: Relaxed into understanding of characters  
and tells.

Tempo: Swift but broken by end.

Meaning/Purpose: The tell ritual is established then degrades.

Cause of change: 2 settles back and tell ritual begins.

---

- 2: Saves...
- 1: Trouble. It saves you from later. Unless something worse happens later.
- 2: You don't have it all, you lose.
- 1: (C) (Becoming serious) - There isn't any more, and it's not a contest.
- 2: You lose.
- 1: (V) I wasn't competing.
- 2: You don't know it.
- 1: I don't really care.
- 2: Of course not.
- 1: (S) It's not funny.
- 2: Okay.
- 1: You're being mean.
- 2: 'A stitch in time.'
- 1: You're very ungracious.
- 2: Uh-huh.
- 1: If you have the advantage you can afford to show some grace.
- (2 starts working her way toward standing.)
- 2: Then grace doesn't mean shit. Grace when you can afford it is like water from a tap. Easy. Grace... under pressure... means something.
- 1: (W) Well you don't have it! ...

⑤ I start to stand

① I stands, x to CS

③ I x DSL

④ I sit DSL corner

---

Noun: the Tell

p 7

Action: I becomes serious about not knowing the "stick in time" tell.

Atmosphere: Serious, building to serious.

How should the audience feel: Tense, absorbing women's anger.

Tempo: Swift and sharp.

Meaning/Purpose: Audience is shown the tension between the women.

Cause of change: Z tells I she's lost the game and I becomes serious.

---

*(1 pushes 2 over with a sudden impetuous foot.)*

*2 lies, stunned. Then slowly sits up; her back to 1. A silence.)*

1... What's the rest of it?

*(Silence.)*

Don't sulk.

*(Silence.)*

I'm not going to apologize, you were a brat, you deserved it.

*(Silence.)*

Please tell me. I admit, I don't know 'A stitch in time'... what?

*(Silence.)*

Please. I'm really sorry. I mean it. Please tell me.

*(2's shoulders start to shake.)*

Please.

*(2 tries not to laugh.)*

I'll kick you again ~~again~~, I don't care. I'll make it number six today!

*(Laughing outright.)*

① Dammit! ...

*(SHE hits the wall.)*

Dammit! TELL ME!

*(Yanking her own chain furiously.)*

GODAMMIT! I don't hold anything back from you, I'm there when you need me, I'm a person, I deserve the truth!

*(1 strikes the wall again, crying.)*

You bitch! You Goddamn bitch! God, I hate you! I really--

② *(Suddenly grabs her head.)*

Oh...

2: ③ What?

① 1 upon knees

② \_\_\_\_\_  
collapse onto low knees

③ 2 turn to face 1

1: Just... faint...

2: Bend.

1: Huh?

*(2 turns to look.)*

2: Bend. Put your head down.

*(1 points.)*

1: Hah, got your face.

*(2 looks disgusted.)*

Open.

① *(2 opens mouth, shows teeth & jaw.)*

Eyes.

② *(Moves eyes about, showing no damage.)*

Neck.

2: Don't push it.

1: Neck.

③ *(2 bends head left, right. 1 is satisfied, and triumphant.)*

Hah.

④ *(BOTH sit. The silence grows heavy.)*

So. No face today. That's alright.

2: Told you.

1: They worked inside.

2: What's your Tell?

1: Huh-uh.

2: Don't hold out.

① \_\_\_\_\_

② \_\_\_\_\_  
eye roll

③ \_\_\_\_\_

④ long pause

---

Noun: Silence

pg 9

Action: Z finally shows her face and they relax

Atmosphere: Settling back to stasis

How should the audience feel: slowly relaxing

Tempo: Relaxed/slow

Meaning/Purpose: Allows audience to relax from the  
strong build previously.

Cause of change: I finishes examination of Z.

---

1: What's 'A stitch in time'?

2: No way.

1: Okay.

(1 moves away. 2 follows.)

2: It's no trade.

1: Fine.

2: Your Tell is just something I don't know, I never happened to hear your story. But 'A stitch in time' is common knowledge, everybody should know it, but you can't remember, you've lost ground.

1: Go to hell.

2: No, it's not equal, that's all I'm saying. It's not a trade. One is factual information, which you need. The other is just... experiential.

1: My Tell is new information.

2: It's personal.

1: Right, and it's mine! Without me, you'll never have it. I'm the only source.

2: It's just experience, subjective.

1: An old saying can be found in any old book.

2: Huh, oh what a relief.

1: (19) It's a platitude, anybody can get it. Mine's rare. This is the source, baby, come to mama. This is the only place you can get it. Can't get rarer than that.

(2) (2 wobbles.)

Hang on to something, you're gonna fall over.

2: (3) (Feigning weakness) Okay, you win, what is it?

① 2 sets, Slight x SL

①.5 1 step back, wide arms,

② \_\_\_\_\_.

③ 2 sets

1: Huh, no way.

2: Yeah.

1: You first.

2: No chance! I'll never tell, you can't torture my fuckin' brains out!

1: Oh, goody!

⑤ (They laugh. 2 doubles over in pain.)

2: Oh God!

(1 watches, pulling remote.)

1: (Coolly) Don't stand up.

(2 has to bend.)

2: Something's wrong.

1: Yeah.

2: I mean it, something's hurt.

1: Don't stand up.

2: Fuck you! Don't tell me not to stand up!

1: You do what you want.

2: I don't have room for you.

(1 simply turns her back.)

You hear me? You hear me, if I go down I --

② (2 is overcome, has to sink down.)

1: Moonlight.

2: If I die here--

⑤ \_\_\_\_\_

① I stands up

② Z sit down/collapse

---

Noun: Moonlight.

pg 11

Action: I pulls back.

Atmosphere: Cool, then building to wonderous

How should the audience feel: Curious abt I's actions

Tempo: medium, not quick, not slow.

Meaning/Purpose: Shows the audience how ugly their world is  
that a bit of moonlight would be so special.

Cause of change: they come too close to friends so I pulls away

---

- 1: That's the Tell.
- 2: Moonlight?
- 1: (1) Listen, don't tell this. When there's a moon, and it's good weather out, I get a shaft of moonlight.
- 2: You do not.
- 1: I do, I get a shaft from the moon. A tiny, tiny, weak little beam of moon. But I get it, there's a crack, and I see it.
- 2: I've never seen it.
- 1: I've never shown it to you. I've never showed it to anyone.
- 2: No one before me?
- 1: I am the only person who's seen it. Unless the person before me.
- 2: I'm serious, are you telling the truth?
- 1: (*Genuine*) This is a Tell.
- 2: (2) How big?
- 1: Aboooout, this big

(*Holds up fingers.*)

But it's moonlight. It's a moonbeam.

(*2 has a pain again. 1 moves closer.*)

I fell in a pond once, at night, when I was really little, and it was so incredibly dark it was just black, and completely cold, and without breath and I was, really I was drowning, because I could swim a little but in the dark of this tomb you don't know which way is up. You just feel the water moving around you and you could be going down but you don't know. Because you don't know where the surface is. You know? It was bad. ...

(*2 has stopped shifting around, listening.*)

LQ 110

① 1 x to 2 abia us of wr

②. 2 down to 1 slightly DS

1: And I was just frozen there, with no air and no hope and no idea which way was up. And then you know what happened?

2: What?

1: This silver sliver nicked my eye and it made me turn my head, this little blinding flash, and I looked and it was a moonbeam shining down through to me. Up through the water I saw the light spreading out and shimmering above me on the surface and I, I, I don't know how, I fought toward it, and I struggled up and went up and with my last breath of life I came up into the night air.

*(2 has forgotten her pain.)*

2: Wow.

1: Isn't that something? I was saved by a moonbeam. I -- I was saved. I was saved. By a moonbeam.

2: Is that true?

1: Yes it's true.

2: Romantic.

1: But it happened. And now I have a moonbeam here.

2: Are you gonna swim up to it?

1: Mm-hm. That's how I know I'll be okay.

2: Because you have a moonbeam?

*(1 nods.)*

I don't have a moonbeam.

*(1 gets remote again.)*

1: Nothing I can do about that.

2: I wanna be okay.

1: You have to find your own thing.

LQ 115



(2 tries to think of something, looks around, bereft.)

THEY are interrupted by a SOUND OFFSTAGE: distant, muffled, as behind a door. BOTH come to their feet, staring intently like dogs to a dreaded sound. 1 glances over.)

2: I dunnow.

1: Only one.

2: One comes first sometimes.

(THEY listen. Nothing.)

1: They'll take somebody.

2: Yeah.

1: They took you last.

2: Yeah.

1: They take you twice sometimes.

2: Yeah.

1: Maybe. But probably not.

2: Yeah.

1: (2) Oh God!

(1 retreats, staving off panic.)

2: What color is it?

1: What?

2: The moonbeam.

1: (3) I can't always keep it in my head. When it gets bad --

SQ 20  
↓ autofollow  
SQ 21

①

\_\_\_\_\_.  
same US @ DC. of boxes

② 1 break SL

③ 1 break USL, then USR.

---

Noun: Man

Action: A sound, someone is coming

Atmosphere: Tense, scared

How should the audience feel: Tense, with the woman,

Tempo: Artificially quick, women's fear makes it feel fast.

Meaning/Purpose: The audience is drawn into the woman's terror, wants to help them.

Cause of change: Sound of someone coming

---

2: ① What color?

1: I try to keep a, keep a really keen picture in my head, of this little beam, but--

2: What color is the beam?

1: You can, you can, you can keep a picture to a certain point, but you never know what they're going to do! --

2: Hey.

1: I have to have time in between to get it back! It's not close enough--

2: I don't care! What color is the moonlight!

1: What?

2: That shines in here.

② *(Another SOUND, STILL FAR. BOTH listen. 1 moves to 2.)*

1: Tell me.

2: What?

1: Your Tell.

2: I don't have one.

1: "A stitch in time."

2: Oh.

1: Seriously, what's the rest of it?

2: No.

③ *(1 retreats again.)*

1: Oh God!

2: If it's you, then I'll tell.

① 2 x to 1 use (un)ox

② 1 x to 2 face overline,  
still

③ \_\_\_\_\_

1: You will?

2: Just before they take you.

1: Why can't you tell me now?

2: You have a clue.

1: When?

2: Earlier.

1: I don't remember!

2: No, just think.

1: It's too long!

2: Just --

1: Sh!

*(THEY listen. Nothing.)*

It's too long, give me the clue again. A stitch in time ...  
*what?*

2: Saves.

1: What?

2: Saves...

1: *What?*

2: A stitch in time saves...

1: ...Trouble!

2: That's the clue.

⓪ *(SOUND, APPROACHING.)*

1: They're here! Tell me now.

2: What color is your moonbeam? ...

LQ125  
SQ22

① Phillip booth lights on.

① back up (DS)

---

Noun:

pg 16

Action: Z decides to help, distract her.

Atmosphere: still terrified, but more focused

How should the audience feel: to see focused

Tempo: still artificially fast on L's part, slower for Z.

Meaning/Purpose: lets audience see difference between L and Z.

Cause of change: Z makes a choice.

---

① (1's gaze is frozen on the door.)

2: White or yellow?... White or yellow?

1: Uh...

2: White or yellow!

1: White, it's white. It's yellow!

2: If it's --

② (SOUND, JUST OUTSIDE.)

1: A stitch in time...

2: Not yet.

(SOUND, KEYS RATTLING.)

1: Tell me.

2: Any minute.

1: Tell me.

2: Just hold on.

②.5 (SOUND, KEYS IN DOOR.)

1: Tell me! Tell me! Tell me!

2: Not 'till you come back.

③ (1 is stunned. Twists it into a spiteful determination.)

1: Goddamn you.

2: That's right.

④ (THEY stare at each other, steely, as...

⑤ DOOR IS UNLOCKED.

SQ 24

LQ 130  
Blackout

SQ 27  
Silence

① \_\_\_\_\_ to windows

② 1 face 2.  
P start cross

2.5 P lights up  
then X D S.

③ 2 break SK

① break SK,  
then back

④ face each other

⑤ @ BO. Phillip X to T.

grab, scream, fall, scream

① exit, ① + ② set

---

Noun: keys

pg 17

Action: 2 tells 1 she won't tell me till until she comes  
back.

Atmosphere: Fury, tense.

How should the audience feel: Slapped in the face by the line "not till"

Tempo: lightning quick, then dead frozen.

Meaning/Purpose: 2 betrays 1 (or thins) or 2 saves 1 (as 2 thins)

Cause of change: 2 refuses to tell 1.

---



**BLACKOUT. A BRIEF PAUSE.  
MUSIC OR PERCUSSION IN THE  
DARKNESS.)**

**PART II.**



**LIGHTS UP:**

*(2 is sitting still, watching 1.*

*1 lies crumpled on the floor, severely beaten. [This effect should be communicated through the actor, without the use of special make-up.]*

2: Have a nice time did we?

1: ...Uh?

2: Welcome back.

*(1 mutters something indecipherable.)*

What?

1: Sa'moon?

2: I don't understand you.

*(Tries feebly to be clearer.)*

1: Th're's a moon?

2: The moon isn't out yet.

1: Can't swim...

2: No swimming. Just lie there.

1: S'save?

2: Your mind is wandering.

1: Wha's save?

LQ 150  
restore

SQ 27.5

Hum restore

⑤ in B0 | scream "no"

① @ top.

1 onside DSL cover  
face and 11 w/ awd.

2 sit crossed being wr

---

Noun: Part II

pg 15

Action: lights up. Hurt.

Atmosphere: Sad, a little residual fear.

How should the audience feel: residual fear fading to calm

Tempo: slow

Meaning/Purpose: re-establish to the element to their lives,  
accuse audience.

Cause of change: I is returned.

---

- 2: Bring your mind back.
- 1: 'Eil me.
- 2: What?
- 1: Stitch.
- 2: Oh man. Can you sit up?
- 1: Wha's save?
- 2: Are you hurt?
- 1: Stitch.
- 2: Show me your hands.
- 1: Tell me.
- 2: Do this first. Show me your hands.  
(1 slides out a damaged hand.)  
Okay, wiggle.  
(Tries to comply.)  
Not bad. Bend.  
(Same, not good.)  
Okay, very good.
- 1: Nuh.
- 2: Yes it is, if I say it is.
- 1: S'bad.
- 2: I'm the one who can see. And I'm saying, no problem.  
Don't sweat it.
- 1: (1) Got kicked.
- 2: Show me face.
- 1: Kicked.

① ———.

② Learn into self.

2: It hurts worse than it is, just show it to me.

① *(1 shows her battered head.  
2 conceals her reaction.)*

Alright, not bad. Not bad at all. Mouth.

*(1 lays her head down.)*

1: Tell me.

2: — You didn't do mouth.

1: I need to know.

2: I need to see.

1: Then you tell.

2: Okay.

*(Nothing.)*

Maybe.

1: *Maybe!*

*(This fires 1 into rolling over.)*

2: In a little while.

*(1 begins the arduous task of sitting up.)*

1: *Maybe* you lie.

2: I told you I'd tell.

1: Said that before.

2: Let's see the neck.

1: *Maybe* you held out.

2: So you'd come back.

1: *Maybe* they kick me.

① 1 stop slowly  
face 2

- 2: You came back.
- 1: Maybe they wanted to kill me.
- 2: You're back.
- 1: Maybe I told.
- 2: Told?
- 1: Yeah.
- 2: Told what?
- 1: They ask questions.
- 2: I know, but we never have any answers.
- 1: Maybe they got a gun.
- 2: Maybe they did, it doesn't make us know anything. Maybe they'll shoot you, what're you gonna do?
- 1: Tell.
- 2: You don't know anything! If you did you'd've told 'em before all this fucking shit happened. What'd you do, make something up?
- 1: No.
- 2: Then what can you tell them?
- 1: That you do.
- 2: What?
- 1: Maybe I told them you knew something.
- 2: I don't think so.
- 1: Maybe.
- 2: You didn't say that.

---

Noun: threat.

pg 21

Action: 1 begins to convince 2 that she told "them"

Atmosphere: Edging towards tense.

How should the audience feel: A little confused, a little tense.

Tempo: medium slow, ramping up.

Meaning/Purpose: Further establish 1 as the "bad guy"

Cause of change: 1's line "well" she says she told "them."

---

① *(1 feels her head gingerly.)*

1: I got a headache.

2: I don't believe you.

1: I do, I have a headache.

2: Fuck you, you didn't tell them that.

1: My lips hurt too.

2: Why would you tell them I know something?

1: You do.

2: I do not!

1: I asked, but you wouldn't tell.

*(2's turn to be stunned.)*

2: What?

1: You held out.

2: ③ Jesus Christ, it's just a fucking Tell!

1: I feel bad, do I look as bad as I feel?

2: Oh my God!

1: You tell me the truth.

2: I'm serious, this isn't a joke, you can't tell them something like that!

1: How do I look?

*(2 looks at door, beginning to panic.)*

2: If they think I know something... I don't know what they're gonna do...!

1: Tell me.

① \_\_\_\_\_  
Cord head to self.

③ Z stand, break SR  
pace.

*(2 is overtaken, tries hysterically to get loose.)*

2: I don't deserve to die here!

*(1 just watches.)*

Please!

1: You tell me what I look like.

*(HER panic dies to a slow burn.)*

2: Oh man, you deserve what you got.

1: So will you.

*(THEY stare at each other.)*

2: You look completely fucked up.

1: Yeah?

2: ~~Yeah.~~

1: Not what you said.

2: I lied.

1: Liar.

2: S'cuse me for trying to cut you a break!

1: You lie.

2: So do you! At least you better be.

1: Go on. Go on!

2: Your nose looks broken.

1: Bad?

2: Not if you're a cauliflower fan.

1: Go on.

① Z sits down  
close to rope.

---

Noun: Body.

pg 23

Action: Z becomes cold / remote, matching 1

Atmosphere: cold and mean.

How should the audience feel: Isolated.

Tempo: Steady, not slow, not fast, automatic.

Meaning/Purpose: They fully lean on each other.

Cause of change: Z pulls away, isolates self from fear.

---

- 2: Your head's busted and your eyes are fucked up, the right one.
- 1: Swollen or cut?
- 2: More like pulp.
- 1: Skip the commentary.
- 2: Your lips are bad. There's some blood around your ear, and there's a lot of blood coming from your mouth.
- 1: From the lips?
- 2: No, from inside. I'd say you broke some teeth.
- 1: Broke...
- 2: Teeth, that's what I said, broken teeth.
- 1: How many?
- 2: You want me to count?
- 1: Fuck you.
- 2: Your hands are a mess.
- 1: I can see my hands. What's the lips?
- 2: Nothing stitches and surgery won't fix.
- 1: Uh:
- 2: You know what they say. "A stitch in time..."
- 1: Say the rest of it!
- 2: I wouldn't tell you now if my life depended on it!
- 1: Maybe it does.
- 2: Maybe it doesn't.
- 1: Maybe it does. Go on.



2: That's head and hands, I don't know about the rest. I don't know if they worked insi --

1: No.

2: No?

1: They didn't.

2: Lucky dog.

1: Lucky me.

2: Lucky charm.

1: Lucky... rabbit's foot.

2: Lucky four leaf clover.

Ⓝ (1 tries to shift, flinches.)

1: Rib...

2: Lucky rib?

1: Think I broke it...

2: Not so lucky.

1: Go on.

2: Fuck you.

1: Fuck you.

2: Ⓝ No, fuck you, you fuckin' bitch.

1: Bite me.

2: Y'know what? You go to hell.

1: Kiss my ass.

2: Suck my dick, asswipe fucking bitch asshole!

① \_\_\_\_\_  
lean back

② 2 stand

---

Noun: Tells

pg 25

Action: they go back to the tells

Atmosphere: calm

How should the audience feel: relieved

Tempo: quiet, not fast

Meaning/Purpose: the tells reestablish order

Cause of change: the tells warn them to each other.

---

- 1: Cunt.
- 2: Cocksucking whore.
- 1: Motherfucker.
- 2: Fuckwad!
- 1: Prick!
- 2: Eat my shit!
- 1: Go fuck yourself!
- 2: Shitlicker!
- 1: Fart-fucker!
- 2: Dickhead!
- 1: Douchebag!
- 2: Needle-dick bastard!
- 1: F--Sh-- Cocksucker!
- 2: I said that!
- 1: I said it, bitch!
- 2: I said that too!
- 1: Say this!
- ① *(1 tries to flip her the finger, has to switch hands.)*
- 2: Well well, one finger still works.
- (THEY have to laugh.)*
- 1: Tit-head.
- 2: Tit-head? That's deep. That and "fart- fucker," I like those two.



1: You are those two.

① (2 suffers a pain. As SHE turns, 1 sees the back of her pants.)

Hey, you're bleeding.

2: Fuck you, slut.

1: Whore.

2: Hooker.

1: Tramp.

2: Cunt-on-the-punt.

② (SHE tries to retreat victorious, but the pain worsens.)

1: How long have you been bleeding?

2: Stalling won't help. Cheater.

1: Liar.

2: Murderer.

1: Right.

2: If you told them...what you said...

1: How long have you been bleeding?

2: You're bleeding.

1: I'm supposed to be bleeding.

2: What, you cornered the market?

1: Right, it's my turn to lose blood.

(2 has to sit down.)

2: I'd feel a whole lot better if you just tell me what you said to them.

① Sit by overlap just OS of C

② 2 ankles curl over self.

- 1: So would I. Why don't we just tell each other?
- 2: I'll tell you if you tell me.
- 1: I'll tell you if you stop bleeding.
- 2: Please *don't*, I don't want to play anymore! It's not a game, I don't want to die here!
- 1: Okay. You tell me your Tell and I'll tell you my Tell.
- 2: (1) Yours is not a Tell, it's just the truth! All I'm asking for is the truth!  
(*It worsens.*)
- (2) Oh! Oh, make it stop!
- 1: Okay --
- (3) (*1 tries to get to her but isn't able.*)
- 2: It's really bad!
- 1: Here, give me your hand.
- 2: (4) Oh God, make it stop!
- 1: Reach out your hand to me!
- 2: Please do something!
- (*Lacking anything else, 1 leans in and uses dead earnest.*)
- 1: Okay. Listen. You want the truth? Here it is.
- 2: Oh!
- 1: The truth is I'm played out, and you're probably hemorrhaging.
- 2: What... ?
- 1: We're not gonna get saved.

① 2 stands up part way

② 2 sinks down  
on knees

③ 1 drags towards 2

④ 2 on knees facing DS

---

Noun: Pain

pg 28

Action: 2's pain worsens

Atmosphere: Open.

How should the audience feel: Scared for 2

Tempo: quiet

Meaning/Purpose: 2 stands to go, needs prompts 1 to finally  
willingly open up.

Cause of change: 1 decides to open up, as 2 looks like she's  
going to die

---

2: No, don't--

1: Whether we die in their hands or in this room is just a detail.

2: We..have...

1: The truth is, we're all we have, and we don't even know each other's names.

2: Moonbeam...!

1: I made it up.

2: Tell me the moonbeam!

1: I lied.

2: Please!

1: You want the truth, tell me your name.

2: (V) No!

1: Why not?

2: Forget it.

1: Someone should know it.

2: Not that!

1: Tell me a Tell!

2: Fuck off!

1: Give me a Tell before you die.

2: Not telling!

1: Why not?

2: I don't want it!

1: Why not!

① z escape to SR wall

2: I don't want it!

*(Pulling herself off the floor.)*

You can't have it! You can shoot me or cut me or fuck me to death or whatever it is they'll do, I don't give a shit, that'll be the end of this shell and everything that comes with it! But nobody will have killed me. Because I was never here. This room never heard my name. The first time they did those things to me, it wasn't me anymore. I am not the kind of person this happens to. And what you see here, isn't me.

*(SHE looks off.)*

It... it ripped out of my body and flew away, *shuuu!* Far away! She's gone. She's got the name. And they've got nothing.

*(2 comes back to herself slowly.)*

*(1 coughs and winces. SHE is lying on the floor, spent.)*

You look...

1: What?

2: A little peakéd.

1: I'm very thirsty.

2: I don't have anything.

1: I know.

2: If I did I would give it to you.

1: If you did... I would kiss you.

2: I would let you.

*(2 rests weakly against wall.)*

1: I'm glad.

2: Hm?

1: That she got free.

① 1 lies down on side facing 2

② 2 refocuses on 1

---

Noun: Name

Pg 30

Action: 2 gets up

Atmosphere: Frantic then accepting.

How should the audience feel: Heartbroken

Tempo: Balanced

Meaning/Purpose: 2 finally breaks free

Cause of change: 2 decides to tell the truth.

---

2: She got lost.

1: You might find her again.

2: You shouldn't've given up your moonbeam.

1: You wanted the truth.

2: I needed the moonbeam.

1: You are a fool.

2: Why?

*(1 is lying still.)*

I'm not a fool for loving your beautiful moonbeam.

1: You never needed it. Dork.

2: It was what we had.

1: I still have my name.

2: And what do I have?

*(Doesn't answer.)*

What do I have?

*(1's eyes are closed.)*

Hey! Fuck you, don't doze off on me. Tit-head!

1: Mm...

2: C'mere.

Ⓟ

*(2 crawls to the end of her chain and extends a leg.)*

Not gonna have you spacing. Come lie on my leg. C'more.

1: Too far.

2: Don't make me sing. ...

Ⓟ

*(2 SINGS in annoying voice, copying 1's song from earlier. Nothing.)*

① 2 start to crawl to 1

② \_\_\_\_\_, Then scoot to wall  
sit facing DS w/ legs out.

2... Come on. Lie on me, my leg is out. 'No time like the present!'

*(1 struggles to respond.)*

1: Never put off to tomorrow...

2: What you can do today. Good. A penny saved...

1: Penny earned.

2: Okay, but you should come over here. ...

*(1 doesn't answer.)*

Okay, that's alright, your turn. No stalling. Stalling for time is cheating.

*(1 makes a soft sound.)*

Uh uh, A man may work from sun to sun...

1: *(Mumbling)* Woman's work, never done.

2: Yes, okay. My go. All's fair...

*(No reply.)*

C'mon. All's fair in love...

*(Kicks 1's arm.)*

Hey! I'm not gonna let you lose, now come on!

*(1 opens her eyes.)*

I'm not gonna let you.

*(1 ever-so-slowly begins to move.)*

That's right.

*(SHE rolls onto her stomach.)*

Good. Come on.

*(1 places her forearms on the floor, and pulls herself toward 2's leg, using the words.)*

1: A stitch...

① 1 set slowly,  
Scout to 2

(Another pull.)

1: In time...

(One more.)

Saves...

①

(2 scoots down to meet her, 1 rolls over onto her leg.)

2: You made it.

1: Mm.

2: Better?

1: I think you better tell me.

(2 studies her, tries to judge it.)

2: Why am I a fool for loving your beautiful moonbeam?

1: Not gonna tell, are you?

2: The moonlight was real. It was your thing.

1: No.

②

(Familiar SOUND, DISTANT. 2 looks up, terrified.)

2: They're coming.

1: Hey. Don't worry.

2: You never told them I knew anything.

1: But I told *you*.

2: You're such a liar.

1: It was just words. But you bought it.

2: Cheaters never prosper.

(ANOTHER SOUND.)

Q170  
SQ28

① look @ each other,  
I sink back down  
lie @ angle

② 2 lie facing 1

---

Noun: Them

12/3/85

Action: 1 and 2 are together, but "they're" coming

Atmosphere: Tense, accepting, 10 mins

How should the audience feel: Hermitic/other

Tempo: Slow.

Meaning/Purpose: the women accept each other

Cause of change: things finally are as physically close as possible

---

1: No, listen. That's your thing. Words. The moonbeam was just a story. You're such a sucker for a Tell. The moonlight is in your mind.

(SOUND: CLOSER.)

2: Listen. I have a Tell for you.

1: Mm.

2: You'll like this, it's a word. Are you ready?

1: What?...

2: A stitch in time sav --

1: No.

2: But --

1: No!

(SOUND: APPROACHING.)

2: If they take me I --

1: Save it.

2: Just let me --

1: Save it.

2: Please!

1: (Faint) save it, save it... save it....

2: Alright. For you. I'm saving it.

(1 dies.

SOUND: JUST OUTSIDE.)

I'm saving it...

(KEYS JANGLING.)

SQ 30

LQ 180

SQ 31

no Hum

① 2 sit up  
Phillip lights up.

② 1 die antobely  
(extend L leg / L arm,  
slide onto stomach)

Nine

2 gently lays 1 down, and gets to her knees.)

2. I'm saving it. *to read*

(SHE stands. Faces door, as it is heard UNLOCKING.)

I'm saving it. *to read*

**BLACKOUT.**

LQ 183  
moon

LQ 187  
Blackout

LQ 190  
Bows

LQ 195  
House