

Performance in Review

CAULDRON, SPINNING WHEEL, BROOM: THE SPINNING TALES SERIES OF MARILYN ARSEM

John D. Anderson with Marilyn Arsem

“**P**ERFORMANCE art exists on a continuum between ritual and narrative,” claims critic Henry M. Sayre in his book *The Object of Performance*.¹ Boston performance artist Marilyn Arsem, in an ongoing series of performances she calls *Spinning Tales*, moves from narrative to ritual, with transformation as her object, spinning mythic images out of commonplace actions and materials. “In my performance work,” says Arsem, “I am interested in presenting domestic imagery in a way that allows the viewer’s interpretation and understanding to shift between the layers of meaning, from the most mundane association of daily work, to the mythic connotations of the imagery. I am not primarily interested in creating characters or telling a story, but rather providing images for contemplation and individual interpretation.”

Arsem, founder of the Mobius Artists Group in Boston,² has based the work in her *Spinning Tales* series on three evocative images associated with witches: the woman over the cauldron, the woman at the spinning wheel, and the woman with the broom. “In fact,” according to Arsem,

these images are simply the activities of women’s work through the centuries—cooking, preparing remedies, making clothing, and cleaning. But they are also images in European and New England folklore, fairy tales, and mythology that are associated with the Crone. They are images of powerful women, wise women, women that are feared by men.

Arsem originally trained in a traditional theatre directing program at Boston University, but has been a performance artist for the last fifteen years.³ Her work bridges the boundaries between performance in everyday life (or cultural performance) and performance art.⁴ She creates, in Allan Kaprow’s terms, lifelike art, as opposed to artlike art, performances of ordinary activities that shade into rituals intended to transform the performers and to invite the audience to risk intimate contact with the transformative process. Like Kaprow, the creator of *Happenings* in the 1950s, Arsem “wants the shapes, thresholds, and durations of experience itself—the conventions of consciousness and communal exchange, whether personal habits or a Labor Day parade—to provide

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the frames in which the meanings of life may be intensified and interpreted."⁵ Consistent with Kaprow's ideas, in Arsem's work "the possible boundaries between lifelike art and the rest of life [are] kept intentionally blurred. . . . The purpose of lifelike art [is] therapeutic: to reintegrate the piecemeal reality we take for granted."⁶

This essay describes the first two performances in the *Spinning Tales* series, "Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping" and "Mothers of Time," explores textual and temporal tensions that sustain the works, and discusses the role of the audience in the works. The texts of both pieces trace similar arcs that move from mundane, domestic actions to uncanny, mythic images. Arsem uses text transformatively, sliding it from the level of ordinary conversation to incantation and augury and ultimately to pure, silent image. Also, Arsem is committed in this work to converting real, durational time to mythic time, to letting the images she creates take shape very slowly and incrementally, inducing altered states of consciousness in both the performers and the audience, who must participate in shaping their experience of the work. The performers in the *Spinning Tales* series function for their audiences as shamans, ecstatic role-players invoking, as Richard Schechner explains, "communication and transformation among several kinds of experience including the reintegration of the past and present, conscious and unconscious, dead and living, dream and waking, individual and group."⁷ Temporally and textually, Arsem's pieces blur the boundaries between life, art, ritual, and myth.

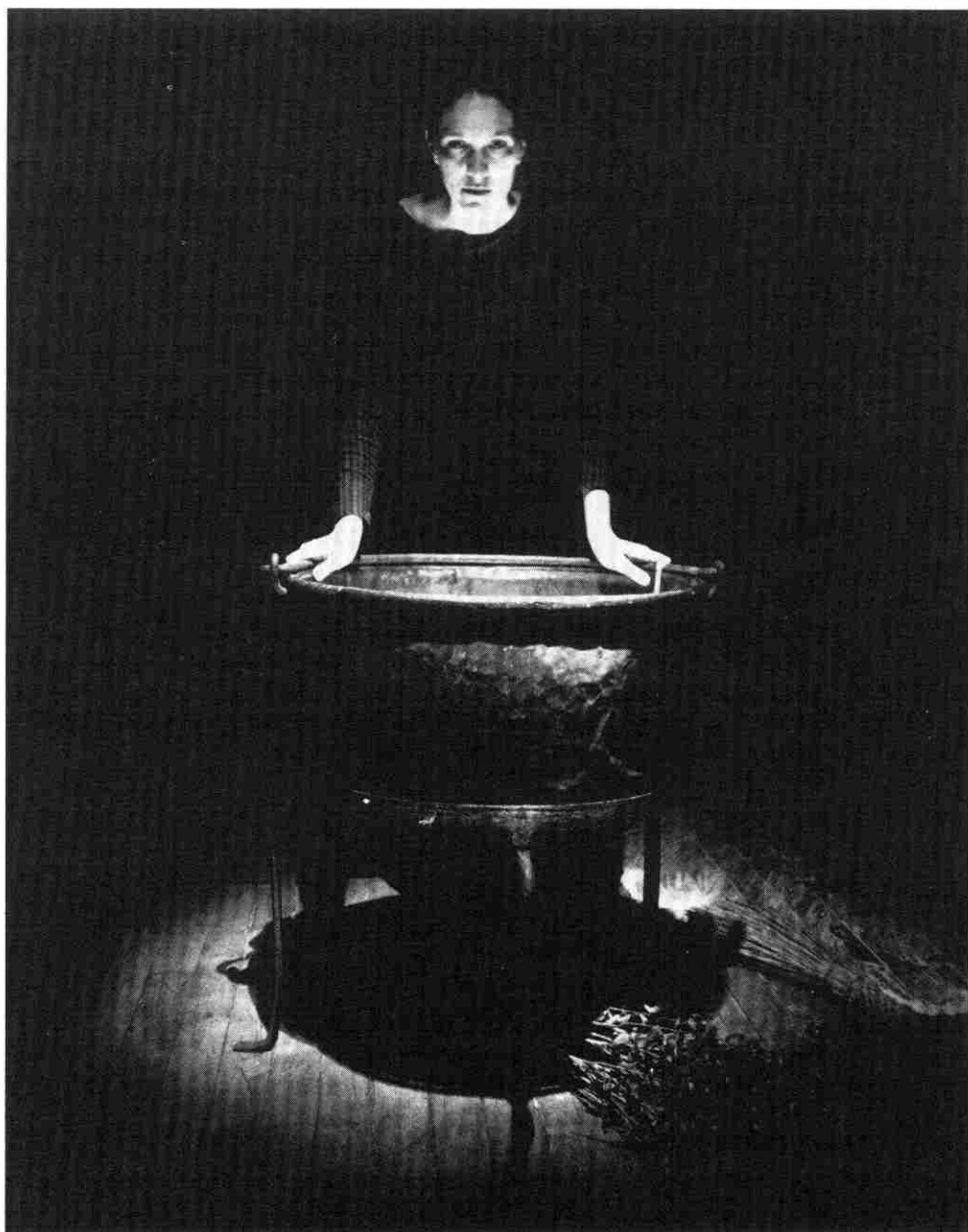
Although the pieces in the *Spinning Tales* series are imagistically and structurally similar, they differ dramatically in length, repeatability, and environment. "Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping," a performance under two hours long that has been staged in a variety of venues since 1992,⁸ takes place in a setting that includes two antique spinning wheels and a cauldron, and relies on atmospheric stage lighting. In preparation for the performance, Arsem learned how to spin thread from wool. "Mothers of Time," a piece for four women, was a one-time performed installation that lasted twelve hours.⁹ It took place on a farm in central Massachusetts on 17 September 1994, at a site that included fields, a stream, woods, and the edge of a pond. According to Arsem,

the preparation of the site took place over five months. Fields were mowed, gardens dug and planted and tended, paths were created, trees cleared. In working on this piece, my collaborators and I researched colonial herbal medical practices, and harvested and prepared herbs that we had planted in the spring. We built tables using hand drills and wooden pegs. We gathered roots and flowers from the fields to use as dyes. We carded and spun and plied and washed wool to make yarn. We learned how to kill and slaughter a chicken.

The performance began at sunrise and ended at dusk.

"Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping" begins when Arsem, dressed in green, greets each audience member at the door with a tuft of wool. Soon Arsem gets everyone twisting the wool, feeling and smelling the lanolin that has softened the hands of spinners for centuries. In the center of the set is a mysterious, silent figure sweeping a mound of flour, spreading it into a gradually widening circle (Helen Shlien in the performances at *Mobius*, 3–5 and 10–12 December 1992). This action unites the polarities of ritual and mundanity, of the whiteness of

bread and the blackness of dirt; the figure is a constant reminder throughout the piece of the ceaselessness of domestic work. Meanwhile, Arsem informally traces the evolutionary history of textiles from the drop spindle up to the spinning jenny in an anecdotal lecture interspersed with family and folk stories. As the lights slowly dim—imperceptibly at first—the stories begin to take eerie turns and Arsem's persona becomes more strange and uncanny.¹⁰



Marilyn Arsem in "Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping" (Photograph by Bob Raymond)

	Marilyn	Joan	Sarah	Mari
A.M.				
5:00 dawn	private start; gifts for others	private start; gifts for others	private start; gifts for others	private start; gifts for others
6:00 6:26 sunrise	greeting at fire in meadow; (turn in place); build up fire	greeting at fire in meadow; (turn in place); bring water from the pond to fill kettle (counting)	greeting at fire in meadow; (turn in place); build up fire	greeting at fire in meadow; (turn in place); carry water from pond to fill kettle
7:00	gather goldenrod from field in basket	gather goldenrod from field in basket	sweep paths with broom from fire to graves	gather goldenrod from field in basket
8:00	cut goldenrod into dyepot (counting); prepare red dye roots	wet cloth at pond (with Sarah & Mari) and place in kettle in meadow	wet cloth at pond (with Joan & Mari) and place in kettle in meadow	wet cloth at pond (with Joan & Sarah) and place in kettle in meadow
9:00	card wool, spin wool on great wheel	carry water from pond to water gardens	sort heap of seeds into separate piles (counting)	harvest herbs from gardens
10:00	spin wool on great wheel; prepare roots for red dye	start fire in woods; carry water from pond to fill kettle in woods	sort heap of seeds into separate piles	pick thorns from hedge (counting)
11:00	spin wool on great wheel; prepare roots for red dye	dig compost	prepare food for lunch; make poppets in fern bed nook in woods	make decoctions from herbs at table in meadow
12:00 12:38 midday	remove cloth from kettle (with others) twisting, wrapping, elementals chant; empty kettle (with Sarah)	remove cloth from kettle (with others) twisting, wrapping, elementals chant	remove cloth from kettle (with others) twisting, wrapping, elementals chant; empty kettle (with Marilyn)	remove cloth from kettle (with others) twisting, wrapping, elementals chant
P.M.				
1:00	prepare red dye in kettle	carry water from pond to fill kettle in meadow	lay seed paths to graves and water them with spoon	build up fire in woods; chop vegetables
2:00	spin wool on great wheel	kill chicken (with Mari)	tear cloth in meadow, wash it in stream; lay it out across meadow	kill chicken (with Joan)
3:00	spin and ply wool on great wheel; dye yarn in kettle	submerge in pond and wash; bury apron; remove dress & dry by the fire	continue washing and shredding cloth getting muddier	pluck feathers from chicken; butcher chicken
4:00	spin and ply wool on great wheel; dye yarn in kettle	sit on mound; smoke & drink; make figures from mud	lay muddy cloth in paths from fire to graves; take bath	chop vegetables & prepare dinner
5:00 5:30 moonrise	eat dinner in woods silently with others	eat dinner in woods silently with others	eat dinner in woods silently with others	eat dinner in woods silently with others
6:00 6:51 sunset	wind yarn; lay out yarn in circle around the fire in the meadow, singing chant	put out fire in woods; cover self in ashes in the process	lay paths to graves with ashes	put herbs and decoctions into baskets at table in meadow
7:00	draw in thread and burn it; burn clothes; carry lantern to grave	bury everything (tools, pots, clothes); sit at fire in meadow, covered in ashes; light lanterns; carry lanterns to grave	chop apart table in meadow & burn in fire; light lanterns; carry lantern to grave	apply feathers and thorns to self at fern bed; circle meadow spinning around, carrying entrails; bury entrails in grave
8:00	dig grave naked	dig grave naked	dig grave naked	dig grave naked

FIGURE 1. "Mothers of Time" performance score.

At first, Arsem's stories seem to come from the present.¹¹ Gradually, though, they begin to slip backward in time to previous centuries until history and myth merge. Several stories are woven together throughout the piece, most prominently that of a woman spinning a shroud out of nettles, but the ultimate destination of this journey is into the world of the Brothers Grimm, into the story of Briar Rose, the sleeping beauty. Is it myth or is it family history? Arsem erases the distinction, allowing first person pronouns and verb tenses to spin smoothly from personal to historical to mythic reference points. When Arsem takes the audience into the world of the sleeping beauty, she is good fairy, evil

fairy, and princess all in one. All boundaries seem to blur, and the world is spinning, spinning into eternal sleep.

"Mothers of Time" multiplied and extended the images and resonances of "Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping," while it diminished the centrality of verbal text. In the first performance of the series, Arsem told the audience how tedious, monotonous, and exhausting women's traditional tasks were; "Mothers of Time" demonstrated it. The piece began at dawn, and the audience began arriving at 6:30 a.m., staying as long as they wished or until the event ended at twilight. Audience members were free to wander throughout the site, which included a meadow (with a kettle over a fire in the center and four graves spaced around the periphery), a nearby stream, and an adjacent woods (with another fire) and pond. Various work areas were prepared around the site for spinning, cooking, gardening, washing, preparing herbs, sorting seeds, etc. Audience members could watch the activities from a distance, or as close as they liked. They were requested to remain silent and refrain from using the tools or assisting the four performers (Arsem, Joan Gale, Sarah Hickler, and Mari Novotny-Jones). The performers talked to themselves as they worked, so that members of the audience had to be very close if they wanted to hear what the performers were mumbling. Occasionally a performer would address an audience member directly, briefly, and privately.

The images evolved over hours, so that the audience observed the process of their evolution. Early in the day the tasks were seemingly idyllic, the work of rural women: sweeping paths across the field, gathering baskets of flowers, carrying buckets of water to fill kettles and to water gardens, harvesting herbs, tending fires, preparing food, dyeing long lengths of fabric in a large kettle over a fire. As the day progressed, the quality of the activities began to change (see Figure 1). As the performers became more exhausted, the work became harder to do. Impossible tasks were added, such as sorting a large mound of seeds of different varieties, removing thorns from a bank of wild roses, spinning piles of fleece, and burying everything.

The arc of the day was the gradual descent to the grave. An ongoing task that recurred throughout the day was that of the performers digging their own graves. As the day waned, the pressure of completing the work before the end added a tense anxiety, a feeling of despair. The piece culminated (somewhat earlier than planned) during a thunderstorm and drenching downpour. Gathered with the audience around the fire in the circle of the meadow, the performers completed their final actions: one burning the thread that had been spun all day, one burying the entrails of a chicken, another laying paths of ashes to the graves, and the last burying everything remaining. Finally, the performers went to their graves and began digging, naked and shivering in the rain.

A tensive relationship exists both within and between the texts of "Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping" and "Mothers of Time." Within each work, the tension occurs between, on one hand, the personally and historically mundane layers of meaning in the domestic images of women stirring, spinning, sweeping, and on the other, the uncanny and mythic layers. The uncanny avatars of these female figures include evil fairies, witches, sorceresses, and seers, and their mythic

embodiments include the spinners of human destiny in Greek mythology—the Fates—and Norse mythology—the Norns.¹²

A tension also exists between the two performances in their modes of presentation. “Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping” operates in the presentational mode, with the audience addressed directly and publicly, even if familiarly and informally. In “Mothers of Time,” the mode was dominantly representational, with the audience mostly observing and overhearing the performers’ mutterings. The only times audience members were directly addressed were private moments when the performers would whisper questions or reveal secrets to individuals. Each of the performers in “Mothers of Time” improvised text around shared themes of death, aging, loss, and the futility of work that leaves no trace; themes of hidden knowledge and powers related to nature and its cycles; and specific themes related to their individual tasks. For example, Arsem, whose central task was to spin a huge pile of wool into thread, described her process and recalled her improvised text as follows:

One way that I began to look at my task was related to where I physically was positioned in the piece. I was very near the center of the meadow. It was as if I were spinning out the time, the performance, the activities. I spontaneously sang a song as I was spinning describing what everything becomes. And I finally ended the piece by drawing in the circle of thread that I had laid around the fire and burning it. This is some of what I sang as I spun:

dirt becomes roots
 roots become stems
 stems become plants
 plants become leaves
 leaves become flowers
 flowers become fruit
 fruit becomes seeds
 seeds become roots
 roots become plants
 plants become food
 food becomes people
 people become corpses
 corpses become earth
 earth becomes roots
 etc., and on and on for hours.

With the burning of the thread, I sang:

the springtime is green
 and summer is golden
 autumn is red
 and winter is white

 the day's growing shorter
 the night it is coming
 the air's getting colder
 the sky growing darker

 time passes slowly
 when you are young
 and then it moves swiftly
 until you are gone

the time it is passing
slipping away
now you are here
and then you are gone

I can't remember anything else that I sang, but there was more. It came out of nowhere, and went round and round as I spun and as I wound and unwound and burned the thread.

In "Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping," the language was the major source of the hypnotic effect, an effect that was reinforced by the almost subliminally soothing, repetitive rhythms of the spinning. In "Mothers of Time," however, the visual image of the work was dominant and was reinforced by the subordinated verbal text, which was only audible when audience members moved close enough to hear.

Both performances also used time in tensive ways, infusing historical and mythic time into the present, durational time of the performance events. Both began by evoking a familiar, reassuring context—that of a living history exhibit—only eventually to subvert it. Even though Arsem and her collaborators in "Mothers of Time" expressly set out to avoid an attempt at authentic historical re-creation such as at Plymouth Plantation,¹³ an audience's initial impression was likely to be similar to that evoked by such phenomena. Even "Stirring,



From left, Marilyn Arsem, Sarah Hickler, Joan Gale, with Mari Novotny Jones kneeling front, in "Mothers of Time" (Photograph by Bob Raymond)

Spinning, Sweeping" initially had some of the qualities of a lecture/demonstration in a historical museum setting. Rhetorically, these connotations functioned to establish common ground between the audience and the performance, clearing the way for a more relaxed openness to the comforting domesticity of the images and then to their transformation. Both performances further evoked the historicity of women's work through the authenticity of the tools and equipment used.

Mythic time also was evoked in both performances. According to Leland Roloff, mythic time "signals the presence of holiness, rite, and ritual. It is the evocation of mystery, of secrets, of the eternal present. It suggests a symbolic time and a recurring time: planting, harvest; spring, summer, autumn, winter; birth, death, rebirth; childhood, manhood."¹⁴ Arsem's *Spinning Tales* performances transformed historical and durational time into a time above time in which eternal cycles recurred endlessly. The hypnotic repetition in both performances had the paradoxical effect of seeming to suspend time, creating a dreamlike quality.¹⁵ The final images emerged from within this dreamy suspension of time.

In "Mothers of Time," the tensiveness of these temporal dimensions gradually intensified as the arc of the day was achieved. The reassuring initial impression described above built into two celebratory high points when all four performers came together ceremonially to spread the lengths of dyed fabric in the air and later to eat a meal. These buoyant moments contrasted with the tedious tasks they interrupted. When a thunderstorm ominously interrupted the meal, drenching the performers and audience, the pace of the performance accelerated precipitately, at Arsem's direction. Arsem later reflected that the storm caused the final images to be propelled prematurely to a conclusion and that some were consequently only partially fulfilled. She felt herself "rushing headlong into my grave." From the audience's perspective, though, the storm intensified the descending arc of the performance. The final images of the naked women digging their graves were utterly bleak.

The boundaries blurred in the *Spinning Tales* series include the boundary between performers and the audience. Again, Arsem parallels Kaprow, whose work, according to critic Jeff Kelley, resists "the passive/receptive role of an audience in relation to a performer." "Actual participation," Kelley continues, "invites the participant to make a choice of some kind. Usually that choice includes whether to participate. In choosing to participate, one may also be choosing to alter the work—its object, its subject, its meaning. In choosing not to participate, one has at least acted consciously. In either case, the work has been acted upon (which is different from thinking about acting). Though the artist sets up the equation, the participant provides its terms, and the system remains open to participation. . . . Our experience as participants is one of meaningful transformation."¹⁶

In "Stirring, Spinning, Sweeping," audience participation occurred at the beginning of the performance, with the distribution of the wool and Arsem's conversations with audience members. This served the crucial function of involving the audience in the action of the piece, i.e., spinning the wool themselves by hand. The role of the audience was more dynamically related to

the experience of "Mothers of Time." Audience members had to choose their vantage points and proximities to the performance. Even travelling to the event involved a commitment. I had to wake up at 4:00 a.m. (after only four hours of sleep) to travel several hours to the site. Upon arriving, I had to walk the length of a field to the site. The gradual revelation of the site, the sense of coming a great distance, moving slowly closer and closer to discover the various details, created the incremental structure of the experience. According to Arsem, "the audience members who were at the event the longest had experiences of transformation similar to the performers. The longer they were there, the more they were able to slow down and feel the gradual descent of the piece."

The earliest arrivals laid down blankets on the edge of the meadow between the path leading to the meadow and the path into the woods and kept their distance from the performers at first. Gradually, individuals would venture closer to the performers. I sat for about half an hour opposite the woman in yellow (Hickler) as she sorted an enormous pile of seeds, a task that reminded me of Cinderella picking lentils from the ashes; as she sorted, she muttered words such as "blood" and "bone" and "flesh." After a while, we made eye contact and she gave me a handful of seeds. Throughout the day I sifted them from fist to fist, like sand in an hourglass, I thought. The feel of them sliding through my hands is a vivid tactile memory of the piece. At various points throughout the day, I had similar encounters with the other performers. The woman in green (Arsem) gave me a thread and told me, "If you wear this for 28 days, starting two days from now, you will remember everything you've forgotten." At one point, I approached two of the women (Arsem and Gale) as they whispered back and forth to each other of mysterious powers: "I can make the oceans freeze," "I can make the moon stay full for a whole month." Another factor contributing to my experience of the piece was that I dozed intermittently throughout the morning, heightening a feeling of dreamy timelessness.

"Maintaining silence on the performance site," according to Arsem,

engendered a state of contemplation. The opportunity for the audience to engage in personal reflection was heightened by the privacy of the individual's experience and by the intimate nature of any contact that the audience member had with the individual performers. The performers spoke to the audience members about concerns of time and mortality, which helped to focus the audience's meditations." As the performance moved to its conclusion at the graves, another layer of meaning in the performance was starkly clear. "This is a piece about aging," Arsem says, "and about our fears of dying. It is about the images of death we carry with us from childhood.

One of the functions of the shaman is to act as psychopomp, i.e., to escort the dead to a resting place.¹⁷ The *Spinning Tales* series fulfills that function literally as well as figuratively. By creating tensiveness between the mundane and the mythic (both textually and temporally) and by inducing in the audience an active awareness of their own mortality, Arsem's work serves the therapeutic purpose of reintegrating "the piecemeal reality we take for granted."

In the third and final performance of the series, "Atropos Spins," Arsem embodies the third Fate of Greek myth.¹⁸ The performance takes place in the context of another event. Unidentified, situated so that the audience members

encounter the performance unexpectedly, Arsem spins at her wheel, singing, and confronts each person, directly and privately, about her or his impending death. Thus, over the course of the series, Klotho, the Spinner, has spun the thread of life, and Lachesis, or Allotment, has measured it out. Finally, it is Atropos, the Unturnable, who chooses when to cut it.

NOTES

¹Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989) 17.

²For an overview of Mobius, see Ron Wallace, "Mobius," *Art New England* 14.2 (1993): 14–16.

³Arsem founded Mobius in 1977 and is currently co-director of the organization. Mobius is a collaboration of 17 artists who create original work in all media and who run a performance and exhibition center in Boston, which they opened in 1983. Arsem is on the faculty of The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, where she teaches performance art. In 1994, she received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts as a solo theater artist.

⁴Carol Simpson Stern and Bruce Henderson, *Performance: Texts and Contexts* (New York: Longman, 1993). Stern and Henderson organize their textbook into categories of cultural performance, literary performance, and performance art, although they maintain that their "categories are not mutually exclusive" (3). Arsem's performances demonstrate the degree to which the categories overlap.

⁵Jeff Kelley, "Introduction," *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, by Allan Kaprow, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) xiv.

⁶Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 205–206.

⁷Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988) 65–66.

⁸Although Arsem considers the work a solo performance, it does include the unacknowledged figure of a woman silently sweeping throughout the piece. In the Boston area, Arsem has worked with Helen Shlien and Virginia Abblitt as the Sweeper. When Arsem tours the performance she asks the venue to recruit an older woman from the community for the task. The venues have included Mobius (Boston, MA), Women's Studio Workshop (Rosendale, NY), Pyramid Art Center (Rochester, NY), Boston Weavers' Guild (MA), Melvin Village Historical Society (NH), Pyralisk (Montpelier, VT), Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont (Burlington), Perishable Theater (Providence, RI), Crone's Harvest Bookstore (Boston, MA), and Tufts University (Medford, MA). I attended the performance at Mobius on 4 December 1992.

⁹An early, shorter version of "Mothers of Time" was commissioned by Yellow Springs Institute in Pennsylvania in 1992. In 1993, Arsem received an Artists' Projects: New Forms Initiative award from New England Foundation for the Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, Rockefeller Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, to complete "Mothers of Time." An excerpt also was performed at the Lincoln Center Out of Doors Festival in New York City in the summer of 1994.

¹⁰Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" *Collected Papers*, vol. 4 (New York: Basic Books, 1960) 368–407. In his essay, Freud notes that "the 'uncanny' [*unheimlich*] is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (369–370). The *unheimlich* contains, leads back to, the *heimlich* (literally, homelike), that which is familiar, native, belonging to the home. In the Spinning Tales series, Arsem artfully exploits the closeness to home and domesticity of the uncanny.

¹¹Arsem's use of personal, family narratives that blur into collectively shared cultural narratives resonates with Kristin M. Langellier and Eric E. Peterson's conception of "spinstorying." See, "Spinstorying: An Analysis of Women Storytelling," *Performance, Culture, and Identity*, ed. Elizabeth C. Fine and Jean Haskell Speer (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1992). Langellier and Peterson use the term to "distinguish the theoretical significance of women's personal narratives," particularly their strategic dimensions (157).

¹²"Many ancient myths that revolve around women's textile arts function on the basis of analogy. For example, fate, to the Greeks, was spun as a thread. Both thread and time were linear, both easily and arbitrarily broken. One could argue that, since women were the people who spun, the spinners of one's destiny would have to be women. These divine female spinners were called the Moirai, or Apportioners, and are often mentioned in Greek literature as being three in number: Klotho, 'Spinner,' who spun the thread of life, Lachesis, 'Allotment,' who measured it out, and Atropos, 'Unturnable,' who chose when to lop it off. . . . Scholars also compare the Moirai to the Germanic Norns, of Wagnerian fame." Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times* (New York: Norton, 1994) 235–236.

¹³Richard Schechner, "Resoration of Behavior," *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania, 1985) 79–94, discusses the inherent contradictions and anachronisms in even such an accurately restored village as Plymouth Plantation. Furthermore, living history exhibits are oriented toward history that is

knowable and recoverable; Arsem's work is more oriented toward history that has remained secret or has been lost, as is the case with much of the history and material culture of women's work.

¹⁴Leland Roloff, *The Perception and Evocation of Literature* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1973) 121.

¹⁵David Cole, *The Theatrical Event: A Mythos, A Vocabulary, A Perspective* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1975) 9, claims that rituals and dreams are the two ways of making present the *illud tempus*, the time of origins, i.e., mythic time.

¹⁶Kelley, xiv, xviii.

¹⁷Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1964) 4.

¹⁸Versions of "Atropos Spins" have been presented in Boston at Mobius and the Berklee School of Music in 1994. I have not seen the final performance in the series.

