

24/03/07

Rebecca Weeks

Writing For Performance Research Journal

Perhaps I should begin with my understanding of Bataille's discussion of the formless, as that is where the 'Groupless' dialogue began;

"A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words but their tasks. Thus the formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or a spit."

Things of apparently little consequence, the humble things that are over looked, these are the entry points into the formless. The apparently useless and ineffectual things that society discards, things not of man, these are touchstones for the formless.

My film is consistent with my understanding of the formless, in that I chose to seek out the story of a man who acts as a caretaker to a closed museum, a museum of forgotten things and lost information. I didn't know when I went looking in those dusty corners what I would find, a mans story that would bind the Trinity Buoy Museum in Penzance and the Trinity Buoy Wharf in London together. Inadvertently I had found an entry point from a humble place into a web of connections between sites and times. I had displaced my enquiry from myself and found the answers in Colin through him the 'spider' became the 'universe'

'Groupless' has been considering the formless working as the disruption of the form it occurs within. How have we performed something else within and through that disruption? How has the formless sneaked in through the crannies we have made for it?

For me this disruption has been temporal, my piece titled '*Here and Now And Then and There*' bridges two sites and the span of fifty years. The piece was filmed in Penzance in February, at which time Colin recounted his memories of serving his engineering apprenticeship fifty years ago at the Trinity Buoy Wharf, and described how the site was then. These recollections were then viewed in March at the 'Groupless' show in one of the sheds he described on Trinity Buoy Wharf. '*Here and Now*' was at times Penzance in February, Trinity buoy Wharf in March, Trinity Buoy Wharf fifty years ago and '*Then And There*' similarly was Penzance in February, The show in March and Trinity Buoy Wharf fifty years ago

at different points in viewing the film. Time is understood in the work as experienced through spatial interactions, through interaction with the physical world and the individuals internal world of memory. The totality of the understanding of time and place is as a fusion of these modes of interaction, external and internal as in Bachelard's writing about the dialectics of inside and outside;

"Thus, in being everything is circuitous, roundabout, recurrent, so much talk; a chaplet of sojournings, a refrain with endless verses. But what a spiral man's being represents! And what a number of invertible dynamisms there are in this spiral! One no longer knows right away whether one is running toward the center or escaping. Poets are well acquainted with the existence of this hesitation of being,"(1994:214)

I am interested in this spiral dwelling, in its potentials. It is through temporality, or the disruption of temporality that we become aware of being. Heidegger's 'Dasein', which translates as being – there, can break into space it needs a place to manifest;

" The ecstatic temporality of the spatiality that is characteristic of 'Dasein', makes it intelligible that space is independent of time; but on the other hand, this same temporality also makes intelligible Daseins 'dependence' on space" (1962:421)

In 'Here And Now And Then And There' the disruption of place and time the oscillation between the subjects and the audiences inner and the outer worlds creates the disruption that highlights the formlessness of 'being', its refusal to be fitted into a 'mathematical frock coat'.

'Being' produces time and space to be in;

"Dasein takes space in; this is to be understood literally. It is by no means just present – at – hand in a bit of space which its body fills up. In existing, it has already made room for its own leeway" (1962: 419)

There is no tension in Heidegger's 'Dasein' as in Bachelard's 'etre – la', a stalemate of being and place. Within 'Dasein' there is no separation between the physical and the spiritual, the manifestation of the physical is spiritual. In this sense he overcomes the limit to the discussion of the spatialised being by saying there is no divide. Therefore we don't come up against the limit of our own spatialised human existence in the same way and an inability to think beyond it. 'Being' is discussed as something that is closer to an independent force, dependent on space and time but separate, which is always present and can come into physical presence. Being encompasses the thing and the potential thing we cannot as yet perceive. These unknown things are not beyond

existence, the divide of inside and outside collapses, as being encompasses all, beyond the limitations of the boundaries of binaries and spatialised thought.

We can become aware of 'being' through the disruption of a linear understanding of time, we can understand the potential for different realities to exist along side each other, actual, past and potential things inhabiting a trajectory of their movements through a space. We can understand that 'being' like the 'formless' allows us ways to penetrate into the substance of life. We find ourselves suddenly in the fabric of time and space beyond the limits of our physical bodies and sometimes we can create a spatio - temporal frame for a glimpse of the 'formless' or for an awareness of 'being'. However 'Being' cannot be characterised as an eruption of the 'formless' within time. According to Heidegger 'being' exists in reserve outside of any physicality and creates the space it the steps into, that would infer that 'being' also creates the time it manifests into, and not that the 'formless' accounts for 'being's' potential to disrupt an understanding of time as linear.

The 'formless' and 'being' are the same in that they are both names, words for observation of the complexities of the cosmos, and they indicate that there are many things that are beyond human ability to comprehend because the whole of the truth lies beyond the limitation of our existence in three dimensional reality at this point. What they both suggest is that we have more in common with the 'spider' or the 'spit' than we may have previously realised.

Bibliography

Bachelard, Gaston, 1994, *The Poetics Of Space*, Beacon Press, New York

Heidegger, Martin, 1962, *Being And Time*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford