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Live or dead? *Televising Theater in Bali*

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Television has come to attract vast mass audiences in many Asian countries in the 1990s. Among the issues this raises are what happens when ‘traditional’ media, such as theater, are broadcast on television. Drawing on ethnography from Bali, in Indonesia, I consider some of the questions involved. Bali is a particularly good case study, because few societies are as famous for their popular theater and also have been catapulted so abruptly into the world of electronic mass media.

At first sight, the issue is fairly straightforward: how does a change of medium affect the performance, whether understood as the message, the text, or its effects upon the audience? However this presumes there to be a content, notionally separate from, and transcending, the form, the medium and the circumstances of communication. How justified are we, however, in applying this dichotomy to the practices of peoples in other parts of the world or, perhaps especially, for electronic media at all? The difficulties are compounded when electronic mediation, such as television, becomes a common mode of disseminating performances. How adequate is our existing language in dealing with new media? How appropriate is it to analyze television as something to be read, as a form of text, without stretching the notion of textuality to absurdity? To what extent should the task of anthropologists be to challenge the intellectual hegemony of textuality and demand critical inquiry into all the new kinds of practice which electronic media have brought about.¹

ic is theatre in Bali?

Theater and Television in Bali

Television has come to occupy an important place in Bali. The New Order régime of former President Suharto relied heavily on television to put across the priorities of economic and social development, and to promote ‘culture’ as a commodity and as the acceptable face of differentiation according to religion and ethnicity. Although state television is highly centralized, regional stations, most notably Bali, have wrested free a significant number of slots, especially in the evening prime time, for ‘cultural’ broadcasts,

often on miniscule budgets. How exactly programmes get approved, financed, filmed, promoted and broadcast - in other words, production practices - remains to be studied.

At another point however the issues are clearer. Balinese actors are explicit that they much prefer performing before live audiences than in recording studios. In this chapter I shall examine some of the differences discernible in the same plays as acted in front of village audiences and as broadcast on Indonesian state television. Such a study suggests that far more is at stake than actors' unfamiliarity with the exigencies of performing for television, with the inevitable differences between acting on stage and in television studios. Balinese theater, especially in the kind of genres I shall be considering, is largely extemporized around a minimal plot. So the circumstances under which the play takes place and the performance of the audience are crucial to what happens. Theater involves not just ad libbing the exchanges between actors, but also a less obvious, but overlapping, dialogue between actors and audience. In a different and little remarked upon way, the audience also performs.

In Bali, then, plays are not productions which are finalized before their performance, even though the minimal parameters of the plot have, of course, to be set for there to be a play at all. There seems to be no comparable requirement to suspend disbelief as in European theater. The interpretive version, of course, is the leap of faith into the hermeneutic circle. Each performance, especially ones before live local audiences is unfinalizable - and unrepeatable. The whole theatrical event hinges upon different sets of relationships working well simultaneously, notably that between audience and actors, and between the actors themselves. Balinese theater depends crucially on others to make it happen. The question 'what are the differences between live and televised theater?' is therefore partly misplaced. Different performances depend upon different audiences and the relationship between actors and audiences. There is no essential, unsituated performance to measure.

Acting to camera, therefore, is a more complex issue than just the effect of television recording and broadcasting on theater. For a start, it invites us to consider what is involved in dialogic models of social action and in communication itself. An inquiry into what happens with theater once performances start to be reproduced in different ways raises wider questions. For a start, from the moment that people become familiar with reading stories in newspapers, books or as cartoons, with hearing them on radio or seeing them on television, the idea of theater itself is transformed. The possibility is born of discriminating nostalgically between authentic, 'live' performances and their mechanical or electronic reproduction. In fact, however, it is the contrast itself, which creates the conditions of possibility of a privileged, essential, originary form, against which divergent versions may be compared. Once theater is reproduced electronically, live performance itself changes, because it is always framed against what it is not.

Research on Television

The impact of television on theater can be judged by the fact that, on the best estimate, over eighty percent of theater troupes in Bali disappeared during the 1980s, as audiences were bent on watching only 'the best'. With theater becoming a mainstay of local television peak-hour scheduling, I found myself caught up in frequent conversations between actors, whether as performers or viewers, who used to complain about the rigidity of the medium. Television had become sufficiently important as to merit a research project in its own right.ⁱⁱ A central part of the project was recording broadcasts of Balinese theater, and a way of testing and fleshing out the actors' appreciations was to commission performances of the plays previously recorded from television. We chose the occasion of local temple festivals in Tengahpadang, the pseudonym for the village where I have done research since 1970, because that is when Balinese themselves put on theater plays. The selection was made in collaboration with local aficionados of theater who chose which plays they had enjoyed the most and which they also considered to be good examples of their respective genres.

In the space available here, I shall restrict myself to one genre, *Derama Gong* (hereafter simply *Derama*), which sprang up in the late 1960s, not coincidentally after the abortive coup d'état in 1965. For nearly thirty years, *Derama* was the rage. The plots are 'modern' in the sense that the characters draw upon new fashions, such as the hero and heroine holding hands, and may allude to contemporary themes and interests, although they are still set in the inspecific pre-colonial past. Unlike much other theater though, which draws on adaptations of written stories, *Derama* is in effect set in a never-never land, where the good win through and the bad get their just deserts. It bears little relationship to any contemporary social, political or economic realm of lived experience.

The play was first serialized on Balinese television between March and April 1991, the troupe, *Bhara Budaya*, being one of the best known on the island. The live performance was filmed as part of the television project in August 1992 during temple festivals in Tengahpadang. Both live and televised performances lasted some seven hours, the latter being broadcast in serial weekly hour-long episodes. The dialogue was extemporized. The bare outlines of the plots were set, but the order of scenes changed somewhat. I am not concerned here with the structure of the plots, but with the relationships between the various parties involved in the occasion as a whole.

Villagers from Tengahpadang are enthusiastic and often knowledgeable theater-goers. If they found a play was interesting, they talked about it, sometimes for days afterwards.ⁱⁱⁱ Three of my Balinese colleagues were themselves actors. The oldest was a well-known Arja teacher and dancer, then in his early nineties. Another key figure was an ex-village

head, who happened to be a skilled player of ministers and servants in *Derama*. There was also a wealthy farmer and devotee of shadow theater; a very clever, but poor, flower-seller; and a tenant farmer who knew a great deal about theater, but who assumed a guise of naïve stupidity in company. His granddaughter, who was training as a actress-dancer also took an active part. Various other friends and relatives who had watched the plays would drop in and out of the discussions.

Warming up the audience

Balinese audiences require wooing to becoming engaged. A favourite theme among actors, and a corollary of interactive theater, is the difficulties of getting the play started in the first place. Even if you are experienced and have danced in a place many times before, you do not know who comprises the audience that night, and their mood. (The meal served before the performance is an occasion to sense the venue, topical local concerns and so forth.) In *Derama*, it is commonly servants, either male or female, playing comic rôles whose job it is to warm up the audience. Such details make clear the problems of performing on television. You know little of your audience, nor have any means of gauging their receptiveness.

So let us compare how the same pair of male servants worked a television audience as opposed to a local live show. The play was about *Gusti Ayu Ratih* (the title of the play), the sheltered and beautiful daughter of a minister to the court of *Daha* to whom the heir to the throne becomes attracted. He seduces and impregnates her but, ensorcelled by a princess from another kingdom (who lusts after him), he abandons her. *Ayu Ratih* goes mad and runs wild in the forest before a wise hermit realizes the nature of the problem and sets her and the prince to rights. The opening half-hour or so has virtually nothing to do with the plot other than setting the scene.

The televised version

Two close servants of the prince, *Gangsar* and *Gingsir*, entered and began talking about the state of affairs in the kingdom of *Daha*. The scene was set, the audience knew where they were narratively. They started in low key with two jokes about there being many food-sellers around the theater, trying out various routines to establish what would make this particular audience laugh. They moved to listing the kinds of cakes on sale in the stalls round about the open theater stage, laying the foundations of a patter which would lead them to a popular Javanese song on television *via* a pun on a kind of cake, *Ketuk Lèndri*, which is close to the title of a song, *Getuk Lèndri*.

The song made the spectators laugh, not because of the words, which were Javanese and they did not know, but at Gingsir's dancing a Javanese pop song and movements in the style of *Jogèd Bungbung*, a genre in which a female dancer invites and dances flirtatiously serially with male members of the audience. In the middle Gingsir wove idiosyncratic noises into the song: *Kaing! Kaing!* which is the Balinese verbalization of a dog barking (*Woof! Woof!*). Gangsar told him to shut up (*Cèk! Cèk!*) the rebuke used to silence a dog. They switched to a take-off of the sort of pop group which performs *Getuk Lèndri*. Gingsir swung his arms and hands out to his sides ever more wildly in a take-off of disco dancing, until he finally grabbed Gangsar - who looked suitably mortified - by the genitals.

At several points what the spectators are to make of what happens is not clearly determined. To what extent is the song about broadening Balinese horizons, or about domesticating, or making fun of, Javanese popular culture, which Balinese sometimes fear is becoming dominant in Indonesia? It would be satisfying to be able to interpret what happened as a commentary by peripheralized Balinese on their place with Javanese-dominated Indonesian state. However I have little evidence that such a closure was intended by the actors or appreciated by the audience. Analysts can wax lyric on what it is all *really* about, but the range of interpretive possibilities at many points in the play is carefully left open.^{iv} The substantiality of deep interpretation is often the academic's wet dream. Many of the people I spoke to refused interpretation at all and said they simply enjoyed the event. On what grounds are we to claim to know better?

For audience members, the scene was an occasion for talking about a range of issues from the cast's performance, from what they enjoyed, found funny, sad or moving, to expatiating upon cryptic sections of dialogue or remarks the actors made. Those who had been actors there commented on technique, timing and so on. At suitable junctures I asked the group direct questions. Did they find the exchange funny? Not particularly. Gangsar and Gingsir were often much better, but they had to be careful what they said in front of television cameras. More important, the audience (from *Tohpati*, near *Denpasar*) were 'raw' - their appreciation of theater was limited and they did little to help the actors. Why then did the television audience laugh? Because they were taken by surprise by the unexpectedly topical reference. Did anyone have an idea why they used that particular song? The group often gives live shows around Bali apart from their televised appearances. So they have begun to run out of fresh jokes and have chosen a song which they know is likely to appeal to the young, while the older spectators enjoyed watching the send-up of the song. The overriding aim in any event is to make the audience like them, appreciate their performance and want to pay to see them again. Here live theater has a great advantage over television. It is *ramé*, crowded, with the busy atmosphere which Balinese cherish. However lively Balinese may make watching television, it has become mostly domestic entertainment.

The play

The play took place in front of the Pura Dalem Kauh in Tengahpadang during the temple festival there. The seating for several hundred was packed out and there was a further large crowd floating between the play, temple, stalls and gambling groups. The play started conventionally, with a deep voice through the microphone offering an apology for any mistakes or faults on the part of the actors, a request to Divinity that the audience enjoy the performance and to bring peace of mind.

The same servants, Gangsar and Gingsir, were the first on stage. After some local references, they complained that they were poor servants, who just got left-overs to eat and one chequered sarong each to wear. How much better the audience was turned out than they! Obviously the audience appreciated what is fitting according to Hindu religion and were dressed suitably for a temple festival.

Gingsir protested that he was ashamed to go to court in old clothes. But how was he to get new ones? He had no money. They despaired, until they suddenly came up with the idea that they could get money if one of them pretended to be dead. Ni Wayan Suci (a woman who was running a stall at the side of the show) would give Rp. 1,000 (then about U.S.\$ 0.50) when she heard her relative, I Gangsar, was dead (a further play on local knowledge). With some splendid mathematics, they worked out that, if they could manage to persuade two people to give Rp. 1,000 each, they would have two million Rupiah and be rich! After some persuasion Gangsar agreed to mimic being dead. Gingsir whipped out a length of white cloth and put it over Gangsar, who promptly leapt up and ran in fear off stage (because witches would think he really was a corpse and come and eat him). Gingsir had to go off and entice him back.

No sooner had the white cloth been put over him again than Gangsar had to get up to have a very public pee in the shrubbery which made up the back of the set. The two then sat down for a moment and gloated over what they could buy with all the money they would get. They would buy a car! Gangsar lay down again and promptly got an enormous erection. Gingsir asked him 'what dead person stands up like that?' and detumesced Gangsar hard with his foot, to a bar from the orchestra. Gingsir then threw himself into a wild fit of mourning, lifting his sarong to expose a vast pair of red underpants (not the sort of thing you do in a televised performance) and hurled himself about the stage howling in grief. Gangsar ran off again in fear and had to be dragged back by Gingsir, who explained that he, Gingsir, had to cry realistically if they were to get people to believe them and so pay up.

Now Balinese are noted for their restraint in mourning. So, once again how the audience is to take this exchange is left open. There is no final interpretation.^v It could be a commentary on, or caricature of, the difficulties, at times impossibility, of ordinary people so rigorously repressing their feelings. It could be a play on what the actors have seen on television and so frames Balinese practice. By this stage, it should be evident that the task of theater is to encompass quite different points of view, a double-, or multiple-voiced commentary. It is a singular form of commentary, because the commentators do not set themselves above what they comment on. On the contrary, they exemplify and embody it. In other words, we are dealing with the coexistence of different points of view, even epistemologies, where the actors, who are at once their own authors, refuse to allow themselves that 'surplus of vision' which so distinguishes the authoritative author. The complex author of the play, the actors with the help of the audience, has no superior point of view, nor do they predetermine, except in the minimal terms set by the plot, how the rôle shall develop.

To return to the scene, Gingsir then went into a sort of comic dance to show his misery. At this point the King of Kuripan entered and asked why he was crying. The following is an edited version of what followed.

- Gingsir:** Because Gangsar is dead.
Prince: But I was chatting to him only this morning.
Gingsir: He died all of a sudden. He said his stomach hurt, he got hiccups and died.
Prince: (*Obviously moved*) Remember the words of wise priests, you should not cry near to a corpse.
Gingsir: Yes.
Prince: It makes the passage harder for the soul of the deceased..
Gingsir: That's why I'm crying over here!^{vi}

Some local comments

The evening after the play I invited a group of people round and asked them what they thought of the two versions of the play. The flower-seller said that he liked the version in Tengahpadang much better than the televised version (which I had showed them on video some weeks before). The farmer said that he did not really like either, because he did not like Derama on principle, but confessed that the live performance had made him laugh, while the broadcast had not. The old actor disagreed sharply with them, although he did admit the jokes were far funnier in the live version. He specified in detail the differences and his reasons for preferring the televised version: the dancing was better, their expressions were more developed, their movements were more appropriate to dance and

they followed the plot, with the correct stages of its introduction, which he listed and defined.

The ex-headman arbitrated. Because he was a professional, the old actor, and only he, realized all the faults. The scene of playing dead was very clever because it hit several targets at the same time. The development of the jokes was much better in the live performance because the audience helped the actors much more than the theater audience in the televised version, who were stiff and unresponsive.

Live or dead?

The contrasts between performances for television and for live local audiences were probably greater in the early 1990s than a decade later. Local audiences increasingly expected plays to be as-seen-on-TV and actors replicate favourite routines from television performances. Casts became more adept at coping without audiences and so on. Certain broad differences remain discernible in the examples discussed. There was greater restraint and formality in the style of dancing, the structure of scenes and speech was more thought through for televised performances. And there was far less attempt to improvise whole sections, although the dialogue was still extemporized. The jokes were more restrained. The actors did not set out to surprise the audience or one another as they might have done in live performances. Most people agree actors on television are serious and feel weighed down by the occasion. Partly, of course, this is because of the draconian censorship imposed under Suharto, which takes the edge off the social criticism expected of theater. (We badly need a study of censorship and control of the media in Indonesia, as it might shed interesting light on the political workings of the New Order régime than is often appreciated.) Obviously though actors have a far freer rein to engage in criticism before a live audience, when they are not being recorded. Johannes Fabian has made the point that such socially critical theater is quite common and that, when academics capture such live moments of intellectual guerilla warfare, as it were, in writing, they may imperil the people they work with (1991). The actors themselves though stress that they suffer the constraints of broadcasting to a large, heterogeneous and unknown audience.

When actors complain of performances on television being dead (the word they often used was literally dead, *mati*), they are pointing to the absence of dialogue with the audience. To the actors, the television studio makes their performances closer to monologue. In the dialogic world of Balinese theater, we see how Europeans and Americans tend to fetishize texts and presume the naturalness of producer-centred models. A Balinese theater play is the complex product of the organizers of the occasion, the managers and actors of the troupe and the audience. Because audiences are relatively silent compared to the actors does not entail that they are not agents. There are many kinds of

quiet, including reflection, judgement and waiting. Balinese actors know only too well they have to convince and seduce each new audience.

The older villagers whom I know often complain that television, in combination with other aspects of development in Indonesia, is having deleterious effects. They say they fear a generation is emerging which is largely ignorant of the vast repertoire of previous practices, from medicinal cures to command of rhetorical skills. It was ever thus. It may or may not be the case that fewer young people appreciate the subtleties of theater than they did. There is no way to determine the issue. What is the case is that the 'best' troupes and new genres take up much of the broadcasting time devoted to Balinese 'culture' (which is one to two hours a night). Most of the local theater troupes have died out and with them much of the regional and local variation in style, which was so striking a feature of Bali. Balinese themselves widely attribute this to the effects of televised theater. The move to increasing standardization and homogenization is not just due to television, but a broader aspect of the New Order's vision of culture as a commodity and means of ideological domination.

Some implications

The scenes discussed make little sense until they are treated as an engagement with the circumstances and the context of that particular performance. Significantly then the quality of the play is dependent upon, and so defined by, what is outside it. In other words, you cannot extract the essence of a performance from the contingent circumstances of the occasion. That is what Bakhtin called 'theoretism', insisting on understanding events in terms of rules or structures and failing to appreciate how particular, open and unfinished they are. 'We cannot break out into the world of events from *within* the theoretical world. One must start with the act itself, and not with its theoretical transcription' (Bakhtin 1984-5: 91). A claim that anthropologists often make is that, unlike their intellectual colleagues, they have long appreciated the dialogic and open nature of social life and are unfettered by the theoretism, which blinkers other, more ethnocentric, disciplines. Ethnography starts with the act. That, at least, is the claim. The theoretical problems of imagining a theory-light description or translation of performance, suggest we need to look more critically however at works purporting to be 'dialogic'. All that glitters is not gold.

Mark Poster, one of the more thoughtful critics in media studies, has criticized transmission models of communication for reifying and fetishizing information at the expense of appreciating mediation as involving different kinds of social practice, which necessarily constitute knowledge, language and its subjects or objects differently (1990: 43-68). Television itself, he argues, following Baudrillard, belonged to a broadcast model of communication, a media age which is increasingly superseded by a new age of

interactive media (1995), which requires us radically to rethink of our presuppositions about communication, its subjects and objects. Poster takes interactivity to be a function of new technologies. Yet, as the scene outlined above shows, it has presumably always been around.

Poster however retains the language of message, referent, sender/receiver, which a more radical version of Baudrillard would undermine. The object-subject duality also remains, with the audience being at once subject, object and referent. A strength of Poster's analysis however is that it recognizes the extent to which the objects of analysis are not static, but are produced and changed by social practices. This process includes notably the act of inquiry itself. A good example is the important controversy surrounding the nature of the audience. Is it the product of sociologically identifiable processes? Or is it inevitably a textual construction? The debate is haunted by the vestiges of representationism: how best to treat the relationship between text and fact?

Poster points to the problem.

When an individual watches a TV ad he or she is watched by a discourse calling itself science but in fact disciplining the consuming subject to the ends of rationality and profit' (1990: 49).

Theoretical formulations of audiences are underdetermined by biomass, whether distributed on theater seats, couches watching a cathode ray tube or in statistical columns. Insofar as we can talk about them audiences are the product of social practices which include both textualizing and naturalizing them, and much more beside. For the commentators, the audience in Tohpati was a moment of response, or rather lack of it, which they contrasted with other occasions. For actors performing on stage, it is closer to something disparate and unformed which you reach out to and try to seduce into a malleable interlocutor. For actors in television studios, it seems to be closer to something they have to imagine in its absence. In short, the point is that audiences are indeterminate. They are not reducible to subjects, objects, textual constructs, ineffable or definite. As audiences are the necessary (even if only imaginary) condition for a play, the congeries of practices which make up the media event in turn constitute audiences themselves.

Some broader considerations

These briefly examined extracts of Balinese theater shed light on critical dialogic analyses and upon received ideas about communication, particularly through the work of Bakhtin and Volosinov. On almost any reading, dialogue is central to the work of Bakhtin, who used the term in at least three rather different senses in different contexts. Dialogue

emerges as the mode of all utterance, in the sense that it is an extra-linguistic element opposed to logic. In dialogue there is always an addressee, that is the persons to whom the speech as a whole is addressed.^{vii} In Bali this is the theater audience. Television inhibits this dialogue, but does not eradicate it: the addressee is still there, but under different discursive conditions. There is also a super-addressee: the audience in yet another form. That is the imagined, but immediate, interlocutors whom, in the last resort, the speaker is most concerned should understand him or her, be they Divinity, an ideal colleague, the truly informed and appreciative spectator. Then there is dialogue in the sense of complex utterances, which contain within themselves the recognition of polyphony. Lastly there is dialogue as a global notion, with truth itself as dialogic (Bakhtin 1984a: 293). Dialogue shatters the monolithic nature of ideology, by pointing out that it is an articulation made by agents to which there always has been, and in due course will be, counter-articulations.

Bakhtin gave various sketches of what he had in mind by polyphony and they seem to link closely in some respects to what Balinese actors are engaged in. Polyphony suggests the coexistence of different historical consciousnesses. It presupposes beings who are situated, partly autonomous and irreducible to any single consciousness. A truly polyphonic work would consist of a 'plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices' (1984b: 6). This stands in contrast to the surplus of vision which authors of monologic works (whether novels, plays or ethnographies) have over their characters and by means of which they finalize and close the narrative. In one sense Balinese theater exemplifies a significant degree of polyphony insofar as the actors develop their characters as beings in their own right and do not just go through the motions of patching together bits and pieces from past performances. However, the singular nature of extemporized multi-authored theater in Bali invites us to reconsider and develop the notion of polyphony to see where it leads.

The result is to swing attention towards the circumstances under which different representations are made, how assertions about structures, knowledge and truth came to be articulated in the first place. Articulation then emerges as a crucial notion.^{viii} The point of articulation is that it brings together how ideas are related with the social and political practices through which they are mediated on specific occasions, placing attention firmly on the circumstances, purposes and consequences of mediation, and so on how television works. Theater is one of a number of recognized and powerful modes of articulation by which Balinese set about understanding and commenting on the world into which they find themselves thrown. They do so using distinctive intellectual practices, which the participants themselves understand rather better than academics usually grasp.

While one might think that the shift from live to televised performance would be significant (and its apparent effect on numbers of theater troupes suggests that) it might be better to consider how Balinese theater, whether presented live or on television, consists of

different degrees and kinds of dialogic performances. These are simultaneously among actors; between scriptwriters, actors and producers; between actors and audiences; between the producers (however conceived) and their targets; among viewers themselves; between one performance and its predecessors and successors; between ways of imagining the world. While some recent work in anthropology has shown recognition of the complexity of representing the object of study of performance, I wonder how successful it is to address the problem by tinkering with modes of academic writing, which are pretty unremittingly monologic. While representing, by definition, transforms what it represents, what kinds and degrees of mediation are we dealing with, and to what effect?

I am suggesting that we consider not just unrecorded theater performances, but all the occasions on which they are reproduced and enjoyed, as congeries of practices that require new kinds of engagement with Balinese theater and its audiences. The study of Balinese television should then arguably be the inquiry into all the new kinds of practice which electronic media have brought about, not least the authenticizing of unrecorded performances. Such a study would involve a degree of openness not common in anthropological and other academic analyses. A problem of studying audiences, and viewers' commentaries, is the precarious sense of contingency which hovers over the endeavour. As Balinese actors will tell you, to presume to anticipate how the next audience will respond is foolish. And the next commentary you hear may shatter the pattern you imagined neatly to be emerging through your inquiries. In the anthropological study of media, the usual criteria of closure, comprehensiveness and certainty may well be the hallmark of the death of critical inquiry. Need openness, uncertainty and indeterminacy be the prerogative of audiences?

Notes

ⁱ One of the more interesting spin-offs of the academic practice of textualizing is the textualizing and authenticizing unrecorded performances as somehow original. Treating electronic mediation as derivative is not recognizing a fact of nature but of imposing a set of - highly élitist - presuppositions.

ⁱⁱ The first aim of the project has to document and study important theater performances. The second is the critical study of the impact of television on performance and *vice versa*. In the absence of television archives or available materials on television, it was first necessary to record and document the range of broadcast materials on Balinese television. The resulting Balinese Television Project was a joint endeavour involving SOAS and STSI (the Indonesian Academy of Performing Arts) in Denpasar, Bali. A brief account of the project can be found in Hobart 1999a. The recordings discussed below are part of an archive of over 1,500 hours of cultural materials broadcast by state television since September 1990, a selection of 150 hours of which have been encoded in MPEG and are available on CD for the use of scholars. The camera-woman for the live performances was Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland, who had extensive experience in ethnographic film and who collaborated on the television project during its first three years (see Hughes-Freeland 1992).

ⁱⁱⁱ I spoke at length with several of the actors, but my translation and analysis of the performances also relies heavily on the commentaries of villagers. I shall mention only the immediately relevant figures with whom I worked as a group, the setting in which Balinese commonly talk over theater.

^{iv} If interpretive closure of the text hinges in some way on the original intention of the playwright, then it is often impossible in practice to know what this might be and how we would decide upon it. In what sense then is it useful even to try to determine validatable and unambiguous intentionality in these quick-silver, ad-libbed, unrepeatable exchanges which depend so much upon the moment?

^v The analysis is mine, but draws upon the commentators' disagreement as what, if any, the significance of Gingsir's crying was.

^{vi} Gingsir engages in a play on textual authority, by taking the terms of the text quite literally. It is also therefore rather a nice play on the conditions of referentiality.

^{vii} Bakhtin's senses of dialogue are not therefore to be confused with the commonsense English usage, which is often not dialogic, as when an author farms out a single monologic idea between different speaker-functions.

^{viii} For some of the more important recent works developing Gramsci's original notion, see Laclau 1990; Slack 1996.

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