

A *paidic* aesthetic: an analysis of games in the ludic pedagogy of Philippe

Gaulier

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Philippe Gaulier was invited by the Arts Council of Great Britain to relocate his school, l'École Philippe Gaulier, from Paris to London in 1991 and this was the beginning of his influential eleven year residency in the UK. Previously a student of, and teacher with Lecoq, Gaulier sought to establish his own approach to performer training by founding his school in Paris, with Monika Pagneux in 1980. The inauguration of his pedagogy in the UK was driven as much by his affection for the English, 'finding their eccentricities a source of much pleasure,' (Murray 2010, p. 221) furthermore this was the moment when Gaulier decided to teach in English, a crucial decision that meant his performer training was accessible to those who couldn't translate or afford to travel. Gaulier's anglicised École continued to attract an international cohort yet increased its ratio of UK based students and, as a consequence, a number of graduates formed international companies that were not only incorporated in the UK but made their creative home here. The impact of Gaulier's performer training is significant and numerous participants have permeated the industry.¹ For example his most prized graduate, Sacha Baron Cohen, frequently mistaken as a method actor, has demonstrated how Gaulier's particular approach to clown can amuse, dupe and fool to a considerable and popular extent in mainstream entertainment. Gaulier's techniques also emerge in UK university drama programmes and have even influenced actor training. This is because his technique appears readily attainable, as it is based entirely on *play*.

¹ Examples include directors Kristine Landon-Smith and Cal McCrystal and numerous actors including Helena Bonham Carter who, according to Cavendish spent 'six months training with Gaulier in the early 1990s, when she was already famous, which is as good a testament as any to the kind of esteem in which [Gaulier] is held by actors.' (Cavendish 2001, p. 19)

Everyone can play. Everyone knows how to play. It's is an accessible activity which doesn't appear to require any specialist skill or acting technique. Play is immediate, its results can be instantaneous and performance can easily be conjured from the playful engagement in a game in a fraction of the time that more complex actor training techniques demand. What's more, play is a pleasurable experience. Indeed Gaulier insists that all play must be engaged in with pleasure – demonstrably so. His performance aesthetic is best described as a form of pleasurable play. Worsley's account of her experience with Gaulier demonstrates the intrinsic function of pleasure in his training:

Even in tragedy there needs to be a certain joy in the performance of it. It might sound basic but it is not generally taught as such and perhaps as a consequence it is surprisingly rare to find real pleasure in the theatre' (Worsley 2002, p. 85).

However, the experience of training with Gaulier can be the opposite. His technique is more complex and confounding than his use of play suggests. It is *ludic*, by this I mean it is a highly complex combination of playing and engaging in games from which a particular type of performance aesthetic emerges – one which Baron Cohen's performances epitomise. Moreover, Gaulier's own pedagogical approach is a ludic interplay between playfulness and brutality. His witty rebuttals range from the cursory dismissal of the player as simply 'boring' to the more damning threat of a 'trip to Iraq.' Gaulier's pedagogy can be a form of combat with the performer, by his own admission when he teaches, he boxes:

An uppercut on the face ... a right hook in the gums of will, determination, resolution and violation. A smack in the stomach of the cheap comic, a left hook to the thorax for someone who thinks they're funny before they really are and three pile drivers for conventional ideas. (Gaulier 2007, p. 290)

Despite Gaulier's use of the familiar territory of play – and all its dangerous as well as pleasurable possibilities – there is little understanding of how the ludic functions in Gaulier's training, specifically how his adaptations of play produce his performance aesthetic. This is curious considering how ubiquitous play *is* in the conservatoire and the academy. The practices of play are commonplace in actor training, as the warm-up or the group bonding exercise, play is predominantly used as a precursor to performance. Moreover, theories of play frequently appear in academic analysis of performance, for instance play was expedient in broadening the territories of Performance Studies.² However, save Clive Barker's use of games to demonstrate a strategic 'scientific basis' (McCaw 2007, p. 337) for actor training, there is little to no research into how play functions in the training for, and therefore the construction of, an acted performance. Such lack of practical analysis has come to the attention of play theorists; in 2001 Sutton-Smith raised the question 'where is the appropriate ludic *performance theory*? (Sutton-Smith 2001, p. 192). Indeed from my experience of training with Gaulier, it was clear that his use of play was integral to the performing aesthetic it produced, though he never articulated what this ludic productivity might be. This is largely because, like Lecoq, Gaulier resists the identification of any expounded 'method'. However, could concepts of the ludic illuminate what the processes of play are in Gaulier's technique; could play theory reveal the constructs of this ludic performance?

During my research into Gaulier's training I was initially frustrated by the abstruse ludic terminology. The ubiquity of the mutable terms play, playing, pleasure and game obscured the complexity of Gaulier's pedagogical approach and hindered analysis of the actual techniques. Indeed, Gaulier's own epigrammatic rhetoric – 'theatre is as serious as a child's game,' (Gaulier 2009) – obfuscates the real

² For instance theories of play provide a rationale for Schechner's incorporation of everyday acts as performance.

difficulty of his training. To test a possible ludic performance theory I sought a more precise terminology. This article details the theoretical terminology I've adopted and shows how this can be applied to analyse games and the function of play in Gaulier's ludic pedagogy. I will also demonstrate how Gaulier's training produces a particular type of performance which is playful, exuberant and imbued with pleasure, one which I term *paidic*. I shall refer to my own documentation of Gaulier's *Taller Clown*³ in Barcelona, September 2008.

For Gaulier acting is play, performers are players and theatre is their game. And it is this that distinguishes his approach from Lecoq's. Recently Murray has drawn attention to the affiliated 'condition' (Murray op.cit. p. 222), of play in the related pedagogies of Lecoq, Gaulier and Pagneux in order to tease out the different methodological function of this in their respective performer training processes. For instance Lecoq's play is pragmatic, a route towards or the 'driving motors' (ibid., p. 223), of the act of performing. Whereas Murray hints that play is more intrinsic to Gaulier's pedagogy and perhaps more excessive – 'on a different register' (ibid., p. 224) – than Lecoq's. I would argue that the distinction between Gaulier and Lecoq's use of play is more significant. As John Wright has pointed out, 'Gaulier works with play for the same reason that Lecoq works with movement' (Wright 1990, p. 9). The essential difference is that for Gaulier, play *is* the training and the forum for this is the game. All the processes of making theatre – whether improvising, writing, directing, singing, or just playing – must be derived from play. Indeed Gaulier insists that 'Everything is a game. Everything is written from the game, everything is written through the game.'⁴ For this reason his *École* commences with a four week course

³ The Catalan for 'Clown Workshop'

⁴ From my own documentation of Gaulier's training, September 2008 as are all subsequent quotations from Gaulier unless footnoted otherwise. Gaulier's 'English' is purposefully pigeon, uttered with an augmented French accent, all a part of his playful repartee with his trainee performers. For this reason some of the references here are transcribed verbatim.

entirely devoted to playing, entitled *Le Jeu*. The literal translation of this is 'the play', though Murray suggests that Gaulier's use of the term implies 'playfulness' (Murray 2003, p. 65), the focus being on the qualities of playing particular to Gaulier's aesthetic, only achieved by immersion in a series of repeated, extended, durational games.

A common game used to launch *Le Jeu* is a static version of Tag, a deceptively simple game that is surprisingly difficult in its execution. This game involves a whole group which, by a process of elimination, is reduced to a single victor (along with Gaulier, who conducts the game and never gets it wrong). The game is played in a circle, and the rules are thus: if the player is tagged they must say the name of another player in the game; if they hear their name called they must tag another, and so on. This is a swift game and players must respond immediately to either stimulus, they can only tag or call on players who are participating – those ruled out of the game do not count. Grounds for elimination include: failure to adhere to the rules of the game; hesitation; repeated tagging or consecutive calling of names; saying the name of someone not in the room (this is a frequent and baffling occurrence) and/or not articulating a name clearly enough for the recipient to respond effectively. Gaulier's instructions for the game are cursory and not as detailed as described here. He will declare the basic rules of the game, but will not describe the experience of its execution. At this early stage in the training it is apparent that Gaulier's pedagogy is typified by what is not said – what is withheld – as much as by the basic, but bombastic, assertion of the rules of the game. When this version of tag is first played, a large proportion of players are usually dismissed fairly rapidly as they grapple with its unexpected complexity.



Figure 1, a. (l to r) Ferran Aixelà, Pedro Mayor de Frias, Philippe Gaulier, Eva Permanyer, Tatiana da Silveira, Beatrice Donze. Figure 1, b. (l to r) Francesca Martello, Miguel Chimeno, Carmen Pieraccini. Figure 1, c. (l to r) Olga Bas Lay, Philippe Gaulier. Figure 1, d. (l to r) Olga Bas Lay, Philippe Gaulier. All images are stills from film footage by Lynne Kendrick, September, 2008.

Tag is the type of game that is integral to Gaulier's pedagogical approach as he uses this to produce pleasure.⁵ This emerges at the point when the player fails the game. The failure of playing this game is always expected – for the simple reason that all but one must be 'out' before the game is over – but the experience is nevertheless a surprise when it arrives and this is almost always pleasurable for the player. This pleasure is not just an emotive response to the moment of failure; arguably the resulting pleasure emerges directly as a consequence from the design of the game. For Gaulier, there is something vital about the rules as these produce a particular type of play which, paradoxically, results in the disintegration of these rules and ignites pleasure. Thus analysis of these different but relational components – the

⁵ see fig. 1, a. Tatiana has just made the mistake of calling her own name

established rules, the playing of and dissolution of these and the resulting pleasure – of the game might reveal some of the methodologies intrinsic to Gaulier’s ludic pedagogy.

The most apparent, but significant fact is that Tag is entirely functional to Gaulier’s pedagogy and for this reason he insists upon fidelity to the game. Nothing exterior to the game is permitted. Any strategy conjured in advance, for instance the playful persecution of another player by repeatedly calling their name, will be futile as the rapid nature of the game negates any opportunity for tactics. This simple game of Tag encapsulates Gaulier’s fundamental tenet of his ludic performer training: that the player can only play – or perform – that which is genuinely derived from the game. Anything prepared, or extraneous to the games proceedings is dismissed as a ‘bad idea’. This is because Gaulier’s use of play is autotelic, which means it is self creating; it ‘begins and ends with itself’ (Anchor 1978, p. 70).

This is why I sought an autotelic theory of play, one which could provide terminology to describe Gaulier’s application of the constructs of play entirely within the realm of the game not in relation to the world outside of it. Sutton-Smith refers to this as ‘the ludic dialectic’ (Sutton-Smith op.cit. p. 197), an entirely contained manifestation of play rather than ‘the referential dialectic’ (ibid., p. 197), in which play refers to that which is exterior to it. This is because play is most commonly considered to be ‘a representation of something’ (Huizinga 1949, p. 13), a form in which we see ourselves reflected: for instance the notion that child’s play at ‘being adult’ is a mimetic act that has a socio-genetic or epigenetic function,⁶ a means of observing, learning and testing existing behaviours. On a larger scale representative play is considered to be culturally metatextual, the progenitor of cultural activities, the forum for the reinforcement of cultural behaviour, a ‘function of culture proper’ (ibid., p. 2).

⁶ For example see Erikson (1978, p. 701) for an atypical psychosocial theory of play.

This fundamental concept that 'all play means something' (ibid., p. 1), is itself a cultural phenomenon, as play theorist Michael Echeruo has pointed out, this representational function of play is in fact a western, 'mimetic bias' (Echeruo 1994, p. 138). The referential dialectic dominates occidental understanding of play.

However one theorist offers a way of articulating play that describes more adequately a ludic dialectic. Roger Caillois was a polymath who broadened the field of ludic theory by incorporating different types of play within his rubric of games.⁷ As a consequence, the dominant occidental mimetic form is but one of a varied manifestation of play forms and impulses. Furthermore his emphasis is on the pretence, the fakery of mimesis, thus his theory is expedient for analyzing types of play practice (particularly performance) that are not, in essence, 'referential', such as Gaulier's. Caillois' categorizations offered several forms of games that are manifested as different and potentially diverse social and cultural acts and these are created by two distinct but related ways of playing which are in a dialectic relationship. These are *paidia* and *ludus*, which he describes as a continuum, from 'turbulence to rules' (Caillois 2001, p. 27):

At one extreme an almost indivisible principle, common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety is dominant. It manifests a kind of uncontrolled fantasy that can be designated by the term *paidia*. At the opposite extreme.... there is a growing tendency to bind [*paidia*] with arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions, to oppose it still more by ceaselessly practicing the most embarrassing chicanery upon it, in order to make it more uncertain of attaining its desired effect. This latter principle is completely impractical, even though it requires an ever-greater amount of effort, patience, skill, or ingenuity. I call this second component *ludus*.' (ibid., p. 13)

Paidia refers to the type of play akin to the 'play instinct' (ibid., p. 28), and is exuberant; as Barker terms it, a 'release of energy' (Barker 1989, p. 232). *Ludus* describes the structures in place, rules for instance, that are flexible and subject to

⁷ Caillois' ludic theory in *Le Jeux et les Hommes* was first published in 1958 and translated into English in 1961.

alteration. *Paidia* is typical of the first playing impulse found in the child, a set of manifestations (not even called games) that have no name. This definition is reinforced by Caillois' use of the term *paidia* as 'the root of the word for child' (ibid., p. 29). *Ludus* materialises as the child develops and engages in strategic play, for instance games.

Ludus, is not just the emergence of form, but describes a way of playing that professionalises play, as Caillois puts it, *ludus* is 'the occasion for training [which] leads to the acquisition of a special skill' (ibid., p. 29). Thus *ludus* is much more than the application of rules but describes the level of difficulty – and all the means by which this can be exerted – of the game and the skill required to play it. *Ludus* and *paidia* are both present in acts of play – specifically games. These two ways of playing are in dialogue, as each choice the player (or in the case of this analysis the pedagogue) may make in one way of playing directly impacts upon the other. This is the significant characteristic of Caillois' theory which articulates play as a *process* not just an innate biological impulse or a psychological function and this chimed with the emergent performative turn in cultural theory. This process is propelled by the continuous flux between *ludus* and *paidia* and the result of this might be a mimetic act, a gambling indulgence or an immersive, dangerous ritual purposefully designed to 'inflict a kind of voluptuous panic on an otherwise lucid mind' (ibid., p. 23). For example, in terms of games analysis, a simple game of Grandmother's Footsteps becomes tedious if the rules remain the same. Augmenting the itinerary – and therefore the *ludus* – with some 'purposely tedious conventions' (ibid., p. 13), by adding chairs that must be sat on, clothes to be worn, food to be consumed throughout the journey towards the Grandmother's back, raises the potential *paidic* possibilities and maintains the player's immersion in the game. Thus the core of Caillois' ludic theory, this dialogical relationship between *ludus* and *paidia*, provides

an opportunity for describing the intrinsic function of Gaulier's games in his pedagogy.

If the simple game of Tag is seen as an exercise in *ludus* play, it is possible to examine the complexities of the game and to propose how Gaulier uses this to produce the pleasurable response. Whilst the rules are deceptively simple, comprising of only two actions, tagging or calling a name, the *ludus* encountered by the player is not. Though the rules appear to remain the same throughout the game, if these are considered as a part of Caillois' *ludus* then it is possible to propose that these change. The *ludus* of Tag, in this case the unobtrusive but gradual increase in difficulty, begins with the repetitive nature of the rules. The player has to negotiate the increasing difficulty of a repeating pattern of the name/tag in conjunction with the changing pattern of whose name is called and who is tagging or tagged. Thus the *ludus* contains two patterns, one fixed and the other in flux and as such there is considerable potential for conflicting demands upon the player's attention. Furthermore, as the group diminishes in size, the player experiences an increase in her/his participation, as a consequence the *ludus* is amplified by the onus on maintaining their performance so far, as well as the increasingly competitive imperative to win. For the remaining players the amount of information they need to maintain, sustain and respond to increases significantly throughout the duration of the game as individual engagement in the patterns of the game becomes more frequent. If the player's focus is not on this accelerating *ludus* s/he risks a hesitation or error.

In order to remain in the game, the player must engage in *ludus* play. However, Gaulier isn't interested in compliance or perfection. Though there is the prize of praise from Gaulier for winning a game like Tag, the important point is that pleasure occurs at the moment of losing, in getting the game *wrong*. At the moment the rule is

accidentally flouted, the pleasurable experience is ignited. Even if the player feels deflated there is still a point at which their pleasure is expressed. This fleeting moment when pleasure punctures the veneer of the concentrated *ludus* play, can be understood as Barker's description of 'experiential joy' (Barker op.cit. p. 232). But this is not just an expression of the realisation that the player has flouted the rule and failed the game – which is usually an amusing moment – but is a response to the player's release from the *ludus* of the game. The disconnection with *ludus* is vital in order that the pleasure is fully, if fleetingly, experienced.

Caillois' concept of *paidia* seems to capture the essence of Gaulier's pleasurable play; both are childlike, instinctual and joyful. Yet, the most significant correlation between Caillois' *paidia* and Gaulier's concept of pleasure is that both are rebellious. Caillois' *paidia* also describes an impulse of 'basic freedom' (Caillois op.cit. p. 27) from the constraint of *ludus* and as such can be subversive; a way of playing that tests and can resist the chicanery of *ludus*. Thus this version of tag, by increasing *ludus*, in turn intensifies the pending *paidic* release. The more restrictive the game becomes, the greater the urge for the *paidic* abandon. This game is as close as Gaulier gets to producing Caillois' 'spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct' (ibid., p. 28), and purposely so. Gaulier's performer is afforded an attainable experience of pleasure early on in training. In the *paidic* experience lie many possibilities for Gaulier's performer training, in particular the state of play that prepares for clown. Though the player fails the game, in failing they have found a state that is useful for performance.

While the pleasurable play of Gaulier's training could be said to be something like Caillois' *paidic* play, the methodological problem for Gaulier is that he cannot directly instruct the player to play *paidically* – the paradox being that any play 'to order' ceases to be play. He can, though, create the structures in which the performer

discovers this; in other words Gaulier can exert control over the *ludus* of the game. Thus it could be said that Gaulier's pedagogy is something like a form of *ludus* as he presides over all games, conducting the rules, augmenting the structure and narrating the games' proceedings. An example of this is Gaulier's addition of a simple activity or action to an existing game. During the *Taller Clown*, participant Miguel found it hard to communicate convincing, pleasurable play. To assist, Gaulier requested the help of two women from the group who were instructed to tickle him during a number of games. For instance in the game of Foreign Languages – a simple game of speaking nonsense – Miguel had to continue his 'text' (the sound of a horse whinnying) whilst being subject to the additional activity – tickling – which resulted in a singularly identifiable response from Miguel: pleasure.⁸ Gaulier identified Miguel's problem, to benefit him and to guide those watching:

You don't show enough pleasure. Now [when] you have a good pleasure, you have the good eyes, when you do the exercise before your eyes are boring. You have to give your fantasy your fun, many things are stupid for the pleasure ... your eyes are boring but not with these two women. Who would be less boring with these two women? Even the Pope would be less boring.

By introducing the tickle, Gaulier is not only making the participant laugh. Miguel is in the process of negotiating this with the other rules of the game, thus the tickle becomes an added level of difficulty, an increase in the *ludus* that demands a different approach. Gaulier is augmenting the *ludus* of the game, in order to provide a moment of *paidic*-like play for Miguel. Gaulier is, thus, the architect of the *ludus* of the game, his pedagogical approach manifested by construction of the rules and his methodology evident in this continuous movement between the established rule (the game structure), the player's response and his subsequent rules applied.

A more intense example of Gaulier's imposition of *ludus* can be found in his use of games for clown training, for instance his version of Simon Says. This is a simple

⁸ See fig. 1, b.

game in which a group of players can only undertake the actions that are preceded by the phrase 'Samuel says.'⁹ Gaulier leads the game and his skilled coercion tricks players into making mistakes by repetition of instructions: 'Samuel says walk, Samuel says stop,' which are punctuated by new instructions: 'Samuel says jump once, jump once,' that change the actions of the game and divert the players' attention. Once an error is made Gaulier halts the game and initiates a ritual of confession and punishment. Firstly each player is required to inculcate themselves by admitting to their mistake. Then they are offered a choice, they can either risk a forfeit or absent themselves from this. The latter is a get out clause for those who don't feel confident to chance the former, they are allowed to say 'nothing' to Gaulier – though according to him this is an admission of inadequacy, a declaration of the lack of attractiveness required to risk the particular offer of the forfeit – which is a request to kiss another player. The kiss is a particular type of transaction and Gaulier is firm about the manner in which this is performed. Firstly they must solicit this by clearly asking 'may I kiss you?' They must remain still until their request is granted, at which point the requestor may walk towards the other player to perform the act. Students can incriminate each other if they see a mistake not owned up to and frequently do so. A guilty player, a cheat, is given a higher stake of forfeit, usually five or more kisses to be granted from different participants. On the rare occasions that the player has all requests granted, s/he enjoys another burst of pleasure on escaping the potential penalty. The risk of this part of the game is that the request for a kiss is refused and this results in punishment from Gaulier.

The actual punishment is to be dreaded, it is administered by Gaulier himself; and consumes a large proportion of the time spent participating in the game.

The punishment consists of an arm lock, 'shampoo' (he tickles the player's hair), 'French guillotine' (chops the back of the neck),

⁹ Gaulier tailors the nomenclature of games as an act of authoring these, this alteration of 'Simon Says' to 'Samuel Says' is in honour of his son.

'Chinese acupuncture' (he pinches the skin on the player's back), 'Guantanamo' (he presses the player's fingers into the palm of the hand) and to finish off, he administers a Chinese burn on the arm.

The initial arm lock is playful enough and the tickling lulls the player into the false impression that this will be a fake ordeal. But the punishment isn't fake, it's real and it hurts. It is a humiliation as it is both a rejection by another player (the refused kiss) and is received in an ungainly, bent posture forced upon the player by the strength of Gaulier's arm lock.¹⁰ At the *Taller Clown* several participants were physically castigated and their responses clearly demonstrated their shock at the severity of Gaulier's actions¹¹ as well as shame after the event. This tangible act is a genuine surprise for the players who, up until this point, have only received verbal abuse from the pedagogue. The reason why he inflicts physical punishment is not explained by Gaulier, but it adds seriousness to the game and this is a significant development of the *ludus* of the occasion and the processes of the training.

Though it remains unexplained, Gaulier's cruelty is not arbitrary. His extreme imposition of *ludus* is an intrinsic, pedagogical act. This not only demands immersion in the proceeds of the game, but also abandons the player in its midst as they are beset with a baffling alternating array of playful and cruel rules that produce unwittingly personal and often revelatory responses. This intensified *ludus* is designed for the player to attain the skills for an advanced technique of Gaulier's performer training, it is a structure enforced upon the game that produces the type of play necessary for the clown. Gaulier describes the clown as 'the player's idiot twin', the ridiculous version of one's self that is particularly visible to the audience. In terms of playing, Gaulier makes an important distinction between being a player and performing clown, which lies in the experience of difficulty, failure and the 'feeling of being a bad student'. As such Gaulier's 'cruelty' is, in actual fact, a key component of

¹⁰ See fig. 1, c.

¹¹ See fig. 1, d.

his pedagogical approach. It is an act of authority over the *ludus* of the game that immerses the student in the level of difficulty necessary for genuinely awful feelings and acts of idiocy to occur. For Gaulier it is from this position of 'badness' the recalcitrant subordination of the clown emerges.



Figure 2, a. (l to r) Philippe Gaulier, Eva Permanyer, Pablo Ibarluzea, Luis Brusca, Lucia Leiva, Ferran Aixalà, Noemí Tudela. Figure 2, b. (l to r) Nathalie Baunare, Miguel Chimeno. Figure 2, c. (l to r) Nathalie Baunare, Miguel Chimeno. Figure 2, d. Philippe Gaulier All images are stills from film footage by Lynne Kendrick, September, 2008.

Indeed Gaulier has created games designed to elicit naughtiness. Bad Words, for example, is a game in which players are encouraged to insult and swear at Gaulier – simply because they have been told not to. Gaulier introduces the game with a collective admonishment, as if they had already committed the offence.

You say bad words, you said “dick” or ... I am furious, so I shout to you and you shut up – you SHUT UP. You remember you made a mistake and the boss [Gaulier] is furious so you shut up. And I say now if I hear one bad word more, it will be terrible, the punishment will be terrible ...

After a few playful cuffed ears and pinches,¹² Gaulier leaves the playing area and directs the students as to when they should re-offend. He even designates the time lapse between their remorse and the compulsion to play dangerously by insulting the pedagogue once more.

... So I leave, to sit on this chair and after forty seconds so you have time to be a bit a ashamed, to be "I made a mistake" ... And you shut up, I sit, forty seconds and after forty seconds one [player] try to find a contact with a neighbour then ... (he swears quietly) and we start again the game of the pleasure to say bad words ...

This is another example of Gaulier's *ludus* methodology, the rules – and the breaking of these – are clear; indeed the rule is that the rule must be broken. But the skill for the player lies in knowing how to commit the act with pleasure, the point at which the impulse to do so emerges, the point at which to engage in *paidia*. Players need to learn the 'dialectic ... between the release of energy [the *paidic*] and the definition imposed by the rules [*ludus*]' (Barker op.cit. p. 232). And in this case the *paidic* impulse must be imbued with *ludus* censure, the feeling that Gaulier describes as 'being in the shit.'

When you are not in the shit you are just an idiot who play a big game, you are not a clown.

Thus it could be said that *ludus*, this difficulty, this cruelty, is essential to constructing the clown. *Ludus*, in this case the difficulty of mistake making, and the *paidic* compulsion to do wrong, is the very means by which the clown appears.

However the autotelic interplay between *paidia* and *ludus* is a hard balance to strike. There is no formula – an x amount of engagement in difficulty will not produce quantity y of playful pleasure – indeed any attempt at formulaic play will be summarily dismissed by Gaulier. During my documentation of the *Taller Clown*, in which I was a participant as well as a researcher, I was frequently admonished for 'playing too much' and overdoing it by 'peeing in the paella.' (Gaulier tailors his insults to the

¹² See fig. 2, a

country in which he is teaching). I was guilty, on a number of occasions, of bringing to bear upon the game ways of playing that weren't in genuine response to the *ludus* that was underway. Though I felt I was engaging in pleasure, this wasn't apparent to the pedagogue. Indeed, many of Gaulier's students may experience pleasure but find the genuine demonstration of this extremely difficult to achieve.

One such example is a game of Caillois' 'incessant invention' (Caillois op.cit. p. 23) – an improvisation – attempted by Miguel and Nathalie at the *Taller Clown*. They were taking part in an augmented version of the Foreign Languages game which involves players in pairs addressing the audience with gobbledygook. Words are not necessary for this exercise and gibberish is actively welcomed. The aim of the game is to demonstrate pleasure in communicating nonsense. Nathalie was playing Gina Lollobrigida, scantily clad with a red nose and Miguel was dressed as Jesus, also sporting a red nose, in a full length dressing gown, with foil-wrapped halo and equipped with a basket of props including bread and fish.¹³ Nathalie began by addressing the audience with a cheery, nonsensical expression communicated as a sort of welcome to the audience. Miguel's reply was immediately to her, not to the audience. In gibberish he appeared to take issue with her greeting. Gaulier stopped them immediately and chastised Miguel because 'you didn't admire [Nathalie],'¹⁴ and instead of communicating pleasure with Nathalie in the game he spoke to her as 'the professor not happy with the student.' For Gaulier any conflict between players is unwatchable for the audience. As a consequence Miguel was once again deemed boring. Gaulier at first amused the workshop participants with his threat to dismiss Miguel from the game.

Alors, who kill Jesus, a second time? Everybody start to think, my god it's so boring. So boring, we don't see your pleasure to be on

¹³These characters are assigned by Gaulier not be played as such but to assist the players in finding their clown. The trainee performer does not necessarily have to comply with the clown character, rather they are encouraged to resist this. For instance a number of exercises at the *Taller Clown* required them to denounce the pedagogue for asking her/him to wear a costume they hated.

¹⁴ See fig. 2, b.

stage, to be the idiot ... but if you don't give the good fun for the game, you are in bad mood. You have to *play*; you have to be in a better mood.

Nathalie and Miguel are skilled performers and they understood what Gaulier implied was missing from their approach to the game. Undaunted they continued. Nathalie feigned pleasure at discovering the props in Miguel's basket. He immediately responded by selecting a piece of bread and attempting to break this. The futile act of breaking plastic bread by an ersatz Jesus amused the audience, so Gaulier allowed them continue with the game. Miguel popped the bread in Nathalie's mouth, which promptly became stuck in her teeth.¹⁵ Nathalie played this moment directly to the audience, attempting to maintain her pleasure whilst encumbered with the bread. Despite the fact that this improvisation was to some extent successful, in that it was funny and amused the rest of the workshop participants, nevertheless Gaulier curtailed the game.

He has the nice moment with the bread; she remember it was the show and she pretend to save the show with the bread in her mouth... But you (to Miguel) *we didn't see you happy as the writer of this game.*

Miguel insisted he was enjoying himself but Gaulier was adamant that this wasn't evident – wasn't communicated – to him and to those watching.

While documenting this sequence I could see Miguel's strategies for playing the game and how these diverted him from immersing himself fully in the *paidic* possibilities. Miguel began engaging in the *ludus* of his improvisation well, by responding directly to Nathalie's playful propositions, but as soon as this *ludus* was established between them his attention was set on constructing the next rule. Consequently Miguel's rapid accumulation of *ludus* quickly encumbered him with a complex game to negotiate and as such his game became densely ludic. Nathalie attempted to decelerate the rate of Miguel's *ludus* by playing her responses to the

¹⁵ See fig. 2, c.

audience. Miguel didn't afford himself this opportunity, partly because he sensed his exit from the improvisation was imminent and this raised the *ludus* imperative to steer the improvisation towards Gaulier's instructions in order not to fail this exercise. Gaulier, in fact, required him to do the opposite: to take the time to play and to have pleasure in this, in Caillois' terms, to play *paidically*.

Throughout this example Gaulier is teaching Miguel to learn the dialectic between the game and pleasure. He may identify error between each attempt at the improvisation, but his pedagogical method is manifested in the game and his redirection of it. For Miguel to find his pleasure as the writer of the game, he needed to play it effectively by only engaging in the autotelic *ludus* found therein. For Gaulier, a skilled player is a simple player. This principle has broader implications for how, as teachers and performer trainers, we might apply a variety of ludic techniques. Furthermore, an understanding of the potential between *ludus* and *paidia* in play forms will not only benefit our own pedagogy but also enable identification of the aesthetic produced.

While Gaulier's technique is an obstacle course of *ludus*, the performance he requires is not the compliant, civilised *ludus* way of playing but is the *paidic* state of play, the potentially disruptive, permanently naughty, 'primary power of improvisation and joy' (Caillois op.cit. p. 27). A Gaulierian performance is always *paidic*, a prime example of this is Baron-Cohen's 'Borat' who, though presented as culturally different, is in fact playfully subverting each norm, rule or *ludus* he encounters. Baron-Cohen's performances don't just appear to be similar to Caillois' *paidia* but arguably they *are paidic* because these are produced by the constraints in which the performer is immersed. Thus Gaulier's pleasurable performance aesthetic is not just one of arbitrary play, emphasised buffoonery or excessive expression of joy but is a construct of the difficult – sometimes extraordinarily complex – *ludus*. For this reason I consider that Gaulier's performer training produces a *paidic aesthetic* as all his

strategic ludic techniques are designed to create this pleasurable, *paidic* play. Moreover, this aesthetic is actualised by *ludus*, it is present in the sense that it only ever occurs in its autotelic construction. It is a way of performing that is 'in the moment'. A *paidic aesthetic*, then, not only describes the play aesthetic, but creates this presence. As such, it is possible to propose that pleasure and presence are not merely unequivocal qualities possessed by the performer but are, in fact, produced by the act of play. In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates how Caillois' autotelic, ludic dialectic reveals the function of play in creating the aesthetic that Gaulier's pedagogy produces. Finally, in terms of our ongoing endeavours in performer training research, this use of play theory for close analysis of pedagogical technique provides one possible answer to Sutton-Smith's call for a 'ludic *performance theory*' (Sutton-Smith op.cit. p. 192).

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