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FORGETTING FOLLOW

CHRISTOPHER COLLINS

There was no light. Nothing was illuminated.
Memories and all of the darkness.

- Shane O'Reilly¹

Memory in Ireland is a performative cultural industry that is regulated by the threat of forgetting. Forgetting cannot be cured, because it determines the phenomenology of memory. The more one attempts to defend against forgetting as a phenomenon, the more likely it is that memory becomes imaginary, because remembrance is essential. To this end, Paul Ricoeur has argued that 'forgetting has a positive meaning insofar as having-been prevails over being-no-longer in the meaning attached to the idea of the past'.² This chapter will argue that if forgetting is modelled as a positive phenomenon, it requires the concomitance of memory and the imagination. Ricoeur, however, has argued that 'the pitfall of the imaginary' haunts the phenomenology of memory as 'a sort of weakness, a discredit, a loss of reliability of memory'.³ This chapter will invert Ricoeur's supposition by considering the ephemerality of performance in relation to forgetting as a productive and performative event that summons the contemporaneity of subterranean histories, alternative temporalities and multidirectional memories. Forgetting seen from this

¹ Shane O'Reilly, interview by Christopher Collins, 5 July, 2013, Trinity College Dublin.

² Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 443.

³ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 54.

perspective offers a radical philosophy of performance as historiographical research, where the phenomenology of forgetting orchestrates theatre practice and the practice of theatre history. The relationship between performance and historiography will be considered in parallel with *Follow* (2011), a highly innovative documentary performance of Deaf collective memory for a deaf, hearing and hard of hearing audience devised and performed by WillFredd Theatre Company, Shane O'Reilly and Jack Cawley.⁴

Historiographical methodologies for performance can develop significantly by following *Follow*'s hermeneutics of historical time. *Follow* suggests that forgetting is salutary for performance because the phenomenology of memory can only be spatialised within the archive if it acknowledges that memory is conditioned by forgetting because memory is not a singular object of time but a multidirectional event that is temporally Janus-faced. *Follow* suggests that in any documentary performance the truthfulness of memory as a dramaturgical object is questioned by the imagination of both actor and spectator. When this happens the object of memory becomes an event of memory. What critically underwrites memory as object/event is the phenomenology of forgetting, which should not be seen as absence, erasure, fear or alarm, but rather as a lacuna that productively operates in the same temporal framework as remembrance. It is only when 'time is out of joint'⁵ that forgetting emerges as a salutary phenomenon, because the constellation of the past in the present transforms memory into a multidirectional event as the lacunae of forgetting are filled. The phenomenology of memory, then, is as much concerned with what cannot be remembered as with what can be remembered, because forgetting and remembrance are two sides of the same coin. And yet, Ricouer maintains that forgetting is 'an attack, a weakness, a lacuna' and furthermore that 'memory defines

⁴ Originally developed as part of Dublin's Project Arts Centre's showcasing event (Project Brand New) in December 2010, *Follow* premiered at The Lir: The National Academy of Dramatic Art in September 2011 during Dublin's Absolut Fringe Festival. *Follow* was supported by Arts and Disability Ireland with funding from the Irish Arts Council and CREATE's Artist in the Community Scheme. I gratefully acknowledge WillFredd Theatre Company, Shane O'Reilly, Jack Cawley for their valuable contributions to this essay. I also acknowledge the support of Ben Murnane and Nicholas Johnson for editing and exploring the ideas presented here.

⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 691.

itself, at least in the first instance, as a struggle against forgetting'.⁶ *Follow*'s performance of Deaf collective memory advocates that forgetting is the very essence of multidirectional memory.

Multidirectional memory considers memory as bricolage that is subject to borrowing, adaptation, and modification in the contemporary moment. This is why Michael Rothberg has suggested that multidirectional memory 'cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites', whereby collective memory in the contemporary moment is 'subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative'.⁷ Spectators will always bring their own memories and horizons of expectations to the performative event, but *Follow* allows different Deaf collective memories to collide with the memories of the hearing and hard of hearing. *Follow* uses Deaf collective memory to speak with and without words. In *Follow* the reception of Deaf collective memories are rendered multidirectional, because they are reconstructed (not resurrected) in relation to the memories of the hard-of-hearing and hearing collectives. Collective multidirectional memory is a bricolage of memories, which raises the question as to whether *Follow*'s staging of collective memory is just another form of deletion and erasure that forgetting is normally associated with? The original memory, however, is not erased: it remains, but remains multidirectional. This is why Rothberg advocates that multidirectional memory 'highlights the inevitable displacements and contingences that mark all remembrance'.⁸ Forgetting is an essential component of multidirectional memory, because it calls forth processes of bricolage. At this disjuncture, 'the pitfall of the imaginary' no longer continues to haunt the phenomenology of memory as 'a sort of weakness',⁹ but rather as a productive corollary of forgetting.

⁶ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 413.

⁷ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 11, 3.

⁸ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 15-16.

⁹ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 54.

FOLLOW IS ALREADY FORGOTTEN

According to the 2011 Republic of Ireland Census, 2,590 persons speak Irish Sign Language in the Republic, which accounts for less than 0.1% of the population.¹⁰ Patrick Matthews and Susan M. Foley-Cave have suggested that ‘the collective lives of Irish Deaf people as a cultural phenomenon have rarely been touched upon in any great depth’.¹¹ Furthermore, it has been estimated that up to 60% of the Deaf community in Ireland have never attended a performance in an Irish theatre, simply because of their limited means of access to the performance; it is not that theatres in Ireland are unable to facilitate access to a deaf and/or hard of hearing spectator, but rather the semantics of the spoken word are lost in translation.¹² A perennial political impetus of Irish theatre is to represent aspects of Irish culture that are underrepresented and *Follow* corresponds to this salient dramaturgy. *Follow* intervenes into the realm of the political by foregrounding marginalised Deaf collective memories. The creative team behind *Follow* was originally interested in devising a performance using the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel as a dramaturgical impetus, because it highlights *Follow*’s fundamental concern: the limits of communication. However, O’Reilly recalls how ‘simplicity, power and truth came from my access to the collective memories of Deaf culture, and that’s when the tone in the rehearsal room changed’.¹³ O’Reilly points out that as the creative team played with the collective memories of Irish Deaf culture in rehearsal, they ‘began to see how much the memories of

¹⁰ “Profile 8 – Our Bill of Health”, *Census 2011* (Dublin: Central Statistics Office/An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh, 2012), 12.

¹¹ Patrick Matthews and Susan M. Foley-Cave, “Village Life: Deaf Culture in Contemporary Ireland”, in *Deaf Studies in Ireland: An Introduction*, ed. Patrick McDonnell (Coleford: Douglas McLean, 2004), 65.

¹² Patrick A. Matthews, *The Irish Deaf Community*, Volume I, *Survey Report, History of Education, Language and Culture* (Dublin: Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, 1996), 198.

¹³ O’Reilly, interview by Christopher Collins, 5 July, 2013.

the collective deserved to be told and how much this omission still goes on'.¹⁴ As the only actor present onstage, O'Reilly, a CODA (child of deaf adults), personally performs these memories using Irish Sign Language and English spoken language simultaneously. This is a performance of virtuosity. Emer O'Kelly, writing for *Sunday Independent* concludes that 'O'Reilly is the consummate performer' and that *Follow* is 'the sign of a masterpiece'.¹⁵

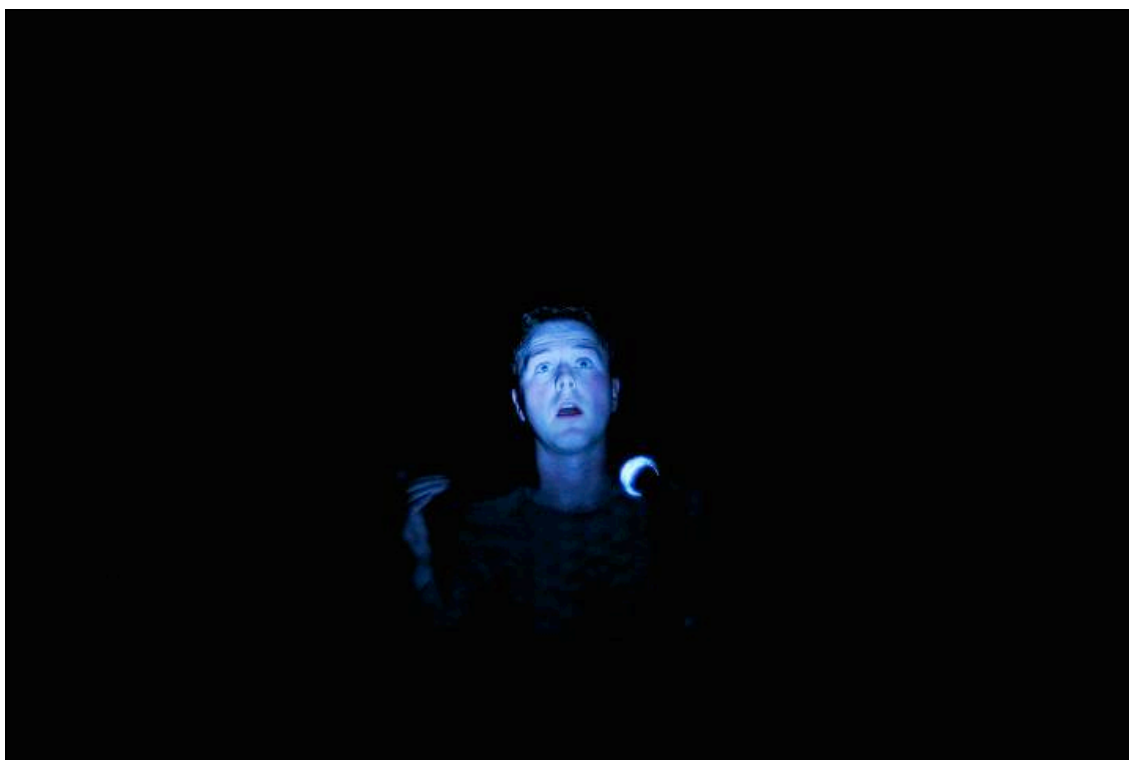


Figure One: Shane O'Reilly in Follow (2011). Courtesy of WillFredd Theatre Company

It is important to point out that one of the languages in which O'Reilly performs has not been recognised by the nation-state; at the time of writing (June 2013) Irish Sign Language is not deemed to be an official language of the Republic by *Dáil Éireann* (Assembly of Ireland). Fintan Walsh considers many performances in contemporary Irish theatre to be ones of 'affective power, mainly trading in a politics of feeling, emotion, and sensation (rather than rhetoric), which seems to appropriately capture and intervene in the

¹⁴ O'Reilly, interview by Christopher Collins, 5 July, 2013.

¹⁵ Emer O'Kelly, "The Sign of a Masterpiece", *The Sunday Independent*, 27 January, 2013, 27.

variously shamed, anxious, and disaffected moods that characterise our times'.¹⁶ *Follow* is a performance of affect precisely because it is a theatre of testimony to Ireland's Deaf community. Ricoeur suggests that 'testimony constitutes the fundamental transitional structure between memory and history'.¹⁷ But there is something much more integral than this in the transition from memory to history that a theatre of testimony also offers: memory as a multidirectional phenomenon that will always be forgotten to the fiction of history.

O'Reilly is the performative conduit between a Deaf, hearing and hard of hearing audience, and he returns to different collective memories in a staccato manner throughout the hour-long performance: there is trauma here. Writing about the performance of trauma, Diana Taylor has argued that 'trauma, like performance is characterised by the nature of its "repeats"'.¹⁸ Trauma, then, is marked by its iterability but it is also marked by uneven return. One memory in particular that O'Reilly returns to again and again is the memory of a deaf mother following two girls to a scene of an accident, where she is informed that her daughter has been knocked down by a car. Later, arriving at hospital, she is misdirected to the morgue instead of the hospital's intensive care unit. O'Reilly performs a mother's desperation and panic with pathos and poise. As he follows two children to the site of the accident the lighting designer (Sarah Jane Shiels) cloaks the stage in darkness and then dances two torches across the stage as symbols of the two children for O'Reilly to follow, while the sound designer (Jack Cawley) strums his guitar in order to make the speakers underneath the spectators' seats vibrate; as Cawley suggests, *Follow* should be 'a visual and a visceral experience'.¹⁹ The trauma that is experienced through the phenomenology of this memory is acutely multidirectional, because lighting and sound-as-vibration ensure that a personal memory to a deaf mother becomes a memory of the Deaf collective that is shared by three demographics of spectators.

¹⁶ Fintan Walsh, "The Power of the Powerless: Theatre in Turbulent Times", in *'That Was Us': Contemporary Irish Theatre and Performance*, ed. Fintan Walsh (London: Oberon Books, 2013), 15.

¹⁷ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 21.

¹⁸ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 167.

¹⁹ Jack Cawley, interview by Christopher Collins, 6 July, 2013, Trinity College Dublin.

Follow's director, Sophie Motley, is adamant that *Follow* should always attempt to 'facilitate the memories of the Deaf community'.²⁰ The performance certainly does this. But it also facilitates all of the spectators' memory as phenomena in relation to the collective memory of Ireland's Deaf community. Phenomenology attempts to identify the subjective within the objective as it appears to an experiencing consciousness within time. What makes the phenomenology of Deaf collective memory accessible to any of *Follow*'s spectators is that the language of light and sound-as-vibration facilitates Deaf collective memory as a multidirectional phenomenon. It is true that a model of multidirectional memory can apply to any performative event, but it is acutely applicable to the efficacy of *Follow*'s reception. Not all of *Follow*'s spectators can understand Sign Language, and not all spectators can hear perfectly. Consequently, the reception of collective memories is very different for each spectator, which is a necessary corollary of framing memory as multidirectional; Rothberg reminds us that a model of multidirectional memory recognises that 'the struggle for recognition is fundamentally unstable and subject to ongoing reversal'.²¹ Multidirectional memory is not singular but plural. Yet the memory must have an objective basis before it can be rendered as a multidirectional event. Lighting and sound provide access to memory as object that is received as a subjective event by all spectators. This, then, is why *Follow* is particularly innovative for contemporary Irish theatre and performance: it provides *all* spectators with access to the collective memories of a marginal community.

All of the collective memories from the Deaf community in *Follow* are refracted through the collective memories of the creative team. 'Whenever you do collaborative work', Shiels points out, 'then you have to bring your own memories in to the rehearsal room'.²² As Janelle Reinelt has suggested, documentary theatre provides 'access or connection to reality through the facticity of documents, but not without creative

²⁰ Sophie Motley, interview by Christopher Collins, 11 July, 2013, Trinity College Dublin.

²¹ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 5.

²² Sarah Jane Shiels, interview by Christopher Collins, 11 July, 2013, Trinity College Dublin.

mediation'.²³ It is not that *Follow* doctors the facticity of memory; dates, times and places remain unchanged. The documentary remains objective, but the experience of it is subjective or, in other words, the phenomena of memory are multidirectional events rather than singular, one-way objects of consciousness. Thus, the productive phenomenology of forgetting orbits *Follow*; not only are forgotten memories remembered as testimonies, but these memories are also forgotten in order to reimagine the memories as multidirectional, and thereby make the performance one of affect.

'The idea of multiple experiential relationships to performance based on individual cultural itineraries establishes some of the parameters to how documentaries mean', Reinelt has suggested, because meaning in documentaries '[is] produced relationally'.²⁴ The practise of documentary performance, then, is similar to the performativity of multidirectional memory, because a consideration of memory in *Follow* is to 'think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others'.²⁵ To place memory within a discursive sphere (as *Follow* does) breathes new life into the past because memory becomes a multidirectional signifier in performance. And it is from this unique position that the dialectic of memory and forgetting in performance is able to challenge the hermeneutics of historical time.

Forgetting facilitates the performance of multidirectional memory in *Follow*, which in turn, allows the remembrance of forgotten history. 'If human societies are historical', Jean-Paul Sartre has suggested, it is not simply because 'they have a past but from the fact that they reassume the past by making it a *memorial*'.²⁶ Such is the temporal power of the past that it continually 'imposes itself on us and devours us',²⁷ but it is necessary to point out

²³ Janelle Reinelt, "The Promise of Documentary", in *Get Real: Documentary Theatre Past and Present*, ed. Alison Forsyth and Chris Megson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 22.

²⁴ Reinelt, "The Promise of Documentary", 10.

²⁵ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 5.

²⁶ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 2003), 521. Emphasis in original.

²⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 524.

that what gives the past its power, for Sartre, is the possibility of the past being commensurate with the future. According to Sartre's logic one only remembers in order to facilitate the writing of history, which is why Pierre Nora has argued that 'memory is constantly on our lips because it no longer exists'.²⁸ But if memory facilitates the writing of history, surely the reverse is also true, for is it not true that history can facilitate memory? *Follow* certainly gives credence to this theory. By representing a collective, neglected history in performance, memory is placed within a narrative framework: memory becomes historical. However, it is at this juncture that historical narrative, predicated on collective memory, facilitates multidirectional memory by reversing Sartre's relation: history becomes memorial. The shift in focus is slight but essential for the consideration of *Follow* as performance philosophy. As Sartre maintained that the memory of past time is conducive towards the narrative of history, then in *Follow* the narrative of history is conducive towards the creation of memory. In this way, the creative team behind *Follow* used collective memories to substantiate a neglected and forgotten historical narrative of Irish Deaf culture in performance, whereby the historical narrative could facilitate the creation of multidirectional memory because it summons an alternative temporality. If Immanuel Kant postulated that time is dependent on the mind, then Sartre supposed the opposite of Kant: our mind is dependent on time. As far as Sartre is concerned, societies are only historical because they are able to reassume the past in order to create memory, and it is this ability to reassume and subsequently differentiate between past/present/future that predicates our consciousness. The phenomenology of memory and forgetting is acutely aware of temporality. By using subterranean history in performance, *Follow* reassumes the past to create history, and from history memory is created. If memory is simply the phenomenological experience of past time, we must therefore assume that memory is not linear in its movements, and it certainly avoids being subject to a generational temporality.

²⁸ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Volume I, *Conflicts and Divisions*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1.

Rather, memory is constantly shifting in perception and once memory is reconstructed within a public forum (such as a theatre) it becomes multidirectional, as it proceeds to 'build new worlds out of the materials of older ones'.²⁹ In *Follow*, then, time folds in on itself because the past and the future exist in the contemporary moment; even the present tense cannot be said to exist because it is a trace, a residue, a vestige without an indelible mark. In *Follow* temporality has become, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty would suggest, 'one single phenomenon of running-off',³⁰ and this is significant because the alternative temporality that *Follow* discloses in performance is conducive to the forgetting of history and the creation of multidirectional memory. As far as phenomenology is concerned, this alternative temporality is only possible because the subjective is found within an objective, analogue perception of time, as both actors and spectators remember the future through a subjective experience with their own pasts in synchronisation to the pasts of Irish Deaf culture. It is this process of adoption and adaptation that facilitates memory as a multidirectional phenomenon. By reassuming the past and projecting the future in the contemporary moment, *Follow* not only ensures that Deaf collective memory exists, but also demonstrates that multidirectional memory is essential for challenging the hegemony of history.

Actors often speak about 'being in the moment', whereby the behaviour that is restored to their consciousness is perceived as if for the first time. However, this process offers an experience with an alternative temporal perspective because, as Henri Bergson postulates, 'your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; and in truth every perception is already memory'.³¹ Thus if by the time something is consciously perceived it no longer exists in the same time frame as when the act of perception took place, the ability to 'be in the moment'

²⁹ Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 5.

³⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), 487.

³¹ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911), 194.

necessarily requires the performer to have an acute perception of memory, because the contemporary moment is always unobtainable; as Bergson suggests, '*practically we perceive only the past*'.³² If the present is always past then the actor's perception is a fundamentally predicated on a negotiation of past time, and so the processes of forgetting, remembering and imagining facilitates the 'being in the moment' that actors speak of. Concomitant with being in the moment is, of course, the perception of memory and the constant fear that what has been remembered in rehearsal cannot be remembered when the time comes. But there is also something much more integral than this: the ability to forget. The ability to productively forget makes a performance different every night. Ricoeur concludes that 'the abuses of memory [...] are also abuses of forgetting'.³³ But *Follow* challenges this logic. Forgetting is the necessary requirement for the efficacy of multidirectional memory *and* the identification of forgotten history. After all, it is not a representation of memory in performance, but rather the restoration of behaviour within an alternative temporal framework. This philosophy of performance runs right to heart of *Follow*, as Motley explains: 'in a sense, *Follow* is already forgotten because we have new memories'.³⁴

SIGN NAME NED

If the present does not exist phenomenologically then, as Marcel Proust was acutely aware, subjectivity is crucially dependent upon the search for lost time. The creative team behind *Follow* searched for the collective memories of Irish Deaf culture, but once they were located they consciously made the memory multidirectional, as O'Reilly points out: 'as a company, once that memory had been located, once it had been brought out of the ether, out of the ground, and it stood up again, then we started to deconstruct it so we

³² Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 194. Emphasis in original.

³³ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 80.

³⁴ Motley, interview by Collins, 11 July, 2013.

could begin to technically recreate it.³⁵ The recreation of memory in performance is indexical for the creative team's search for imaginary time, a process that is evident in the 'Sign Name Ned' scenes of *Follow*, which hold their provenance in O'Reilly's father's schoolboy memories. 'We do not know, in a phenomenological sense,' Ricoeur has suggested, as to 'whether forgetting is only an impediment to evoking and recovering the "lost time," or whether it results from the unavoidable wearing away "by" time of the traces left in us by past events in the form of original affections.'³⁶ What the 'Sign Name Ned' scenes demonstrate is that forgetting does not contest the search for lost time. Neither is the phenomenology of forgetting a manifestation of the slow ticking of the clock but rather, that forgetting in *Follow* is the consciousness of multidirectional memory and, by corollary, forgotten history. *Follow* ensures that O'Reilly's father's individual memories transcend the collective so that they become multidirectional. In doing so forgotten history is remembered.

One scene in particular that clearly demonstrates O'Reilly's advanced understanding of physical performance witnesses Ned immersed in holy water at Lourdes, which sends him into an exotic underwater world replete with angelfish and seahorses. The immersion into holy water is meant to change the state and status of Ned's deafness. It doesn't. And the scene concludes with O'Reilly signing 'deaf people belong underwater'.³⁷ The efficacy of this scene can hardly be overstated. It allows *Follow* to create its essential premise (the limits of communication), but it also demonstrates how this memory is rendered multidirectional by means of performance. If the present is simply the perception of past/future time, then this memory never ceased to exist according to the analogue conception of time, which means that its recreation for performance was predicated on the search for imaginary time, not the search of lost time. The memory, then, was never forgotten *per se*; it never disappeared in to the sands of time, but the

³⁵ O'Reilly, interview by Collins, 5 July, 2013.

³⁶ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 30.

³⁷ *Follow*. Unpublished performance script, 11.

creative team necessarily forgot the memory so they could make it multidirectional. The imagination facilitates this process. This creative dialectic of forgetting and imagination allowed the creative team behind *Follow* to explore O'Reilly's father's memory of being immersed in holy water as an immersion in to an exotic underwater world. 'Such is the power of the imagination', Michael Chekhov writes, that the actor should be able to 'follow the motley images of [his/her] memory' but at the same time realise that memory is 'not so faithful to the facts' because the act of recollection summons 'some traces of imagination'.³⁸ In *Follow* the fidelity to this particular memory remains constant, but by bending the truth, the performance offers both actor and spectator access to the fidelity of the memory as a multidirectional phenomenon.

The phenomenology of multidirectional memory, then, is commensurate with the phenomenology of forgetting, and this has direct ramifications for the efficacy of documentary theatre in relation to theatre historiography because truthfulness is necessarily pluralised. Merleau-Ponty has suggested that the fundamental goal of phenomenology is not to presuppose that truth exists but 'like art, it is the act of bringing truth into being'.³⁹ In performance, O'Reilly acknowledges the phenomenology of memory by always striving to remain truthful to the experience of the memory that is being summoned. 'When you try and remain truthful', O'Reilly has suggested, then the transcendence of miscommunication can happen'.⁴⁰ But O'Reilly is also equally aware that the experience with memory in performance is always pluralised. What is at stake, then, for the phenomenology of memory and forgetting in *Follow* is the consciousness of truth within memory, as O'Reilly points out:

To represent the truth verbatim on stage is not what I think the truth is. The truth lies in the genuine inhabitation of the poignant moments of a memory. That is where the resonance of the truth lies. It is not in photocopies of memories. They are not the truth. A photocopy of a memory needs focus and treatment for its

³⁸ Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor: on the Technique of Acting* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1985), 21-2.

³⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xxiii.

⁴⁰ O'Reilly, interviewed by Collins, 5 July, 2013.

truthful existence on stage, or else it is just a photocopy of a memory.⁴¹

The creative team behind *Follow* was fundamentally aware that both actor and spectator cannot always be sure that the act of remembrance is truthful, as O'Reilly points out: 'if you're trying to tell the truth of a memory then you're going to have to lose something else, otherwise where does the truth of that memory begin and end? So, in order to access the truth, we identify the truth and support it; we often don't need to know too much about the details that surround it.'⁴² In making memory multidirectional *Follow* negotiates the phenomenology of forgetting as a productive process in order to accomplish the performance of 'truthful' remembrance.

At *Follow*'s dénouement O'Reilly dissolves out of the final Sign Name Ned scene and Shields fades to black. In the darkness O'Reilly stands alone, betwixt and between memories. Time changes. O'Reilly begins his final act of remembrance by walking calmly to a microphone and informing the stage manager that he needs the microphone to be turned on. As O'Reilly begins to speak to his audience in Irish Sign Language and English (see *Figure One*), a light that is sonically responsive within the microphone illuminates his face and hands. When O'Reilly pauses in his act of remembrance the memory lingers in the darkness, in the lacuna of forgetting. Nevertheless, light and sound conspire to give phenomenological representation to multidirectional memory. Up until this point, the audience were unaware that the principal narrative of *Follow* is personal to O'Reilly. This is his multidirectional memory:

When I was twelve and my sister was nine we went to the local shopping centre. I wanted to print photographs for a school project and my sister wanted to buy a new teddy bear. On the way home, my sister was hit by a car and knocked down. I asked two girls to go to my mother's house to tell her we were OK and waiting for her at the hospital.

⁴¹ O'Reilly, interviewed by Collins, 5 July, 2013.

⁴² Ibid.

We waited for over an hour. When she arrived and saw us there, she screamed so loud that I'm sure even she heard.⁴³

At this moment in time, the spectator has a material presence in which to invest his/her phenomenology of the memory that has been rendered multidirectional by means of performance. In this way, *Follow* falls in line with Reinelt's promise of documentary theatre in that 'the value of the document is predicated on a realist epistemology, but the experience of documentary is dependent on phenomenological engagement'.⁴⁴ 'The audiences creates a new memory from a true story',⁴⁵ Motley points out, and the phenomenological engagement with this memory is the very essence of forgetting. Although the spectator perceives O'Reilly and has a phenomenological engagement with the personal trauma of his memory, it is the spectator that defines the memory as multidirectional by projecting him/herself into O'Reilly's perception of temporality. Ricoeur argues that 'forgetting indeed remains the disturbing threat that lurks in the background of the phenomenology of memory and of the epistemology of history'.⁴⁶ But as far as *Follow* is concerned, this isn't the case. O'Reilly had to forget in order to remember. Tom Cantrell cautions documentary theatre actors against 'foregrounding the individual rather than their own processes', because it can lead to the actor 'obscuring their own creativity'.⁴⁷ Although O'Reilly foregrounded the individual (his own mother) by representing her acute trauma, O'Reilly also made his mother's memory multidirectional by filtering the memory thorough his own creative imagination. In the Sign Name Ned scenes of *Follow*, O'Reilly does not reveal that the memories are personal to his father. But in this final act of remembrance, O'Reilly offers his own testimony to the past in which he is continually present:

⁴³ *Follow*. Unpublished performance script, 15.

⁴⁴ Reinelt, "The Promise of Documentary", 7.

⁴⁵ Motley, interviewed by Collins, 11 July, 2013.

⁴⁶ Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 412.

⁴⁷ Tom Cantrell, *Acting in Documentary Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 53.

During the show I perform with a heightened and inhabited mode of storytelling in order to draw the spectator into the truth of some of the memories. But at the end of the piece it is important that I shed all performance and style, and tell the end of that Mother story as myself, Shane O'Reilly, in order to expose the truth and authenticity of that piece of my own dialogue. It also allows the audience to see through all of the theatrical muscle, all of the performance, the embellishment that they have seen throughout the piece, and access the basic skeletal structure, which is that thread of truth in all of the memories. We are allowing people to see the origins of these memories that have been recreated and retold.⁴⁸

The performance of multidirectional memory in *Follow*, then, contributes to the epistemology of history, and this is only achieved through the phenomenology of memory and forgetting. *Follow* uses multidirectional memory to challenge history. For both actor and spectator, the memory is made multidirectional through performatives of forgetting and the imagination, but when O'Reilly address the audience, the kernels of truth within the collective memories are revealed. Actor and spectator are fundamentally aware that these collective memories are conditioned and yet forgotten by historical time. This is precisely how *Follow* is able to intervene into the distribution of the sensible. When the sensible is challenged, as Jacques Rancière reminds us, 'those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account'.⁴⁹

This approach to theatre and performance historiography necessarily affects the structural authenticity of documentation and the archive. Such is the power of the archive that Jacques Derrida has suggested that it is primarily concerned with 'the structural breakdown of the said memory'.⁵⁰ It is because forgetting is just as integral to the archive as remembrance that theatre historians should interrogate the structural authenticity of documentation in the first instance, rather than postulating suitable methodologies of

⁴⁸ O'Reilly, interviewed by Collins, 5 July, 2013.

⁴⁹ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 27.

⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* vol. 25, no. 2 (1995): 14.

documentation. Multidirectional memory is palimpsestic, which means that the original memories can (eventually) be identified. However, Rebecca Schneider's reflection on the ephemerality of performance is applicable to *Follow*'s hermeneutics of historical time. Schneider calls for 'other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently'.⁵¹ *Follow* directly engages with this performance philosophy. 'It's about when memory becomes story, it's about when fact becomes fiction',⁵² Motley points out. *Follow*, then, offers a radically alternative performance philosophy that affects performance as a methodology for historiographical research. This is a performance of the repertoire, in Diana Taylor's phrase, because unlike the archive the repertoire 'enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge'.⁵³ In a similar line of thought, multidirectional memory is not hermetically sealed in a temporal archive only to manifest itself in the present as a residue of time past, but rather memory is an event, just as live as the performance of *Follow*, and the event continues to perform after the house lights have been raised. Just as the creative team behind *Follow* discovered, it is *how* the phenomena of memory are experienced that always makes multidirectional memory an imaginative event; 'the memories have the ground truth of the original experiences', Motley has suggested, 'but we changed the form of the memory'.⁵⁴ There are no truths here. And at a time when theatre and performance historians are concerned with documenting the traces of the event, *Follow* maintains that if memory and truth are always open to reasonable and imaginative doubt then similarly, the epistemology of history and the structural authenticity of the archive should also be conditioned by the same doubts. A documentation of memory suggests that events can easily be archived wherefrom they

⁵¹ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), 98.

⁵² Motley, interviewed by Collins, 11 July, 2013.

⁵³ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 20.

⁵⁴ Motley, interviewed by Collins, 11 July, 2013.

can be forgotten because they are securely retained by the archive. *Follow* demonstrates that multidirectional memory is antithetical to the archive's selective remembrance because performance privileges memory as event over the archive's consideration of memory as object. In order to render memory multidirectional the phenomenology of forgetting is required. Forgetting is salutary for performance and its phenomenological manifestation should be seen as an alternative historiographical methodology for considering the performance of memory and the memories of performance.