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> Tragedy revolves around the primary contract of man and nature, the contract fulfilled by man's death, death being, as we say, the debt he owes to nature.
>
> —Northrop Frye, *Fools of Time*[1]

> The situation is an appeal: it surrounds us, offering us solutions which it's up to us to choose.
>
> —Jean-Paul Sartre, "For a Theater of Situations"[2]

Pig Iron Theatre Company's *Pay Up*,[3] originally produced for the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival in 2005 and most recently revived in September 2013, is not so much a piece of interactive theater as an interactive *situation*, in which theater, radically abbreviated, is offered.[4] I wrote the text for *Pay Up* in collaboration with the company, and my hope in this essay is to examine some of the ways in which the experience of making *Pay Up* invites reflection into the pleasures and discomforts of interactive performance.[5] In particular, I would like to consider how a raucous performance piece marked by the everyday victories and disappointments of simple consumer choices might somehow also open out onto something as unlikely as tragedy—how the existentialist dramaturgy of Sartre as well as the classical poetics of tragedy might be mobilized to treat an interactive performance in which the spectator has become the protagonist. Finally, I want to offer the proposition that an emancipated spectator (in the frequently cited formulation of the political philosopher Jacques Rancière) might also be a *tragic* spectator, following Sartre's observation that "the chief source of great tragedy—the tragedy of Aeschylus and Sophocles, of Corneille—is human freedom."[6]

At first glance *Pay Up* does not appear to adhere to any traditional understanding of tragedy. When an audience member enters the all-white, brightly lit warehouse space that houses *Pay Up*, he or she is given white elastic booties to wear (to preserve the white floor), a map, and five crisp green dollar bills. Throughout the space, immaculately designed by Anna Kiraly, are eight small performance cubicles, and at designated times audience members are invited to spend their money to gain entrance to these cubicles to witness short scenes. These scenes are about handling money, primarily concerning the (real-life) Yale economist Keith Chen's efforts to teach capuchin monkeys to use currency.[7] In addition to the eight cubicles, there are several "black market scenes," performed in unfinished hallways and dimly lit bathrooms, and two large musical-theater-style dance numbers that are offered to the audience as a whole at no charge. Although the scenes connect to one another, they are not segments of one coherent linear narrative, nor is it possible for any single audience member to see them all without attending the show more than once. The inspiration for this configuration of the piece came early in the creative process, when Dan Rothenberg, the director of the show and one of the artistic directors of Pig Iron, brought in the psychologist Barry Schwartz's book *The Paradox of Choice*, which argues that increased consumer choice tends to produce anxiety.[8] We wanted to see if we could establish rules of play, modeled on the ordinary consumer experience, that would provoke that kind of anxiety in the theater. Indeed, *Pay Up* feels like a game, perhaps more so than a piece like Punchdrunk's immersive hit *Sleep No More*, in part because certain individual choices are raised to the status of *moves*, isolated into the quanta of irreversible financial transactions.[9] This invites the spectator to adopt a strategic mentality—how can I maximize my experience? But in its finale *Pay Up* directs its attention to each audience member's real-life decision to attend *Pay Up*, and the inevitable opportunity costs of that decision, not just in terms of money, but in terms of time. Self-determination always comes at a price—as Terry Eagleton writes about tragedy:

> the term "self-determination" also suggests setting limits to one's liberty in the act of exercising it, diminishing the self in the process of realizing it. The self-determining animal is also a self-thwarting one, which simply to fulfill its boundless freedom must become a slave to finitude. To practise

> one's freedom is thus to betray it.… In opening up horizons, we ineluctably impose frontiers; in choosing one course of conduct, we leave others eternally unrealized.[10]

In its concluding moments, *Pay Up* applies this sense of irrevocable loss to the passing instants and minor decisions of the spectator's real life, eulogizing freedom's inseparability from fate. The collision of self-determination and the inevitable repayment of Northrop Frye's "debt to nature" comes as "an epiphany of law, of that which is and must be."[11] It is in this final section that *Pay Up* unearths the tragic occulted in the everyday, before releasing its audience back to the real world. Or as the disembodied voice of *Pay Up*'s announcer intones early on in the show, after letting the audience know that some scenes may fill up, "In my experience, life is full of regret."[12]

The experience of watching *Pay Up* starts before the show, strictly speaking, has begun. After you have donned your booties and received your cash, you are permitted to enter and explore the warehouse space on your own, map in hand, as a wash of white noise plays through loudspeakers. The whole space is white and brightly lit, the monochromatic expanse broken by thin black lines forming geometric shapes that evoke diagrams of boxes and shipping containers. There are several freestanding small rooms distributed evenly around the warehouse—each big enough to hold audiences of around fifteen to twenty people—but you are not allowed to enter them. Performers in white jumpsuits (we call them "barkers") block the entrances to these rooms, and will quietly and politely tell you that these rooms are for employees only. Indeed, although you are free to explore, there's nothing much to do. I always find this part of the show, the part before it begins, disproportionately fascinating—both disorienting and strangely compelling. One critic compared *Pay Up*'s warehouse set to the *mise en scène* of George Lucas's early film *THX 1138,*[13] and the experience of moving through this alien blankness without any particular guidance is, for me, simultaneously vertiginous, disconcerting, and pleasurable. Pleasurable, because although I have been through this part of the show many times, it always feels unfamiliar. This is when we most vividly experience the show as being in space rather than time, in the manner of a visual art installation. This is when we, as audience members, bring the space into being, *enunciate* it, through our free movements

within it.[14] But I also find it disconcerting, perhaps because the whiteness also gathers to itself the ominous sterility of the laboratory, or perhaps because I know that this phase of *Pay Up*, the phase in which time goes unmarked, is always about to be over.

The amplified voice of a young woman, deadpan or possibly just bored, echoes through the space. We cannot see the source of the voice: "Welcome to *Pay Up*. *Pay Up* is an artificially controlled economic environment. You will have six opportunities to purchase a scene. There are eight scenes to choose from. *Pause*. Six opportunities. Eight scenes. You will not be able to see everything." As the announcer continues, explaining the proper use of the headphones found in the cubicles ("make sure the *left* side is over your *left* ear"), the barkers in white jumpsuits stand on white buckets and demonstrate proper form in the over-rehearsed mode of flight attendants instructing indifferent passengers. The speech comes to an end: "Thank you. You have fifty-three minutes left to pay up."[15] And with that, a loud buzzer sounds, followed by persistent ticking, and the video monitors hung throughout the space (which have until now borne the legend "STAND BY") begin counting down, in hundredths of a second, starting at 00:53:00:00. From this moment forward, the endpoint of *Pay Up* remains constantly in view, the monitors serving as an ever-present *memento mori* for the performance. The time disappearing over the course of the play is at once the fictive time of the world that *Pay Up* has brought into being and the real time of the world outside.

The moment the buzzer sounds, the barkers disperse. Some go to prepare to be the actors in the scenes that will begin in three minutes, and some go to serve as guides, to help the audience members in their decision making processes. The announcer helps too, in her own way:

> *Announcer*: Opportunity One will begin in three minutes. Sometimes it's easier to make a choice if you break it—down. The first choice you should make is *funny* or *sad*. Again, that's *funny* or *sad*. What are the choices?
> *Barkers*: Funny!
> *Announcer*: Or…
> *Barkers*: Sad!
> *Announcer*: That's right.
> (*The barkers close their eyes and start dancing.*)[16]

This is when people sometimes start running. I've seen all the scenes already, many times, so I don't run. The announcer tells people not to run, but it doesn't always have an effect. Some people have heard that a particular scene or other is the one that they shouldn't miss, and they want to make sure they see it. That scene is usually "Amanda," but it could be one of the others as well. When my then-pregnant wife came down from New York to see the show, people bumped into and pushed in front of her, and this made parts of her experience unpleasant in ways that we, as the show's creators, had not foreseen. This raises a question for interactive and participatory theater projects: are certain kinds of spectators sometimes being favored over others? And do participatory structures make that inevitable? In the way that narratives are sometimes criticized for normalizing certain racial, class-based, or sexual identities, might certain structures of interaction and participation also establish certain spectators as unexamined norms? In *Pay Up*, which attempts to ironically replicate an economy of competition, how much might we accidentally be glorifying and reifying the system that we are critiquing simply by instantiating its modes of interaction?

The scenes themselves are each identified on the map by a set of icons that indicate whether a scene is funny or sad, ordinary or extraordinary, and whether it takes place during the day or at night. The map also lists which of the recurring characters (including simians) appear in which scenes, providing another thread to follow through the narrative maze. In general, the scenes are performed as dumb shows, mimed demonstrations that are accompanied by rich soundtracks delivered through headphones. This allows the scenes to be visually and aurally isolated from one another, though they all share the same visual language. In each little white room, actors in white jumpsuits perform before a row of folding chairs, each chair accompanied by a pair of headphones resting on a peg.

One of the most popular scenes, "Amanda" (*Funny, Extraordinary, Night*), is about a woman buying another woman's name for no fully articulated reason, except that she is loathe to share it: "Look that's my name, all right? That's my name. There can only be one Amanda, and I'm the only Amanda up in this piece, you understand what I'm saying?" Both women are voiced by the actor Johnnie Hobbs III, part of the original "core creative team," who invented the entire monologue almost fully

formed in one inspired improvisation session. In the headphones we hear Hobbs's voice, accompanied by music, as we watch the two women in white jumpsuits execute a highly choreographed physicalization of the narrative. This scene, like all of the scenes, is approximately four minutes long. When it's over, a bell dings in the headphones, and a voice instructs us, "Thank you for attending scene thirteen, 'Amanda.' Please take off your headphones and wait for the buzzer to exit."[17]

Several of the scenes are derived from the research of economist Keith Chen into the ways in which capuchin monkeys exhibit some of the same behavioral biases as humans when taught to use currency. "Loss Aversion" (*Funny, Ordinary, Day*) dramatizes an experiment in which a monkey evinces an irrational preference for a gamble in which one grape might become two over a gamble in which two grapes might become one. But the focus of the scene is on the tension between Keith Chen's fellow researcher and a lab tech forced to replace her in the experiment, despite her fear of monkeys.

"Fungibility" (*Funny, Extraordinary, Day*) invites the audience to peer through windows into a small enclosure, taking the position of the experimenters watching their subjects, in this case a monkey who pays another monkey for sex, an incident that actually occurred in Chen's lab.[18] This surprising interaction was encouraging evidence that the monkeys understood one of the core features of currency—that it could be used for more than just one thing, though it did raise some delicate issues for the lab. In the second half of the scene, the actors become surreal versions of the experimenters, with boxes for heads, themselves engaged in some ethically dubious activity.

Other scenes treat everyday and not-so-everyday interactions with money: a brother and sister arguing over an inheritance, a man who feels cheated while trying to pay his ex-girlfriend to sleep with him, a woman who pays her ex-fiancé the full price of her engagement ring after the engagement is broken off. In "Exact Amount" (*Sad, Extraordinary, Night*), the ghost of Keith Chen's father appears to him in a dream, leaving only after Keith gives him one hundred thirty-five dollars and forty-three cents, the exact cost of the missed medication that his father could not afford to buy. In "Box Artist" (*Sad, Extraordinary, Day*) an artist sells

indistinguishable white cubes, each with different contents. Some contain valuable jewelry, some contain poetry, some contain currency, some contain manure, and they are all priced the same. He explains:

> *Box Artist*: No matter what I put in the box, I've spent the same amount of time making the box, and I've spent the same amount of time deliberating over the contents.
> *Patron*: Right…Um…I'm just wondering…
> *Box Artist*: Yes?
> *Patron*: I'm wondering if I can open the box when I get home.
> *Box Artist*: Well, sure. It's your box. But it may lose its value as art.[19]

In other words, the formal constraints of the system and the conceptual field in which they operate are understood to be the determinants of the work's meaning. Does this apply to *Pay Up* as well? How much of *Pay Up*'s meaning is located in the content of its individual scenes, as performance or as drama? Each time we've revised *Pay Up*, we've rewritten and replaced some of the individual scenes, but we haven't changed much, if anything, about the larger system in which the scenes reside.[20] This disparity is, I think, largely because the individual scenes never seem to serve the world quite fully enough. Other people will probably disagree with me about this, and indeed I wonder whether my discontent is less a result of our failure to deliver the best possible scenes than a consequence of the larger structure of a piece premised on consumer dissatisfaction. The box, once opened, loses value, in part because its contents include all of the things that it is *not*, and the pain of those absences cannot help but to threaten the pleasures of what *is*. These disappointments are both fictive parodies of the costs of self-determination, and at the same time miniscule examples of those very real costs.

The subject of buyer's remorse is broached in the first of *Pay Up*'s complimentary musical numbers, which are offered at certain intervals between the scene-purchase opportunities. The voice over the loudspeaker intones: "Opportunity 3 is over. *Pause*. This is a dance break. Dance break. Outside the rooms. Outside the rooms. *Pause*. This one is a freebie." The audience members amble towards the middle of the warehouse. The lights change—now instead of a ubiquitous brightness emanating from evenly distributed fluorescent tubes, the space is lit primarily by a few

incandescent bulbs inside of hanging white buckets. Phalanxes of barkers approach from several directions. A loud, slow drum begins to beat, and the performers begin a choreography of gestures. Soon, they sing:

Barker Group One:	*Barker Group Two*:
(*sung*)	
Can I get my money back	
If I want to change my mind?	
If I open up the package	
And I hate the thing inside?	(*sung*)
Can I get my money back?	No you can't, no you can't
If I want to change my mind?	There's no fucking refund!
If I open up the package	No you can't, no you can't
And I hate the thing inside?	There's no guarantee.
……..	
I chose all wrong.	
I chose all wrong.	We all choose wrong.
I chose all wro-o-ong.	I chose all wro-o-ong.
I feel so bad.	
I feel so bad.	I feel so bad.
I feel so ba-a-ad.	I feel so ba-a-ad.[21]

A buzzer sounds, the lights switch back to normal, and the barkers resume their normal countenances. Back to work. The announcer offers deadpan consolation: "Don't feel so bad. Don't feel so bad." She pauses, and then a moment later she resumes with, "This audience has been crowding the funny scenes. I don't want to do this, but this audience is forcing my hand. The funny scenes are now two dollars. I repeat, the funny scenes are now two dollars." The barkers groan and share their displeasure with the audience (their script reads: "*React big*"). The announcer continues, "The sad scenes are good too, in their own way. All the scenes have something to offer. Please consider giving your time to scenes that might have been overlooked or misunderstood. *Pause*. Don't be afraid to spend your money. All money is the same. *Pause*. Opportunity Four will begin in 30 seconds."[22] *Pay Up* is set up in such a way that it becomes necessary to dip into your own wallet to supplement the five dollars we give you at the outset, if you want to see a scene during each of the six opportunities.

But there are other ways to spend your time, some of which also cost money, some of which are free. Spectators who don't make it into any of the scenes, as well as some spectators who have been quietly propositioned earlier, will be invited by rogue barkers to purchase "black market" scenes, scenes that might lack some of the corporate veneer that characterize the official scenes. One of these scenes is a pirated version of "Loss Aversion" performed in Spanish, another is a song about money sung in three-part harmony in a closet for a lone spectator, and a third is a surreal and discomfiting scene that takes place in the men's bathroom.

It is also possible to hang out with some of the barkers on their "break," during which they will complain freely to you about their jobs, their coworkers, and everything else about *Pay Up*. One barker will attempt to sell you his art, vacuum-sealed dollar bills inscribed with the phrase "*Non olet*"[23] for one dollar apiece. Another barker, with stronger ties to management (internally referred to as the "enforcer"), circulates throughout the warehouse, breaking up the unauthorized scenes. All of these elements of *Pay Up* serve to hint at a wider world, but the details are never made explicit. When the barkers leave *Pay Up*, what will they find at home? Who are their employers? What, in the fictive universe of *Pay Up*, is happening? Is *Pay Up* meant to be a corporation? A laboratory? Both? I would offer that these lacunae enable the fictive universe of *Pay Up* to remain only lightly spread over the actual reality of the situation—just enough to enable the piece to work without obscuring the details that are not only drawn from real life, but are real life in action. You are not in an interactive drama in which you portray Hamlet. You are playing as you, and this is your real money that you are actually spending.

Before the final scene-purchase opportunity (as the monitors throughout the space continue to count down the remaining time, now reading 00:13:25:00), the entire ensemble of thirty actors presents another musical number, this time a flashy highly choreographed Broadway-style crowd pleaser, complete with kick lines and tap routines. This moment in the show is usually particularly successful with audiences. It is funny, straightforward, and rigorously executed—for some spectators, especially those for whom interactive or participatory theater is not a normal part of their cultural diet, this offering is possibly a relief. It is a segment

during which theater's traditional bargain with its audience is back in force: you (the audience) will pretend to sacrifice your autonomy, and we will honor that sacrifice by ensuring that your time is not wasted, that pleasure of some kind or other is afforded to you. I note that this sacrifice is only pretended, because of course the freedom to leave, to walk out, to disrupt the performance is never fully withdrawn. But it is nonetheless a suspension, without which the performance cannot occur, a suspension that, despite its risks, can be pleasurable in and of itself. It is also a time in which *Pay Up*'s game is suspended, the game in which you are in competition with your fellow audience members, because you are sure that you are all seeing the same thing. At the end of the musical number, the buzzer sounds once again, and the game is resumed.

At the moment of the buzzer, a slightly uncomfortable switch occurs between two spheres of pleasure offered by *Pay Up*, that associated with traditional spectatorship and the ludic pleasure of autonomous gameplay. The pleasure of theatrical spectatorship is in part, as Anne Ubersfeld writes, "the pleasure of the sign; it is the most semiotic of all pleasures."[24] For Ubersfeld it is, specifically, the invocation of the sign-as-absence, a desire that cannot be fulfilled. And though a component of that pleasure is the intellectual activity of assembling and assimilating the various signs and sign systems of the theater as an act of bricolage, it is at the same time a pleasure of not doing, of being at leisure, of being a body at rest. It is also, in part, an act of submission. This exists in contrast with the ludic, participatory pleasure of navigating *Pay Up*'s marketplace of scenes. This pleasure, in which the player enjoys some quantity of autonomous freedom within the constraints of fixed rules, is a result of what is sometimes termed *player agency*. How creators can maximize a sensation of agency is of crucial importance to video game designers and scholars, especially when faced with the challenge of attempting to incorporate narrative. Brenda Laurel, for example, uses the *Poetics* as a means to comprehend the agency of both humans and computers as something that can be evaluated according to standards of beauty.[25] She argues that agency is necessary for "robust interaction," and that in order for the agency to be significant, "the effect that a player's actions has on the plot needs to be substantial"—in other words, it needs to have a meaningful impact on the plot.[26] I strongly suspect that Laurel would consider the stop-start-stop of player agency in *Pay Up* an inadequate integration of narrative

and agency. Agency requires, to some extent, indeterminacy, and though your particular experience is not completely preordained, the experience of putting it together in no small way resembles the semiotic bricolage of the traditional spectator. Nowhere is the break between the ludic and the experience of *Pay Up* made more clear than in its conclusion. "One plays only if and when one wishes to," writes Roger Caillois. "In this sense, play is a free activity. It is also uncertain activity. Doubt must remain until the end, and hinges upon the denouement.… An outcome known in advance, with no possibility of error or surprise, clearly leading to an inescapable result, is incompatible with the nature of play."[27]

The ending of *Pay Up* is not only known in advance, it comes with a sense of irresistible force. We have been constantly reminded exactly how much time is left, how much time we have left to make choices, and finally how that time is completely and irrevocably lost to us. As the clocks on the monitors approach 00:00:00, the disembodied voice of the announcer summons us to the center of the warehouse: "Audience, please stand on the blue lines. Audience to the blue lines, please. In the center of the space."

The barkers now process through the space, bearing the pile of cash that had once belonged to the audience aloft in a large red tarp, singing a wordless dirge derived from the second movement of Beethoven's seventh symphony. The announcer continues her final address:

> You could have been somewhere else.
> You could have spent your money in a different way.
> *Pause.*
> You missed the 303rd performance of *Spring Awakening* at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre on Broadway. Orchestra seats, $112.
> *Pause.*
> If you stayed home, you could be meeting verified local singles now at Montclair Singles Dot Com.
> *Pause.*
> You could have gone ice skating at the Floyd Arena, four dollars for students, seven dollars for everyone else.
> *Pause.*
> Please remain on the blue lines….
> You could have watched *The L Word* on Showtime. (Tasha and Alice broke up again. Molly and Shane got back together.)
> *Long Pause.*
> You could have spent your time somewhere else.
> Now, it's gone.[28]

The singers reach their climactic final note, the buzzer sounds, and the clocks hit zero, all in the exact same moment. It is, for me, immensely gratifying. In darkness, the video monitors hesitate on the final zeros for a few moments, then read "GOODBYE." Glaring work lights come on, and we are brusquely ushered out of the space as we see the barkers patted down by their managers, the money counted in a roped-off room.

There is no sense whatsoever of player agency in these final moments. We are committed to the choices that brought us here, and it has become clear what the video monitors were telling us the whole time, that what we were spending here at *Pay Up* was *time*, and that time was not only the fictive time of the game, but the very real time of our lives, the disappearance of which is not something we can escape. This is Frye's epiphany of law as revealed at the conclusion of *Pay Up*: that the debt we owe to nature is repaid in minutes and seconds. Bert States observes, following Mikel Dufrenne, that what we observe in the theater are real things put to use as signs, and we can't help but see them as both "real" and "unreal."[29] Perhaps the pleasure we take in theater is in part pleasure in the tension of what States calls the "seam" between the real and the unreal, between the actor and the character. In *Pay Up*, the character is you-playing, and the actor is you-not-playing. When the buzzer sounds, the seam is rent, and you-playing disappears. The fictive time of the game is revealed to be real, as of course we have always known it was, and its disappearing act continues, following you as you walk out of the building and choose where to go next.

In this way, the final moments of *Pay Up* escape the quarantine of theatrical performance, and the central dramatic pressure of *Pay Up*—the anxiety of choosing—takes on greater significance. During *Pay Up*, the formal conflict between player agency and narrative inevitability reflects the tension between freedom and fate that Frye and others have found to be characteristic of tragedy. But at the moment when *Pay Up* ends, the narrative structure disappears, and the agency of the spectator is loosed onto a much wider field. Now the anxiety of consumer choice is revealed to be a shadow thrown by a more profound anxiety, that of existential *angst*. According to Sartre, *angst* is the feeling produced by the awareness of being "condemned to be free," a freedom that exists beyond narrative resolution.[30] It is now, in the flash of its own disappearance, that *Pay Up* illuminates the tragic anguish of everyday existence.

I find that my emotional experiences during this final moment match Bert States's compelling account of tragic catharsis. He evocatively describes it as "a pell-mell effect, composed of different combinations of emotions, perhaps, but always what we may call a whelming experience."[31] It is uncanny, somehow, to confront the contiguity of the *situation* presented by *Pay Up* with the real-life situations that precede and follow it. For Sartre, the situation is the experience of consciousness "thrown" into the world, the reciprocal relationship in which consciousness is inseparable from the "external reality" at which it is directed. In "For a Theater of Situations," he calls for a theater in which people can become characters only after their decisions have hardened, only "after the curtain has fallen."[32] During the time of the drama, however, they are *not* characters, they are rather their situation, a situation which opens up some possibilities at the same time that it forecloses others. For Sartre, the configuration of the situation is the organizing principle of the drama. This is an appealing dramaturgical orientation for a performance piece like *Pay Up* in which the protagonist, by virtue of also being the spectator, is necessarily indeterminate. But experiencing this indeterminacy as the spectator/protagonist can feel vertiginous, because the indeterminacy of character is felt as an indeterminacy of self, a recognition of the sheer contingency of the real-life situation. That vertigo is the *angst* that accompanies the recognition of one's freedom—as Sartre writes, "Vertigo is anguish to the extent that I am afraid not of falling over the precipice, but of throwing myself over."[33]

The unsettling condition of being free is engaged by any sort of interactive performance, no matter how much that performance circumscribes the spectator's field of action. This limitation on action is, as in life, the necessary ground for freedom; it is part of the situation in which freedom can exist. But perhaps the distinction between interactive performance and non-interactive performance is unnecessary here. In his essay "The Emancipated Spectator," the political philosopher Jacques Rancière attempts to dismantle the rhetoric surrounding participatory and immersive performance. He argues that the artist's desire to "activate" the spectator falsely implies that the spectator is otherwise passive, and that it accompanies an inegalitarian assumption that the artist can effect a specific change in the consciousness of the spectator. The theater is not a privileged site of possible community, rather, "in a theatre, in front

of a performance, just as in a museum, school or street, there are only ever individuals plotting their own paths in the forest of things, acts and signs that confront or surround them."[34] Rancière hopes for a theater that recognizes that the autonomy of individuals continues even when they become spectators. This is a theater that denies that a performance is a transmission from the artist to the spectator. Rather, it is external to both and possessed by neither.

The limited autonomy granted the spectator over the course of *Pay Up* does little to satisfy this demand. But the acknowledgment that the spectators came to see *Pay Up* of their own volition, that it exists merely as a result of a choice as part of the individual spectator's personal adventure, does point in this direction. It is not *Pay Up*'s interactivity that is relevant to Rancière's argument but rather this final nod that diminishes the experience of *Pay Up* from the inside. *Pay Up* is a fabricated marketplace, but it is situated in a real marketplace, and by acknowledging its own contingency, it begins to acknowledge the power of the spectator.

But with the acknowledgment of power comes the acknowledgment of responsibility. Not only do the spectators bear the weight of their own choices, they face the fate of being unable to escape that responsibility, unable to escape choosing. *Pay Up* is a play about going to see plays, and of course, in a certain sense, all plays are about going to see plays. The acknowledgment of the freedom of the spectator, always present, is also an acknowledgment that this freedom is the ground of our existence, that "we are not free to cease being free." Sartre continues,

> freedom in its foundation coincides with the nothingness which is at the heart of man. Human-reality is free because it *is not enough*. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been separated by a nothingness from what it is and from what it will be. It is free, finally, because its present being is itself a nothingness in the form of the "reflection-reflecting." Man is free because he is not himself but presence to himself. The being which is what it is can not be free.[35]

These emancipated spectators are tragic spectators, because the recognition of their emancipation vis-à-vis the artwork is also a tragic recognition of their freedom in general, a freedom that is also necessarily a fate. In *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Sartre characterizes the pursuit of being as inherently tragic, only transformed into comedy by the mediocre, who lose themselves in the "infinity of means."[36] The recognition of things as they

actually are, then, is a return to the tragic, a return to an awareness of the nothingness at the heart of humankind. The freedom of the emancipated spectator is the freedom of being not enough, the freedom of being not-yet, the freedom of being outstanding—a debt.

In this sense, a dramatic work which takes account of the emancipated spectator will to a greater or lesser extent also need to take account of the tragedy embedded in that emancipation. Unlike the communitarian theater that attempts to bridge the gulf between the theater and its double, the theater of the emancipated spectator acknowledges not only the unbridgeable separation between the spectacle and the spectator, but the inevitable uncollectedness of the self. [37] In abandoning the Edenic fantasies of the participatory impulse, the theater of the emancipated spectator resolves itself not to the fated will of the gods but to the tragic and unrelenting condition of their unavailability. This theater recognizes its spectators as protagonists of dramas known only to themselves, and situates itself within a larger confluence of forces and relations, acknowledging the porous fragility of its proscenium. In this way, this theater resists its own authority, allowing itself to merge into the larger "forest of things, acts, and signs" that constitutes the spectator/protagonist's experience in the world.

In the fleeting moment of its conclusion, *Pay Up* possibly gestures in the direction of this kind of an enterprise. I certainly believe it does. But I am also cautious, especially at the close of this essay, and in the context of the writing of Rancière, in seeming to appear to provide an authorial explanation of *Pay Up*—of what *Pay Up* is doing to its audience—not just because I am only one of its many creators. Tragedy occurs or does not occur in the experience of the spectator. The tragic vision, as it is often called, is a mode of seeing, as Murray Krieger calls it, a "view and version of reality."[38] Krieger attributes this vision to the protagonist of the drama, an attribution that Bert States plausibly modifies to apply instead to the artist or creator of the work.[39] I would offer that tragic vision might lie, instead, inside the perspective of the spectator, insofar as the spectator is always also the protagonist of his or her own drama. It is *that* drama that provides tragedy with its affective power, its cathartic "whelming." I have attempted to account here for my own experience of *Pay Up*, with the awareness that my experience of *Pay Up* is, like my experience of everything else, radically particular to me.

Rancière's proposed theater "revoke[s] the privilege of vitality and communitarian power accorded to the theatrical stage, so as to restore it to an equal footing with the telling of a story, the reading of a book, or the gaze focused on an image."[40] Perhaps an extension of this logic reciprocally makes the performance of reading this essay available to the same tragic vision as the theatrical performance of the spectator/protagonist. It's up to you, part of your own personal adventure. After all, you—the reader/protagonist—could have spent your time doing something else.

Now, it's gone.

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Notes

[1] Northrop Frye, *Fools of Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 4.

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, "For a Theater of Situations," in *Writings*, ed. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, trans. Richard McCleary, vol. 2 (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 186.

[3] Pig Iron Theatre Company is a physical theater company based in Philadelphia. For overviews of the company's history and methods, see Nick Salvato, "'Ta Daaaa': Presenting Pig Iron Theatre Company," *TDR/The Drama Review* 54, no. 4 (2010): 206–223; and Krista Apple, "A Wild, Wild West of Their Own," *American Theatre*, February 2010, 28–30.

[4] "Situation" refers here to Sartre's use of the term, as in the quotation that precedes the essay. This should be distinguished from Guy Debord's "constructed situations," which were intended as direct interventions in everyday life. See Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Terms of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Tendency," in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 44–49.

[5] The core creators of the original production of *Pay Up* were Dan Rothenberg (director), Robert Quillen Camp (text and sound design), Anna Kiraly (production design), Quinn Bauriedel, Morgan Eckert, Johnnie Hobbs III, Christie Parker, and Dito Van Reigersberg. Pig Iron's process of devising work is truly collaborative, and the text for *Pay Up* was created in tandem with every other element of the production.

[6] Sartre, "For a Theater of Situations," 185.

[7] See M. Keith Chen, Venkat Lakshminarayanan, and Laurie R. Santos, "How Basic Are Behavioral Biases? Evidence from Capuchin Monkey Trading Behavior," *Journal of Political Economy* 114, no. 3 (June 1, 2006): 517–537, doi:10.1086/503550.

[8] Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).

[9] This comparison was first suggested to me by Dan Rothenberg, the director of *Pay Up*.

[10] Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 114.

[11] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 108.

[12] Robert Quillen Camp and Pig Iron Theatre Company, *Pay Up* (unpublished manuscript, 2008).

[13] Kathryn Osenlund, review of *Pay Up*, Pig Iron Theatre Company, Philadelphia Live Arts, *CurtainUp*, September 10, 2005, http://www.curtainup.com/payup.html.

[14] Michel de Certeau compares walking through an urban environment with speaking a language, bringing the potentiality of urban space into being through *enunciation*. See *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 97–98.

[15] Camp and Pig Iron Theatre Company, *Pay Up*.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Stephen J. Dubner and Steven D. Levitt, "Monkey Business," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2005.

[19] Camp and Pig Iron Theatre Company, *Pay Up*.

[20] A notable exception was Quinn Bauriedel's solution (introduced in the 2008 production) to the problem of members of the audience who had received complimentary tickets, and therefore had a very different relationship to the money they were spending. Sitting at a desk, he would ask these audience members to compose a haiku poem about money, which he would buy for five dollars. Upon receiving the poem, he would declare it to be very good, hand over the money, and then immediately insert the poem into a paper shredder.

[21] Camp and Pig Iron Theatre Company, *Pay Up*.

[22] Ibid.

[23] This is a reference to Marx's observations on the alienability of money: "Since every commodity disappears when it becomes money it is impossible to tell from the money itself how it got into the hands of its possessor, or what article has been changed into it. *Non olet* [it does not stink], from whatever source it may come." *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin, 1992), 205.

[24] Anne Ubersfeld, "The Pleasure of the Spectator," *Modern Drama* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 1982): 129, doi:10.3138/md.25.1.127.

[25] Brenda Laurel, *Computers as Theatre* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1991), 49–65.

[26] Brenda Laurel, "Response to Michael Mateas," in *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, ed. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 19.

[27] Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 7.

[28] Camp and Pig Iron Theatre Company, *Pay Up*. This version of the closing monologue is specific to one night of the production at Peak Performances, Montclair University, Montclair, NJ, 2008.

[29] Bert O. States, "The Phenomenological Attitude," in *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 375.

[30] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 29.

[31] Bert O. States, *The Pleasure of the Play* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 95n.

[32] Sartre, "For a Theater of Situations," 186.

[33] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 29.

[34] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso Books, 2009), 16.

[35] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 440.

[36] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 19.

[37] See Martin Heidegger's particularly relevant description of the "not-yet" of Dasein as an uncollected debt in *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 286.

[38] Murray Krieger, *The Tragic Vision* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960), 3.

[39] States, *The Pleasure of the Play*, 181n.

[40] Rancière, 22.