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The Theatre of Affect

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by

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CHAPTER ONEINTRODUCTION

There is an extensive body of work in the fields of philosophy, psychology, and sociology which identifies a specific world view based on the following criticism of modern society: that people live monocerebral existences divided from their physical, emotional, and intuitive abilities. In this state, the capacity for *affect* - emotional response - is believed to be atrophied, and experience nullified. Such a condition - which may be loosely termed 'mind/body split' - results in a diminished ability to relate to other people, a sense of alienation from the world, and a pathological loss of human capacities. Many psychologists believe that this state prefigures neuroses, destructiveness, and schizophrenia.¹

This thesis is concerned with the concept of 'mind/body split' and its relation to affective communication in the theatre. The subjects of my enquiry are theatre practitioners or companies whose work has directly addressed these issues: Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, The Living Theatre, The Performance Group, The Open Theatre, Peter Brook, and Eugenio Barba. My aim has been to re-examine the work of these seven in order to produce evidence of their concern for affect, heightened experience, and the healing of mind-body schism. I propose that an understanding of these concerns provides a major critical key to the appraisal of the practitioners in question.

It is necessary, before detailing my evidence, to provide the reader with certain keys to the material under scrutiny. In

particular, I shall provide contexts, both societal and theatrical, within which the material should be viewed. I shall also outline the scope of my enquiry, and the criteria involved in identifying parameters.

The seven theatre practitioners studied in this thesis are not known collectively by any one term. For this reason, I make use of my own terminology, and refer collectively to the group as 'The Theatre of Affect', or 'affective theatre'. I accept that this moniker currently has meaning only within the context of my own debate, but I hope that the evidence provided here will satisfy readers that the classification is a useful one.

Critical commentators have analysed the work of all of these practitioners to some degree in the past, and for various, connected, reasons they have often been considered as a group. Christopher Innes uses the category 'Holy Theatre' to include Artaud, Grotowski, Brook, and the Living Theatre;² Margaret Croyden points out the resemblance of the American groups to nineteenth century romanticism;³ Christopher Bigsby uses the term 'performance theatre' to comment upon the increased significance of performance elements, as opposed to textual elements, in the work of the three American companies, and names Artaud, Brook, and Grotowski as important non-American influences.⁴ There are further links within categories such as 'encounter theatre' and 'environmental theatre'.⁵ Above and beyond these headings, I would suggest that the group are united by their consistent referral to societal schism, and by the momentum towards providing a forum for

renewed and affective experience. In this respect, this thesis provides an all-embracing point of reference which accomodates other critical categorisations whilst going beyond them.

Several critics directly refer to 'mind/body split' in their discussions of one or more of the practitioners, and a comprehensive reading of critical material within the field demonstrates a general awareness that this is an intimately involved issue.⁶ In Beyond Broadway, Christopher Bigsby writes,

The central assumption behind performance theatre was that the division between art and life was as unreal as were those other dualisms under attack (mind and body, performer and observer).⁷

This thesis takes the position that the concern of the practitioners discussed here was primarily with the division between mind and body. Thereby, it supplements existing authorities by providing an indepth account of an issue which is undoubtedly of interest, and which is, demonstrably, the central key to appraisal.

My material has been drawn entirely from a study of primary and secondary written documents: texts written by, and about, the practitioners. These have included details of actor-training and research methodology; critical analyses of performance and training styles; commentary on aspects of ideology and aesthetic principles; and descriptions of productions. The work which I discuss is not contemporary, and I have had no opportunity to view performances first-hand. Therefore, all references to, and descriptions of, performances have been derived from these written sources. The study of performance techniques from a historical perspective is problematic. Documents

written by the practitioners, or accounts of their work by other writers, cannot stand for the experience of spectatorship in analysing performance conventions. We cannot hope to evaluate performance on the basis of what was written or said about it (usually *after* the event). We can, however, hope to identify recurrent themes and attitudes from descriptions and critical accounts, and to consider points of theory as they have been expressed in written documents.

It is notable that *all* of the theatre-makers in question have chosen to write about their work, whether in poetic, philosophical, or technical terms. Indeed, their writings include important theoretical texts, such as Artaud's The Theatre And Its Double; Grotowski's Towards A Poor Theatre; and Brook's The Empty Space. Alongside this primary material, there exists a substantial body of critical commentaries, including some major authorities, such as Kumiega, and Osinski on Grotowski, or Christopher Bigsby on the American companies. My intention has been to isolate, from these sources, those aspects of performance theory and practice which were directly concerned with mind-body schism and affective communication. Where areas of inconsistency are apparent, I raise questions and where critical support and vindication have been given or withheld, I make inferences. I do not, however, presume to pass judgement on the efficacy or appropriateness of chosen methods. Nonetheless, the reputation of the practitioners in question, and their endorsement by numerous critics and scholars does, I believe, lend credence to the techniques and ideologies which they espoused. The combined force of their respective beliefs about theatre and society may be seen to represent a case for

defining theatre as a forum for affective experience. In this way, I believe that this study has an important part to play in wider discussions of the role of contemporary theatre.

With regard to the chosen period for study, I have concentrated on work occurring between two quite definite dates - 1959 and 1980. Although strands of momentum, and lines of thought and experiment, may be seen leading up to 1959, I would suggest that the body of work with which this thesis is concerned may be dated quite accurately from that year. 1959 was the year in which Grotowski's theatre was founded in Poland; and whilst the Living Theatre had already been operating for some years, the main period of their influence and popularity began with their production of *The Connection* in 1959.

Artaud lived between 1896 and 1948, however his influence was felt most strongly in the 1960s due to the publication of The Theatre And Its Double in America in 1958.⁸ His theories were enthusiastically received by the artistic avant garde, and were readily absorbed by the experimental theatre. In this way he was at least partly responsible for the momentum in those years toward violent, physical theatre. Almost all of the practitioners in this study have recorded their debt to Artaud in one way or another. The Living Theatre and Brook were amongst the earliest to experiment with his ideas, and both Chaikin and Schechner belonged to the generation which embraced the 'Theatre of Cruelty'. Grotowski has asserted that his ideas on theatre were fully formed when he first encountered Artaud's work; nevertheless, for many critics and observers the work of the Laboratory has served to

actualise Artaud's vision.⁹ In many ways, Artaud's is the dominant voice in this field, perhaps because his influence was by way of a legacy. Despite his presence here, it is not incorrect to say that this thesis concentrates on a body of work which began in 1959.

The breakdown of the companies is less easy to pinpoint than their genesis. The Open Theatre stopped work after their last production in 1973; Schechner left the Performance Group in 1980; The Polish Laboratory was officially disbanded in 1984. Most significantly, however, the years 1970 and 1980 stand out as watersheds. In 1970 the Living Theatre radically changed their attitude to work in theatre and left the developed world and their student and bourgeois audiences to work in the streets of Brazil. Also in 1970, Peter Brook left Britain to work in a multi-cultural context within the privileged confines of the Centre for International Theatre Research in Paris. That same year, Grotowski announced his decision to stop creating performances and although the group's last piece *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* continued to be performed until 1980, it increasingly took a back seat to a new form of creative work which defied categorisation as 'theatre'. In 1980, Grotowski rejected theatre altogether when *Apocalypsis* was played for the last time. Since then, despite the continued fascination of the theatre world with his work, Grotowski has shown no interest in aligning his current projects with theatre. In 1979, Barba set up the International School of Theatre Anthropology and although Odin Teatret continues to operate as it did throughout the sixties, the move towards anthropology is indicative of a general shift. Barba, Grotowski, Brook, and Schechner are all intensively involved in cross-cultural

studies, and although this has arisen out of the earlier work, and bears some similarity to it, it must be seen as a change of focus and as a departure from the theatre which was centrally concerned with 'affect'.

In the final chapter, I will attempt to draw conclusions from the evidence surrounding the breakdown of the companies and the discontinuance of the work which they pioneered. Such conclusions are relevant, not only to an understanding of the past and of the individual practitioners, but to an appraisal of experimental and avant garde theatre today. I have not attempted to examine contemporary, post-1980 theatre in detail since to do so would have demanded a less intensive study of the earlier period. Furthermore, as I have indicated, 1980 represented a watershed after which new developments and contexts came into play. Whilst these developments are commented on in the final chapter, and are important to a complete understanding of the 'affective theatre', they necessitate a comprehensive study unto themselves. I believe that the evidence which I present will convince the reader that the period between 1959 and 1980 constitutes a self-contained and, in many ways, closed period of theatrical history.

The 1960s and 1970s were periods of intense experimentation within the theatrical avant garde. Amongst the multitude of diversity and growth, there emerged central tendencies toward an experiential and affective theatre. The notion of theatre as a therapeutic force gained widespread currency, and many companies and individuals worked under the assumption that theatre has the power to effect change in

both the individual and society. In the theories of our practitioners, theatre was seen as a form intrinsically connected to the renewal of experience for reasons of personal and societal well-being. Jerzy Grotowski, the Living Theatre, the Open Theatre, the Performance Group, and Peter Brook were the leading figures within this field. Their practical influence was supplemented by the theory of Artaud, and their affective, experiential forms had impact throughout the avant garde. The 'affective' theatre provided a model for many lesser known companies, and influenced a general tendency toward physical and participatory work. By identifying and defining the ideologies which informed this movement, I believe that this thesis provides an important insight into a period of twentieth century theatrical history which was, undoubtedly, a milestone.

Detailing the history of this period from the perspective of its major figures brings to light the extent to which these theatres formed a 'movement'. Numerous points of contact and networks of interconnections arise as the histories of the practitioners are unfolded.¹⁹ In order to clarify this sense of connectedness for the reader, I have included a chronological table as an appendix. References to this table clearly show the development of the individual companies in relation to one another, and the collaborative relationships which took place. Such a tabling of events helps to identify the parameters of the 'movement' which was based upon the mutual concern for affect. Beyond this, however, historical accounts of the practitioners are not relevant to the study. Therefore, I do

not claim to produce exhaustive chronological histories, which are, in any case, available elsewhere.

I have refrained from studying the widest range of groups and individuals whose work in the theatre embraced affective forms and issues of mind/body schism. There were, of course, other, smaller groups who also contributed to this realm of work, and were involved in the web of interconnections and collaborations. On the whole, however, the chapters on the seven practitioners cover the major aspects of the subject, and are sufficient for the raising of a variety of points and questions. I have also felt it necessary to restrict my inquiry to the 'theatre', and have not, therefore, considered similar movements in fields such as dance or performance art.

Since mind/body split is widely considered to be a Western phenomenon, I have not considered Eastern theatre forms except where they relate to the Western practitioners by way of influence. Likewise, I have only considered other cultural and performance elements where the practitioners have drawn on them. To look in detail at these wider applications of my criteria would have involved much wider contexts than this study has allowed. I have been particularly regretful that it has been necessary to limit my focus to performance and performance-training, since paratheatre and theatre which occurs in workshop situations are so very relevant to my topics of concern. In the chapter on Grotowski, I do, to some extent, consider his evolution into and beyond paratheatrical techniques. However, I do so largely for the light which that stage of his career sheds upon the

earlier performance work. To have included a complete study of paratheatre would have widened my parameters to the point of weakening them.

There are a great many theatre-makers whose work intersects with certain of the characteristics of affective theatre as I have defined it. Stanislavski's emphasis on the actor's affective experience, and his development of techniques such as 'affective memory' might well be regarded alongside the affective actor-training of Grotowski;¹¹ Robert Wilson's right-brain communication bears comparison to the theories of subliminal and altered states of consciousness with which Artaud and others experimented.¹² Despite coincidences of intent, Stanislavski and Wilson do not fall easily into the category which I have created. Since they could certainly be considered as 'affective theatres', each in their own right, it is necessary for me to outline the criteria by which I have chosen my own boundaries for the term.

My initial interest in this subject arose from a recognition of two recurrent aspects in the work of certain theatre-makers, and from a suspicion that they were closely connected to one another. The theatre-makers who interested me were attempting an 'affective' communication. By this I mean that they hoped to inspire an emotional response in the spectator - not on an escapist, sentimental level, but on a deeply personal and profound level. Connected to this was the intention to communicate to the spectator as a 'whole' person, using communicative methods which addressed sensual and subliminal levels of comprehension. In my study of Grotowski, Brook, Chaikin, etc. it

became clear that 'affect' was seen to take place only when the individual was touched on levels beyond the purely intellectual. Thus, for these theatre-makers, theatrical communication required the overcoming of daily states of monocerebrality. In the theory of Artaud, and in the theatre pioneered by Grotowski, the actor's craft is defined very much in terms of the ability to communicate, not only through physical, intellectual, and emotional faculties, but through the profound integration of these elements. Therefore, actor-training becomes a form of therapy, as it were, healing personal schisms of mind and body.

In examining the methods by which mind/body integration and affective communication were attempted, I have concentrated on those theatre practitioners for whom both aspects of this formula were present. The theatre of affect, as I define it, is based on the integration of all human faculties, and is not achieved in theatre which has a strong cerebral emphasis. I have identified methodology as falling into two distinct, though mutually reinforcing, categories:

(1) development of the *actor's* experience in rehearsal and performance in terms of integrating aspects of the self, arousing the life of the subconscious, and activating affective responses; (2) development of the *spectator's* experience in terms of contacting all aspects of the self, activating physical and affective responses, serving as a reminder of latent human abilities.

The social significance of theories of mind/body split and affect cannot be ignored. Whilst the fascination with affect was undoubtedly

an aesthetic choice, motivated by the failings of the mainstream theatre, it was also very much a political choice. The desire for affect in each case was prompted by an awareness of modern society's ability to distance people from their physical, emotional, and intuitive capacities; to stress a monocerebral orientation. Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre had, at heart, a moral mission: to reunite people with the experience of their own lives. For Chaikin, as for the others, modern humans lived partial, divided existences, defended at every turn from a visceral awareness of their own experience.¹³

The seven 'affective' theatres identified here are linked in many ways, but primarily they are linked by their mutual assumptions about life and art, and by the social morality with which their work was imbued. Each of the practitioners, within different cultures, and for differing reasons, identified a lack of emotional wholeness in modern society and attempted to address it. For the Living Theatre, the theatre was a vessel "in which we travel to the uncharted isles of mind, body, being". Their theatre was an affective force designed to change the consciousness, and thereby the politics, of the nation.¹⁴ For Joseph Chaikin of the Open Theatre, the attempt to "give expression to feelings that are very much a part of our experience, but which are not permitted air very much" was a response to a society in which he saw "a real momentum toward numbness".¹⁵ Schechner's Performance Group was concerned with psychological unity, and with the theatre group as a model for the collective society. Grotowski saw that "Civilisation is sick with schizophrenia, which is a rupture between intelligence and feeling, body and soul", and his work in and around theatre sought to

effect a return to emotional states of being.¹⁶ Peter Brook defined his work as the search for a theatre which could "speak to its audience at a depth of feeling that precedes the dissection of man into social and psychological categories: speaking to 'a man in his wholeness'".¹⁷ Eugenio Barba's theatre, seen by some to be a continuation of Grotowski's work, has effectively created new ways of using theatre in order to highlight and safeguard the social relevance of the work.

There was also a political slant to any desire for an aesthetic revitalisation of the theatre. All of the practitioners in question addressed themselves to the nature of theatrical communication; they were all reacting to the theatre conventions of their time. Theatre may be seen to have followed society's lead in accepting a monocerebral and non-experiential format; stage conventions often reflect superficial reality and stress a verbal and psychological rendition of character. The affective theatre sought to counter the intellectual communication of the mainstream stage by reiterating physical and energetic capacities, and by seeking expressive and metaphysical interpretations of reality. Theatrical conventions which challenged monocerebrality did so both as a political act and a theatrical corrective. So closely did the mainstream theatre reflect its society, and so closely did the affective theatre-makers equate the theatre-group with the societal group, the act in performance with the act in life, that work in the theatre was considered to be directly effective upon the wider society.

For some, the mainstream theatre was not only a victim of

society's emotional and experiential collapse, but also a protagonist.

Richard Schechner cites the following quotation in his book,

Environmental Theatre:

The drama, meanwhile, is one of the principal devices we have for deadening this response. We are conditioned very early to look on passively while people are being beaten, killed, or suffering in every conceivable way...The theatre helps train us in non-responsiveness so that the formal institutions that depend for their existence on our social narcosis can survive.¹⁸

In response to this kind of awareness, the experimental theatre-makers sought to distance themselves from theatre in which audiences are physically and morally passive. In its stead they propounded a participatory theatre in which affective responses would be awakened. To this effect they sought ritual elements and structures, and highlighted the role of *action*. Ritual and myth were used as means through which the spectator could confront an experience and emerge fundamentally changed. These elements also indicate a retrospective idealism on the part of the practitioners in that they referred back to an assumed period of time in which wholeness had not been disrupted by the growth of modern society. The ritual brought with it a model for community as well as an opportunity for active involvement.

A diagnosis of society's ills in terms of mind/body schism and loss of affective experience was readily available to the 1960s theatre-makers, particularly in America where the theories of psychologists like Laing, and the political neo-Freudians, Marcuse and Brown, gained widespread currency.¹⁹ Laing is discussed in writings and interviews by all three of the American companies, and his theories have been compared to those of Artaud.²⁰ Likewise, there is a major

point of contact between Laing's notion of the schizophrenic society and Grotowski's statement that "Civilisation is sick with schizophrenia". Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown also emerge as influences upon the American companies. They each focus on society's repression of physicality and sexuality, and their theories underlay much of the American 1960's counter-cultural emphasis on nudity and 'free sex'. Beyond this, they also provide a strong case for a renewed emphasis upon a-cerebral faculties as a return to affective and enriched experience. Within this field, the writing of Erich Fromm is also relevant. Fromm has been noted, by many chroniclers of the American culture of the 1960s, as a major influence. Fromm is concerned with the evolutionary imbalance of cerebral faculties and in The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness he traces human inhumanity, destructiveness, and the twentieth century record of cruelty and genocide to the hypertrophy of 'reason'.²¹

Both the Living Theatre and Grotowski have acknowledged a profound interest in the work of the scholar, Martin Buber. Buber is discussed in the chapter on the American companies, however we can see from the comments there, on human relations and spiritual experience, how his assumptions and beliefs also intersect with those of Grotowski.²²

Whilst I have been unable to dedicate research time to notions of mind/body split and affect as they are voiced within disciplines other than theatre, I have made reference to those individual writers whom the theatre-makers themselves drew on. The majority of such references belong in the American chapter, but I would suggest that the theories

articulated there may shed light on the techniques and ideas of the European practitioners also.

Although the concept of 'mind/body split' appears in numerous discussions from a variety of perspectives, a comprehensive survey of thought on the subject is not available. This made my research around the subject somewhat difficult, and created problems of vocabulary and authority. Since it has not been my task to identify common threads within the psychological writers I refer to, I make no claims on any inroads in that area. Rather, I merely draw from their works those points which I believe intersected with the theatre-makers' beliefs, and either influenced or supported them. Since my concern is with the theatre, I have not dwelt on the wider context of mind/body split, but have attempted to identify the major connotations and developments as they relate to theatrical technique.

As regards the lay-out of my material, I have tried to work within chronological structures as far as possible. However, I decided to treat the American companies together since their societal context was so important to an understanding of them. Therefore, the chapter on the Performance Group comes before those on Brook and Barba.

Each of the seven practitioners represents a strand of interest within the study of affective theatre as a movement, and this is borne out in the lay-out and development of my discussion. The chapter on Artaud examines his very personal and artistic view of the state of mind/body split as he experienced it in his own life. His writing,

important for the model which it upheld in the 1960s, constantly voices specific attitudes towards humanity, societal life, and the nature of thought. I have presented, in detail, an analysis of his notions of schism and his desire for personal re-unification, which serves to illustrate the condition of 'mind/body split' for the reader. His theatre emerges, in this context, as an attempt to provide a therapeutic force capable of effecting change in both the actor and the spectator.

Grotowski's work, which has been seen by many critics to fulfil Artaud's wishes for the theatre, and in particular for the actor, provides much of the information which is lacking in Artaud's writing, as to the realisation of proposed effects. In the chapter on Grotowski, I have outlined the direction of his thoughts on mind/body split, with particular reference to his comments on the 'schizophrenic society' which he mentions in relation to Artaud, and which re-emerges as an issue with the American companies. Grotowski's productions are described from the point of view of their affective elements and their commentary on the issues of affect and schism. I have placed the works within the context of both Grotowski's ideology on these underlying issues, and the actor-training he devised in response. His work may be seen developing consistently towards an experiential theatre in which the actor's role was to attain transcendence, and in which the spectator was witness to a spiritual act.

The American companies, whilst strongly guided by their readings of Artaud and their encounters with Grotowski, presented an altogether

less 'spiritual' theatre; despite the claims of the Living Theatre who certainly spoke of their work in religious and transcendent terms. These companies have been discussed in such a way that their affective techniques and societal criticisms and discussions have been highlighted. The divergent strands of approach have been identified, and the problems which they encountered have been considered.

These chapters develop the notion of an affective theatre whilst at the same time unwinding the theories which informed it. The mind/body malaise which had characterised Artaud's personal life, and which Grotowski sought to dismantle in the psyches and bodies of his actors, was, for the Americans, a society-generated condition which the theatre could confront. Thus, these first three chapters move outward from a personal vision to a societal vision; from theory, to practical knowledge, to affective theatre as a directly societal and political force. The chapters on Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba develop the discussion rather differently.

Brook was a colleague of Grotowski and the Americans, often working closely with them during the period in question. He was an important contemporary influence and a major figure in early 1960s experimentation. What is more, he carried out practical research into Artaud's theories and, for a time, addressed himself to the creation of affective technique. Despite significant differences between Brook and the others which emerge in the fifth chapter, the work on Brook is important because it completes the picture of major figures, and

continues discussions which have been set up in the chapter on the American companies.

Eugenio Barba's work provides a further perspective. Although Barba was a colleague of Grotowski as early as 1960, he was not a dominant figure in the theatre during the 1960s and '70s. He does not feature in the collaborative network to the same extent as the other practitioners; indeed the impression is that Barba represents a 'second generation', influenced by Brook and the Americans as well as by Grotowski. It is in this capacity that Barba is important to this study. Barba's work with the Odin Teatret may be seen as a 'bridge' between the work of the 1960s and the contemporary theatre of today. Although my research ends at 1980, and is not concerned with work after that date, I believe that Barba's relevance to today's theatre is important to an overview of the affective theatre in general. Further, the concluding discussion of the demise of affective theatre would not be accurate if it did not take into account the consistency of Odin Teatret, and the development of 'Third theatres'.²³

The chronological starting point for this study is Artaud's lengthy discussion of the state of mind/body schism. This serves to outline the condition and its devastating effects upon the individual. Artaud's work in the theatre was very much a response to a malaise which he felt in his own life, but also recognised in the rest of society. In describing his own sense of disembodiment and, from there, in unwinding a critique of society, and a theory of art, Artaud provided the model for a generation of artists who would live many

years after his death. Artaud is the mentor for much theatre which confronts the loss of affect, and he is also, by his own admission, the prototypal victim of society's sickness: mind/body schism and the 'death of affect'.²⁴

NOTES

- 1 Some such theories are discussed in chapter four of this study.
- 2 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant-Garde (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- 3 Margaret Croyden, Lunatics, Lovers and Poets: The Contemporary Experimental Theatre (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974).
- 4 Christopher Bigsby, Twentieth Century American Drama: vol. 3: Beyond Broadway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- 5 Both 'encounter theatre' and 'environmental theatre' are general terms used to highlight a specific characteristic of the experimental theatre. Richard Schechner's use of the term 'environmental theatre' is discussed in chapter four of this thesis.
- 6 For example,
Jennifer Kumiega refers to "the mind/body split (Western society's schizophrenia)" in relation to Grotowski in -
Jennifer Kumiega, The Theatre of Grotowski (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 128, 133, 155.

Christopher Bigsby refers to Joseph Chaikin's comment, "In this age, we have too definitely divided the mind from the body and the visceral." Bigsby, p. 104. See also Bigsby's discussion on pages 66 to 67 of same.

Richard Schechner discusses mind/body dualism and unity in relation to Eastern and Western theatre forms in Richard Schechner, Environmental Theatre (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1973), pp. 219-221.
- 7 Margaret Croyden, p. 137.
- 8 Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double trans. Mary C. Richards, (New York: Grove Press, 1958).
- 9 For example, see -
Victor Corti in Antonin Artaud, Artaud: Collected Works vol. 2, trans. Victor Corti, (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd, 1971), p. 11.

Martin Esslin, Artaud (London: John Calder, 1976), p. 92
- 10 Christopher Innes writes, "Artaud and Vitrac named their theatre after Jarry... while Jarry's *Ubu* plays have been performed by Peter Brook, Jean Louis Barrault, Joe Chaikin and the Becks. 'Theatre Laboratories', following Grotowski's in Poland, have been established in Belgium, Denmark, Japan and America, and the term recurs in variations like Brook's 'Centre for International

Theatre Research'. Artaud worked with...Barrault, who was responsible for establishing Brook's research centre in Paris...Grotowski, Brook and Chaikin have cooperated on projects, as have Brook and Marowitz; Barba was trained by Grotowski and Chaikin by the Becks, while Grotowski has held international seminars and 'research universities'. Such cross-indexing could go on endlessly..." Innes, p. 259.

- 11 For 'affective memory' see -
Mel Gordon, The Stanislavsky Technique: Russia (New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1988), p.232;
Constantin Stanislavski, An Actor Prepares trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, pbk ed. (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd.), chapter ix.

Note that Grotowski has referred to Stanislavski as his "personal ideal"; see Jerzy Grotowski, Towards a Poor Theatre rpt. pbk. ed. (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 16.

- 12 See Preface to Stefan Brecht, The Theatre of Visions: Robert Wilson (New York: Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt-am-Main, 1978).
- 13 See chapter four of this thesis.
- 14 Julian Beck, The Life of the Theatre 2nd ed., (New York: Limelight Editions, 1991), p.147.
- 15 Joseph Chaikin in Eileen Blumenthal, Joseph Chaikin: Exploring at the Boundaries of Theater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 39.
- 16 Jerzy Grotowski, Towards A Poor Theatre (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 91.
- 17 Peter Brook in A.C.H. Smith, Orghast at Persepolis (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1972), p. 52.
- 18 Philip Slater, from the then unpublished manuscript, Earthwalk, cited by Richard Schechner in Environmental Theatre (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973), p. 188.
- 19 See chapter four of this thesis.
- 20 For introduction to Laing see chapter one of this thesis.

Chaikin discusses Laing in an interview with Erika Munk; 'The Actor's Involvement', The Drama Review, Winter 1968, T38, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 150.

John Lahr reports the Living Theatre's use of quotations from Laing, in John Lahr, Acting Out America: Essays on Modern Theatre (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), p. 176.

Richard Schechner of the Performance Group draws on Laing's theories in Environmental Theatre (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973), p. 273, 318.

David Kelley equates Artaud with Laing in his essay, "Antonin Artaud: 'Madness' and Self Expression", in Peter Collier, and Judy Davies, eds., Modernism and the European Unconscious (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 243.

- 21 For discussions of the influence of Marcuse, Brown, and Fromm on the affective theatre-makers, see chapter four of this thesis.

Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974).

- 22 Halina Filipowicz writes,
 "Kott reported that Grotowski gave him a French translation of Martin Buber's The Tales of the Hasidim. This is the book, Grotowski told Kott, with which he never parts".
 Halina Filipowicz, 'Where is Gurutowski?', The Drama Review, Spring 1991, vol. 35, no. 1, T129, pp. 182-183.

- 23 See chapter six of this thesis.

- 24 The term 'death of affect' is taken from J.G. Ballard who first inspired me to think in these terms. See the introduction to J.G. Ballard, Crash (London: Granada, 1975).

CHAPTER TWOANTONIN ARTAUD 1896 - 1948

I suffer because the Mind is not in life and life is not Mind.'

In many ways Artaud embodied the concept of mind/body split. His writing is full of allusions to, and descriptions of, his own existential trauma, and his work in the theatre constantly sought to redress an imbalance of mental and emotional faculties which he identified in both his contemporary theatre and society in general. Artaud sought to find artforms which speak to the person as a whole, and which integrate the subconscious and physical capacities of the performer. However, his writing is fraught with tensions which arose from his own inability to harmonise internal and external processes, and to reconcile himself to the conditions of physical existence. Artaud's theatre addresses the issue of mind and body, not only because he consciously sought a 'total' theatre speaking to the 'whole' individual, but because his artistic and personal identity was forged on the painful basis of a profound sense of schism.

Within Artaud's work, we find a vivid description of the states of mind/body split and atrophied affect which serves as a touchstone for the rest of the study. We also encounter his attempts at a societal theory to account for these conditions. In his writing on the theatre, and in his attempts to find new theatrical forms and languages, Artaud provides us with an embryonic image of an affective theatre - one which was to come to fruition only some years after his death.

Artaud suffered from a profound ontological insecurity; that is, he could not reconcile himself to the conditions of existence. Throughout his writings, on the theatre and on other subjects, Artaud expresses a deep-felt sense of disability in terms of living within the accepted forms of his society. Society is continually held up to a radical and scathing critique in which Artaud challenges civilization's cerebral orientation which he sees as being fundamentally unnatural and debilitating.

Artaud felt that the Western human lived a divided life, torn between the poles of being - mind and body, internal and external, soul and intellect, conscious and unconscious. It was this essential schism which lay at the heart of Artaud's personal anguish, and which is manifest in his creative works. He wrote "I am dying of the torment created by this paradox between my inner facility and my external difficulty."²

For Artaud, this fundamental paradox largely results, in Western society, in a tendency towards cerebrality at the expense of physicality. Rather than living integrated lives, Artaud felt, people favour their cerebral faculties to such an extent that they lose contact with their emotional and physical selves. This results in two complementary conditions; firstly, the individual cannot experience the world, or himself, as real because his perceptory faculties that link him to the world and to his own experiences are located in the body, and the body is alienated from him. Secondly, the individual has difficulty in expressing that which occurs within his mind, since



expression involves the transmission of a thought or idea from the inner to the outer realm, and it is precisely this outer realm that the ontologically insecure individual is unsure of. These two related points lie at the heart of Artaud's work as a writer and theatre-maker. They not only constitute the subject matter for much of his work, but are also intrinsically manifest in the forms he uses and creates.

That Artaud was, self-professedly, the greatest victim of the malady he reports and rails against, has served to cast doubt upon the appropriateness of his criticisms. In an essay, 'Madness and Self-Expression',³ David Kelley asks what must be a fundamental question in relation to Artaud,

Is the mental sickness of which he speaks systematically throughout his writings a personal and private affliction which separates him from 'normal' society, or is it a social phenomenon?⁴

This does, indeed, seem to sum up the choices one faces in a reading of Artaud; when he addresses this existential paradox, is he speaking for everyone or just about himself? He himself offers no immediate clues since his societal comments are always based on his own experiences, and his writings about others are often couched in terms which reflect the commentary back upon himself⁵. Whilst he believed that life was unbearably cruel for all men, Artaud felt that his particular mental anomaly (supposedly the result of childhood meningitis, and recurring as mental illness throughout his life) gave him acute and exemplary insight into the nature of thought and being.

I am the man who has most felt the stupefying confusion of his language in relation to thought. I am the man who has best charted his inmost self, and its most imperceptible subsidences... I am he who knows the inmost recesses of loss.⁶

For many critics and commentators the fact of Artaud's psychiatric difficulties throughout his life, along with the convoluted nature of much of his writing, is enough to tip the balance towards their choosing to dismiss him as a madman whose work serves only to describe his own particular problems. Yet this seems too easy; Artaud has a great deal to say - much of it in lucid and penetrating forms - which strikes a chord with other societal criticisms; and if his early writing suggests that his problems are personal and unique, by the time of writing 'Van Gogh' in 1947, he had come to see his suffering as a symptom of a wider societal illness. It "isn't man but the world that has become abnormal", he writes. He speaks of a "sick society", and it is this that he blames, in no uncertain terms, for the death of Van Gogh. For Artaud, Van Gogh is "the man suicided by society"⁷. Kelley writes,

It is difficult, in reading Artaud's marvellously evocative and lucid descriptions of Van Gogh's paintings, not to empathise with his equation of genius with what society chooses to call madness, and to read, as he does, the word suicide as a transitive verb - to see Van Gogh as a superior being 'suicided' by society. And as is clearly suggested by the text, to read, for Van Gogh, Antonin Artaud. Some years later Ronald Laing's The Divided Self would similarly argue that the so-called madman may simply be reacting to an unbearable situation, and fulfilling the role in which he is being cast by those around him who define themselves as 'sane'⁸

This chapter attempts to draw out from the mass of Artaud's writings a clear impression of his theory of the self, and of the self within society. It will consider the relations of thought and language, of mind and body, of the interior and the exterior, and of the conscious and the unconscious mind as they relate to the Artaudian image of self; and it will place within the context of this

illuminating ideology Artaud's theory for the theatre, thus shedding light on his radical artistic vision.

The Age of Surrealism

Artaud lived between 1896 and 1948, a period which covered two world wars and a French colonial war. He was twenty-two when World War One ended. In his introduction to Nadeau's The History of Surrealism,⁹ Roger Shattuck describes the aftermath of that war,

At the Armistice, the political and social situation of Europe was exceptional. Theoretically there were two camps: the victors and the vanquished, but the former found themselves facing a state of destitution hardly less severe than the latter's. Not only material destitution, but a total impoverishment that was already raising, after four years of slaughter and destruction of every kind, the question of confidence in the regime. Had it all come to nothing more than this? Had it taken so many gigantic means to end in a rectification of borders, in the conquest of new ports for some and their loss for others, in the theft of colonies already stolen? It was in this disproportion between means and ends that the madness of the system appeared.¹⁰

To those who were prepared to see things this way, civilization could never again be wholly accepted. There emerged a new cynicism, and a distrust of the system in the inevitable and harrowing realisations that accompanied the end of the war. Further, there followed what Nadeau describes as "the temporary and factitious euphoria that follows every war".¹¹ Hardship and poverty were superceded by materialism and consumerism, which in turn bred their own societal criticisms. Civilization came to seem less the result of progress than a stage on the course of self-destruction. Nadeau writes of,

...man, who can apply his reason, his logical faculties to changing the world, but who has turned out to be powerless to change himself. He has remained the savage, using machines of which he knows only the approximate function. Worse, he becomes the prisoner of these machines he mass-produces.¹²

The disruption of moral and social values, and the loss of faith in the supremacy of man's intellect led thinkers toward a reappraisal of the world which man was creating. Scientism and human logic came into serious dispute. Nadeau writes,

Man has produced a terrible civilization because he has become a cerebral monster with hypertrophied rational faculties. Reason, logic, categories, time, space, two-and-two-makes-four have ultimately come to seem the only living realities, whereas they were nothing but convenient forms, practical and provisional means to his ends, infinitely superior to primitive empiricism and religious mysticism, but merely a stage in the development of thought, a stage which must be transcended.¹³

During the war Dada¹⁴ had emerged with its unequivocal absurdism: Nadeau calls it "an unprecedented attempt to destroy traditional values, the rejoinder - however ineffectual - to the patching-up being done by the international diplomats at the Peace Conference in Paris".¹⁵ Dada asserted, in the face of a ridiculous world, a ridiculous art in which chance, misunderstanding, and chaos ruled. In Dada, as with Artaud and the surrealists who followed, the world of logic, rationality, and cause-and-effect - the world as we know it - was supplanted by an a-logical means of thinking and creating that paid no heed to the cerebrally orientated modes that had gone before it.

The surrealists, with whom Artaud was affiliated between 1924 and 1926, rejected cerebrality and conscious mental faculties, emphasising instead the role of the unconscious and the life of dream and imagination. Likewise, the basis for Artaud's criticism of society, and the root of his own psychological difficulties, lay in the dichotomy of conscious and unconscious realms. According to Nadeau, the surrealists

were not alone in seeking to unsettle the logical world. Bergson, the French philosopher, in his work on the shady area between metaphysics and science, rejected the supremacy of reason. Einstein questioned the tenets of science, and epistemologists questioned the nature of knowledge. Nadeau describes the outcome of these doubts,

Reason, all-powerful reason, stands accused, and stands mute: she has nothing to say in her defence. Reality is something besides what we see, hear, touch, smell, taste. There exist unknown forces that control us, but upon which we may hope to act. We have only to find out what they are.¹⁶

This then was a time in which certainty in a logical, rational world was crumbling. People were beginning to push aside science's cut-and-dried answers, and to reintegrate older, more traditionally mystical aspects of experience. The profoundest research into this area of life was provided by Freud, uncovering as he did the vast world of dream and the unconscious, and placing it firmly within the framework of science. Nadeau describes the effect of Freud's discoveries,

It is henceforth demonstrated that man is not just a 'reasoner' nor even a 'sentimental reasoner' as too many poets have been up till now, but also a sleeper, a confirmed sleeper who wins every night, in his dreams, the treasure that he will dissipate by day in small change. Man was not only a prisoner of nature, and of his triumphs over nature, but of himself; he had wrapped his mind with mummy cloths that were gradually smothering him. Down with syllogisms, corollaries, QED, cause and effect, the whole and the sum of its parts: open the gates to the dream, make room for automatism! We are about to see a man as he is, we shall be whole men, 'unchained', delivered, daring at last to be aware of our desires, and daring to fulfil them.¹⁷

Like the surrealists, Artaud lived through these discoveries, and his life and work embrace the contradictions of an era in which the unconscious life was struggling back into recognition alongside the conscious and rational mind. Little wonder that he emerges as a

profoundly insecure individual, trapped between the poles of his existence, and unable to reconcile the sense of schism. After centuries of monocerebrality, Artaud's society became aware of the potential for wholeness, of the lost realm of the inner self; but how to map this terrain, how to inhabit it, remained a mystery. In the struggle for clues, Artaud and his surrealist contemporaries confronted many questions about the self, and about the relationship of thought, language, and being.

The surrealists had found in Freud the vindication for their radical views of society and of human existence. In the discovery of the unconscious mind there was unearthed for them a trove of inspiration and a new way of approaching artistic creation. Nadeau tells us that the surrealists,

....are amazed, dazzled by the new treasures they have discovered. The wall that so jealously, so immutably separated private life from public, unconscious from conscious, dream from logic and 'directed thought' crumbles; the leaning tower of bourgeois respectability is reduced to rubble.¹⁹

In the light of this the Surrealists determined to remove creativity from the realm of conscious action in order to let the unconscious voice be heard. To this end, they explored automatic texts, dream narratives, spontaneous and irrational actions, and the excitements of chance and coincidence. Their immediate expressions were trusted, and not subjected to the rational order of the conscious mind. In their rejection of civilization they reasserted the Freudian id, the pleasure principle. If Freud contended that the progress of man has been built, not on reason but on desire²⁰, the surrealists embraced desire as the mainstay of creativity and art, and attacked the society that had long

sought its subjugation. Nadeau writes;

Twenty centuries of Christian oppression have not been able to keep man from having desires, and from longing to satisfy them. Surrealism proclaims the omnipotence of desire, and the legitimacy of its realization. The Marquis de Sade is the central figure of its pantheon. To the objection that man lives in society, surrealism replies by the total destruction of the bonds imposed by family, morality, religion.²⁰

In this context we can also read Artaud's vehement dismissal of civilized society, and his search for the undercurrents of life which represent the subjugated desires of man. Freud proposed that our allegiance to the pleasure principle - to desire - is never destroyed but in its repressed state continues to exist, growing warped and perverted. Artaud held a similar belief which underlies his theories of cruelty, and theatre as plague. He felt that modern society, by forcing people into unnatural modes of behaviour, necessitates the subjugation of human impulses. These impulses, denied release, grow warped beneath the veneer of civilization. Artaud wanted theatre to act as a scourge - a plague - cleansing society and setting men free.

If we could go behind the facade what disjointure we would see, what a veinous massacre. Gutted corpses, piled up.

The whole thing is as high as a plate of shrimps.

This is the lineament so much mental activity resulted in.²¹

If civilization was responsible for separating man from his desires and from an integrated life in which cerebrality played an equal, not a dominant, role, then civilization was to be attacked. The surrealists felt that, in Nadeau's words,

The important thing was to rediscover life under the thick carapace of centuries of culture - life pure, naked, raw, lacerated.²²

In their attack on culture, the surrealists' first concern was to

rescue art and poetry from the grip of cerebrality. The attack was often a vicious one, aimed at bourgeois and rational culture, and at the assumptions of art, beauty, and talent. Artaud wrote "Writing is all trash",²³ whilst the surrealists made hostile written attacks on several authors, and carried out numerous acts of sabotage and disrespect on aspects of culture.

Artaud's place as a surrealist is affirmed by the transcendent nature of his writing, by the search within himself for continual inspiration, and especially by his rejection of cerebrality in favour of an unconscious, interior orientation.²⁴ In his early letters to Riviere, written between 1923 and 1924, Artaud confronted many of the questions of creativity and being that the surrealists were also asking. Even after his split with them in 1926, Artaud continued to work through forms which were very close to the surrealists' earlier concerns. Breton and the other leading surrealists expelled Artaud in 1926 for "incompatibility of goals: once the expelled members acknowledged literary activity as a value, they had no place in a group which had proclaimed its vanity".²⁵ Further, as the surrealists developed towards an affinity with communism and political action, they left behind (albeit reluctantly) the notion of a revolution first and foremost in thought, which Artaud would always adhere to.

The Riviere Correspondence

Between 1923 and 1924, following the submission of some poetry to La Nouvelle Revue Francaise, Artaud corresponded with the editor of that journal, Jacques Riviere. The Riviere-Artaud correspondence²⁶ is

an important source for an understanding of Artaud. As Riviere himself points out, where Artaud's poetic works are often convoluted and opaque the letters are lucid and insightful; successful in transmitting concepts which are necessarily difficult to analyse because of their unconscious and internal nature.²⁷ The letters deal with Artaud's personal struggle to control his own mental activity. He writes of difficulties which hamper his creative and expressive processes, and of his desire to gain some hold on the elusive moment of inspiration.

That Riviere was editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise* was not, according to Victor Corti (in his introduction to the first volume of the Collected Works of Artaud²⁸), the reason why Artaud had contacted him. Rather, it was because Riviere was also the author of two respected works on "the literature of the Self", Rimbaud and Thanks to Dada.²⁹ Artaud wrote to Riviere,

...I put the question to you, to you and no one else, because of your mind's extreme sensitivity, its almost morbid penetration. I flattered myself in thinking I was bringing you a case, a distinctive mental case, and as I believed you to be interested in any form of mental malformation, in all the obstacles which destroy thought, at the same time I hoped to draw your attention to the *real*, the incipient value of my thought and my mind's compositions.³⁰

So, when Artaud submitted his works of poetry to Riviere, and subsequently wrote the letters of debate and explanation, it was not merely an attempt to have his work published, but rather to have expressions of that which he perceived to be his mental anomaly acknowledged. By recognising the poetry, Riviere would have lent credence to Artaud's suffering, and accepted Artaud's definition of literary worth. The question to which Artaud refers above, around

which much of his discussion centres, is this,

...do you think one can grant less literary truth and power to a poem which is imperfect but full of great beauty, than to a perfect poem without much inner excitement in it?³¹

Riviere did not publish the poetry, nor did he really, in the space of the correspondence, understand Artaud. He had turned down the poems because he felt that whilst they were interesting, and in parts showed talent, they did not cohere consistently; "there are awkward passages and disconcerting oddities", he wrote. His response was to suggest that Artaud rework the poems, omitting the "divergent imagery". In the Preface to the first volume of the Collected Works, Artaud tells us that "Jacques Riviere did have the fault of considering treatment first above all else". In response to Riviere's comments, Artaud attempted to create technically correct poetry, but;

Then I gave up. As far as I was concerned, the problem was not to find out what might manage to worm its way into the strictures of written language,
but into the web of my living soul.³²

For Artaud, the poems were manifestations of his particular state of mind, and he was insulted that Riviere should suggest mere cosmetic surgery. Artaud describes his mental state as the source of a particular, creative struggle, but one which sheds light on the creative process in general. The letters attempt to convey this attitude to Riviere, and to explain that the poetry offers insight into the creative process through the exemplary difficulties. However, as Artaud tells us, Riviere admitted ultimately that he had not fully grasped their writer's meaning.

For I went to see him one day and told him the underlying meaning in the letters, in the heart of the marrow of the writer, Antonin Artaud.

And I asked him if it had been understood.

I felt his heart swell up as if it would burst when confronted with the problem.

He told me it had not been understood.³³

At the centre of Artaud's writing was an inability to control his thought and to feel at one with his mental self.

I suffer from a fearful mental disease. My thought abandons me at every stage. From the mere fact of thought itself to the external fact of its materialisation in words. Words, the forms of phrases, inner directions of thought, the mind's simplest reactions, I am in constant pursuit of my intellectual being.³⁴

On one level, Artaud could not accept Riviere's advice to rework the poems because, "when *I am able to grasp a form*, however imperfect, I hold on to it, afraid to lose all thought. As I know I do not do myself justice, I suffer from it, but I accept it in fear of complete death".³⁵ On another level, Artaud felt that the poems were of value precisely because they had sprung - or been wrenched - from his troubled soul, and that this value overruled any defect in form, which was in any case, equally an expression of his inner turmoil.

I felt and accepted these expressions, these poorly written phrases you reproached me for. Remember, I did not question them. They came from the deep insecurity of my thoughts. I am only too happy when this insecurity is not replaced by the complete non-existence I sometimes suffer.³⁶

For Artaud, his writings were "vestiges of what I was able to salvage from the utter void", and for this reason he sought Riviere's acknowledgement of what were for him "manifestations of mental existence"; the very fact of the trouble with which Artaud wrought these pieces, and their expression of that mental struggle, made them, in Artaud's eyes, worthy.³⁸ Artaud makes a significant point when he

asks Riviere to "Think it over with your heart".³⁸ Artaud's work is not intellectually devised; the images are not created to convey a cerebral idea, but rather to represent and convey a feeling. This is how they are best read - not analysed critically but responded to humanly - one human soul to another.

Artaud's difficulty in controlling his creative activity is best understood in the light of two points which emerge in a reading of the letters; one is his definition of 'thought', and the other his perception of existence. When Artaud speaks of 'thought' and his difficulty in holding on to it, he is referring largely to creative, active thought over which one has some control, and not the mere ticking over of the mind mundanely.

For I do not call *having thought*, to judge correctly, I might even say, to *think* correctly. For me, having thought means to *sustain* thought, to be in a fit state to manifest it to oneself and its being able to answer to all circumstances of feeling and life. But mainly *to be answerable to oneself*.³⁹

The separation from his mentally creative self which he speaks of is also manifest in a general division from reality; an inability to fully make contact with his own experience; he writes, "I have the whole distance separating me from myself".⁴⁰ He speaks of being "not in this world" and "in my inexistence and uprooted as I am".⁴¹

What emerges from the letters is the description of a condition in which creative and unified existence is elusive, and a sense of immanence in life is lacking. In his own words, Artaud described his existential condition as "a focal collapse of my soul, a kind of

essential and fugitive erosion in thought, a transitory non-possession of physical gain to my development..."⁴²

Artaud's complaint is one which he considers uniquely his - 'the result of a physiological weakness', yet he sees its roots in society - "Our whole period suffers from this weakness". The difference between he and others is this, "Only their souls are not physiologically affected, not substantially affected....they do not suffer and I do, not only mentally but physically, in my everyday soul".⁴³ He refers to the condition as "not just a phenomenon of the times" but,

...a sickness which is near to the nature of man and his main expressive potential and applicable to a whole life.

A sickness affecting the soul in its most profound reality, poisoning its expression. Spiritual poison. Genuine *paralysis*. Sickness robbing us of speech and memory, and uprooting thought.⁴⁴

The sickness is applicable to all of life because it resides in an inability to experience, to feel oneself alive - reality as it is perceived is affected, the ability to express oneself is affected because one is separated from oneself, divided by internal schisms. Artaud's plea is simple; "I only want to feel my mind".⁴⁵

Riviere, in one of his letters to Artaud, asks "Where does our being go.....I wonder at our era (I am thinking of Pirandello and Proust, in whom it is implicit) which raised the question without answering it, and so limited itself to anguish".⁴⁶ Thus he places Artaud in a societal context; Artaud is not unique but, as he himself suggested, exemplary in that his is the deepest expression, the most acute suffering. Perhaps Artaud was the one least able to accept what others had resigned themselves to.

By feeling himself robbed of expression - "a higher vicious will attacks the soul like vitriol" - Artaud loses, as it were, his experience. He is struck dumb, made impotent, left "panting at the gates of life".⁴⁷ It was existence itself that Artaud craved - to go through the gates into life; to feel whole through his experience resounding within him as emotion and achieving expression through inspiration and creativity.

Artaud felt that man requires 'wholeness', what he called "constant concert",⁴⁸ in order to create, and that this state is rarely achieved. This is Artaud's dilemma and his suffering; where he requires wholeness there is division. His experience is fragmented and devoid of dynamism. For Artaud, life is stopped short because man is incapable of carrying impulses into action, creativity, expression. Riviere, throughout the correspondence and with characteristic optimism, attempted to placate Artaud on this matter.

"A physiologically affected soul." What a terrible heritage. Still, in a certain respect, without regard to insight, it can also be a privilege. It is the only means we have of understanding ourselves a little, at least of looking at ourselves....We must go below, we must look at the underside....How could we distinguish our intellectual or moral mechanisms if we were not temporarily deprived of them? This must be a consolation to those who experience death in small doses in this way, for they are the only ones who in some measure know what life consists of.⁴⁹

Riviere's consolatory words may have some truth, nevertheless his phrase "death in small doses" must surely be seen to belie his attempts to look on the bright side. Ultimately, Artaud's literary activities were irreconcilable with Riviere's critical standards. Artaud's poetry sprang from a realm largely untouched by logic or order, and emerged despite the impotence and schism that he felt.

As a poet I hear words that do not belong to the world of ideas.
For where I am there is no more thinking.
Freedom is just a convention and even more unbearable than
slavery.
And cruelty is an idea in practice.⁵⁰

Artaud's work continued, from these early expressions of himself, to develop towards an artform - the theatre - which worked on levels beyond the intellectual, and which expressed depths of suffering through affective forms of communication. Although Riviere never published the poems which had instigated the correspondence between himself and Artaud, he did eventually publish the letters because of their insight into the nature of inspiration and creative thought, and their description of the state of psychic schism.

Mind and Body

If Artaud is exemplary in embodying and expressing the mind/body split as it affects the whole of our society, then his response takes the opposite form from that which society manifests. Whereas modern Western man has largely concentrated on his logical, cerebral qualities of rationality and order, Artaud tended towards a subconscious and irrational mode of being. His poetry, as the Riviere correspondence suggests, is expressive of an inner realm of thought, which (to Riviere's mind) is not properly transformed into expression through the workings of the conscious intellect. With the surrealists, Artaud found credence for his version of artistic creation, however, he continued to seek the restitution of those conscious faculties which eluded him.

Whilst the surrealists celebrated their decision to abandon rational thought, Artaud craved holism, in which his being would no longer be rent by opposing forces; in which there would no longer be a gulf dividing him from himself. He yearned to have access to experience and to the free flow of ideas and actions, feelings and expressions.

Artaud felt that human monocerebral orientation is responsible for separating people from their sense of existence. To this effect, he writes of the Florentine painter, Paolo Uccello;

Paolo Uccello is struggling amidst a vast mental skein in which he has lost all the ways of his soul, right down to loss of form, discontinuance of his reality.⁵¹

It is cerebrality which causes Paolo to lose himself; he is bound up in a skein which is 'mental', into which reality has disappeared. Later Artaud makes it explicit; "For Paolo Uccello represents the Mind..." and he widens the accusation to include everyone - "...we are *solely* in the Mind".⁵²

Artaud's orientation was not in the rational mind, which he despised, but in the subjective and emotional mind, amidst those elements of the subconscious which he could glimpse. He had difficulty in transferring from this deeply interior realm to an outer realm, although he desperately wished to express his feelings and ideas. In the Riviere correspondence there is a great deal of discussion as to his faltering use of language, his difficulty in freely allowing impulse to flow into expression. He spoke of himself as "someone who has lost his *understanding of words*",⁵³ and announced that he was "the

man who has most felt the stupefying confusion of his language in relation to thought".⁵⁴

His despair is closely linked to this inability to easily associate language and thought, and, increasingly, he chose to reject rational, intellectual forms of writing and to rely, instead, on the emotive force of his subjective, inner expressions, (as the debate on literary worth with Riviere illustrated). With surrealist overtones, Artaud wrote,

People who leave the realm of the obscure in order to define whatever is going on in their minds, are trash.⁵⁵

Artaud stayed within the realm of the obscure.

In the confusion of inner and outer aspects of the self, Artaud felt divorced from his own physicality. He speaks of a sense of living in a 'void', and of feeling alienated from his own experience. He writes of,

...the void into which being born necessarily put me.

Neither is my life complete, but nor have I completely aborted death.

Physically I do not exist, owing to this massacred, incomplete body, no longer able to nourish my thoughts.⁵⁶

Why should the body be 'massacred' and 'incomplete'? In 'Description of a Physical State' Artaud goes some way towards explaining this.⁵⁷ His physical state is described in terms of physical discomfort and actual pain, more significantly, however, he also points to the body's alienation; sensation in the limbs is altered, movement confused, the limbs seem "woolly", "distant", "out of place". He calls it "A sort of inner breakdown in the entire nervous system", and refers to "the

disembodiment of reality". Artaud's separation was from his physical self as much as from his expressive self. For reasons which he increasingly came to see as societal, Artaud viewed the body as forced into unnatural and perverse ways of being which alienated it. Although Artaud wrote of physical pain, and although he despised his physicality, these things, he tells us, are not so bad as the state of numbness and disembodiment which he felt;

No, all the physical rendings, all the curtailment in physical activity and the discomfort at feeling dependant within our body, and this body itself laden with stone and resting on decayed supports, are not as bad as the affliction in being deprived of physical knowledge and one's sense of inner balance.⁵⁹

Being alienated from the body amounts to a separation from the self; Artaud reports that he was "Abandoned by every possible human feeling" and that life was lived as a sort of non-life in which loss of sensation debilitated.⁵⁹

If only we could enjoy our void, if we could be properly relaxed in our void, if this void were not some sort of being, but not quite death either.⁶⁰

The state which Artaud described is almost 'zombie'-like; a state of being in which experience is so numbed that the self seems to lose all credence, and is no longer felt to be vitally connected to the world. He wrote "It is so hard no longer to exist, no longer to be in something".⁶¹

An early work, Umbilical Limbo, written during Artaud's alliance with the surrealists, discusses this alienation from life.⁶² The title suggests suspension from life - or from that which nourishes life - and he writes of "Anguish which constricts life's umbilical cord".⁶³

Life's umbilical cord is so restricted, he felt, that we are cut off from the vital source of existence. Artaud felt so removed from life that he could not believe in his own reality. In the midst of suffering, and unable to accept the terms of existence, Artaud considered suicide. However, he wrote,

Before committing suicide, I would like to be given some real assurance of being.⁶⁴

How could he choose death when he did not feel himself to be alive? In the second piece on Paolo Uccello, Artaud had the protagonist ask "What is the Mind? What is *My-self*", and he described Uccello thus,

Picture him as you like, standing, in front of a window or an easel or even without any sort of appearance, shorn of his body, as he would have liked to be. With nowhere in space to mark the location of his mind.⁶⁵

It is clear, in the text, that Artaud equates Uccello with himself, and therefore we find two clues to Artaud's own state of being; he is eager to be rid of the body, but even more eager to spatially place himself; if he exists in his mind, then where is his mind? and what is his mind? That with which he identifies his being (vague as it is) is something which we cannot fully explain or describe; the mind is elusive, not necessarily to be associated directly with the brain. From this state of 'unbeing', this amorphous existence, Artaud unwound a discussion of suicide with startling logic

If I kill myself, it won't be to destroy myself, but to rebuild myself...I would reintroduce my designs into nature through suicide. For the first time I would give things the shape of my will. I would free myself from the conditioned reflexes of my organs which are so badly correlated with my ego. Then life would not be just an absurd accident - where I think what I am told to think - then I would select my thought and the direction of my faculties, tendencies and reality.⁶⁶

In a society in which the self is repressed, and obedience to the norms of the culture insisted upon, Artaud doubted his free will. Alive, his actions and responses were not free, but 'conditioned' and out of step with his 'ego'. In death, he suggested, he would be free of the world - free of the body which is both demanding and inhibited. Suicide would set him free from his imprisonment in the world, allow him to start to exist. For in life, Artaud saw no freedom of action or of choice,

This God has disposed of me to the point of absurdity. He kept me alive in a void of denials and furious self-disavowals. He destroyed everything in me, right down to the last surge of my conscious, sentient life. He reduced me to a walking automaton, but an automaton who feels the rupture of his unconscious self.

And thus I wanted to prove I was alive, I wanted to get back in touch with the resonant reality of things, I wanted to break with my fate.⁶⁷

In his schismatic existence, Artaud felt destroyed, disempowered, and disenfranchised from his own potential. He had been *paralysed*, and he was aware of the paralysis. Existence had been torn from him; suicide, then, was the route back to existence, whilst his fate as a living man was to be only half-alive.

More than anything, Artaud despised his inability to feel *alive*. He felt that he lacked a sense of the body's physical presence. Whilst he was neurotically repulsed by the flesh, at the same time he believed in the body's latent ability to perceive and 'understand' at a direct level which bypasses the analytic mind.

For me, whoever says Flesh says *apprehension* above all,....
Whoever says feeling also says intuition, that is, direct

knowledge,...

Yet whoever says flesh also says sensibility....⁶⁸

Artaud wrote of reasserting the role of the body in the whole person; of re-finding the abilities of the body (necessary to the whole person) which are lost in the cerebralisation of the self.

I renounce nothing which is Mind. I simply want to transfer my mind, its laws and organs, elsewhere. I do not give myself up to the mind's sexual automatism but, on the contrary, am seeking to isolate the discoveries which explicit reason does not give me, out of this very automatism. I give myself up to feverish dreams, but I do so in order to deduce new laws. In delirium, I seek multiplicity, subtlety and the eye of reason, not rash prophecies. There is a knife-edge here I cannot forget.⁶⁹

In the light of this Artaud sought to re-find himself; his desire was to achieve a unity of self in which the mind and body were not divided from one another. He recognised that within the body and the subconscious mind, the human had access to experiences which monocerebrality denied. Artaud's essential difficulty was the holistic integration of these experiences with the life of the conscious mind. This was his great despair;

God set me down in despair as in a constellation of stalemates whose radiance terminates in me. I can neither live nor die, but am unable not to wish to live or die. And all men are like me.⁷⁰

This last line is significant; ultimately, Artaud's thoughts were not only of himself; he saw all of society in the terms of disability that he knew to be his own lot.

In the letters to Riviere, Artaud had referred to creative thought and inspiration as instances in which the self's divisions momentarily dissolved; in which there was neither an inhibiting intellect nor an indulgence in the physical, but rather a transcendence in which the two

poles could be united, and man could be whole. Artaud writes of moments in which he achieves such a sense of unity; a momentary release from his own divided self through the esemplastic potential of inspiration. One such incident involves his appraisal of a painting by Andre Masson,

As for me, I have described this painting with tears in my eyes, for I am deeply affected by it. I feel my thoughts spread out before it as onto an ideal, ultimate area, only an area whose form could be brought into reality. It is a godsend to me.

And every one of my fibres unravels and finds its place in a predetermined slot. It is as if I were returning to my origins, I sense the location and arrangement of my mind.⁷¹

This is presumably the effect which Artaud hoped his writing - and later his theatre - could have upon an audience. In the poem, 'Dark Poet', he says "Your pen scratches at the heart of life";⁷² it was life at a depth that he wished to convey, and at a depth that he wished to touch others, as he had been touched by the Masson painting.

Artaud analyses 'unity' in terms of the unimpeded link between the subconscious and the conscious parts of the psyche.

That cord connecting me with the intellect which preoccupies me and the subconscious which nourishes me, reveals more and more subtle fibres at the heart of its tree-like tissue. And this is a new life, born, forever more profound, expressive and firmly rooted.⁷³

Expression is born of the unimpeded flow of ideas from the subconscious - where they arise out of the root of our human experiences - to the conscious where they are transmitted into an order and a form, and transported into the exterior realm.

Here again is the crux of the separation - the real self is subdued by the civilised and created self. Yet Artaud sees the

potential for authenticity, for a whole and unified being;

I can conceive a system in which the whole man would be involved, man with his physical body and the summits, the intellectual projection of his mind. ⁷⁴

He requires both poles of the self to co-exist in balance, and his route to this balance is via a transcendence of each. In transcendence our separation from physicality is no longer relevant; we have moved onto a plane in which our awareness of the body is from within, a natural and uncomplicated release from our physical unease. Likewise, the restrictions of the intellect are released, and we attain a plane of subconscious understanding, beyond ego.

Artaud sought a form of existence which did not restrict but which *opened* the mind,

To get carried away by things instead of fixing on one of their specious aspects, endlessly searching for definitions which only reveal their lesser aspects.

but to do that, to have the current of things in you, to be on a level with that current, at least to be level with life, instead of our deplorable mental state continually leaving us between two stools.

to be on a level with objects and things, having both their global form and meaning within us, that both the locations of your thinking matter and the feeling and vision of them within you should start moving at the same time. ⁷⁵

That is, to let our experience of things carry us forward, to understand at a depth, within ourselves, rather than focusing only on the appearance of things; to refrain from categorising and intellectualising experience - turning it into words. Artaud sees this as relocating us on a level with life; overcoming our current mono-cerebrality. Artaud attempted to synthesise his inner being with the

world around him, in order to be at one with, and a part of, the larger experience of life outside of the self.

If creativity and inspiration have the potential to unify us through transcendence, Artaud also felt that suffering and schism played their part in the creative, artistic process. Artaud's suffering, which he felt to be embedded in his psyche, and concerned with the workings of that psyche, was the source and subject of his art. Likewise, he did not believe that art could exist which was not born of human suffering; since life is suffering, and art should arise from one's life, then art which does not portray or grow out of suffering cannot be true to life.

...everything which is not tetanus of the soul or does not come from tetanus of the soul like the poems of Baudelaire and Edgar Allen Poe is not real and cannot be considered poetry.⁷⁶

Two years before he died, Artaud wrote 'Coleridge the Traitor' in which he expressed his dismay that Coleridge had denied his own vision of pain, and chosen to write banal poetry instead. In Artaud's interpretation, Coleridge is the Mariner, and the albatross is his true vision which he killed, and came to regret;

...undoubtedly the crime of the ancient mariner is that of Coleridge himself, and the albatross is that soul of man which Coleridge killed in order to live.⁷⁷

Artaud expected all art to arise from suffering; this attitude informed his opinion in the Riviere letters, and underlay his definition of literary worth. Artaud felt that Coleridge had ultimately denied his own expressions of suffering, thereby diminishing his art. This attitude is also present in the following discussion of French art (by

which he here refers to painting);

French art lacks true moral torment. I do not mean anxiety or sorrow. I mean focal, essential, absorbing torment. Disillusionment, yes, and even more, grief (although so little) but depth, questioning, or breaking, *never!* Externally drunk, Dionysiac as much as you like, and even on the edge of intoxication, a window on infinity, something between decay and phosphorous which Delacroix sometimes has.

But all this is still restricted, conscious, perfectly definable. No French painter ever gives us the feeling that his nature transcends him.⁷⁹

Suffering, as is so often the case, is linked to transcendence; French art may have sorrow, emotion, even irrational and Dionysiac qualities, but on the whole it does not, for Artaud, have 'moral torment', and it does not achieve transcendence. The 'nature', the inner self, or subconscious, instinctual self, of the artist does not break through the mask of cerebrality and constraint. The ego is not transcended by that which is greater than the product of self-control. Artaud writes,

I do not separate my thought from my life. With each of my tongue's vibrations I retrace all the paths of my thought through my flesh.

One must have been deprived of life, of the nervous irradiation of existence, of the conscious fulfilment of our nerves, to realise to what extent the Sensation and Knowledge of all thought is secreted in the nervous energy within our bones. Also how mistaken are those who bank on intelligence and pure intellect. Above all, there is the completeness of the nerves. Completeness which contains all consciousness and the magic ways of the mind through the flesh.

But what am I in the midst of this theory about the Flesh or more correctly, Existence? I am a man who has lost his life and who is seeking every way of re-integrating it in its proper place. In some measure I am the Generator of my own vitality. Vitality which is more precious to me than consciousness, for what in other men is only the means of being Human is all of Reason to me.⁷⁹

Here, Artaud is articulating his concept of integration with the self and the world; the ego and the conscious self must not be allowed to

sever the individual from life; the individual remains, in his thoughts, connected to the world. Likewise, Artaud says, thoughts have their reverberations throughout the 'flesh'; the activity of the mind is not separate from the body, but acting in unison with it. He goes on to say that it is through the daily state of schism that he has come to this knowledge of integrated existence. Having been "deprived of life" - of the nervous, visceral sensation of existence - he now knows how deeply physical sensation and mental activity should be intermingled; the mind and the body are not separate entities at all. In our 'completeness' the mind is contained in the body, the body holds the secrets of the mind.⁸⁰ But where is he, himself, he asks? If this is his theory of existence, how does he appear within it? "I am a man who has lost his life"; Artaud acutely feels this separation of sensation and knowledge. He is seeking to find his life again, reconnect with his own experience. He is responsible for his own vitality and it is this vitality that he must find; vitality which he values above consciousness. Whilst others regard their physical being as merely their life-force in the biological sense, Artaud feels that this is where all "Reason" lies; the source of an integrated self who can think and express. It is not the conscious intellect which provides Artaud with his 'reason', but the self within the body, within the perception and expression of life.

Artaud's vision of the self was prescient. He foresaw that a later age would concur with him, even if his own did not.

Come now, in ten years' time I will be understood by people who do what you are doing today. Then my eruptions will be understood, my crystals will be clear, they will have learnt how to adulterate my poisons and the play of my soul will be divulged... and people

will learn what the configuration of mind means and they will understand how I lost my mind.²¹

It was not ten years later, not even within his own lifetime, that Artaud gained popular credence. Not until the artistic avant garde of the 1960s in America and Europe did Artaud finally come into his own. Throughout his life Artaud used many art-forms - poetry, prose, cinema, radio, theatre - to express and counter his sense of existential schism. Ultimately, it was the theatre which served him best in this respect, and it was his writings on the theatre, in particular those in The Theatre And Its Double, which proved seminal, and which carried his thoughts and work forward into the theatre of the sixties and beyond.

The Theatre of Artaud

Artaud's initial interest in the theatre was as an actor. In 1920 he began to take on small acting parts in Paris, and in 1922 worked for a time at Charles Dullin's *L'Atelier*.²² This was to be an instructive experience, owing to the experimental nature of Dullin's theatre. The theatre was also to provide Artaud with a model for unified experience, such as he would later discuss in the Riviere letters. David Kelley, in Modernism and the European Unconscious, suggests that Artaud's love for acting was precisely because of the theatre's esemplastic potential.

...the attraction of acting for him may have lain precisely in the extent to which it could be felt to resolve the extremely personal sense of rupture which he felt between language, thought and being...For the duration of the performance, life or action, for the actor, coincides with thought in the concrete language which is the body and its gestures. So that the sense of authenticity of self which derives from the integration of language, thought and feeling is, however briefly, attained.²³

Kelley's illuminating argument touches upon the special function theatre has in providing, for the actor, a period of creativity in which the various aspects of the self are temporarily re-united. That which theatre can uniquely offer is the opportunity for the performer, absorbed in his role, to become conscious of existence in a visceral sense, to momentarily be in contact with the self as a whole. Artaud, as we have seen, is concerned with the difficulty in achieving sensation and feeling alive, and with his sense of distance from the world, and even from his own physical self. In theatre, he may well have found the experience, albeit fleeting, of unity of thought and action, mind and body, the self and the world. In performance, links are momentarily revived; Artaud's void is momentarily filled.

As his knowledge of, and interest in, the theatre widened, Artaud's personal use of acting led to the conception of a theory of theatre as a form of therapy - a means of integration for a whole society. From his earliest writings on theatre Artaud displays a clear, if radical, definition of its role. Theatre was to be a means to reintroduce people to all levels of experience.

We must get rid of the Mind, just as we must get rid of literature. I say the Mind and life interconnect at all levels. I would like to make a Book to disturb people, like an open door leading them where they would never have gone of their own free will. Simply a door communicating with reality.⁸⁴

That which Artaud suggests as the mechanism by which to effect the state of reintegration in the spectator is disturbance and shock. By physically affecting the organism of the viewer (perhaps in the way that shock affects by causing adrenalin to be produced within the body

of the individual) Artaud felt that the *whole* of the person could be contacted. Further, shock effects would have the potential to momentarily displace the spectator's cerebral defenses, thereby allowing direct experience to occur.

These theories and attitudes were in direct opposition to the naturalistic mainstream theatre ideas of the time. For Artaud, naturalism was a device based on a false assumption: that theatre should mirror life. He despised the pettiness and artifice of the naturalistic stage which sought only to reflect a society equally superficial and untrue. Artaud's personal sense of void, and his hankering for a more integrated way of life had led him towards the vision of a theatre which could truly affect people. The naturalistic stage sought only to entertain, or, at best, to present an argument. Perhaps it is not surprising, if Artaud's diagnosis is correct, that a people who cannot abide experience but must transform everything into the deadly logic of intellectual thought will not conceive of a theatre in which the central convention is experience. Rather, they produce a theatre which *photographs* life, reproduces what can only be looked at from a distance, never felt. Likewise, the audience watch from a distance like voyeurs, never participating with their lives, their bodies, or their emotions - only their passively receptive minds. Artaud had no interest in using theatre to copy life since he saw that its qualities lay elsewhere. He wrote,

What's an actor? An instrument at rehearsals, a photograph to redo what is already done?²⁵

Often he spoke out directly and venomously against the shallow,

psychological stage, obsessed as it was with naturalism and rationalism. In 'The Evolution of Decor', published in 1924⁸⁶ he wrote,

Re-theatricalise the theatre, such is their latest monstrous cry. Whereas theatre must be thrust back into life.

This does not mean the theatre should imitate life. As if we were only able to ape life. What we need is to rediscover *the life of the theatre* in all its freedom.⁸⁷

Rather than exaggerate the artificiality, illusion, and convention of the stage, Artaud sought the opposite; to reassert theatre as an entity in itself, not an imitation of *real* life. Artaud required the theatre to be 'human', to convey human emotions which had come from a depth of humanity - not the surface, rational, controlled reactions of the conscious mind, but the responses of the hidden self. This is in direct opposition to the theatre which communicates with the conscious, intellectual mind. Artaud writes,

To save the theatre I would even get rid of Ibsen because his protagonists discuss points of philosophy or morals which do not sufficiently affect their souls *in relation to us*.⁸⁸

Artaud does not necessarily dispute the intellectual aspect of Ibsen, but the fact that these discussions remain within the realm of the conscious. They do not *affect*, they do not touch the audience at a depth, they do not, therefore, put the viewer in touch with his own inner self. Artaud wished to "put the feelings and actions of the characters on a level where they have a more vital and unusual meaning;⁸⁹ a meaning that goes beyond the usual level of comprehension, and affects us 'vitaly', wholly.

Artaud's comments on the theatre in 'The Evolution of Decor', contain several suggestions which would later be developed by him in

his manifestoes for the Theatre Alfred Jarry (1926-1930) and the projected Theatre of Cruelty. In the introduction to volume two of the Collected Works, Victor Corti writes,

Even prior to 1926, Artaud had evolved certain ideas on the need for theatre to portray the metaphysical side of human nature. He considered this essential in order to re-establish a subconscious link between actor and spectator.⁹⁰

In 'The Evolution of Decor', Artaud rejects the notion of theatre as subservient to text, championing instead the development of the text through its physical realisation on the stage,

Subservience to the author, abiding by the text, what a dismal practice! Every text has endless possibilities. The spirit, not the letter of the text! A script requires more than analysis and insight.⁹¹

As Artaud saw, his desires for the treatment of text and the reappraisal of theatre's nature and potential called into question many existing theatrical conventions and structures;

The structure of the theatre would have to be changed so the stage could be moved according to the requirements of the action. The strictly spectacular side of plays would likewise have to be dropped. Then one would go there not so much to see, as to take part.⁹²

In the years and works to come, Artaud would attempt to create numerous theatrical conventions and manifestoes for an experiential theatre of affect.

Artaud's first dramatic work for the theatre was in the form of play-writing. *The Spurt of Blood* was first published in The Umbilical Limbo in 1925⁹³. The piece is short and contains many stage directions which would be difficult to realise theatrically, but which demonstrate

Artaud's surrealist imagination and the affective communication which he sought. For example;

*A host of scorpions crawl out from under the WETNURSE'S dress and start swarming in her vagina which swells and splits, becomes transparent and shimmers like the sun.*³⁴

The play incorporates both vocal and visual directions which provide insight into Artaud's conception of a non-naturalistic theatre. The following examples show the range of communicative devices which Artaud hoped to incorporate.

Eric Sellin, in The Dramatic Concepts of Antonin Artaud, points to the play's opening, in which 'I love you...' is repeated in different tones; Sellin describes the piece,

...their dialogue is highly inflected and their voices repeat the expressions not in exact repetition but as one might echo middle C with high or low C or vary it with C sharp.....

This early effort is perhaps more silly than dramatic, but what Artaud intended was obviously an incantatory declamation...³⁵

According to Christopher Innes, in Holy Theatre, Artaud's stage directions for lighting, which included the use of a strobe, were revolutionary for their time.³⁶ The intended effect was the disorientation of the spectator, and the creation of atmosphere and emotion to add force to the images. Innes writes,

...in Artaud's view the true value of lighting was its ability to dematerialise stage action, transposing it into a primitive, subconscious key.³⁷

To substantiate this, Innes points to Artaud's comments on Lugne-Poe's use of lighting for *Pelleas and Melisande*,

...here was truly living light; it was aware, it emitted aroma, becoming a new sort of active force and giving to his settings and his actors a luminosity like that in the ultimate absence of

consciousness of the "dervish".⁹⁸

The text itself incorporates parodic elements and moments of sheer irony, as Innes has pointed out,

All the main characters represent varieties of spiritualised ideal love as grotesque perversions of nature. The opening parodies a romantic duet on the trite theme of 'I love you and everything is beautiful... We are intense. Ah, how well ordered this world is!', rendering the clichés meaningless by artificial tonalities...⁹⁹

Artaud's rejection of conventional values is evident in the text; the figures representing society are destroyed by lightning flashes which reveal images of plague and natural disaster; the 'whore' is referred to as 'The Virgin', and the hand of God is bitten. Innes sees the play in terms of two concepts: an illustration of the cruelty of life and a celebration of sexuality. However, bearing in mind Artaud's general attitude to sex, it seems surprising that he should here choose to celebrate it.¹⁰⁰ It appears more as a marriage of sex and violence; if it is a 'celebration', it is certainly a vicious one - eyes are eaten during orgasm, scorpions crawl from the nurse's vagina, a penis burst's.

Both Innes and Claude Schumacher (editor of Artaud on Theatre) remark upon the play's similarity to early surrealist film; in particular, Bunuel's *Le Chien Andalou* (1928), which includes the famous image of an eyeball being split open by a razor blade.¹⁰¹ Innes articulates the intended effect of Artaud's violent imagery in terms of,

...using visceral shock to short-circuit rational response and release the subconscious.¹⁰²

Thus, Artaud's disturbing stage technique is directly related to the notion of mind/body split; by forcing the spectators to relinquish their defensive cerebrality, Artaud is hoping to elevate the life of the subconscious, thereby redressing the psychic imbalance which obsessed him.

In addition to its formal effect, violence in Artaud's work can generally be read contextually on a number of levels: as symptoms of man's distorted impulses breaking free of repression; as part of the intrinsic violence of corrupt civilization; conversely, as the necessary shock to destroy civilization; as a return to a primitive, pre-logical consciousness based on the struggle for survival.

Although Artaud wanted *The Spurt of Blood* to be performed by the Alfred Jarry Theatre, when it was set up the following year, it was not actually performed until 1964.¹⁰³

In 1926 Artaud set up his own theatre along with a playwright, Roger Vitrac, and a painter, Jean de Bosschere. They named their theatre after an inspiring influence; The Theatre Alfred Jarry. It was within the Jarry theatre that Artaud's ideas, famous for their articulation in The Theatre and Its Double and their subsequent influence on European and American theatre in the 1960s, first took shape. Ideas which had evolved in critical, theoretical writings and in *The Spurt of Blood* became, to some extent, practically realised within this framework. Whilst many contemporary critics disregard Artaud's practical work in the theatre, reviews of, and critical

responses to, the Jarry Theatre performances reveal a good degree of respect for the company. The company is referred to as "one of the freest avant-garde groups"; their work is described as a "true reintegration of magic, of poetry in the world"; "it questions the entire significance of theatre".¹⁰⁴

Throughout its existence The Jarry Theatre was dogged by lack of finances, and hostility from some areas of the public. Artaud wrote of being dissuaded by "the stupidity of some people and the bad faith and low viciousness of others".¹⁰⁵ Both Vitrac and Artaud had fallen from favour with the surrealists, and that group were hostile to their efforts to the point of sabotaging their performance of *A Dream Play* in 1928.

Corti reports that Artaud's contemporary critics accused the company of producing "a type of theatre that seemed close to anarchy",¹⁰⁶ but Corti himself counters this description by referring to the theatre manifestoes of this and later periods;

Artaud always built on known, if primitive, models and emphasised a systematic approach.¹⁰⁷

If the Jarry theatre was an attempt to re-create affective forms and set new precedents, it was equally, as Corti tells us, "a systematic onslaught on theatre as it then stood".¹⁰⁸ Artaud's programme was controversial as much as constructive. He wrote,

The Alfred Jarry Theatre, conscious of the theatre's collapse before the encroaching development of world-wide motion picture techniques, intends to contribute to the downfall of theatre as it exists in France today by specifically theatrical means, dragging all the literary and artistic ideas down with it in this destruction, along with the psychological conventions, all the plastic artificiality, etc., on which this theatre was built, by

reconciling the idea of theatre, at least provisionally, with whatever is most feverish in life today.¹⁰⁹

In Vitrac, Artaud had found a worthy collaborator. Corti tells us that Vitrac's play, *The Secrets of Love* (1925), "...was the first modern play that reintroduced the concept of metaphysical cruelty".¹¹⁰ By the second Jarry Theatre manifesto,¹¹¹ Artaud was writing about affective imagery in a way which equated it very closely with the notion of 'cruelty'; events were to be

shown from an extraordinary angle, with the stench and the excreta of unadulterated cruelty, just as they appear to the mind, *just as the mind remembered them*.¹¹²

Clearly, for Artaud, the inner workings of the mind - the subconscious - is heavily tinged with 'cruelty'. Artaud's use of the term 'cruelty' has provoked much discussion and caused widespread misunderstanding and misapplication. Whilst physical violence could certainly play a part in illiciting an emotional response from an audience, Artaud's intrinsic interest was in cruelty on a metaphysical level, and in the intrinsic cruelty of life itself. As with much of Artaud's writing, the term 'cruelty' appears to work on the level of association rather than of direct definition. In a letter to Ida Montmartre, an actress who had misgivings about appearing in the Jarry Theatre's production of Vitrac's play, *Victor*, Artaud wrote,

Everything dirty or filthy has a meaning and must not be taken literally. Here we are at the very heart of magic, the heart of human alchemy.¹¹³

It is clear that Artaud worked very much in this way: using metaphoric allusions whose associative power he explained in terms of 'magic'.

Likewise, he has described 'cruelty' as representing respectively, "an appetite for life", the acknowledgement of harsh reality and dark forces, the conditions for living, and the struggle to exist: cruelty as a name for life.¹¹⁴

In 1927, the Jarry Theatre produced their own version of Vitrac's *The Secrets of Love* in which Artaud, to highlight the inherent 'metaphysical cruelty', introduced the use of puppets. Corti tells us that,

Artaud considered that the introduction of puppets would induce the metaphysical fear produced by the inhuman representations of Oriental dance drama. When speaking of the Balinese Theatre, he was to write: "And there is a striking similarity between the truly terrifying look of their devil, probably of Thibetan origin, and a certain puppet with leafy green nails, its hands distended with white gelatine, the finest ornament of one of the first plays of the Alfred Jarry Theatre."¹¹⁵

'Metaphysical terror' was an important concept in even the earliest of Artaud's works. In *The Spurt of Blood*, Corti reminds us, there is a shower of dismembered limbs.

Dismemberment was always used by the Jarry Theatre to depict an underlying mental state rather than bloodshed.¹¹⁶

Corti makes the point that puppets are easily dismembered, thereby adding to the effect of one convention whilst making possible, in practical terms, another.

Vitrac's work also appealed to Artaud's interest in the flow of impulse from idea to expression, from the unconscious to the conscious realm, and struck him as working through mental faculties other than the rational. In a review of an earlier production of *The Secrets of Love* (1925), Artaud wrote,

It is good to feel such work exists at the frontier of the mind, where factual logic is excluded and where every feeling is instantly turned into action. Where every state of mind is registered with direct imagery and takes form with the speed of lightning.¹¹⁷

This is just the form of expression which Artaud was seeking and discussing in his early writings, and which would become a major objective of the Jarry Theatre. Artaud's notes on his 1928 production of Strindberg's *A Dream Play* reveal his attraction to that play;

An infinite compass of feelings are brought together and expressed in it. At the same time, we find in it both the outer and inner aspects of manifold, vibrant thought.¹¹⁸

The interplay of different levels of reality, and the existence of metaphysical questions in "a form that is at once concrete and mysterious"¹¹⁹ appealed to Artaud's notion of an affective theatre addressing existential questions. Similarly, Artaud's notes for Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata* (a production plan which was never actualised) reveal his interest in the subconscious;

It gives the feeling of something which is a part of a certain inner reality, without it being either supernatural or inhuman. And that is its attraction. It shows nothing but what is known, although hidden and out of the way. In this play the real and unreal merge, as they do in the mind of someone falling asleep, or someone suddenly waking up under a false illusion.

We have lived and dreamed everything this play reveals, but we have forgotten it.¹²⁰

In Artaud's definition, theatre's function was precisely this - to rediscover lost aspects and levels of human experience.

In 1927, Artaud published an article entitled 'Manifesto For An Abortive Theatre'¹²¹ which describes, in bitter tones, the conditions at the outset of creating the Jarry Theatre. He speaks of their

motivation in terms of a response to an age which he described as,

*confused...full of blasphemy and the dull glow of endless denials, when artistic as well as moral values seem to be disappearing into an abyss the like of which has never been seen in any other intellectual period...*¹²²

Artaud refers to the "despair" and "remorse" involved in launching the theatre, and suggests that they felt that they could not do otherwise. They could no longer believe in any existing theatre, and sought to revive theatre's original definition, in an era which specifically required it. Artaud wrote,

A terrible confusion weighs down on our lives. We are undoubtedly in a very critical period from the spiritual point of view. We believe in all the threats of the invisible. We are fighting the invisible itself.¹²³

In this context, Artaud's theatre is designed specifically in reaction to a state of spiritual turmoil. In response to this existential dilemma, theatre is set the task of uncovering truth from amongst chaos.

We are wholeheartedly applying ourselves to unearthing a certain number of secrets. And what we want to expose is this mass of desires, dreams, illusions and beliefs which have resulted in this lie no one believes in any longer, called, probably mockingly, the theatre.¹²⁴

To bring forward our hidden desires - our repressed selves - is the goal of Artaud's theatre;

...to succeed in showing the mind's obscure, hidden and unrevealed aspects, by a sort of real, physical projection.¹²⁵

By revealing the truth, Artaud would at once be reasserting the original nature and definition of theatre, and effecting a kind of therapy for an audience reached by affective communication and touched at a depth by the affective form.

Throughout the six Jarry Theatre manifestoes Artaud developed the concept of theatre as an act of life, on a level with life. In the first, dated November 1926, he opens with a discussion of the nature of theatre. Is it a game, he asks, or reality? If it is a game, he suggests, we have far too many problems in real life to be distracted by it. But,

If theatre is not a game, if it is indeed a reality, the problem we must solve is how we can restore its standing as reality and how to make every show a kind of event.¹²⁶

The Jarry Theatre was not to be an illusion, a photograph of life, or a game about life; but rather, a vibrant and potent event within, and relevant to, reality.

The Jarry Theatre does not cheat, does not ape life, does not portray it. It aims to extend it, to be a sort of *magical operation*, open to any development, and in this it answers a mental need audiences feel hidden deep down within themselves.¹²⁷

Artaud's theatre rejected illusory stage techniques which would allow the spectator to distance the events from reality. Rather than reproduce life, Artaud felt that theatre could 'extend' it; he wanted to take the spectators into a dimension which is generally lost to them. For Artaud, this was 'magical' because it revealed that which was hidden; that which he sought was real magic - not sleight of hand. Artaud makes his position very clear: either theatre is dispensable, or it must be put back into its proper contact with reality; "The theatre must give us this ephemeral but true world, this world in contact with real life".¹²⁸

By asserting theatre as a part of life, Artaud makes possible the

definition of theatre as an artform which can, potentially, have an effect on life. This is a radical opinion in the context of a culture whose mainstream theatre was based on the principles of illusion and entertainment.

In an early article written in 1921 about Dullin's experimental *L'Atelier* (of which he was then an actor) Artaud describes the mainstream theatre like this,

There are those who go to the theatre as they would go to a brothel. Furtive pleasure. For them, the theatre is only momentary excitement. It is like the dumping ground of their need to experience pleasure through all their physical and mental senses.¹²⁹

Even in 1921, Artaud was contrasting with this definition of theatre one in which theatre is "conceived as the achievement of the purest human desires", and attempting to "rediscover all of theatre".¹³⁰

By the time of the Jarry Theatre, those early thoughts had taken greater shape in Artaud's mind, no doubt influenced by his time with Dullin, and with the surrealists, and by his new collaboration with Vitrac. The Jarry Theatre manifestoes describe theatre in terms which approach a theory of theatre as therapy, and of a subconscious communication. It is in this way that Artaud felt that his theatre could "endeavour to express what life has forgotten, has *hidden*, or is incapable of stating."¹³¹

In terms of the audience's comprehension of the events presented, Artaud points towards a subliminal or subconscious perception; not speaking 'to the eyes, nor to the direct emotions of the "soul"'¹³² but

to something which is beyond these two categories, in which division does not occur.

We are not appealing to the audience's mind or senses, but to their whole existence. To theirs and ours. We stake our lives on the show that is taking place on stage. If we did not have a very deep, distinct feeling that part of our most intimate life was committed to that show, we would not think it necessary to pursue this experiment further.¹³³

In Artaud's definition, the theatre is elevated from the role of entertainment to that of a necessary and potentially healing act.

Artaud hopes to "return to the human or inhuman sources of the theatre, thereby to resuscitate it completely"¹³⁴. Although he does not make use of the term 'subconsciousness' it seems likely that this is the seat of those "sources" and "secrets" to which he refers, and that it is this level of comprehension which he hopes to inspire within the audience. He gropes toward an expression of 'subconscious' with unmistakable terms,

whatever is a part of the mystery and magnetic fascination of dreams, the dark layers of consciousness, all that obsesses us within our minds...

psychological emotions of a sort, where the heart's most secret movements will be exposed.¹³⁵

Before psychoanalysis had become an established and respected science, magic and mesmerism must have seemed the only route to the inner regions of the mind. I suggest that Artaud is moving towards a theory of theatre as a form of communication with the subconscious, and that, for want of a vocabulary or relevant model, he uses 'magic' to articulate the form this theatre will take. He asks,

How can a play be a magical operation, how can it answer needs

which go beyond it, how can the deepest part of the audience's soul be involved?¹³⁶

Artaud's answer is less than revealing: "This is what people will see if they trust us," he writes.¹³⁷ Many of the manifestoes display a similar vagueness: this is not a fully-fledged plan, but one which is still in its infancy. Artaud admits that elements of the programme are elusive but states their belief that "a miracle, will occur and reveal to us all that we still do not know".¹³⁸ Similarly,

...chance is our idol. We are not afraid of any failures or disasters. If we did not believe a miracle was possible, we would not even entertain such a risky course.¹³⁹

This is not surprising when we consider the revolutionary nature of their theatre, and the fact that it rested on such intangible premises. Artaud speaks of the essence of their theatre as "something imponderable", "an imperceptible discovery, able to create the greatest illusion in the audience's mind".¹⁴⁰

Since Artaud's principles are so firmly in line with the nature of spontaneous and inspired creation, it is not surprising that rather than consciously work to an ordered and pre-arranged method, he relies upon inspiration and findings within himself which may not easily be called to order. The surrealist technique of automatic writing would have lent credence to such faith in the subconscious imagination. Artaud is not, however, unaware of the risk involved in such an approach. The Jarry Theatre, he writes,

...may or may not find what we need...may or may not discover anything...may or may not find *the necessary disturbing element which is right to throw the audience into the sort of uneasiness he is aiming at.*¹⁴¹

It is highly significant that Artaud here refers to evoking

"uneasiness" in the audience through "disturbing" elements. We have already mentioned the tendency towards cruelty, shock, and metaphysical terror as ways in which to achieve affective communication. Clearly, Artaud's therapeutic theatrical experience works through the release of negative emotions. He speaks of making the spectator "smile a rather sickly smile"; of causing "human anxiety", and of refinding fear. In an era in which he felt affective experience to be lulled into non-existence, Artaud wished to return his audiences to a state of visceral alertness. By encouraging a renewed sensitivity to experience, Artaud hoped that the spectators would be awakened from their inability to exist vitally.

Artaud's attempts to communicate with the unconscious refer often to dream imagery and to "Whatever has a prophetic sense in life, is like an omen, is echoed in intuition".¹⁴² These are images which cause a reverberation within us, which touch some hidden part of the psyche, some resonant nerve in the body and thereby stir an understanding or memory - perhaps one which the conscious mind cannot comprehend at all. To this effect, imagery was to be "indestructible, irrefutable",¹⁴³ touching the spectator directly. Artaud speaks of shocking the audience with even "vulgar" means, and he lists "trumpets, fireworks, explosions, spotlights, etc."¹⁴⁴ This is the total theatre which Artaud is famous for: an eclectic involvement of all possible means to disorientate and overwhelm the audience.

The Theatre Alfred Jarry Manifestoes refer to the actors' movement as amounting to an "invisible" language, which would not be the result

of convention or technique, but rather would arise as an expression of the actor's inner self. Artaud wrote, "Not one theatrical gesture must be void of the fatality of life and the mysterious happenings that occur in dreams".¹⁴⁵ He approaches a gestural language which conveys the hidden signs of the body;

...it is meant to reveal unaccomplished actions, omissions, distractions, etc., in a word, all the ways in which personality betrays itself, thus rendering choruses, asides, monologues, etc., useless.¹⁴⁶

Therefore, we can see that Artaud was attempting to make the invisible visible through the expressive potential of the body, by replacing verbal theatrical technique with physical language. Likewise, vocal usage was to be distanced from dialogue, and more expressive forms discovered;

varying in intensity between a normal tone and the most jarring artificiality. Using this *new theatre tone*, we intend to emphasise and even disclose further, unknown feelings.¹⁴⁷

For *The Ghost Sonata*, Artaud's plans included a constant sonic background, consisting of the sound of waves and a fountain which would increase in volume to "the point of obsession"; wind sounds "giving a curious sensation of solemnity, but without howling, rather as if the atmosphere were being powerfully jarred".¹⁴⁸ There were also directions for the wind to mingle with the dialogue, "making a bizarre, inexplicable sound".¹⁴⁹

In order that the audience should be fully responsive to these effects, Artaud devised a system of 'de-identification'. Corti articulates the reasoning behind this move towards stylisation;

The audience was never permitted to identify with any of the

characters in the plays, for once they were allowed to do so their senses become lulled. In order fully to appreciate performances spectators must be kept constantly on the alert...¹⁵⁰

This also served to distance the performing from naturalism; Artaud's theatre was firmly based on the principle of metaphysics - going beyond the superficial reality to that which is hidden; conveying it in a form which has direct relevance to the spectator. To this effect, Artaud's production plans highlight the character of the old man in *The Ghost Sonata* as

a symbol of all sorts of conscious and unconscious ideas; revenge, hatred, despair, love and regret. At the same time he lives a very concrete, real life.¹⁵¹

The acting style for the piece was to facilitate the play's movement between reality and symbolism. Artaud notes that the actor playing the student should base his acting on,

a man who is not entirely awake, and when he touches solid matter (either literally or emotionally) he does so like a man acting by proxy.¹⁵²

Artaud was also drawn to the way in which Strindberg's play conveyed meaning through scenic material since this intersected with his own desire to utilise theatre's whole potential. Artaud planned to disproportionately highlight certain scenic details in order to create a sense of distortion. This would serve both to disorientate the spectators and create a nightmarish or dream-like atmosphere in which the significance of the scenic features would be revealed. Lighting effects such as "Violent, blinding lighting"¹⁵³ were designed to cause visceral shock to the audience, and to provide a further level for the conveyance of meaning.

Ultimately, the objective of Artaud's planned assault on the audience was entirely therapeutic. Of his high ideal, he wrote,

...those who come to our theatre must understand they are participating in attempts at mysticism, through which an important part of the mind and consciousness may finally be saved or lost.¹⁵⁴

In a postscript to the Manifesto For An Abortive Theatre, written later in 1926 (probably, according to Corti, after the break-up with the surrealists) Artaud attacked those who considered theatre to be counter-revolutionary and articulated his own theory of the revolutionary capacity of theatre as he defined it.

...I find one of the main reasons for the sickness we are suffering from is sheer externalisation and out and out proliferation of power. It also lies in the abnormal freedom of exchange of ideas now current between men, since this doesn't leave thought time to take root. We are driven to despair by mechanisation at all levels of contemplation.¹⁵⁵

Artaud characterises his contemporaries as too 'external', too superficial; ideas do not sink to or arise from a depth of the self, but from a surface level of mind. Artaud seeks his societal revolution at its base in a revolution of consciousness;¹⁵⁶

We ought to return to the state of mind, or simply even the practises of the Middle Ages, but genuinely, by a form of essential metamorphosis. Then I would consider we would have brought about the only revolution worth discussing.¹⁵⁷

Artaud considers that it is thought, our mode of being, our consciousness, which require alteration; otherwise changes to the superstructure are futile.

Bombs need to be thrown, but they need to be thrown at the root of the majority of present-day habits of thought...¹⁵⁸

The Alfred Jarry Theatre defined itself in terms of such a revolution in thought. Artaud likened the experience of watching the Alfred Jarry

Theatre to that of visiting the dentist or surgeon: the individual was to emerge changed. This was to be achieved through the disturbing effects of subconscious communication.

If we were not convinced we were going to affect them as deeply as possible, we would think ourselves unworthy of this, our highest task. They must be thoroughly convinced we can make them cry out.¹⁵⁹

Significantly, Artaud's route to the subconscious is via the *whole* person, not just their cerebral or physical capacities;

Audiences coming to our theatre know they are present at a real operation involving not only the mind but also the very senses and flesh.¹⁶⁰

At its very core, Artaud's theatre was an attempt to reintegrate mind and body in the fragmented person of the spectator whom Artaud assumed to suffer as he, himself, suffered.

Artaud's notion of theatre as an autonomous force equal to life is encapsulated in the title of his most famous and seminal work, the collection of essays, The Theatre And Its Double. He explained his choice of title in a letter to Jean Paulhan,

For if the theatre is the double of life, then life is the double of the true theatre...this title will correspond to all the doubles of theatre which I thought I had found over so many years: metaphysics, the plague, cruelty.¹⁶¹

The suggestion of autonomy, that theatre is separate from, but related to, life, elevates the theatre from its subserviency to a position of equality. Rather than merely being a vehicle to reflect the surface of society, Artaud saw theatre as a significant phenomenon with the power to go beyond the realms of normality. Theatre as a concentration of the emotional and spiritual qualities of existence would be, in effect, superior to the mundanity of everyday life. Furthermore, theatre's

ability to frame emotions and transform the personal into the universal; its ability to communicate on a subconscious level and to expose interior reality gave it a metaphysical quality. This is a substantial reappraisal of the role theatre can play, and one which effectively upturns the conventional understanding of the relationship between life and art. That the equation could be inverted - "life is the double of the true theatre" is a profound notion with far reaching connotations about how we view both reality and art. It is also a sign of Artaud's belief in theatre's power to affect society.

Eric Sellin suggests that the image of the 'double' held a personal rather than logical place in Artaud's thoughts.¹⁶² As with much of his writing, Artaud employs the term in a manner resonant with connotations which are not always immediately accessible to the reader. In the explanation to Paulhan, quoted above, Artaud connects the term 'the double' to a number of images from his previous writings, thereby shedding light upon the nature of the writing (and subsequently, the theatre) itself. When Artaud says the term "will correspond to all the doubles which I thought I had found..." it becomes clear that what he is seeking in the double is a mirror image through which to understand the nature of theatre. If one bears in mind the theatre of Artaud's time, its role, and form, and the words used to describe it, then it is easy to imagine that Artaud struggled to conceive of his vision within the existing vocabulary. Even today, within the context of many years of directly affective, non-verbal theatre, a critical vocabulary to express and evaluate theatre's potential is not easily available. For Artaud, whose vision was so radically different from that which had

gone before, it was necessary to abandon the conventional terminology and turn to other areas in search of an illuminating vocabulary. Plague, cruelty, and metaphysics - the early tried and discarded 'doubles' - were, in effect, attempts at metaphor. Artaud's struggle with the uneasy concept of theatre as plague is a search for a vocabulary appropriate to his vision. If he has necessity to resort to outlandish imagery then it is because of a lack of terminology with which to describe a theatre whose very tenets were contrary to the principles of the theatre of his time. Ultimately, and ironically, it is the mirror-image itself, the idea of a 'double' which comes to represent the Artaudian theatre. The 'double' is the search for metaphor, for words; it is also the reappraisal of the essential relationship between performer and audience, theatre and life, inner and outer reality.

In his essay on the Plague,¹⁶³ as with metaphysics and alchemy, Artaud finds a phenomenon through which to draw parallels with theatre, thereby 'borrowing' a vocabulary. The poetic, often obscure, writing has often been deemed impenetrable and denied critical respect. That the theatre could be modelled on plague is regarded as a wild and unsubstantiated notion. For Artaud, however, plague is a metaphor, a link into a vocabulary capable of expressing concepts new to the field of theatre. Artaud's references to the effects of a scourge are couched in terms more often mythopoetic than scientific, but nevertheless, they provide a touchstone by which to compare the effects of a potential 'true' theatre.

Artaud's inspiration for the choice of plague as an image may well have been the writing of St. Augustine to whom he refers in *Theatre and Plague*.

In *The City of God*, St Augustine points to the similarity of the plague which kills without destroying any organs and theatre which without killing, induces the most mysterious changes not only in the minds of individuals but in a whole nation.¹⁶⁴

Augustine saw the theatre as a plague in that it was "a pestilence... to infect not the bodies but the morals...it benighted the minds of men with so gross a darkness and dishonoured them with so foul a deformity." His was a world in which inherent good was poisoned by the depravity and evil of theatre. Artaud's concept of theatre as plague takes exactly the opposite view. For Artaud, evil is inherent in life itself and Western society is characterised by a refusal to admit to basic human instincts. The repression of our natural life-force results in warped and dangerous impulses which find expression at points of breakthrough or high emotion: through theatre or plague.

It may be true that the poison of theatre, when injected in the body of society, destroys it as St. Augustine asserted, but it does so as a plague, a revenging scourge, a redeeming epidemic...¹⁶⁵

Just as the onset of plague disrupts society and shatters the facade of civilization, so too should theatre be catalytic. Far from 'benighting' men's minds with evil as Augustine would have it, Artaud sees theatre as purging an evil which is already present, harboured by society.

It seems as though a colossal abcess, ethical as much as social, is drained by the plague. And like the plague, theatre is collectively made to drain abcesses.¹⁶⁶

For Artaud, plague acts as a metaphor for the surfacing of all that simmers in the undercurrent of life, in two ways: in the breakdown of society whereby morality gives way to depravity, and in the breakdown of the body whereby "...the fluids, furrowed like the Earth by lightning, like a volcano tormented by subterranean upheavals, seek an outlet".¹⁶⁷ Artaud's comparison of theatre and plague, however, goes further than to say that they each perform a "wholesale exorcism". Within the nature of plague as he sees it, Artaud finds further points of contact with the theatre. Like theatre, plague creates a link between the imagination and reality, in the form of the victim's hallucinations. Both theatre and plague create images which are taken to extremes and which rediscover archetypes. Each happens when the inconceivable begins - at the point where reality breaks down. Victims of plague, like participants of theatre, are driven toward "heroic" states of being. Sensual tranquility is upset, and the repressed subconscious is released into fantasy. Theatre and plague can each inspire a state of "potential rebellion", having revealed glimpses of possibilities; for this reason, acts normally opposed in society become acceptable. The latent undercurrent of human cruelty is exteriorised, and minds are urged toward delirium. Both victim and actor pursue their imaginings, and, whilst no outer signs are visible, an inner paroxysm occurs.¹⁶⁸

Both theatre and plague can be seen as extreme forces which rediscover the powers of nature and those dark parts of our inner psyche most hidden from the world. If theatre induces evil, or the outpouring of dark emotions, then it is because society has impelled us

to frustrate these natural impulses and theatre is performing the function of returning us to ourselves. Of 'Seraphim's Theatre', Artaud wrote,

This means that the *magic of living* exists anew, the intoxicating air in the cave surges up like an army from my closed mouth... This means that when I act, my scream stops turning in on itself while it awakens its double in sources in the cave walls. ...While I live I cannot feel myself living, but when I am acting then I feel I am existing.¹⁶⁹

Artaud's ontological schism was healed in the act of performance, and thus he looked to the theatre as a form of therapy for society. The theatre which Artaud envisioned was designed to *affect*; to communicate with the visceral and subconscious aspects of the individual. This was to be a revelatory theatre which spoke directly to the senses, conveying as much about the viewer as about the performance, and demanding a physical and emotional response. In Artaud's theatre, the director's yardstick was to be emotional relevance rather than verisimilitude or realism. Everyday and superficial reality was to be banished from the stage. Artaud's theatre was to be metaphysical - communicating essential inner truths to the spectator as a *whole* person.

This was an attempt to go beyond the schism of mind and body, in order to bring about an integration of the two. This in itself was to be the primary function, or communication, of any performance; the form, therefore, playing a larger part than the content. Thematically, Artaudian theatre was to be a re-examination of organic man. The fundamental role of this theatre was an enquiry into the essence of

life and of humankind. For Artaud, the undercurrents of life were matters of cruelty: human hunger for life; the continuous nature of evil; the necessity of pain. He saw humans as creatures of instinct and imagination repressed by society and the demands of civilization.

Since Artaud's attempt was to communicate with the inner repressed person, he sought means to address the spectator as a whole being, speaking to the senses as well as the intellect; to the subconscious as well as to the rational mind. Artaud proposed a visceral communication on a deeper, more subtle, and less easily rationalised level of perception. Imagery would be directed at the eye and ear, not the mind; physical elements would affect the mind obliquely, via the nerves and senses. Metaphysical matters would be absorbed by the spectator in both mind and body. The performance would be communicated through symbolism and gesture on all levels, to all of the senses. Artaud wished to return his audiences to a natural state of perception in which the body and the subconscious would be involved to a greater extent than the logical mind. This revitalisation of all levels of communication between 'the mind and life' might be read as the reforging of links between the mind and the body - that which transmits information about life and the experience of life.

Artaud's theatre, in order to be effective in this aim, worked on two assumptions; that the actor could effect a purgatorial, healing experience on behalf of the audience, and that the stage experience could evoke a mirror experience within the spectator. This was clearly a 'ritual'-based theatre, and Artaud created the term 'holy theatre'

accordingly. Artaud, then, can be seen to be attempting a theatre of transcendence, in which the spectators could approach a spiritual and physical metamorphosis, the aim of which was to achieve 'wholeness'. With this objective, along with his general distaste for Western standards, it is not surprising to find Eastern influences and ambitions in Artaud's vision of the theatre.

Charles Dullin recalls Artaud's interest in the Oriental theatre being in evidence as early as 1922, and in 1930, the Theatre Alfred Jarry acknowledged as influences the "indisputable examples furnished by the *Chinese, Negro-American, and Soviet theaters*".¹⁷⁰ However, in 1931, the Balinese Dance Theatre visited Paris and provided Artaud with an example of highly effective Oriental theatre which served to confirm his ideas, and solidify his belief in a non-verbal, ritualistic, theatre. The Balinese theatre corresponded to Artaud's burgeoning vision in terms of its mystical and transcendent nature, and in its ability to communicate on a level quite alien to the Western theatre. Gesture and sign replaced dialogue; the performers were highly disciplined and entered a trance-like state from which they were delivered by exorcism at the end of the performance; their roles were not characters in a plot, but the representations of metaphysical states. Much as Artaud had envisioned, the Balinese represented dream and the unconscious through the use of techniques of fragmentation and simultaneity. The aim of their performance was not to blandly entertain but to transcend reality; to contact the inner self, the subconscious. There was no set, no attempt at illusion, rather, an attempt at truth: that is, an attempt to represent metaphysical

elements in a performance structure designed to have an actual, ritualistic effect upon the performers and audience. Artaud was misled in his assumption that the physical language of the Balinese troupe was intuitively conceived and instinctively understood. It was actually a strict technique learnt and conveyed as a conventional language, albeit an esoteric one. However, the Balinese dance provided Artaud with a working example of 'Holy' theatre - a touchstone for his own visions.

John Coast's description of Balinese dance theatre conveys an impression of the physical and sensual effects of this particularly Eastern phenomenon;

....a terrific chord I shall never forget, and straightway we were drowned in the music, drowned, overwhelmed, carried away, submerged.... a percussive attack, an electric virtuosity, a sort of appalling precision which, as it echoed and rebounded off that long wall, almost pulsated us out of our seats, bringing tears of sheer astonished emotion to our eyes. This music broke its way into us, possessed us.¹⁷¹

It is clear to see how this theatre corresponded to the image which Artaud had been trying to articulate, and it is no coincidence that it should be an Eastern artform which provided him with such an example. Eastern religion and culture is concerned with Holism in a way that the West is not. When Artaud said "All of this is steeped in deep intoxication, restoring the very elements of rapture",¹⁷² he was referring to the direct physical confrontation of the Balinese dance which inspires 'rapture' by inspiring immediate and subconscious reaction to a spectacle which bypasses the conscious brain and goes straight to the senses. 'Rapture' in this case, is the result of being made aware of one's capacity to 'feel'.

Artaud's vision of a theatre of transcendence took shape in the light of a growing awareness (personally, and within his society) of Eastern and primitive philosophies and cultures. His theory for the theatre is influenced by the East both directly and by way of his world-view, his awareness of the Western tendency to separate mind and body. His was the first use of the term 'ritual' with regard to theatre and his writings have played an important part in conveying the influence of Eastern culture to the Western theatre of the 1960's and onwards.

Artaud's personal awareness of the void between the mind, (the 'self'), and the body, (the medium through which we perceive the world) led him towards a unique reappraisal of theatre. His achievement is vast; although his theory did not take shape within his lifetime, his writings were to prove seminal and essential to the avant garde that followed. What Artaud achieved was a vision of a theatre for the West which did not emulate the trappings of Eastern theatre but which reiterated Eastern principles of holism and transcendence. With the Balinese dance as his guiding star, and entranced by alchemical metaphors, Artaud haltingly articulated his own deeply personal notion of a metaphysical and affective theatre.

At his death, Artaud left behind fragmentary and imperfected plans. His experiences in the theatre - and, indeed, in life - had caused him much bitterness; nevertheless, in the years immediately previous to his death (and following his release from several years in psychiatric institutions) there were moments of reward. His essay on

Van Gogh won a literary award, and he was working, at the time of his death, on a commissioned presentation for radio. Greater than any recognition that he received in his lifetime, however, was the response that occurred when the Theatre and Its Double was printed, for the first time, in an English translation in 1958. Theatre-makers in Europe and America were drawn by Artaud's theories for the theatre and he became, for many, a mentor. The experiments of these practitioners, some of whom are discussed later in this study, provide us with a practical insight into the ideas which Artaud, himself, never fully achieved. There also arose, separately and without the direct influence of Artaud, a group in whom Artaud's highest ideals of a holy and transcendent theatre were realised.

Eight years after Artaud's death, a company was formed in Poland which, although its director knew nothing at that time of Artaud's work, may be seen to have accomplished the intentions and desires articulated by Artaud. Jerzy Grotowski and the Polish Laboratory Theatre were also concerned with holism and with the creation of a theatre based on a-cerebral means of communication. In turning now to Grotowski, we will develop our discussion of the concepts laid down by Artaud, and discover the methods and techniques by which Grotowski succeeded in creating the affective theatre which Artaud had foreseen.

NOTES

- 1 Antonin Artaud, Artaud: Collected Works vol. 1. trans. Victor Corti, (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1968) p. 49.
- 2 Ibid. p. 83.
- 3 David Kelley, 'Madness and Self-Expression' in Peter Collier and Judy Davies, eds., Modernism and the European Unconscious (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 230-244.
- 4 Ibid., p. 230.
- 5 For examples of this, see Artaud's writings on Van Gogh and Paul Uccello -
 (a) 'Van Gogh: The Man Suicided By Society', in Jack Hirschman, ed., Artaud Anthology (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1965), pp. 135-163.
 (b) 'Paul the Birds or The Place of Love', Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 52.
- 6 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 74-75.
- 7 In Jack Hirschman, ed., Artaud Anthology (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1965), pp. 135-163.
- 8 David Kelley, p. 243.
- 9 Maurice Nadeau, The History of Surrealism trans. Richard Howard, rep. (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978).
- 10 Ibid., p. 46.
- 11 Ibid., p. 48.
- 12 Ibid., p. 49.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 49-50.
- 14 see Ibid., chapter three.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 47-48.
- 16 Ibid., p. 50.
- 17 Ibid., p. 51.
- 18 Ibid., p. 51.
- 19 See Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), pp. 7, 16.

- 20 Maurice Nadeau, p. 53.
Note the reappearance of De Sade in 1965 in Brook's production of Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* (1964); see chapter five of this thesis.
- 21 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 110.
- 22 Maurice Nadeau, p. 107.
- 23 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 15.
- 24 Note the presence of Artaud in Nadeau's list of "Principal Works in which the Surrealist Spirit has been Manifested"; Maurice Nadeau, p. 349.
- 25 Ibid., p. 148
- 26 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 27-45.
- 27 Ibid., p. 34.
- 28 Ibid., p. 10.
- 29 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 10. (N.B., dated 1913 and 1920 respectively).
- 30 Ibid., p. 30.
- 31 Ibid., p. 28.
- 32 Ibid., p. 18.
- 33 Ibid., p. 20.
- 34 Ibid., p. 27.
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- 36 Ibid., p. 28.
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- 42 Ibid., p. 31.
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- 45 Ibid., p. 42.
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- 47 Ibid., p. 42.
- 48 Ibid., p. 40.
- 49 Ibid., p. 44.
- 50 Ibid., p. 20.
- 51 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
- 52 Ibid., p. 53.
- 53 Ibid., p. 165.
- 54 Ibid., p. 74.
- 55 Ibid., p. 75.
- 56 Ibid., p. 168.
- 57 Ibid., p. 54-57.
- 58 Ibid., p. 84.
- 59 Ibid., p. 83.
- 60 Ibid., p. 73.
- 61 Ibid., p. 73.
- 62 Umbilical Limbo can be found in volume one of Artaud's Collected Works; it includes *The Spurt of Blood*, 'Description of a Physical State', 'Letter to the Legislator of the Drug Act', and several other pieces.
- 63 See 'Letter To The Legislator Of The Drug Act', Ibid., p. 61.
- 64 'On Suicide', *ibid.*, no. 1, p. 157.
- 65 'Paul the Birds or The Place of Love *followed* by Letter To A Lemon-Headed Man' from Cup and Ball, *ibid.*, p. 147.
- 66 Ibid., p. 157.
- 67 Ibid., p. 158.
- 68 Ibid., p. 166.
- 69 Ibid., p. 167.

- 70 Ibid., p. 159.
- 71 Ibid., p. 57.
- 72 In Umbilical Limbo, *ibid.*, p. 57.
- 73 Ibid., p. 85.
- 74 Ibid., p. 164.
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- 77 Antonin Artaud, 'Coleridge The Traitor' reproduced in Jack Hirschman, p. 134.
- 78 Ibid., p. 135.
- 79 Ibid., p. 165.
- 80 Compare to Grotowski's theory of 'body-memory' in chapter three of this thesis.
- 81 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 76.
- 82 See Artaud's essays on Dullin's theatre - 'Charles Dullin's L'Atelier', Artaud: Collected Works, vol. 2, trans. Victor Corti, (London: Calder and Boyers, 1971), pp. 128-129.; 'L'Atelier Theatre', *Ibid.*, pp. 130-132.
- 83 David Kelley in Peter Collier and Judy Davies, p. 235.
- 84 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 49.
- 85 Naomi Greene, p. 20.
- 86 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 152-155.
- 87 Ibid., p. 153.
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- 90 Antonin Artaud, Artaud: Collected Works vol. 2., p. 7.
- 91 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 153.
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- 95 Eric Sellin, The Dramatic Concepts of Artaud (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1968), pp. 117-118.
- 96 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant-Garde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
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- 100 Naomi Greene, pp. 120-125.
- 101 See Claude Schumacher, ed., Artaud on Theatre (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 20.
- 102 Eric Sellin, p. 93.
- 103 See chapter five of this thesis.
- 104 For critical responses and reviews see Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 2, pp. 214-216.
- 105 Ibid., p. 22.
- 106 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 13.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 2, p. 7.
- 109 Ibid., p33.
- 110 Ibid. p. 7.
- 111 Corti produces evidence that it was, in fact, Artaud who wrote the manifestoes; see Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 2, pp. 211, 216.
- 112 Ibid., p. 26.
- 113 Ibid., p. 66.
- 114 In 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto', Artaud writes, "Cruelty: There can be no spectacle without an element of cruelty as the basis of every show. In our present degenerative state, metaphysics must be made to enter the mind through the body." Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double trans. Victor Corti, (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1970), p.77.

See also the 'Letters of Cruelty', Ibid., pp. 79-80.

- 115 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 2, p. 8.
- 116 Ibid., p. 8.
- 117 Ibid., p. 136.
- 118 Ibid., p. 68.
- 119 Ibid., p. 68.
- 120 Ibid., p. 97.
- 121 Ibid., pp. 22-25.
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- 126 Ibid., p. 15.
- 127 Ibid., p. 27.
- 128 Ibid., p. 16.
- 129 Ibid., p. 130.
- 130 Ibid., pp. 130, 131.
- 131 From 'The Alfred Jarry Theatre (1928)' reproduced in Claude Schumacher, ed., Artaud On Theatre (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 35.
- 132 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 2, p. 23.
- 133 Ibid., p. 17.
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- 151 Ibid., p. 98.
- 152 Ibid., p. 104.
- 153 Ibid., p. 101.
- 154 Ibid., p. 23.
- 155 Ibid., p. 25.
- 156 Compare to the ideas of the Living Theatre - see chapter four of this thesis.
- 157 Artaud, Collected Works, vol. 2, p. 25.
- 158 Ibid.
- 159 Ibid. p. 17.
- 160 Ibid.
- 161 Eric Sellin, pp. 93-94.
- 162 Ibid., pp. 95-96.
- 163 Antonin Artaud, The Theatre And Its Double trans. Victor Corti, (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1970), pp. 7-22.
- 164 Ibid., p. 17.
- 165 Ibid., p. 22.
- 166 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
- 167 Ibid., p. 11.

- 168 This paragraph summarises the various links Artaud makes between theatre and plague throughout the essay.
- 169 From 'Seraphim's Theatre', Antonin Artaud, The Theatre And Its Double, pp. 100-101.
- 170 Eric Sellin, p. 51.
- 171 John Coast, Dancing Out Of Bali (London: Faber & Faber, 1954). See also I Wayan Lendra, 'Bali and Grotowski: Some Parallels in the Training Process', The Drama Review, Spring, 1991, vol. 35, no. 1, T129.
- 172 From 'On The Balinese Theatre', Antonin Artaud, The Theatre And Its Double, p. 47.

CHAPTER THREEGROTOWSKI

Civilisation is sick with schizophrenia, which is a rupture between intelligence and feeling, body and soul.¹

For a time, the most exciting theatre in the world was being created in a small town in Poland. In 1959 Jerzy Grotowski became director of The Theatre of the Thirteen Rows, which was to become known as the Polish Laboratory Theatre. Within a little over a decade Grotowski and his company would have developed, and abandoned, a style of theatre which had influence, and created reverberations, all over the world.

If Artaud was dogged by the personal conditions which led to his recognition of atrophied affect in society, Grotowski may be seen to have surpassed his own limitations in that respect.² Indeed, his theatre is based very firmly on the surpassing of societally-conditioned limitations in both the actor and the spectator. The actor-training which Grotowski developed with his company is intimately concerned with notions of the unification of mental, physical, and spiritual impulses, and thereby provides us with an invaluable insight into the ways in which actor-training can effectively address these issues. His work in the theatre also details a profound enquiry into the nature of affective communication, and his experiments with audience manipulation, and the role of the spectator, are exemplary in this respect. Grotowski's work in the theatre was unique, and may

certainly be considered to mark a highspot in any history of affective theatre. If Artaud embodied the state of mind/body schism, Grotowski's theatre uncovered methods by which to return to holistic balance.

In the early years of the group, (1959-1961) certain technical approaches to the work were necessary which led Grotowski and his actors towards important discoveries about the nature of their craft.³ As the need to expand the actors' abilities in keeping with Grotowski's plans grew, the Theatre of the Thirteen Rows came to require a more extended rehearsal time in which the company could learn and develop appropriate skills. In time the training took on an autonomy of its own and became, in a real sense, the driving force in the creation of performances. It was initially essential to economise on props and set for financial reasons, but this poverty came to have aesthetic importance, and to be a guiding principle and characteristic of the work. In part, this may have been because the group came to see the place of such means in the developing, or emerging, theory of mind/body theatre. Further, Grotowski has spoken of 'poor theatre' as a deliberate decision to abandon technological effects, which seemed more suited to the realms of film, television, and radio. In the face of this 'competition', Grotowski decided to concentrate on those aspects of communication which belonged uniquely to the theatre. The early work also initiated experiments into environment and actor-audience relations which were to continue in various forms throughout the coming years, and which would ultimately contribute to the decision, in 1970, to move away from theatre forms altogether.

Grotowski has been considered to be a natural successor to Artaud, and although he claims no direct influence from Artaud, there are certainly many ways in which the work of the Laboratory can be seen to realise Artaud's visions: the holy actor; affective communication; theatre as a form of psychological therapy; theatre as a way to break through the life mask. Not incidentally, a central essay in Grotowski's book, Towards A Poor Theatre, discusses Artaud.⁴

The significant point of contact between the two men is not so much in superficial similarities of technique and theory as in their underlying attitudes towards the theatre, and towards life. Like Artaud, Grotowski was concerned with the healing of disunity. As early as 1960, in *Cain*, we can see this concern emerging as a theme in the portrayal of Alpha and Omega as the forces of Nature and Reason respectively. Increasingly, the form of the performance work came to embody the unification of these two forces as they are manifest in the human being, and increasingly the esemplastic potential of creativity was tapped and exploited in the actor-training. The unity of the actor in terms of mind and body, and the subsequent transcendent state became the point of focus for each production. By showing the audience such self-revelation and holism the actors hoped to encourage others toward a similar experience. The effect of the performer's 'act' of self-discovery (in a holistic more than a psychological sense) would be to recall to audiences their own ability to feel and to experience life at a depth of feeling.

That which motivated this artistic momentum towards unity and balance was an awareness of the tendency in modern Western society to live alienated and divided lives in which our physical and instinctual selves are repressed and subjugated by the dominance of intellect. Jennifer Kumiega refers to this concept in her comprehensive book The Theatre of Grotowski⁵;

How humankind may be changed and the life-experience of the individual improved is also self-evident in Grotowski's words and work. What is required is the healing of the mind/body split (Western society's schizophrenia); the eradication of the psycho-physiological blockages in the individual to permit contact with deeper impulses; a communion with others through spontaneous reaction; and hence a mutual discovery of sources of energy, light and love to enrich daily experience. All of Grotowski's work was implicitly towards these ends...⁶

This chapter traces the ideology of schism and unity through Grotowski's early work to its ultimate theatrical expression in the training and performance work of the Laboratory Theatre. It examines the influence of Eastern philosophy upon Grotowski's development of this ideology, highlights the points of contact with Artaud, and explores the connotations of the move away from theatre, (into, and beyond, the activity called 'paratheatre'), showing the ways in which Grotowski's central themes - poor theatre, treatment of text, environment, actor-spectator, actor-training all had their roots in, or were otherwise related to, the mind/body split theory.

Early Work

From the very first production, *Orpheus*, in 1959, Grotowski had demonstrated a dialectic relationship to text by framing the writer's dialogue in such a way as to undercut it with his own, often contrary,

message. As a Polish reviewer commented, the play would become, for Grotowski, a structure on which to develop his own creation.

The director wished to transmit the philosophical contents through purely theatrical means. Therefore the literary aspect becomes a scaffolding, on which theatre can build its own construction.⁷

Grotowski's development of this treatment of text (which echoed Artaud's dismissal of the sanctity of the written word) was influential throughout the European and American avant garde of the 1960s and '70s. It provided a new model for theatrical creation, and encouraged the unseating of the writer as the central creative figure. Generally, in the early plays, Grotowski's additional 'narrative' was in the form of an intellectual philosophy which required cerebral analysis and response. *Shakuntala*, in 1960, was reviewed as being "too much of mathematics, of conceptualism, and too little poetry".⁸

In both *Orpheus* and the second production, *Cain*, Grotowski thematically highlighted the relationship between man's intellectual faculties and the natural world. His rewriting of Cocteau's ending to *Orpheus* involved a celebration of experience, and of both natural laws and human intellect.⁹ In *Cain*, Grotowski replaced the characters of the biblical story with metaphysical emblems which related directly to the struggle between natural man and the intellectual world of modern society. In this way he highlighted the earlier theme within the context of a play which Flaszen has described as dealing with "the antagonism between man and society, man and the world...".¹⁰

Grotowski also added a final scene to the play to clarify his additional 'narrative'. The scene consisted, in Jennifer Kumiega's

words, of "an ecstatic dance to celebrate the theme that 'the world is one'".¹¹ The characters, God as Alpha, or Nature, and Lucifer as Omega, or Reason, are united in a final image which surely bespoke Grotowski's own concern for unity: between reason and nature; between man and the world; between mind and body.

This dichotomy was also apparent within the form of the piece, for whilst the concepts in question were intellectually poised, the form of their presentation tended towards an a-cerebral communication. The critic, Gawlik, described *Cain* as,

operating in the field of emotions, reactions, symbols...the spontaneity of form, sometimes irrational and nebulous and yet - as it were - total and sensual...¹²

Jennifer Kumiega notes of *Shakuntala*, the group's fourth production, that,

The play seemed to be presenting at the same time the potential for 'communication through ritual', and the potential for alienation.¹³

Therefore, it seems that an uneasy relationship existed between the intellectual debate which Grotowski was raising, and the sensual mode of communication in which he chose to embody it.

Flaszen tells us that the struggle within the early work for a balance of intellect and feeling, was a struggle going on within the creators themselves; an attempt (or at least a need) to discover their own place in relation to the mind/body dialogue;

Our relation to the physical world was still uneasy as if eroticism or physicality was not acceptable. It was a primitive animalism, the result of the male-female schism. Important in Grotowski's perception of the world then was the non-acceptance

and mockery of nature as something unpleasant. These were strong motives.¹⁴

There was, then, an early unease about the acceptance of nature, despite the fact that the plays were addressing the idea of embracing it. The thematic persistence of intellectual concepts might suggest that Grotowski himself could not relinquish his own cerebral orientation at this time. Certainly, Kumiega reaches this conclusion;

It was as if two incompatible techniques were being put to the test, which could only ultimately cancel each other out. It is hopefully not too much of a presumption to suggest (based on Flaszen's reference above to the 'non-acceptance and mockery of nature as something unpleasant') that the dichotomy was one that belonged to the creators of the performance and was yet to be resolved.¹⁵

By the second stage of the group's career (1962-1984), intellectual communication had been transformed into a visceral and even subconscious relationship with the audience, which conveyed ideas on the level of image as opposed to argument.

Eugenio Barba, who worked with Grotowski during these early years, has remarked upon the transference of focus from intellectual to physical faculties within the work of the actor Ryszard Cieslak,

When I left Grotowski's theatre, Ryszard Cieslak was already a good actor, but he wanted to be an intellectual. It was as though a great brain were getting tangled up with that body that was so full of life, and flattening it out somehow, reducing that life to two dimensions. I saw him again two years later, when he came to Oslo with *The Constant Prince*...I saw a man who had discovered his own completeness, his own destiny, his own vulnerability.

...It was as though that brain which had been a sort of filter that clouded his actions had released itself and impregnated his whole body with phosphorescent cells.¹⁶

Preparation for the early plays did not involve the actor-training around which the later work was based, nor was the actor, at this stage, the central figure. The writer, Osinski, commenting on *Orpheus* and *Cain*, writes,

...based on richly augmented visual and theatrical elements and technical tricks, and not on the art of the actor. It was - as Grotowski described it later - "more in the nature of exorcisms against conventional theatre than a proposition of a counter-programme", and in consequence "formulated the negative programme of this company".¹⁷

Although at this stage the actor's role had not begun to approach the significance and sanctity which would mark it in later years, Kazimerz Braun relates what, for him, appeared to be a premonition of these things to come. There is a scene in *Orpheus* which requires an angel to appear at a window; this is generally accomplished by stage machinery -

But in the Theatre of Thirteen Rows that scene was done very crudely - undoubtedly because of lack of funds and through haste. Quite simply Heurtebise (Zygmunt Molik) grasped the window-frame with his hand and hung there. I was sitting nearby and could see the veins standing out on his forehead with the strain...

I don't know for certain, but I feel that that scene with the flying angel might have been decisive. Maybe it inspired them with the energy for further work and pointed out the direction of further research? In any case I find something highly instructive and symbolic in the scene. An actor must rise in the air. But how? It's not possible. He hangs onto the window-frame. He experiences all of his weight and his lack of skill, and most likely the humour of the situation, both physical and psychological. And thus he must learn to fly. In reality. Both physically and psychically. He must free himself from the weight of his body. And he must free himself from the illusory demands - and the aesthetics - of old theatre.¹⁸

Indeed, one can see how this early event relates to the later use of the actor, both in terms of the physicality and aesthetic poverty involved, and also in terms of the actor's actual experience overlapping with that of the character; Molik's own struggle with the

task of hanging from the window-frame becomes an image for the idea of flying which the angel embodies.

Flaszen has affirmed that it was during work on *Shakuntala* in 1960, that Grotowski and the group reached a turning point at which they realised the necessity for training, and began to articulate their work in terms of a search for "a purer theatre where one could not tell content from form".¹⁹

Shakuntala also provided an early opportunity for experimentation within Eastern and ritual models. Grotowski had long held an interest in Eastern philosophy and religion, to which we might trace his concern for unity and holism. In 1956 Grotowski had spent two months in Central Asia, but prior to this he had already read widely and been involved in discussion groups on aspects of Eastern philosophy ("Buddhism, Yoga, the Upanishads, Confucius, Taoism and Zen-Buddhism").²⁰ He was particularly interested in the discipline which Eastern artforms invariably demonstrate. In 1971, speaking of Asian/Oriental actors, Grotowski referred to his respect for "the morality of their work", as Kumiega describes,

He explained this more fully through analogy with the difference between Eastern and European traditional sports. The traditional European objective is to acquire a skill in order to vanquish the opponent/enemy, whereas for the Oriental it was 'a means to go out of one's self, to meet life; in fact it is life itself, a way of existence. And there was something of that in the Oriental theatre, in their classic theatre'.²¹

As Grotowski developed his concern with disunity, he became more and more convinced of the potential for a theatre which was not

intellectual, but which led towards wholeness and transcendence of divisions; 'a means to go out of one's self'. Not as a form of escapism, but rather as a liberation from the repressive ties of cerebrality, and an opportunity to be reconciled with the self as a whole and to thereby be capable of experiencing life. This corresponds very closely to Artaud's desires for a creative experience which could release him from the 'void' he felt, and permit vital experience, the lacking sense of being alive. Like Artaud, Grotowski developed this theory of theatre as a kind of therapy for both audience and actors.

Like Artaud, Grotowski was also fascinated by the Eastern theatre's physical language and, inspired by this, the work on *Shakuntala* was focused upon the objective: "to discover a system of signs suitable for our theatre, and our civilisation".²²

Whilst Grotowski's research into Eastern theatre forms has guided much of his work, both in the theatre and beyond it, the search for an equivalent ritual or mythic language of signs for the West was ultimately abandoned. Kumiega writes,

Although Grotowski always acknowledged the basic lesson of 'sacred' theatre - that 'spontaneity and discipline, far from weakening each other, mutually reinforce themselves' - he came to believe that theatre in the West cannot reach this essential balance through recourse to an orchestrated alphabet of gesture, because 'group identification with myth - the equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth - is virtually impossible today'.²³

Grotowski finally concluded, after much research, that Eastern theatre forms could not be transposed in any detail onto a Western

theatre;

their aesthetic is completely alien to me. I do not think that we can adopt from them any techniques, or that they could inspire us directly.²⁴

However, the research into Eastern theatre, not to mention the world view expressed within Eastern philosophy, encouraged many of the experiments, and the subsequent discoveries, which defined the Laboratory. The search for parallel conventions for the West led Grotowski further into his early usage of poor theatre, and towards the self-revelatory role of the actor. Grotowski has written;

When all that is individual and innermost has been revealed, features of individual behaviour are eliminated; then the actor becomes a paradigm of human kind.²⁵

Rather than create an isolated and artificial language of signs, the group moved towards expressing an organic, perhaps *archetypal*, language which was understandable by the personal chords it would strike in the viewer. The signs would be revealed by the actor's work on their own inhibitions and repressions and would arise from that which the critic Jan Blonski, speaking of Grotowski's work, called "that which is permanent and common, and thus communicable".²⁶

The experience of the performers became the paramount aspect of Grotowski's creative style, around which all the elements of his theatre revolved. Performances grew from, and expressed, the performer's personal discoveries and, as with the example of Molik as the angel, the actor's real actions and emotions became the motifs of each production. Actor-training was developed which, like the Eastern model, was based on the elimination of obstacles rather than the acquiring of skills. Exercises were specially developed (from a number

of sources, including yoga) which focused upon the actor's heightened experience, and achievement of transcendence.

For the audience, Grotowski structured the performer's liberations and revelations into images which could communicate at a depth of feeling. This concern with the audience's experience led inevitably to the experiments in environment (which began with the next piece, *Dziady*), and to the attempt to recreate ritual in the theatre. Kumiega describes these methods and concerns as "a way of healing the many splits both within an individual and between people".²⁷

By touching the unconscious and repressed parts of the spectator's psyche, the performance would, effectively, perform an act of healing - that which was split would be reunited in much the same way that Artaud sought first his own unification and then that of audiences through the experience of theatre. Further, by returning individuals to their feelings, one would allow them the possibility of experiencing the world, thereby experiencing their own lives, and the existence of those around them. The ritual communication would further provide the structure of a shared and intimate experience in which a profound relationship with another being would be possible.

To this end Grotowski also turned to those plays which held meaning within the Polish culture, and which he felt conveyed archetypal imagery and universal themes. This was a substitute for the Eastern model of physical signs and, according to Kumiega, a means by which to,

penetrate beneath the apparently divisive and individual structure of the Western psyche, and evoke a spontaneous, collective, internal response. This would be the common, shared experience which constituted ritual.²⁹

Grotowski chose a Polish play for his next production. *Dziady* (1961), by Adam Mickiewicz, is Romantic and patriotic and very popular in Poland; it addresses and contains certain ideas and images which are familiar to Polish audiences, and which may even constitute part of the Polish culture and psyche. The play is itself based on a mythic tradition which Osinski describes;

A peasant ritual called Forefather's Eve takes place in a village chapel, in the depths of Lithuania, assembling all the main characters of the drama. Mickiewicz made the folk ritual the basis of a dramatic structure....The revolt of a romantic individual is demonstrated through a love which is rebellious and contrary to prevailing convention.²⁹

The individual, Gustaw (or Gustav), becomes in the course of the play a national hero;

Gustaw is transformed into Konrad - poet and seer who, by the power of poetry, sees into the future and assumes responsibility for the entire nation. In this way, Gustaw's personal drama transforms itself into national drama, personified in Konrad.³⁰

Kumiega tells us that the play contains a significant motif; Poland as "a 'Christ among the Nations of the Earth', an innocent victim crucified by foreign powers".³¹ Thematically and formally the sacrificial individual was to become a major concern of the Laboratorium; indeed, the critic Jan Blonski has suggested that all of Grotowski's performance work,

shows one and the same thing, namely the death of Christ, over and over again...A similar fascination occurs on several levels of the Laboratory Theatre work...It is a fascination with salvation through sacrifice.³²

Religious elements and images abound in the work, always marked by Grotowski's ambivalence and dialecticism. Often, Grotowski takes a blasphemous stance against organized religion, whilst adhering to pseudo-religious principles of transcendence and holiness which may be Eastern in origin but which also bear a striking resemblance to the Catholic traditions of mortification of the flesh.

According to accounts by Kumiega and Osinski, Grotowski's treatment of *Dziady*, as with the earlier works, involved a certain dialecticism and undermining of the play's message, particularly its patriotism. The play also lent itself to the experiments with group participation which were beginning to emerge. Jan Blonski tells us that,

The Romantics...attached the greatest importance to audience involvement in a performance: it was a dream of art penetrating into the reality of life...It strove in its highest achievements towards mystery, to a union with the viewers, if not in ritual, then in a common sacrifice, in a gesture which would shake the world. That gesture was a collective celebration, as it were, of the dreamed-of act, which must finally be made flesh.³³

Grotowski said of *Dziady*, "we participate in a ceremonial which releases the collective unconscious"³⁴, and indeed, he arranged the piece in such a way as to highlight its ritual elements. The audience were arranged throughout the space in 'islets' of chairs and the action took place all around; this arrangement meant that members of the audience could each view the reactions of the other spectators, thereby drawing them into the realm of the action. This was the first of the experiments into spatial design, and at the time the desire to affect and reach the audience led the group to believe, as Flaszen has stated,

that

Directing a performance, unlike in the traditional theatre, concerns two companies. The director constructs his performance not only of actors, but also of spectators. Theatrical ceremonial is created at the intersection of these two ensembles.³⁵

Grotowski was attempting to draw the audience further into the activity of the play than they had been allowed to do in the earlier, traditionally organised, pieces. By placing the actors and the audience in the same space it was hoped that the impression conveyed would be that they were all participants, although some (the actors) were more active in their participation.

The play aimed to strike associations within the audience through mythic images and ritualistic aspects, thereby deflecting communication onto an unconscious level. The original myth was also confronted through Grotowski's usual undermining conventions to add interior levels of depth and affect. Grotowski describes one example of this,

The long soliloquy has been changed into the Stations of the Cross. Gustav-Konrad moves among the spectators. On his back he carries a broom, as Christ carried his cross. His grief is genuine and his belief in his mission sincere. But his naive reactions are shown to be those of a child who is not aware of his limitations. Here the director used a specific dialectic: entertainment versus ritual, Christ versus Don Quixote. The meaning of the production becomes clear in this final scene, where the individual revolt aimed at effecting a radical change is shown as hopeless.³⁶

The actor-role interplay which had emerged, perhaps by chance, in *Orpheus* was by now becoming a definite principle, as Barba describes;

Gustav-Konrad is exhausted and drips with sweat. He does not try to hide it. His gestures suggest that it is the blood that Christ sweated.³⁷

In time, actor-training and the emphasis on the actor's experience as

the motif of the role would come together with the thematic concept of the sacrificial individual in the notion of the Holy, transcendent actor.

In a review of *Dziady*, the critic, Kudlinski, coined a phrase which Grotowski was himself to adopt - "the dialectic of apotheosis and derision". We have seen how Grotowski had brought to the plays he dealt with in the early years a dialectic treatment of text. Initially this was largely a case of presenting an intellectual argument, as it were, but as Kumiega tells us, it would come to infiltrate the group's work in all its manifestations, and that which had been a cerebral communication was transformed into one incorporating also the physical and the emotional.

...in the following few years this principle came to be applied in physical terms also, in the training and performance techniques of the actor, and it was only then that the work of Grotowski's actors began to be recognised as truly innovatory.³⁸

Ideology

...no-one since Stanislavski, has investigated the nature of acting, its phenomenon, its meaning, the nature and science of its mental-physical-emotional processes as deeply and completely as Grotowski.³⁹

Peter Brook refers to the very essence of Grotowski's art when he mentions "its mental-physical-emotional processes". Unlike much twentieth century theatre, Grotowski did not rely on purely intellectual, verbal means of communication. His search was for a theatre which communicated on *all* levels of human understanding - mental, physical, and emotional. We have seen how, in the early works,

Grotowski was inclined to take a contrary and argumentative position in relation to the plays he used, and how his group's artistic techniques were designed to run contrary to the mainstream theatrical conventions. So too, his ultimate unification of diverse aspects of the self - mind and body, intellect and emotion, spirituality and reason - was in direct opposition to the prevailing Western culture.

Grotowski's work in the theatre throughout the main performance years (1962 -1968) sought to redress the imbalance of mind and body in both theatrical conventions and society. The actor-training which he developed with his group was focused on the eradication of divisions within the individual and between individuals; the performances which arose from this work were intended to encourage others towards a similar liberation. The intellectual approach to performance, and to life, was replaced by a holistic approach focused upon experience. And perhaps precisely because of its experiential content, Grotowski's theatre became defined, not as passive entertainment or escapism, but as a means of changing people; "a moral and social mission".⁴⁰

In an article about Artaud, Grotowski has referred, with loaded terminology, to the schisms in society,

Civilisation is sick with schizophrenia which is a rupture between intelligence and feeling, body and soul.⁴¹

The term 'schizophrenia' is an amorphous description. It is widely misused as a moniker for multiple-personality syndrome (although this may play a part in some schizophrenic cases, it does not itself constitute the condition), and even amongst the psychiatric profession

the word is used to describe a wide range of symptoms. Most controversial of all is the ongoing discussion as to whether the condition constitutes a physical, chemical disturbance - an 'illness' - or is socially generated. R.D. Laing's descriptions of the schizophrenic state, whilst partisan in terms of the above debate, provide a strong analysis of the elements inherent in schizophrenia, and can thereby help us to understand Grotowski's accusation against society.⁴² It may be useful to remember that David Kelley, quoted in the previous chapter (page 26), equated Artaud's notion of the 'sick society' with the theories expressed by Laing in The Divided Self.

The schizophrenic, according to Laing, feels out of place in the world, he suffers from ontological insecurity, and feels disassociated from his sense of 'self'. For Grotowski, we are all schizophrenic, suffering from "a rupture between intelligence and feeling, body and soul". Rather than operate as holistic entities, we feel alienated from ourselves; there is a gulf between our minds and bodies - like Artaud's void. Impulses do not flow freely between the two but are distorted in the unnatural liason. In our Apollonian⁴³ culture the imbalance is largely in the favour of 'mind'; we operate cerebrally and our emotional and physical capacities wither. Because we feel separated from our bodies, we feel separated from our experiences - the world, and others in it, become distant and unreachable; life seems to barely touch us.

Grotowski sees civilization's intellectual bent in terms of a pathology; he writes that society's attempt to make Artaud "acknowledge

discursive and cerebral reason" amounted to making him "take society's sickness into himself".⁴⁴ However, Grotowski does not suggest as an antidote the domination of Dionysus over Apollo. As in the harmonious conclusion of *Cain*, the two are to be united - intelligence and feeling; body and soul. Artaud, in Grotowski's account, had rejected reason and cerebrality as the dominant mode of being, but was not, thereby, whole; "He Wasn't Entirely Himself".⁴⁵ Artaud's 'void' remained because in his retreat from cerebrality "he had given up everything orderly, and made no attempt to achieve precision or mastery of things".⁴⁶ "He couldn't bridge the deep gulf between the zone of visions (intuitions) and his conscious mind".⁴⁷ Artaud's 'void', of which he was so painfully aware, was precisely this gulf, this division within himself. He erred in the opposite way to society, but was no less divided. Whilst he recognised that society's illness was cerebrality, he failed to come to terms with the part cerebrality must play in the whole person. "He grasped half of his own dilemma: how to be oneself. He left the other half untouched: how to be whole, how to be complete."⁴⁸

For Grotowski, Artaud's way "wasn't a therapy but a diagnosis".⁴⁹ Artaud recognised the pathology of monocerebrality, but he did not discover a holistic, healthful way to overcome it. Nevertheless, for Grotowski, "His chaotic outbursts were holy, for they enabled others to reach self-knowledge".⁵⁰ Grotowski's theatre can be seen to go beyond Artaud's prescriptions in that it marries the idea of releasing repressed forces with discipline and control. Grotowski's fundamental principle was unity; whilst his theatre emphasized the Dionysian in

terms of its physical, spontaneous, emotional components, it did so without compromising the Apollonian structure of order and discipline. The tension between spontaneity and discipline in performance was, he felt, the crux of expressiveness; the "*conjunction of opposites which gives birth to the total act*".⁵¹ Likewise, the balance between intellect and physicality was the essential component for everyday life.

In this respect, Grotowski is, spiritually if not practically, nearer to Eastern models of theatre and life. That his approach had a missionary zeal, in that it was attempting to right a societal imbalance, is significant in an overall view of the group's work. Blonski suggests that "the fundamental belief that theatre can in fact change both the actor and the spectator" is the "truly revolutionary aspect of Grotowski's work".⁵² Kumiega, and others, attribute this attitude to Grotowski's "combination of Marxism and a personal fascination with the spiritually-developing philosophies of the East".⁵³

Artaud too, as we have seen, felt that theatre could effect a change in an audience, and in society as a whole. The mechanism which he suggested operated through the enactment of horrors serving to awaken us to their reality. Grotowski denies the efficacy of this approach;

I don't believe that the explosive portrayal of Sodom and Gomorrah on a stage calms or sublimates in any way the sinful impulses for which those two towns were punished.⁵⁴

Instead, Grotowski suggests the 'total act' as a means of release which

has a profound effect on the consciousness of both the performer and the viewer.

We feel that an actor reaches the essence of his vocation whenever he commits an act of sincerity, when he unveils himself, opens and gives himself in an extreme, solemn gesture, and does not hold back before any obstacle set by custom and behaviour.⁵⁵

The power of the 'total act' lies in its ability to suggest to us the potential for wholeness,

even if it doesn't protect us from the dark powers, at least it enables us to respond totally, that is, begin to exist. For each day we only react with half our potential.⁵⁶

In an age of cultural 'schizophrenia' Grotowski's mission, through the theatre, was to encourage audiences to return to holistic modes of being in which essential aspects of their humanity could be freed from society's repressive taboos.

In the most highly developed of the performance pieces, Grotowski's central image and convention was the transcendent 'total act' of the performer on behalf of the audience. Spiritual, physical, and mental unity was accomplished through transcendence achieved in the challenge of personal limits. Grotowski's assumption was that the actor's liberation could remind audiences of their own potential for freedom and holism. Further, it was hoped that the images and actions arising from the self-exploratory work would communicate to the depth of consciousness from which they sprang.

In the state of transcendence the actor leaves behind society's harmful divisions, and experiences with the whole, live person.

If the act takes place, then the actor, that is to say the human being, transcends the state of incompleteness to which we condemn ourselves in everyday life. The division between thought and

feeling, body and soul, consciousness and the unconscious, seeing and instinct, sex and brain then disappears; having fulfilled this, the actor achieves totality. When he can take this act to its limit, he is far less tired after than before, because he has renewed himself, recovered his primitive indivisibility; and there begin to act in him new sources of energy.⁵⁷

This process in the actor is reminiscent of the state of inspiration or creativity which Artaud wrote about, and felt that he accomplished in his own performance work. Whilst Artaud did not, in his writings, come to terms with an analysis of the process by which the state of inspiration may be tapped, or brought under conscious control, Grotowski, through the development of training at the Laboratory, found concrete means through which the actor might be directed to a truly liberating and creative experience.

Irving Wardle gives us some idea of the effect of watching the actors undergo their liberating and revealing acts when he says, "what it conveys is an intensely private sense of what it feels like to be at breaking point"; of Cieslak's performance as the Constant Prince he notes, "exceeds anything I have seen in human exposure".⁵⁸ The performers' objective in approaching breaking point by pushing towards their personal limits of physical and emotional exposure was twofold. On the one hand, it was a personal journey of self-discovery, and as Flaszen explains, "We draw out from the depths of the unconscious with the aim of healing".⁵⁹ On the other, it provided a way of reaching the audience at a similarly subconscious level; Kumiega articulates this approach as,

based on the theory that by liberating the creative impulse from the physiological and psychological blockages and healing the mind/body split to permit spontaneous response, the actor is freeing the psychological riches of the unconscious (or even

Jung's 'collective unconscious') as the material of a creative representation.⁶⁰

This relates closely to psychological theories of repression in which society is seen to be responsible for the predominance of intellect, the withering of physical capacities for experience, and the resultant existential schism. Grotowski clearly sees the societal implications, as Kumiega comments,

What was emerging for Grotowski, was a vision of the actor as an individual capable of divesting her or himself of the social, conditioned layers of the psyche, and revealing themselves at a level beneath the individual or personal.⁶¹

In positing the possibility of a union between the commonly disparate elements of self, Grotowski reveals certain assumptions about his attitudes to mind and body. The idea of the body having an autonomous life, separate (in a sense) from the mind, emerges. He attributes to the body certain important capacities able to function in ways that the mind cannot. Grotowski refers to "body-memory" or "body-life" in reference to the sensual and visceral level of knowledge which we all possess. He tells us,

These recollections (from the past and from the future) are recognised or discovered through what is carnal in nature...in other words body-life.⁶²

In this account, perception and association, ways of knowing, do not occur only on a conscious level, but on a deeply physical level.

Grotowski goes so far as to say that memory is contained in the body. In opposition to Stanislavski's method of arousing and controlling 'emotion memory' Grotowski sought a working process which would motivate and inspire the associations inherent in body-memory,

bodily impulse. Such a process attempts, as Kumiega puts it, to,

eliminate the 'conscious' as a distinctly ideational or analytic aspect of the process. In this respect he distinguished 'association' from 'thought' by a deliberate emphasis on the body.⁶³

The assumption is that by revealing that which is natural (though repressed), by tapping the essential expressions of one's own humanity, the actor creates, or rather conveys, imagery that has resonance within other humans also. Kumiega paraphrases;

If we give ourselves freely to this process, said Grotowski, there is released from within the being an impulse, which is concretized as an association, or a physical action.⁶⁴

Grotowski tells us more clearly what it is that he means when he speaks of associations,

It is something that springs not only from the mind but also from the body. It is a return towards a precise memory. Do not analyse this intellectually. Memories are always physical reactions. It is our skin which has not forgotten, our eyes which have not forgotten. What we have heard can still resound within us.⁶⁵

Kumiega points out a source for this theory in the work of the philosopher and psychologist, William James,

James experimented on himself and concluded that it was the automatic body response to a situation which constituted the emotion itself, rather than the mental perception of the experienced emotion. This was expressed in the famous example: 'I saw the bear, I ran, I became frightened.'⁶⁶

Although it is not clear whether Grotowski acknowledges the influence which Kumiega identifies in James, she does tell us that Grotowski had once studied reflexology which she refers to as "the methodological extension of James's basic precept".⁶⁷

For Grotowski, the authenticity of a response in creative exercises depends upon a bodily perception of memory, as opposed to an intellectual one. The mind's command of memory will not arouse body-memory, the body will be alienated in the creative process, and the act will be as schismatic as is everyday life in which the body is also systematically denied.

This concept of body, and the implied assumption of repression-theory is not, of course, Grotowski's alone, Kumiega points toward similarities with Wilhelm Reich and Arthur Janov.⁶⁸ Janov, speaking of neurotic needs, articulates a similar concept of body:

The need, then, is not just something mental stored away in the brain. It is coded into the tissue of the body, exerting a continuous force towards satisfaction. That force is experienced as a tension. We may say that the body 'remembers' its deprivations and needs just as the brain does.⁶⁹

Janov makes the position a little less radical by isolating the word 'remembering' in speech marks, as though not fully stating it in its literal usage. The degree to which Grotowski believed in the panpsychic ability of the body is not clear, nor is it necessary to resort to science to attempt to prove or disprove him. It may be that Grotowski's theory was intended on a less than literal level - however, his emphasis on the base of the spine as a centre of energy would suggest that he does hold beliefs contrary to current medical opinion (though not to Eastern mysticism; as Kumiega rightly points out, 'kundalini' also incorporates the notion of the base of the spine as a source of energy, employing the image of the coiled serpent to illustrate this⁷⁰). Osinski, writing about a much later period of work, makes a comparison between Grotowski and Gurdjieff. Gurdjieff's theories

relate to Grotowski's work in many ways, but in particular, Gurdjieff's notion of the body possessing seven minds is notable.⁷¹

There are comparisons with many other psychological writers, some of them contemporary and working in America during the time Grotowski was working in Poland. These writers are discussed in the next chapter. The interconnection of the disciplines is not surprising, Kumiega tells us that

Grotowski has frequently referred to the Laboratory Theatre actor-process as a form of analysis, or therapy for the actor, and by implication the spectator.⁷²

Further, Kumiega tells us in her history of the group that their move to Wroclaw in 1965 allowed them to "make contacts in specialized fields and explore contemporary developments in peripheral areas such as cultural anthropology, psychology, psycho-analysis and physiology".⁷³ The link is notable in the Lab's emphasis upon the actors emotional states and, as Kumiega says,

the relationship of these to functioning social conditioning; the reciprocal effects of action/conditioning; and the effects of past and memory upon action. Similarly, Grotowski's theories relate to some schools of contemporary psychiatric practice in the central thesis that cerebral functioning has been over-emphasized in the past as a medium for comprehending the human condition.⁷⁴

The role of the body is clearly central. By assessing cerebrality as dominant, and physicality as repressed or subjugated, Grotowski comes into line with psychologists such as Marcuse, Brown, and even Laing, who were then developing their theories in America and significantly influencing the avant garde theatre there.

Alienation from the body, a central factor in the state of

mind/body split, is of particular consequence for actors, as Kumiega points out,

According to Grotowski, actors find it difficult to accept their bodies...This condition involves more than just a primal shame in relation to the body - the body is, through a process of compensation, held responsible for the shortcomings in life, it becomes an 'intimate enemy'. This 'divided' or schizoid state (in extremity the classic schizophrenia) entails loss of security for actors in relation to the body, which objectively is the instrument of their craft.⁷⁵

Thus, it was through a specifically theatrical situation that Grotowski and his actors encountered a condition that has its roots in Western society as a whole. Their 'solution' was to be found in forms of actor-training that related strongly to Eastern concepts of transcendence. For Grotowski, the creative state is reached, as Artaud imagined, through wholeness; and wholeness, the overcoming of schism, is possible only through a transcendence of both mind and body. However, in a theatre, and a society, which has, for so long, favoured cerebrality, Grotowski's route to transcendence is via a renewed awareness of the body. Indeed, the 'total act' is approached through excessive physicality, which provides the key for emotional and subconscious release.

The emphasis upon the body also serves to reiterate the potential for an enriched experience of life. We noted earlier that schizophrenics cannot experience life fully because they feel separate from their visceral selves. By re-establishing a sense of the body, we reconnect ourselves to our sensual abilities, and thereby to the world around us. Grotowski's work and speeches often stress the importance of re-newing our contact with ourselves, and our lives. Indeed, he has

spoken of 'freedom' in terms of being alive to experience,

If I were ever to build the self-portrait of my dreams - at the very centre would be a liberated life, the original state, freedom... Freedom is associated neither with freedom of choice, nor with sheer voluntarism - but with a wave, with giving oneself up to this huge wave, in accordance with one's desire. And when I speak of desire, it is like water in the desert or a gasp of air to someone who is drowning.⁷⁶

Grotowski's aim in the physical exercises called 'studies' was to "turn toward the experience of my own life, towards my own life in person, flesh and blood, external and internal intimacy".⁷⁷ Thus, the work of the actors, in Grotowski's theatre, was very much an attempt to transform their own lives, and to become more fully human. Jennifer Kumiega has noted that the transcendent actor's experience resembles "mystical and transpersonal states of consciousness".⁷⁸ She develops this comparison by discussing Zen, as it is expressed by David Feldshuh in his article, 'Zen and the Actor'.⁷⁹ 'Zen mind' refers to a state of creativity which compares with the state attained by Grotowski's actors in 'the act', and also with Artaud's moments of holism when creativity saved him from the void and connected him with the experience of his life. The attainment of 'Zen mind' involves the individual's full and undivided presence in the experience of the moment; in such a state there is both a balance, and a transcendence, of mental and physical faculties. Such a state relates very clearly to the discussion of monocerebrality, as Feldshuh implies;

For Descartes, thinking was proof of existence - *cogito ergo sum*.
Zen meditation is clearly premised on an opposing proposition - "I think, therefore, I am *not*."⁸⁰

Thus, through the totality of body and mind, the actors achieved proximity to the deep-rooted self, and approached transcendence of the

schisms which harm us in day to day life. However, the actor's release through the actions of the play was not for purely personal salvation but was extended to the audience members, both as an image of their own possibilities, and as an invitation to experience liberation for themselves. Flaszen explains,

...the spectator understands, consciously or unconsciously, that such an act is an invitation to him to do the same thing, and this often arouses opposition or indignation, because our daily efforts are intended to hide the truth about ourselves, not only from the world, but also from ourselves...We are afraid of being turned into pillars of salt if we turn around, like Lot's wife.^{e1}

Further, by uncovering deep-seated emotions and ways of being, it was hoped that the actor would be able to communicate at an equally profound, subconscious level with the spectator. The actor-training work called 'studies' attempted, through the liberation of the performers, to go beyond the naturalistic portrayal of things to archetypal imagery. Michael Kustow, a commentator of theatre such as Grotowski's and Brook's, describes the work as "a style of playing which, not literally, but by association and allusion, calls up responses deep-rooted in the collective imagination".^{e2}

This approach to communication informed the use of imagery, gesture, and also language (both in rehearsal and performance situations), as Flaszen describes,

...when language must be used in the work, either by Grotowski or among the actors themselves, it is a language of images, not the language of naming things by their names...It is a search for such a language which in itself is a chain of associations that don't refer to the mind, but the whole of our being.^{e3}

The word is returned to its affective, associational and acoustic aspect, and its intellectual usage subjugated. The associative aspect

of the group's communicative approach relies on the assumption that the subconscious stores images and notions which may be struck by archetypal imagery. By tapping these repressed feelings and ideas, the individual is brought to a deeper, dream-like level of consciousness. This relates to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious.²⁴

In fact, it was the link with the 'collective unconscious' which attracted Grotowski so strongly, in earlier years, to Stanislavski. Stanislavski's central question, which Grotowski so much admired, was "How to touch the intangible? He wanted to find a concrete path towards what are secret, mysterious processes".²⁵ As we have mentioned, Grotowski's interest in Eastern theatre forms had provided him with a model for a language of signs and mythic associations. It was not, however, a model which he could directly draw from. In its stead, Grotowski and the actors developed the process of actor-training resulting in the 'total act'. In the actor's search for his own deep-rooted inhibitions and repressed emotional and physical life, a parallel mechanism for touching the subconscious of the audience was revealed. This stripping away of the outer levels of gesture, behaviour and communication may be seen to parallel the theatrical stripping away of illusory conventions of set, prop etc.

Communication with an audience at this level of understanding bypasses intellectual dissection and distancing which constitutes the response to so much contemporary art. Kumiega comments on this,

We relate cerebrally and aesthetically to the structure, robbing the underlying reality of its penetrating potential for change. The skull loses its death message and becomes an insignia - we too

easily achieve a state of illusory cognizance with the world.⁹⁶

Grotowski's communication was designed to speak directly to the emotional, physical responses of the individual, thereby disabling the inhibitive and protective intervention of the intellect.

Kumiega identifies the role of catharsis in distancing the theatrical event and disempowering its affective capacity. Catharsis operates as escapism in purging the spectator through the thrill of the piece - the spectator emerges feeling better but unchanged. Interestingly, Kumiega relates catharsis to the context of Apollo and Dionysus;

The concept of *catharsis* arose in conjunction with written classical drama at a time, in terms of the evolution of civilization, when Apollonian order was imposing itself upon Dionysian chaos. Connected with the Dionysian (feminine) principle were rites and rituals, celebrations of community, corporality and relatedness, movement and change. In contrast the Apollonian (masculine) principle represented order and construction, reason, intellect and language, stability and the status quo.⁹⁷

In the tragic drama, chaos threatens but is punished, and order is re-established. The status quo is never unsettled, and civilization's repressive force endures. In Grotowski's theatre, the unsettling of complacency, and the challenge of taboo is central. Grotowski's theatre operates largely on the single principle that we must reject the mask of civilization and its power to divide us, and claim those lost and repressed human capacities which are daily denied us. Kumiega writes,

Grotowski has always insisted that the way towards progress and evolution is through work towards indivisibility, towards being whole and not divided into body/mind, intellect/sex etc. In this respect he is within the context both of the great Eastern philosophies and religions and of contemporary psychological and sociological thought. To evolve, humanity must learn an internal harmony where the Apollonian and Dionysian principles work in

union within their appropriate fields, without conflict. In this context he formulated his fundamental artistic principle of *conjunctio oppositorum*, the balance of structure and spontaneity.⁸⁸

In our Apollonian culture the mask which Grotowski wants to crack is the Apollonian mask. Kumiega tells us,

...despite his *conjunctio oppositorum* there was in his theatrical work an unconventional emphasis on the Dioysian principle. Its appeal was primarily to the unconscious, using spontaneous, non-verbal, corporeal means. And in both his theory and his actual construction of the theatrical experience the major emphasis was on the *relatedness* and *community* of theatre.⁸⁹

This is a theatre of mind/body unity, and of the union of one with another. It is a rejection of schizophrenia and its concurrent alienation, and a return to a holistic, primitive lifestyle in which creativity is possible, and experience is vivid. Flaszen tells us,

Grotowski's productions aim to bring back a utopia of those elementary experiences provoked by collective ritual, in which the community dreamed ecstatically of its own essence, of its place in a total, undifferentiated reality, where Beauty did not differ from Truth, emotion from intellect, spirit from body, joy from pain; where the Individual seemed to feel a connection with the Whole of Being.⁹⁰

Training

Training had been increasingly necessary for the group during their first years together, but from 1963 it became a focal point. Throughout the main performance years, in which the performances from *Kordian* to *The Apocalypsis cum Figuris* were created, this aspect of the research came to surpass that of actor-audience relations and environment, eventually creating a startling and innovative performance

style which directly responded to the thematic concerns of Grotowski and his group.

Of the early work, Grotowski has pointed out the attempt "to discover certain objective laws governing man's expression",⁹¹ and he refers to the sources of their research in this area as,

...the already elaborated systems of the art of acting, such as the methods of Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Dullin, training systems in the classic Chinese and Japanese theatre, or the Indian dance drama, explorations of the great European mimes (e.g. Marceau), and the practitioners and theoreticians of expressiveness; also the investigations of psychologists dealing with the mechanism of human reactions (Jung and Pavlov).⁹²

These were the bases from which Grotowski's psycho-physical technique was drawn. From 1963, Grotowski was particularly influenced by Kathakali which his associate, Eugenio Barba, had studied in India and taught to the group on his return.

As the training developed it became more a process of undoing inhibitions and blockages than of acquiring skills, until Grotowski and his team had developed a highly effective form of physical work in which psychology was as much involved as physiognomy. The objective was not to control the body consciously, but to dismantle the defensive mechanisms of conscious control so that the natural abilities of the body could begin to shine through, thereby creating an unimpeded flow of impulse from the interior, subconscious self to the exterior physical self. Grotowski's actors were seeking to achieve the state at which "the body would not resist the actor". Grotowski felt that,

For as long as the actor has the feel of his body, he cannot attain the act of divestment. The body must totally stop resisting; in effect it must cease to exist.⁹³

Since our inhibitions are largely personal to each individual the Laboratory became concerned with a psychoanalytic search into themselves in order to discover their particular blockages and to surpass them. Grotowski has commented,

In the final analysis there are no prescriptions. For every individual one must discover the cause which impedes him, hampers him, and then create the situation in which this cause can be eliminated and the process liberated.⁹⁴

For this reason also the work cannot be transcribed as a method and the exercises, as they are described in Towards A Poor Theatre, do not themselves amount to the working method of the group; that which constituted the Laboratory process was that which began where the exercises ended. The exercises served to focus the body, they "imposed a discipline" and "demanded precision", but they were "totally devoid of any sense, if human spontaneity was not their basis".⁹⁵ The real work was that which took place within the psyche of the performer, and which occurred around the exercises, as it were. Kumiega writes,

Although Grotowski only ever talks in very generalized terms about what these blockages are, one can infer from compatible psychological and spiritual theories that they relate in some way to an individual's past conditioning.⁹⁶

If we also consider Grotowski's comments on the mind/body split, civilization, and its intellectual bent, then we may surmise that much of the inhibition involved is in terms of physicality. This is also in keeping with psychological theory, in particular Freud's theory of repression, especially as it has been articulated by psycho-sexual writers such as Brown and Marcuse. Osinski describes the work thus,

One could say that it was a training of personality through organic actions, or - to put it differently - an attempt to reach an attainment of 'the total act' in the area of exercises. They had to ask of themselves the question: who is it who exercises? And

the answer was: not an actor as actor, but the actor as man, as a human being.⁹⁷

The physical and psychological removal of inhibition was seen to be an essential key to the preparation of the 'actor', as Grotowski defined it. Resistances occur in relation to the body and, because of that, in relation to others. Just as the schizophrenic has no physical, experiential basis from which to move outwards into the world and contact others, so too the actor - the person - in his repressed, everyday state cannot commune naturally. Grotowski tells us,

We must find what it is that hinders him in the way of respiration, movement and - most important of all - human contact. What resistances are there? How can they be eliminated? I want to take away, steal from the actor all that disturbs him. That which is creative will remain within him. It is a liberation.⁹⁸

In addition to dismantling defensive, inhibiting, reflexes, Grotowski's exercises reasserted a primal faith in the body. In daily life, as our personal understanding of our body diminishes we lose sight of its abilities; as our dependence on cerebrality increases our faith in physicality atrophies. The 'corporeals' recreate an affinity with the self by forcing the participant to abandon cerebral understanding and place their faith in the body. When an exercise is accomplished and the performer realises that they have physically performed an action which they did not know that they were capable of, then a certain kind of confidence is restored. This is confidence in the body's ability to comprehend and to perform through processes which bypass rational understanding; the mind may balk at the prospect of turning a somersault, may be unable to consciously calculate how it can be done, yet the body is able to perform it. For Grotowski, the essential

element was the taking of risk; leaving behind the defensive control of rational understanding, and allowing the body to act.

The corporeals were based on hatha-yoga and were demanding and gymnastic. Kumiega tells us of their part in the process towards transcendence;

It was in confronting this challenge and being triumphant, Grotowski believed, that the actor transcended the ordinary, everyday 'self'. Grotowski described this as attaining to a condition of 'primal trust', in which we are led by our natures (and there are interesting parallels here with Taoist philosophy).⁹⁹

Grotowski elaborates on the process,

...when you perform a somersault in space which you are usually not able to do because it seems impossible, you regain some trust in yourself. How do you do that somersault? To discover that somersault, that crossing of the impossible - that is what the individual exercising has to do alone, in his own way, taking his own risks. Only then will it be useful. You have to discover the unknown, and the secret is revealed by the very nature of the one in action...It is not knowing how to do things that is necessary, but not hesitating when faced with a challenge, when you have to achieve the unknown, and do it leaving the 'way' (in so far as this is possible) to your own nature.¹⁰⁰

Transcendence is the state of going beyond consciousness; both mind and body are unified in the transcendent act which leaves them behind, as it were. At the point of transcendence we are free from the ties to mind and the alienation from body, and we enter into a whole and creative state of being. Whilst transcendence can be seen as a spiritual state which denies the carnality of existence, it is also one which denies cerebrality. Further, the body cannot be transcended if it is an unknown quantity; only by an acute and profound awareness of the whole can we transcend ourselves.

The somersault, or similar act, is achieved by allowing oneself to try, by overcoming the inhibition which makes us fear failure. Rather than protect ourselves from what may happen we must become open to the possibility of experience. We are so much involved in a lifestyle based on dependency upon our minds and upon rational understanding, that we can no longer trust the kind of knowledge which the body possesses. All we need do, in Grotowski's thesis, is release the hold of the physically-inhibiting intellect. Grotowski has said,

Transcendence is a question of not defending ourselves in the face of transcendence. There is something which we must do which surpasses us; even a simple somersault in the *exercise corporels*, with certain limited but real risks that we must take; there may also possibly be pain - it is enough not to defend ourselves, to take the risks.¹⁰¹

This is an important part of the process of *via negativa* - there is no learning or training or possessing a skill involved; the process, as Grotowski explains, is 'not voluntary. The requisite state of mind is a passive readiness to realize an active role, a state in which one does not "*want to do that*" but rather "*resigns from not doing it*".¹⁰² This is an important key; the problem is quite clearly not what we *cannot* do, but what we *will not* do; the solution is in releasing inhibition, rejecting convention, and responding with one's 'nature'. Grotowski has also used the term 'internal passivity' to describe the desired state. As Kumiega points out this is a difficult concept to grasp for Westerners who live such cerebral, intellectually-dominated lives, in which rationality defines all actions.¹⁰³ The links with certain Eastern forms, however, are clear; the state of meditative alertness springs to mind, and Kumiega identifies,

...the Taoist principle of *wu-wei*. This translates literally as

'non-action', and Joseph Needham...elaborates it as 'refraining from action contrary to nature.'¹⁰⁴

The accomplishment of an act does not constitute the product of an exercise; rather it is the live process which is important, and which must be continually vital. Grotowski explains this,

If someone among us, by repeating many times a movement or evolution, somehow discovered its mystery, he knew how to do it, "he knew it"; and then - if there was no risk, no necessary concentration, no unconscious adjustment of his entire nature, he would do it correctly, with precision, but again, as a being divided into consciousness and the body. He was not at one with his body, but separated from it, as it were, divided...Lack of consciousness of his body is necessary for man, but this is not the same as being divided from it.¹⁰⁵

It was the process of eliminating ones blockages, taking the risk of experiencing life fully, and revealing the innermost vulnerable self that the Laboratory developed as their innovative and transcendent art. It was in this way, also, that the cruelty which Artaud had spoken of became an element of their work, and the theme of self-sacrifice was embodied in their working methods as well as in their texts and scores. The transcendence came about through the revelation of the self in a unity of mind and body. Grotowski called this a return "to the experience of my own life"¹⁰⁶ because it reunited the actor with the possibility of experience at a depth of feeling. This was an important achievement in itself, especially in the context of Grotowski's 'schizophrenic' society. It was also a route to creativity and communication. Grotowski writes,

...the more we become absorbed in what is hidden inside us, in the excess, in the exposure, in the self-penetration, the more rigid must be the external discipline; that is to say the form, the

artificiality, the ideogram, the sign. Here lies the whole principle of expressiveness.¹⁰⁷

The training exercises exist within the two poles of freedom and discipline. Paradoxical as it may seem, true discovery and liberation is brought about within the bounds of strict and rigid discipline. The actors reveal themselves through a process which is both psychically and physically demanding. This constitutes a 'sacrifice' on the part of the actor, in terms of both divesting the self of its protective outer layers, and of undergoing an extreme and strenuous physical act, made possible by the discipline of daily and strenuous training. Grotowski has said

It can be said without exaggeration that each "laboratory" premiere is bought at the price of the hard - one might almost say "convict" - labour of the team of eight.¹⁰⁸

Training was a daily experiment with the self, involving deep penetration and the ongoing interaction of the constant group. Bearing in mind Grotowski's concern that discipline should accompany release, in order to accomplish it, the training incorporated strict physical exercises which developed the expressive and plastic potential of the body. Croyden quotes a student who had been involved in some workshops run by Grotowski;

The exercises are designed to stress our capacity for balance, plasticity, fluidity and extension. Their purpose, however, was *not* that we develop physically, but that we learn, organically rather than cerebrally, 'essential things' about our bodies, such as resistances and points of balance.¹⁰⁹

In explaining the role of the exercises Grotowski has used the example of a bridle on a horse which intensifies the horses reactions; in such

a way the discipline of the exercises also works.¹¹⁰ Further, the training provided a physical language for the performers - a fluency of the body which allowed them a startling range of vocal and physical expression; as Grotowski has said, "an inarticulate voice cannot confess".¹¹¹

Later Work

From 1962, the group prefixed their name with a reference to the growing research element in their work - 'The Laboratory Theatre of Thirteen Rows'. Between this time and 1968 the major performance works were evolved - *Kordian*, *Akropolis*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Constant Prince*, and a lesser piece, *The Hamlet Study*. All of the works involve the concept of sacrifice, thematically as well as in form. As the actor's sacrificial act became more developed during this time. Grotowski's experiments into the manipulation of the audience changed emphasis, so that the objective was no longer to try to direct the audience, but rather to focus them upon the all-important 'act'. Grotowski, speaking in 1968, explains this progression:

Gradually we abandoned a manipulation of the audience and all the struggles to provoke a reaction in the spectator, or to use him as a guinea pig... We began to concentrate our complete attention and activity on, above all, the art of the actor.¹¹²

Also during this period, and in connection with the work evolving in training, the earlier dichotomy between Dionysian and Apollonian culture disappeared in a move towards an a-cerebral art, as Kumiega reports,

Grotowski in time undermined completely the supremacy of the discursive level within the plays he utilized, the notion of an intellectual exchange of ideas on the verbal level, and emphasized

instead the central characters and themes (the 'myths') and the poetic language to be used non-intellectually as sound or music.¹¹³

Kordian, in 1962, presented some of Grotowski's major thematic concerns, as descriptions by Kumiega, and Osinski make clear. The piece incorporated a self-sacrificing individual whose patriotism for Poland was ironised in Grotowski's polemic by placing the whole play in an asylum. The scenic arrangement of the piece reflected the asylum, with audience sitting on and around the hospital beds, thereby cast as patients. At this stage there was still an attempt to manipulate the spectators by enforcing this vicarious role-playing; there was also direct provocation, as in the scene where the spectators were ordered to sing, and threatened if they didn't comply. Raymonde Temkine, author of an early book on Grotowski, commented on the effect of this arrangement as it seemed to her,

...the spectator, plunged into this unusual universe, would instinctively seek out his place, either among the sick people, or among the normal people, and absorb the psyche of one group or the other. But who is mad? And where is health? One's choice would be subject to continual reconsideration.¹¹⁴

Kordian avoids the platitude of equating madness with sanity; Temkine could find no group to identify with. Through the structure and scenic architecture of the piece, Grotowski encourages the discovery that sanity cannot reside in either option. This was his underlying motivation; divisions must be healed, only the unified, whole individual can approach his potential.

Flaszen refers to *Kordian* as operating on one level as a

representation of "the collective delusions of sick people",¹¹⁵ and he expresses Grotowski's aim in the following terms,

The director analyzed the meaning of an individual act in an era where collective action and organization are the guarantees of success. Today, the man who tries to save the world alone is either a child or a madman...¹¹⁶

The identification of society as suffering from 'schizophrenia' is clearly implied in the production, but, as ever, Grotowski's imagery works on a number of simultaneous levels, and analytic understanding on the part of the spectator is not possible. If the piece has societal implications, it also has universal ones; conversely, the metaphysical is also deflected into the realm of real life. As Kordian offers his blood for his country, the Doctor lances him in a blood-letting. Osinski describes the moment;

The great scene of the individual's self-sacrifice has been counterpointed by the prose of a medical operation. Literal blood mixes with metaphorical blood; imaginery suffering with real suffering; the physical with the spiritual; drastic body functions with poetic sublimity.¹¹⁷

Just as the actor and the role overlap through Grotowski's use of real experience, so too levels of experience overlap within the person of the performer. In this way, Grotowski achieves a unity which is both artistic and, as it occurs within the performer, spiritual.

"Thus one passes from fact to metaphor."¹¹⁸

With *Akropolis* in 1962 Grotowski again created his own framework for the text by placing the action of Wyspianski's play in Auschwitz. Wyspianski had originally set the work in the Cracow Royal Palace, where kings, heroes, and leaders of Poland are buried; he called it

"the cemetery of the tribes", a line which Grotowski seized upon, along with "our Akropolis" to become the guiding, much repeated motifs of the play. Wyspianski, in a letter (incorporated into Grotowski's performance as a prologue) refers to the Akropolis as "the symbol of the highest point of any specific civilisation".¹¹⁹ Robert Findlay, in his retrospective analysis of Grotowski's performance, describes Wawel Cathedral as "the repository and resting place of all the tradition and greatness of both Poland and Western civilization at large".¹²⁰ It is significant that the values in question are those of the West, since Grotowski puts them to the test in his dialectic use of the original. Grotowski's *Akropolis* is the extermination camp "where our century has had to measure its values".¹²¹ Flaszen says of the piece,

The ancient myths and motivations are played by the fragments of humanity on the fringes of experience to which we have been driven by our twentieth century.¹²²

So the piece, in effect, uses the terrible fact of Auschwitz to question the civilization which produced it. The following account of the production is drawn from a number of commentaries, in particular those by Robert Findlay and August Grodzicki.

Eric Bentley, who saw *Akropolis* in New York in 1969, attacked the performance for using the sensitive material gratuitously;

In New York, thousands of whose families lost relatives in the extermination camps, you show us an Auschwitz that is of technical interest to theater students. If that isn't an example of a deplorable formalism, what would be?¹²³

However, Bentley has failed to accept the motivation behind the piece; although Grotowski was experimenting with theatrical form, he was always also working from a moral or philosophical intent. Osinski tells

us that *Orpheus* had ended with a statement summarizing Grotowski's approach,

At the end of the performance, the director defined his own attitude to the problem in an invocation written by himself. His ambition was to find a modern theatrical shape to express perennial problems of life and death, love, responsibility, man's relation to man and to nature.¹²⁴

Whilst his work gradually lost its discursive and intellectual qualities, I would suggest that this attitude remained paramount throughout Grotowski's performance work, finding expression in more and more affective and visceral forms.

Bentley also seems to forget that this work was created by Polish people, living in Poland, with every right to express something that was intimately a part of their life experience; people whose lives must have been indelibly marked by the fact of the Holocaust occurring in their lifetimes. Grotowski has affirmed that the piece "was influenced by the nearness, both in time and place" of Auschwitz (Opole, where *Akropolis* was created, is only sixty miles from the site of the camp).¹²⁵ Further, the *Laboratorium* drew on the experiences of two ex-inmates, through the artistic collaboration of Jozef Svagna, and the use of texts by Tadeusz Borowski, from whom they gained the line and motif;

It's just scrap iron that will be left after us
And a hollow, derisive laughter of future generations.¹²⁶

Great care was taken with the style of the performance, in order to achieve a presentation which was appropriate to the extreme material. Grotowski describes the angle of their approach to the

creation of the piece,

We did not wish to have a stereotyped production with evil SS men and noble prisoners. We cannot play prisoners, we cannot create such images in the theatre. Any documentary film is stronger. We looked for something else...No realistic illusions, no prisoners' costumes. We used plain costumes made from potato sacks, and wooden shoes. These were close to reality, a reality that is too strong to be expressed theatrically.¹²⁷

Jozef Szagna, an ex-inmate of both Auschwitz and Buchenwald who had actually been condemned and miraculously saved at the place of execution, co-wrote and co-designed the performance with Grotowski. His comments on the work give illuminating insight into his and Grotowski's intent for the piece;

...as co-author of the script and co-designer of *Akropolis* I was given my first opportunity to convey my ideas and dreams which resulted from my experiences in the concentration camp. I showed a day in the life of a man who has become only a number from his birth to his death, i.e. from dawn till night. I filled the stage space with pipes, wheel-barrows and old bath-tubs, because the prisoners were given a job to do of building a camp for themselves, that is a grave-cum-crematorium. Rags made of partly burnt sacks, mottled with wound-scars, were their costumes. The prisoners' naked arms and legs were needed for work, berets pulled over their ears brought their faces into relief, the masks of emaciated camp prisoners; the clogs rattled heavily like chains, a rattle of millions of feet in a prison rite. An orchestra played for the dummies of the victims that were carried to their death and accompanied work which served death. We used deformity in order to reveal the inhuman meaning of a macabre vision which I had seen with my own eyes.¹²⁸

Szagna tells us that this was an opportunity to express "dreams which resulted from my experiences in the concentration camp". His images have an expressive power which goes beyond the realistic. They convey the *essence* of the situation, as opposed to the surface reality. Flaszen says of the costumes, "This is a poetic version of the camp

uniform...The actors become completely identical beings. They are nothing but tortured bodies.¹²⁹

These are images as they have been processed by the psyche of one who was unfortunate enough to see for himself, and thereby they contain an archetypal quality of association. The effect of this is to avoid, as Grotowski has said, a realistic style of performance which could not possibly do justice to the reality in question. It also creates communication on a level beyond the superficial; Grotowski's actors did not recreate the appearance of prisoners, but the *essence* of prisoners. To this end also, much work was done on creating a style of facial expression, which was ultimately found in the use of frozen grimaces. They sought "a basically non-emotive form of expression"¹³⁰ in order to convey a strong and disturbing aspect of the camps. Kumiega describes this,

Each actor kept a particular facial expression, a defensive tic which was elaborated with facial muscles without make-up. It was personal for each, but as a group it was agonizing - the image of humanity destroyed.¹³¹

As Flazsen points out,

While the entire body moves in accordance with the circumstances, the mask remains set in an expression of despair, suffering and indifference'.¹³²

Within the body, too, there was depersonalization by virtue of the style of performance; "When the individual traits are removed, the actors become stereotypes of the species."¹³³

Here we have the ultimate in extreme experience performed on behalf of an audience in such a way to question the values of the

society in which the audience live. Kumiega writes,

The characters of the Laboratory Theatre drama represented the Auschwitz dead, resurrected from the smoke of the crematoria. The audience were the living, witnessing or dreaming a world they could not experience.¹³⁴

The piece is presented through the frame of a dream, in part perhaps because it would be impossible - and inappropriate - to attempt to illustrate the reality, but no doubt also for reasons akin to Artaud's use of dream imagery; the subliminal, subconscious and affective qualities. Robert Findlay's description of the play comments on the effect of the dream structure;

For a period of slightly less than an hour, in the context of a wide-awake dream, each audience member was witness to and confronted by a horrifying truth of the modern era - the fact of Auschwitz - in a way that no film or photograph of actual prisoners, corpses, or gas chambers could rival. In this horrifying atmosphere, the mythologies of the past - of Jacob and Esau, of the Trojan War - were enacted from a perspective that gave them a peculiar contemporary pertinence emphasizing the disastrous human problem of the struggle of nation against nation and brother against brother.¹³⁵

The dream is carried through into the structure of Wyspianski's original enactments of biblical and legendary scenes. In Grotowski's *Akropolis* it is the prisoners who play these parts. Flaszén comments;

It is transmutation through the dream, a phenomenon known to communities of prisoners who, when acting, live a reality different from their own. They give a degree of reality to their dreams of dignity, nobility, and happiness. It is a cruel and bitter game which derides the prisoners' own aspirations as they are betrayed by reality.¹³⁶

Here is a many layered event; the dream relates to the reality of the prison, it conveys further the harshness of that prison life, and it provides a structure for the metaphors provided by the stories of Jacob and Esau, of Paris and Helen. Flaszén describes for us the thematic

content of these particular scenes; of Jacob and the Angel,

The famous scene from the Old Testament is interpreted as that of two victims torturing each other under the pressure of necessity, the anonymous power mentioned in their argument.¹³⁷

Meaning is conveyed in the archetypes of the story but is thrust onto a level of physical communication by the actions of the scene; Jacob is carrying the Angel in a wheelbarrow on his back, each is struggling, "The protagonists cannot escape from each other. Each is nailed to his tool; their torture is more intense because they cannot give vent to their mounting anger."¹³⁸

The scene with Paris and Helen is used to portray the effect of the concentration camp upon love; "A degraded eroticism rules the world where privacy is impossible".¹³⁹ Helen is therefore played by a man, and in the wedding ceremony, Jacob's bride is a stove pipe wrapped in a veil of rag. Dehumanisation is clearly a factor in these scenes in which degradation and violence emerge even within the dreams of hope; an altar bell rings with grotesque pathos and irony in the wedding of Jacob to his bride. The imagery is designed to convey associations which inform the hearts of the audience in a way that narrative, cerebral communication could not. Flaszen describes a further moment;

The despair of men condemned without hope of reprieve is revealed: four prisoners press their bodies against the walls of the theatre like martyrs... One detects in the recitation the ritual grief and the traditional lament of the Bible. They suggest the Jews in front of the Wall of Lamentation.¹⁴⁰

Szagna's description of his work on the piece touched upon forms of expression which strike chords of association. In 'A Retrospective View' of *Akropolis* in Modern Drama, Robert Findlay refers to the

associational element of communication built in to the scenic structure of the piece;

Each object must serve several purposes, thus contributing to the multileveled, metaphoric richness of the production. As Flaszen has suggested, the bathtub in the production was both pedestrian and symbolical, for it represented simply a bathtub and at the same time all the bathtubs in which human corpses were processed for the making of soap and leather. Turned upside down, the bathtub became an altar in front of which a prisoner prayed.¹⁴¹

Throughout the play the inmates are involved in the building of the camp itself from the bits of metallic junk which are in the space when the audience arrives. This corresponds to the line from Borowski, which proves to be true by the end of the play. Flaszen describes this use of the set as

a concrete, three-dimensional metaphor which contributes to the creation of the vision. But the metaphor originates in the function of the stovepipes; it stems from the activity which it later supersedes as the action progresses. When the actors leave the theatre, they leave behind the pipes which have supplied a concrete motivation for the play.¹⁴²

Multiple levels of association occur throughout the design of Grotowski's pieces. *Akropolis*, like *Kordian*, worked on a structure of layers; the actual experience, the Auschwitz characters, and the characters they enacted. Kumiega tells us that the audience were excluded from the piece, so they were effectively within yet another realm.

...there was in *Akropolis* no attempt to make direct contact or elicit response from the audience. There were deliberately created effects of rejection and alienation, the psychological imposition of the initiated upon the uninitiated. The actors sought to give the impression that they lived in another world.¹⁴³

Findlay's comment reveals something of the experience of being in the audience;

Perhaps it was most distressingly confrontational to an audience

member that the actor's eyes looked dead. The performers looked through audience members as if the latter were glass windows. Thus, despite the intimate proximity of performers and spectators, Grotowski's actors constructed a clearly impenetrable psychological barrier between themselves and those witnessing their activities. The performers were, indeed, figures of another world, another time - they were the dead performing for the living and thus creating for the spectator an atmosphere of nightmare.¹⁴⁴

This psychological separation conveyed the dehumanisation of the inmates, but it was also related to, and necessitated by, the concepts of dream and of extremity, as Flaszen describes;

They are two separate and mutually impenetrable worlds: those who have been initiated into ultimate experiences, and the outsiders who know only the everyday life; the dead and the living. The physical closeness on this occasion is congenial to that strangeness: the audience, though facing the actors, are not seen by them. The dead appear in the dreams of the living odd and incomprehensible. As if in a nightmare, they surround those dreaming on all sides.¹⁴⁵

Further, the piece is conveyed through Grotowski's usual ambivalent dialecticism, which confuses conventional reaction, and creates extra levels of meaning by opposing text with context. Findlay uses the term 'ironic inversion', and tells us that whereas Wyspianski's play is an

optimistic affirmation of the centuries-old traditions of Western culture and civilization, the power of the resurrected Christ, as well as a call to Polish nationalism, Grotowski deliberately submitted these values to the tests of mockery and blasphemy.¹⁴⁶

On one level, the content of the text is inverted by its new setting in Auschwitz; on a second, Auschwitz is also inverted, in Findlay's analysis;

...Grotowski submitted the fact of Auschwitz itself to the tests of mockery and blasphemy. His prisoners of the death camp were pitiful yet somehow beyond pity; they were simply there - an objective fact for the audience to ponder. They were hardly the noble victims our culture has raised nearly to the level of sainthood. Rather, they were human beings simply confronted with the ultimate in inhumanity.¹⁴⁷

For Kumiega, the effect of this alienation of the victims is to prevent the audience from undergoing a cathartic experience. Catharsis acts as a purge whereby strong, sentimental emotions have the effect of making one feel better for having had them. Kumiega explains further,

Catharsis presupposes a fundamental inner belief, possibly subconscious, in an ordered model. This belief is ultimately strengthened through the dramatic tragic experience, and it is thus a process that endorses the status quo.¹⁴⁸

Thus, in tragedy, catharsis allows the individuals to carry on as they were before; for Grotowski the aim is to disallow previous complacency and effect the conditions for change.

His aim, therefore, is to bring us momentarily into contact with the deepest levels within ourselves, deeper than those engaged within the order of forms, through incarnate mythic confrontation. If we succeed through the shock of exposure, in touching those depths, we are changed for ever. The process does not involve release: it is rather a re-awakening, or a re-birth, and in consequence potentially painful.¹⁴⁹

This then, is the motivation behind presenting the painful spectacle of Auschwitz, in the unrelenting format of the *Laboratorium* production. Raymonde Temkine tells us that

The spectator would be relieved if a real contact could be established, a communion through pity; but he is rather horrified at these victims who become executioners...and who repulse or frighten more than they evoke pity.¹⁵⁰

The estrangement forces the viewer into confrontation; pity or sadness would too easily afford the viewer with an attitude behind which to hide. Grotowski cuts off all the easy exits of emotionalising or intellectualising; we must meet *Akropolis* at a much greater depth of experience. Kumiega records the reaction of another spectator,

Actors move in and out of one another's space in demanding physical ways, but they never violate *our* space, though missing us by a hair's breadth. We are reminded, in this structural metaphor, at what close quarters we live, how narrowly we are missed or

stricken by disaster or love.¹⁵¹

So structurally, as well as via the other elements, the piece is designed to have an affective communication; one which is not easily dispelled through the sentimentality of pity or sadness.

In content, the play also avoids easy answers; there are no guards depicted, rather as Flaszen tells us,

The inmates are the protagonists and, in the name of a higher, unwritten law, they are their own torturers...

There is no hero, no character set apart from the others by his own individuality. There is only the community, which is the image of the whole species in an extreme situation.¹⁵²

The victims are themselves the protagonists, just as they themselves built the prison. It is clear that the play has meaning beyond the specific facts of Auschwitz, and that this meaning is conveyed in order to affect at a depth of feeling which conventional responses to theatre negate. The sacrificial aspect of the company's training and performance methods add to the sense of watching the human at the moment of extreme experience. Irving Wardle wrote of the 1968 Edinburgh Festival performance,

This result evidently follows a prolonged period of inward preparation. The discipline of the company may be rigorous, but what it conveys is an intensely private sense of what it feels like to be at breaking point.¹⁵³

Along with the scenic, structural, and performance styles, the Laboratorium apply a vocal technique which also bypasses intellectual effect. A number of vocal styles are employed, as Flaszen describes,

...starting from the confused babbling of the very small child and including the most sophisticated oratorical recitation... everything is there. The sounds are interwoven in a complex score which brings back fleetingly the memory of all the forms of

language. They are mixed in this New Tower of Babel, in the clash of foreign people and foreign languages meeting just before their extermination.¹⁵⁴

The Laboratory's vocal style was highly evolved, and produced unequalled results; Findlay records one startling use of vocal skill from *Akropolis*;

His voice rises to a mad intensity until it eventually breaks into song. What is striking about this moment is that Molik actually sings in two different voices simultaneously, owing to his use of body resonators.¹⁵⁵

The skill has a specific effect; Barba tells us that it transforms language into "more than a means of intellectual communication. Its pure sound is used to bring spontaneous associations to the spectator's mind..."¹⁵⁶

The whole thrust of the play is to create associations which have meaning, but meaning which is understood on a level within the psyche; not through the analytic and distancing potential of the intellect, or the comforting catharsis of emotional response. Flazsen writes,

The mixture of incompatible elements, combined with the warping of language, brings out elementary reflexes. Remnants of sophistication are juxtaposed to animal behaviour. Means of expression literally "biological" are linked to very conventional compositions. In *Akropolis* humanity is forced through a very fine sieve: its texture comes out much refined.¹⁵⁷

This sub- or para-intellectual understanding was also involved in Grotowski's creation of the piece. He has said,

I didn't think or analyse Auschwitz from the outside; it's this thing in me which is something I didn't know directly, but indirectly I knew very well...¹⁵⁸

This is a point which Findlay seems to miss, in his otherwise revealing retrospective account of *Akropolis*, when he writes;

...it is perhaps the supreme richness of each performance moment that may represent to some a fault in the work (and indeed a fault

in most of Grotowski's succeeding works): each multiple connection, image, metaphor, and symbol may come too rapidly to be fully comprehended...¹⁵⁹

Surely Grotowski is asking us to abandon just this level of rational understanding, and accept the performance in its complexity of association as an experience which, whether we consciously gauge it or not, has reverberations within us and touches chords which we cannot consciously understand.

The performance ends with a delirious procession with a headless corpse-dummy which is the 'Saviour'. The procession is a religious one; they sing an ecstatic lament which becomes louder and more frenzied. Flazsen says, "The procession evokes the religious crowds of the Middle Ages, the flagellants, the haunting beggars. Theirs is the ecstasy of a religious dance".¹⁶⁰ The procession is towards a box in the middle of the room into which they disappear, still singing - "They seem to throw themselves out of the world", says Flazsen¹⁶¹. The lid shuts on sudden silence, and a voice says, "They are gone, and the smoke rises in spirals". Flazsen's description concludes, "The joyful delirium has found its fulfillment in the crematorium. The end".¹⁶²

J. Schevill writes of his reaction to the 1969 version of *Akropolis* in New York;

This message I don't need to understand. I know now why there is a strange joy as well as terror in crematories, and I will never escape this revelation.¹⁶³

Akropolis ends with the startling ecstasy of the inmates entering the crematorium. Transcendence is accomplished through the dehumanising

and dreadful extremities of the experience of Auschwitz. Innes comments on this,

...the conventional images of transcendence were discredited, while the degradation of the body resulted in an inner illumination expressed by an unearthly smile at the moment of total exhaustion.¹⁶⁴

Grotowski followed through this radical concept in the next performance piece, *Dr. Faustus*, which is here discussed with reference to Eugenio Barba's notes from Towards A Poor Theatre. Grotowski used Marlowe's text, much adapted, to present his own discussion of good and evil, and of the true nature of man. Faustus is portrayed as a 'Saint against God' whose desire for truth sets him against God, since God is the creator of the world and "...the laws of the world are traps contradicting morality and truth".¹⁶⁵ The truth which Grotowski's Faustus seeks is a very specific one; Barba's notes express the saintliness thus,

But what must the saint care for? His soul, of course. To use a modern expression, his own self-consciousness. Faustus, then, is not interested in philosophy or theology. He must reject this kind of knowledge and look for something else.¹⁶⁶

For Faustus, in whom values are inverted, studies in philosophy and theology are regarded as sins; whilst he sees his pact with the devil and his interest in necromancy as virtues. Faustus wishes to know himself; if God forbids us knowledge, and if he ambushes us with damnation for sin (which is inevitable), then Faustus will turn to Satan. It is not worldly, cerebral wisdom which Faustus requires, but a deeper knowledge. Faustus the Saint who pursues truth is also saintly in his martyrdom. By making his pact with the Devil, Faustus gives his

soul - which is more important to him than God - to eternal damnation. This is the ultimate sacrifice because there is no celestial peace beyond it, as there is for the Christian martyrs; only ultimate punishment. God is cast as a figure disinterested in the souls of men, and as the maker of rules which deny the possibility of human morality and truth. What rules does he mean? Cerebrality? Faustus eventually becomes animal-like. In his rebellion against God, Faustus proves God's cruelty. Faustus is a saint in the terms of the definition which Osinski suggests,

Faustus was regarded as a saint, if by 'sanctity' we are to understand an uncompromising search for truth, passion for extreme attitudes embracing the whole man.¹⁶⁷

Michael Kustow describes this concept of inversion;

Faustus treated his studies of law and theology as sins; black magic became a saintly pursuit. Mephisto, dressed in a monk's robe, appeared as a double, played by an actor and actress. They also took the roles of the Good and Bad Angels. Understanding began to glimmer. Devil, Good and Bad Angels are all *agents provocateurs* for God, against whom Faustus, a Saint against God, a lay saint, rebels. He embraces necromancy with the fervour of a man who cares about his soul so much that he won't submit it to the Divine Blackmail.¹⁶⁸

As before, Grotowski cast the audience within the play. The piece is structured around Faustus's last hour, and takes the form of a Last Supper in a setting which suggests a monastery. The audience are seated at long wooden tables on which the action is played. At the head of the table, sits Faustus. His story is by way of a confessional, and so the audience are at once implicated as his confessors. However, amongst them are two actors who play the traditional role of providing low comedy in the form of mockery therefore the audience are also placed on the side of cynicism. The Last Supper frames flashbacks into the

episodes of the play. These are designed on a hagiographic basis - baptism, mortification, temptation, the performing of miracles, martyrdom. Faustus progresses through the events which mark the lives of the saints, (the actor, Cynkutis, was chosen for the role because of his resemblance to St. Sebastian). There is symbolic imagery throughout; Innes lists some of the major religious symbols: an annunciation with Mephistopheles as a 'soaring angel'; a baptism, a pieta, the absolution of Mary Magdalene and the cleansing of the temple are referred to; Garden of gethsemane and the Mother of Christ at Calvary, even an inverted crucifixion. The archetypal nature of these images is clear, and they occur within a setting which conjures up the religious life of a monastery. Vocally, the atmosphere is filled with chants and liturgies - "Christian hymns are linked with pagan practices; prayers sound like threats".¹⁶⁹

The piece is dark and threatening, at one point Cieslak tears apart the table-tops. Kustow describes the moment;

There is one terrifying sequence in which the Emperor's servant (Ryszard Cieslak) goes berserk and rushes around dismantling the rostrum-tops (inches away from us) leaving only the skeletons of the tables. The world for a moment, seems to be coming apart.¹⁷⁰

Kustow describes the whole performance as "a rare theatrical shock-treatment". Physically the piece approaches extremes, as did *Akropolis*; Osinski tells us that "The actors - particularly Cynkutis - were close to ultimate ecstasy, a trance".¹⁷¹ When Faustus' hour arrives, he is carried off to hell, dragged in an inverted cruciform shape. Innes places this scene within the appropriate context;

Again the moment of ecstasy comes at the moment when conscious control over the body is lost. The spirit is exalted when a man is reduced to his animal 'roots'. Faustus 'is in a rapture, his body

is shaken by spasms. The ecstatic failure of his voice becomes at the moment of his Passion a series of inarticulate cries...no longer a man but a panting animal.'¹⁷²

Faustus' martyrdom is for self-knowledge. In his reduction to animality, he achieves the state of trance and ecstasy. And this state is accomplished within the body of the performer. Innes writes,

Faustus becomes a Saviour in human, as opposed to religious terms, since the actor's 'total unveiling of being' in divesting himself of all the defensive shells and props of personality is intended as a challenge and model for the spectator.¹⁷³

Grotowski explains this process further,

If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration. If he does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse...he repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness.¹⁷⁴

This represents both an example of Grotowski's central intent, and a vast development of the concept of actor and role overlapping that we discussed in relation to Molik as the angel in *Orpheus*. The spirit is exalted when conscious control - the intellect - is disarmed. The body is degraded to achieve this release in *Akropolis*; in *Faustus* the ecstasy accompanies a return to animality. Although excess and extremity is involved, almost as mortification of the flesh, I would suggest that it is a return to the body which here provides the key to self-knowledge and holism. This too is the experience of the Laboratorium actor, finding self-knowledge and archetypes of expression and communication through their physically strict journeys into their own hidden psyches; through the disclosure of the subconscious by the peeling away of the defensive ego. The relationship between actor and role is two-way; on the one hand the self-revelation of the actor

provides the action which carries and conveys the part, on the other, as Innes here describes, the role acts as a vehicle for the actor's self-discovery.

In *Dr. Faustus* the characters were treated 'as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask - the innermost core of our personality - in order to sacrifice it, expose it', and the result was to create a deliberate confrontation with the actor's own experience.¹⁷⁵

The Hamlet Study was created in 1964 during an unusual period in the company's history. Kumiega calls 1964 "a period of extreme existential uncertainty for the Laboratory Theatre".¹⁷⁶ The work was evolving towards greater experimentation, and the actor-training was becoming the focal point of the company's research. The company had begun, with *Dr. Faustus*, to achieve acclaim and interest from beyond Poland, but within their own country they were received with hostility and silence by both critics and public alike. In the face of this Polish disregard for the work, there was uncertainty about the company continuing to exist. Osinski reports,

The Hamlet Study was prepared in exceptionally difficult circumstances. The institute's future fate was unsure. The directors and actors had, for instance, no guarantee that they would receive a salary the following month.¹⁷⁷

Despite the uncertainty and the pressure to conform, the group prepared the work on *Hamlet* with a strong emphasis on process rather than product. Their title for the work was taken from an essay by Wyspianski (the author of the original *Akropolis*), but it was intended to equally refer to their own concentration on personal 'study'. It was only ever presented as a work-in-progress, and constituted the first research into collective creation. Flazsen describes the new process of work,

The basic directions are suggested by the director, but only to

the extent of stimulating the actor's creative imagination. The actors, in the course of rehearsals, explore themselves, improvise whole scenes, stimulating in their turn the director's invention and, mutually, their own. Such work depends on collective exploration of what is hidden in the psyche and expressively effective - and in organising this around a guideline which forms itself gradually.¹⁷⁸

It is notable that Grotowski and the company had again turned to writing by Wyspianski. Grotowski's use of Wyspianski material has interesting roots,

In the conception of man and theatre created by Wyspianski, the inner purity, truth and commitment of the actor are in general the condition of the existence of an authentic theatre.¹⁷⁹

It was this approach to theatre which Wyspianski applied in his essay on Hamlet. However, the group did not follow this essay, or Shakespeare's play, in creating their work, but rather used the material to feed their own interest in the 'motif' of the outsider. Osinski contends that the piece can only be properly viewed in retrospect; "Then it seemed to be something of a nightmare about persecuted people."¹⁸⁰ Osinski, and Kumiega provide commentaries on *The Hamlet Study*, from which I have drawn the following discussion.

Hamlet, played by Molik, is cast as "a bookish type, rattling off smart phrases, a gesticulating intellectual, a faint-hearted and cunning casuist, a strident and jumped-up Jew".¹⁸¹ Osinski describes him similarly as,

personified abstract reflection on life, the instinct of justice and a desire to improve the world. He was an intellectual with the mark of a foreigner, outsider.¹⁸²

Hamlet is thus contrasted with the Polish populace whom he describes as a collection of primitive, thick-skinned individuals, acting through physical strength, who only know how to fight, drink and

die in a sullen frenzy.¹⁶³

This seems to echo the earlier explorations into the polarities of Reason and Nature. Osinski analyses the performance as "a vivisection of the alienation brought about by culture, and the alienation of instinct".¹⁶⁴

Hamlet is the outsider; in the sensuous bath scene in which the Queen/Ophelia character dies, Hamlet maintains his 'otherness' by remaining fully dressed. Hamlet also emerges as a humanitarian whilst society is seen "in a desperately recurring historical movement towards action, death and resurrection".¹⁶⁵ Hamlet appears weak in contrast to the physical power of the soldiers whilst yearning for solidarity and fraternity. Osinski characterises him by "his longing for the human bond and solidarity to which he came close at last in an extreme situation".¹⁶⁶ As in *Akropolis*, the extreme situation reveals the best of humanity. Kelera comments,

The Hamlet from Opole is a unique sociological creation which could be defined most simply as Hamlet and others...What matters here above all is the relation to others, not the nature of Hamlet himself. This Hamlet - an intellectual among "others" - is a prototype and model of "the outsider"; that psycho-sociological creation which has become almost the main obsession of modern literature, sociology, and the "philosophy of man". In such a treatment it is not important who Hamlet really is, but how Hamlet is seen through the eyes of "others" - mystified in their vision, deformed by their pressure. And what those "others" are - deformed, mystified altogether through Hamlet's vision - is also important. The error is on both sides - the director and the company suggest. The error consists in the socially determined, multi-layered mystification of the relation: Hamlet and others.¹⁶⁷

Kumiega sees the 'outsider' motif, and the alienating relation with others as a product of the period of insecurity through which the group were living, and uses a separate comment from Flazsen to make a more

historical connection with Hamlet as the intellectual outsider;

When our country didn't have its own existence, the population grew passive throughout the nineteenth century. The intelligentsia fought for and created a new culture and a new awareness: *they* kept the nation alive despite its lack of political existence...The myth is that by carrying the culture, we redeem the others...So our very theatre experience is based on the same motif. Thus, the dual myth of martyr and intelligentsia was not abstract for us - it was directly connected with our experience. ¹⁸⁸

After a year of work in Wroclaw the group emerged with a new performance piece which looked at the concept of 'constancy' in the title character of *The Constant Prince*, Don Fernando. Grotowski used works by Calderon and Slowacki as the basis for his play, but eliminated the historical context (the war between the Portuguese and the Moors) in order to deflect the concepts involved onto a more universal plane. Kumiega's discussion of *The Constant Prince* provided the descriptive basis for the following account.

The 'Constant Prince', not unlike some of the earlier central characters, is constant and true to his own values, which are higher than, and contrary to, those of the corrupt society in which he lives. The cruelty of the persecutors serves only to illuminate the purity of the martyred prince as they try to break his spirit and destroy his constancy. As Flaszen describes, the prince is protected by his own constancy, and the persecutors - though they drive him to physical suffering and death - cannot touch him.

Their world, provident and cruel, actually has no access to him. The Prince, who surrenders himself as if in compliance with the unhealthy manipulations of his surroundings, remains independent and pure to the point of ecstasy. ¹⁸⁹

That which protects the prince is not his righteousness, nor the principles which he adheres to, so much as his insistence upon remaining 'human' in an inhuman world. Flaszen points to this when he describes the prince's white and red costume as "a sign of his defenseless, human identity, which wields nothing but its own humanity in its defense".¹⁹⁰

If this served as an image for society - in which being true to one's own human potential is almost impossible - then the audience were drawn into the accusation. Grotowski placed the spectators above and around the playing space in a manner loaded with implications;

They are like spectators at a *corrida*, like medical students who watch an operation, or, finally, like those who eavesdrop and thereby impose a sense of moral transgression on to the action. In *The Constant Prince*, the spectators are relegated to the role of students carefully watching an operation, a mob watching a bloody spectacle, collectors of impressions, tourists demanding sensations, or eavesdroppers on some secret ritual which they watch from a safe corner and to which no intruder is allowed access.¹⁹¹

The 'voyeurism' of the spectators was emphasised by the nature of that which they witnessed; the physical and mental cruelty meted out to the prince was visibly accompanied in Cieslak, the actor of that part, by an extreme physical, spiritual and mental experience.

Cieslak's body expressed his psychological state in physical reactions that are usually considered involuntary - sweating profusely while remaining still; a red flush spreading all over his skin; tears flooding from closed eyes - giving an effect of absolute authenticity to the experience presented.¹⁹²

This was the 'total act' which Grotowski's actor-training had been moving towards. It provided a profound link between the character of the prince and the actor, Cieslak; for whilst the prince rises above

the degradation of his physical sufferings to emerge human and pure, Cieslak, through his personal exposure and pain reached a kind of transcendence. The critic, Kelera describes this in incredulous tones,

All that is technique becomes, at culminating moments, illuminated from within...Just a moment more and the actor will rise from the ground...He is in a state of grace. And all around him, the entire "theatre of cruelty," blasphemous and excessive, is transformed into a theatre in a state of grace...¹⁹³

The total act was much more than a theatrical device, or even a meeting of the actor and the character in a new dimension of performance; the 'total act' was, in itself, a message of sorts, for in it Grotowski saw a quasi-religious healing of schism, a rediscovery of an intense and primal self-unity. He wrote,

This act can be attained only out of the experience of one's own life, this act which strips, bares, unveils, reveals, and uncovers. Here an actor should not act but rather penetrate the regions of his own experience with his body and voice...At the moment when the actor attains this, he becomes a phenomenon *hic et nunc*; this is neither a story nor the creation of an illusion; it is the present moment. The actor exposes himself and...he discovers himself. Yet he has to know how to do this anew each time...This human phenomenon, the actor, whom you have before you has transcended the state of his division or duality. This is no longer acting, and this is why it is an act (actually what you want to do every day of your life is to act). This is the phenomenon of total action. That is why one wants to call it a total act.¹⁹⁴

Cieslak's achievement in *The Constant Prince* directed the company towards their next task; extending Cieslak's experience to the rest of the group, providing a structure in which the image (and the act) of transcendence could be created, not by a solitary individual in conflict with the rest of the world, but by the group as a whole.

In early 1969, *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* was premiered. It had

taken several years to emerge, and evolved from work on other sources - Slowacki's *Samuel Zborowski*, and *The Gospels* of the New Testament. Eventually, it was an eclectic piece showing some signs of these exploratory sources alongside excerpts from Dostoevsky, T.S. Eliot, and Simone Weil. The title itself comes from Thomas Mann's novel, *Dr. Faustus*, in which it is the title of an inspired, last work by Mann's character, Leverkuhn. Osinski sees this as a portent of the fact that it would also be Grotowski's last work in the theatre;

Leverkuhn became, as we know, truly insane. For Grotowski, on the other hand, an entirely new horizon appeared in his creative life, a new dimension which is difficult to understand and even more difficult to evaluate.¹⁹⁵

Osinski also notes that "There is a definite association of *Apocalypsis* with a vision of the world's downfall".¹⁹⁶ Accounts of the performance by Osinski, and Kumięga provide the descriptive material for my discussion.

The performance was set amongst a group of individuals who find in their midst a simpleton, and amuse themselves at his expense. Again, Cieslak played the "noble loner" struggling against "lie and lawlessness".¹⁹⁷ He also acted as Grotowski's assistant, perhaps to assist the other members of the group in finding for themselves the process which had lead him to achieve the 'total act'.

The early work on the Gospels had focused on Renan's Life of Jesus, a book which Grotowski had been familiar with since his childhood. Renan emphasises Jesus's humanity - "all ages will bear witness, that in the whole world of the human tribe the greatest man

was Jesus¹⁹⁸ - and it is not surprising that Grotowski's interest in the potential of the human would lead him towards this interpretation of Christ. The work on the Gospels, which troubled the group for some time, was finally resolved when the scriptural material was placed in a human contemporary context. Flaszen tells us,

What would have happened to Christ if he revealed himself nowadays? In a literal way. What would we do with him? How would we see him? Where would he reveal himself? Would he be noticed at all? With the help of these questions, the crisis was resolved. And then it turned out there is a passage in the Gospel: 'I have come and you haven't recognised me.'¹⁹⁹

In *Apocalypsis*, Christ emerges in the person of the Simpleton. In Polish, the name used is *Ciemny* - "the Dark One", the associations of which Kumiega identifies;

... associations of a touched innocence, a medieval idiot unknowingly holding powers of light and dark. He is drawn, an unwilling victim, into the group's games and is elected to be their Saviour. Desperate for their love and acceptance, he is gradually consumed by the power of his own role, and struggles helplessly towards the final extinction. His agonies produce in his tormentors pleasure, rage, pity and final acceptance.²⁰⁰

The 'dark' side of *Ciemny*, coupled with his lack of rational intelligence and his childishness, create a character who is living, as it were, in another realm, and through capacities which even he does not recognise. Ultimately, the struggle between the group and the individual, *Ciemny*, is pared down to a confrontation between the Simpleton and the character who represents Simon Peter. Kumiega identifies the wider connotations of this,

At the very end only Simon Peter is left with his academic arguments to confront the Simpleton. To these the Simpleton has no logical response, and the second and final crucifixion at Simon Peter's hands is a cold, intellectual verification of the earlier emotional one.²⁰¹

As with earlier productions, Grotowski embraced an attitude of blasphemy and profanation - in the casting of Christ as the Simpleton, and in the (mocking) sexual relationship which arises between Ciemny and Mary Magdalene. Kumiega makes the point that in this production, the blasphemy was "...less intellectualized than in former productions. The most fundamental and universal of religious myths became incarnate in a brutally literal manner".²⁰² As before, the blasphemy was designed to break through complacent attitudes and shock people into an active relationship with the piece. By the time of this, the last performance piece, the levels at which these techniques were working had been forced onto a sub-intellectual level - the level at which Grotowski hoped to communicate with the audience.

Just as Artaud had hoped that the holy act of the performer would somehow evoke a similar experience within the spectator, Grotowski sought to find channels of communication which would effectively draw the spectator towards a similar discovery within themselves, connected to and inspired by, but not imitative of, that of the actor. In this sense, Grotowski's theatre evolved very surely and naturally towards a theatre which had real and direct meaning to the lives of its audience, and which sought to effect change at the deepest level of human life; which sought to re-affirm the spectators relationships with their own humanity. In the face of a societal orientation towards cerebrality, and bearing in mind the Freudian theory of repression, Grotowski's route to the 'whole' person was through a transcendence of division and imbalance to a state in which the subconscious and irrational mind and

the feeling body orient the individual to levels of experience which are wholly natural, but usually inaccessible.

The work on this final performance piece had set out to investigate the possibility of taking the group towards Cieslak's 'total act'. Kumiega affirms that this was achieved; few critics doubted or denied that this had been the case, (although not all reported it in positive terms). The performers, themselves, speak of *Apocalypsis* in terms which go beyond the usual description of a theatrical experience. Molik has said;

Apocalypsis was never like a performance for me. It was like a time in which I could live a full life...in another world for a while, and this can give you the power to endure everyday life.²⁰³

Sciarski describes the event similarly;

It was all an overwhelming and dramatic experience for me, involving an awareness of that particular community in which closeness can provide unexpected hope and strength - and I could in no way relate it to "theatricality", even in its most honest form, or to an "artistic experience".²⁰⁴

The power of the 'act' to filter into the world beyond the performance as a quality within the individual, and the establishment of community through the collective work of the group towards self-discovery are two of the key reasons why the 'total act' had significance beyond the creation of theatre.

Throughout the twelve years of performing *Apocalypsis*, the group attempted more and more to draw the spectator closer into the realm of the 'act'. In practical terms, this involved scenic changes, such as removing the seats to draw the audience closer to the performers, and abandoning costume in favour of ordinary clothes. In less concrete

terms, it involved the increased opening-up of the actors to the audience. Cieslak has written,

I think that the most essential part was and is the search for ways of transcending, of getting away, from what is dark in *Apocalypse*, an effort to move toward light and also to see, to sense the direct and close presence of the people around us which produces something that is most important (that cannot be expressed in words), something sincere that happens between the individual who still is in some small part a spectator and the individual who still is in some small part an actor.²⁰⁵

Despite Cieslak's suggestion that the roles of actor and audience had come closer, and despite the group's desire that this should be the case, the audience, on the whole, remained separate. The 'act' remained in the province of the performers. This is why, in 1970, although *Apocalypse* continued to be performed for many years to come, the group decided not to make any further theatre pieces. Instead they chose to open up the actor-training processes to participants. The performance became merely a step towards the work that really interested the group. Grotowski was interested in pursuing the 'act' in an environment and collaboration which went beyond the boundaries of the theatre event. That which had provided the very core of his theatre, which had acted as a catalyst and inspiration for groups all over the world, which had taken the actor - the human - into realms undreamt of, had finally led Grotowski out of the theatre and into an unknown, unnamed phenomenon, dedicated to the unearthing of the self, not with actors, but with people.

Post-Theatre

The changes initiated at the end of 1970 were articulated by Grotowski in the statement, "Holiday" (literal translation, 'holy

day').²⁰⁶ He asserted,

...I am not interested in theatre anymore, only in what I can do leaving theatre behind...Am I talking about a way of life, a kind of existence, rather than about theatre? Without a doubt. I think that at this point we are faced with a choice...The quest for what is most important in life.²⁰⁷

Grotowski's decision was to once and for all reject the barrier between actor and spectator by opening up the actor-training element of the work to participants. After the early experiments with audience manipulation, Grotowski had realised that he could not hope to directly control the spectators, as he did the actors. By the time *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* was created, the audience were no longer cast in vicarious roles, but were purely witnesses. A commentator, Burzynski, had felt that the development of the theatrical meeting of actor and audience in *Apocalypsis* had taken the Laboratorium to the very outskirts of theatre;

...Grotowski cannot, after the *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, produce anything that could possibly remain within the bounds of what is broadly understood as a theatre performance. A step beyond the experience contained in the *Apocalypsis* signifies an ultimate departure from the theatre into the unknown which, if it still lies within the realm of art, will probably become an entirely new form of it.²⁰⁸

This was the very problem which Grotowski faced at the end of the sixties; he knew that his search pushed him onwards, but it was no longer clear what lay ahead. As Burzynski suspected, it would no longer be possible to stay within the framework of the theatre performance, therefore a new model was required. Furthermore, it was necessary to find ways through which participants from outside the group could achieve the level of what Kumiega calls 'de-conditioning' which the actors had reached.

The 'Theatre of Participation', as the years between 1969 and 1976 have become known, was centred around closed encounters between members of the Laboratorium and outsiders. 'Paratheatre' both dissolves the audience and activates it, since the audience themselves become full participants. As well as rejecting the actor-audience division, Grotowski's new departure also necessitated the rejection of artistic standards. The work no longer had a public profile, and was not designed to communicate beyond the boundaries of its own group. Therefore, outward aesthetic values were no longer appropriate. Furthermore, as Kumiega has discussed, there had been at least some doubt in Grotowski's mind as to the efficacy of artistic communication. For Kumiega, artistic conventions are too readily absorbed on an intellectual - and therefore not affective - plane;

We relate cerebrally and aesthetically to the structure, robbing the underlying reality element of its penetrating potentiality for change.²⁰⁹

Despite the fact that Grotowski had tried to highlight, through the actor's work, the experiential content of the performances, there was still, inherent in the theatrical tradition, a tendency for spectators to distance themselves from the event. Kumiega sees Grotowski's departure from theatre very much as a strategy by which to overcome this intellectual sidestepping. In this way, Kumiega reads the departure as an abandonment of "the general artistic ethic, rather than specifically theatre".²¹⁰ Inherent in this also, was a renewed emphasis upon 'process'; in paratheatre there was no longer any *product* at all. The work did not result in a performance, nor was it concerned with the development of skills. Rather, paratheatre was carried out for

its effects upon, and within, the group, and was therefore dealing with abstract and intangible 'results'.

Descriptions exist, in a number of sources,²¹¹ which explain in detail the content of specific paratheatrical exercises. From Findlay we learn the basic features, as he describes work with which he was, himself, involved,

...it had a structure with a clear beginning, middle, and end; it had at least one leader from the "inside" and a group of participants from the "outside"; it made no clear separation between performers and spectators, as in a traditional theatrical piece; its action also made no distinction between a fictive world and the real world but rather trod a fine metaphoric line between the two; and its energy grew not simply from a leader but, within the confines of its form, from the improvisatory imagination of the total group.²¹²

We also know that work would consist, as the earlier actor-training had, in strenuous exercises which incorporated and indeed unified both physical and mental impulses. There are further ways in which paratheatre can be seen to carry on, or develop, aspects of technique from the performance years. Significantly, Grotowski has continued to work through the *via negativa* approach which characterised the actor-training. Paratheatrical exercises, in fact, might be seen as an opening up of this aspect of the Laboratorium's technique to wider groups of people. The social and personal implications of learning to 'unlearn', and of revealing the self through intimate confrontations are apparent. Paratheatre may be seen as an attempt to share the personal worth of *via negativa*, and to expand its application beyond the theatre group, and into life. A second element which survived the transition from theatre to paratheatre is the use of strenuous and exhausting physical activity as a route to uncovering the inner self.

Grotowski has written, "There are certain points of fatigue which break the control of the mind, control that blocks us..."²¹³

In paratheatre, physically and mentally tiring work is carried out for long periods of time in order that the participant will, through tiredness, arrive at other levels of perception, and abandon every-day defensive behaviour patterns. Kumiega comments,

There are other similarly familiar elements in the paratheatrical work: the search, through spontaneous action, for the resolution of the body/mind split; the experience of "re-birth" through contact with another.²¹⁴

I would go so far as to suggest that these were the central motivations behind Grotowski's creation of paratheatre. We have already seen the ways in which the concept of mind/body split informed the performance work, and how personal unification within the individual in the context of the theatre group had been intended as a model for audiences to follow. In developing the paratheatrical activity, Grotowski has demonstrated his commitment to these issues, above and beyond artistic concerns. In New York in 1970, in the 'Holiday' speech, Grotowski spoke of the existential conditions which were leading him in the new direction;

In the fear, which is connected with the lack of meaning, we give up living and begin diligently to die. Routine takes the place of life, and the senses - resigned - get accustomed to nullity... This shell, this sheath under which we fossilise, becomes our very existence - we set and become hardened, and we begin to hate everyone in whom a little spark of life is still flickering. This is not a spiritual matter: it envelops all our tissues, and the fear of someone's touch, or of exposing oneself, is ever greater...²¹⁵

In the speech which followed, Grotowski outlined what he knew - or sensed - of the direction he was taking. His words reveal an emphasis

on the individual's relationship with life, with nature, and with others. Further, he speaks of rediscovering, "Man as he is, whole, so that he would not hide himself; and who lives..."²¹⁶

It might be suggested, then, that Grotowski, throughout the work both in theatre and beyond it, has concerned himself with ethical considerations which predated and survived the experiment with theatre, and which then came to find expression in a new form of activity. Kolankiewicz refers to Grotowski in this period as someone "convinced that the world's life can be changed", and who realises that change is initiated within one's own life, in relation, and collaboration, with others. For Kolankiewicz, Grotowski's paratheatre represented a situation in which such optimum collaboration and experience could occur. The individual would find this a situation where,

... his senses would not be walled up; where he would be immersed in existence. Where - as Grotowski puts it - he would enter the world as a bird enters the air.²¹⁷

Paratheatre, then, is intimately concerned with addressing the existence of contemporary western humans. It is conceived as a response to loss of experience, loss of affect.

Paratheatre derives its name from the activity which Grotowski used to reach it, however, it is difficult to categorise it as a theatre form since it rejects so many of contemporary theatre's criteria and values. Furthermore, the emphasis upon the spiritual or holistic well-being of the participant appears to coincide with forms of psychotherapy. However, Kumiega points out that,

Having been reached by the physical act of theatre, it lacks both the intellectual self-consciousness which is one of the most

crippling elements of so much Encounter work, and uniquely avoids the attitude that the activity constitutes a cure, or treatment, for psychic illness or inadequacy.²¹⁸

Paratheatre was first initiated, in 1970, as an activity separate from training (though as we have seen bearing some resemblance to it), amongst the closed group of the Laboratorium members. In 1973, for the first time, paratheatrical 'Special Projects' were initiated as encounters with people from outside the group. In 1975, paratheatre projects became more public in a Theatre of Nations event organised by Grotowski called the 'University of Research'. Conferences were held with Brook, Barrault, Chaikin, Andre Gregory; classes were taken by Barba, and members of the Laboratory led paratheatrical projects with participants chosen from the 'University of Research' audience. In addition to the small groups, large open workshops called 'beehives' were held at night, in which anyone could participate. The 'beehives' differed from the previous paratheatre in that they took place for shorter lengths of time, and were less formally controlled in terms of participants and setting. One participant, a professor of psychiatry, Dabrowski, reports on the beehives which he attended,

Unusual forces appeared and were at work here. Imaginative, emotional, intellectual, but also animistic, irrational, that is, those that could only be grasped intuitively. I observed bright, intelligible, and clear dynamic reactions, on the one hand, and dark, irrational, almost magical ones, on the other...²¹⁹

Dabrowski's comments testify to the interplay of physical and mental, cerebral and emotional faculties in the paratheatrical activity. The work appears to encourage the submersion of intellectual mental activity, and to intensify perceptual and instinctual abilities. In this, Dabrowski notes that beehives have "from the psychiatric and

psychological point of view, a very significant therapeutic value".²²⁰

Dabrowski elaborates on this claim,

I participated in a "beehive" where we were working on overcoming fear and in liberating our empathic desire to help others...It seems that individual personality was sublimated and higher aims appeared. Social contacts were broadened and deepened. ... "Beehives" free one from routine activities and break harmful stereotypes. One notices other values; one sees more universally. Furthermore: in the dynamics of the "beehive," I see the opportunity to free oneself from a one-sided position. I see the revitalization of many aspects of human life, individual and social: empathy, aestheticism, sincerity, directness, controlled impulse, harmony...²²¹

For Dabrowski, the personal and social benefit of the stimuli provided in the beehive amounts to enabling participants to be 'actors of their own fate', by which he means that "it contains elements of individual and collective self-improvement".²²² This is clearly very close to Grotowski's earlier aims. If a concern for personal unity had motivated Grotowski's work in the theatre, it had also led him out of theatre altogether.

Throughout the first half of the 1970s, paratheatrical Special Projects were preceded and initiated by performances of *Apocalypsis*. Whilst the production continued to be developed throughout this period, it has been critically seen largely as a part of the paratheatrical process; both in terms of its own development and of its use as a form of invitation to greater participation. Gradually, paratheatrical 'openings' (beehives) were developed to replace *Apocalypsis* as the vehicle through which to meet potential participants.

By 1976, the paratheatrical projects had broadened from their

tentative beginnings, and from Autumn 1976 to July 1977 a major paratheatre event, *The Mountain Project* took place. Whilst Grotowski oversaw the project, it was led by a second-generation member, Jacek Zymski. The work was carried out in three phases, *Night Vigil*, which acted as an 'opening'; *The Way*; and *Mountain of Flame*. *Night Vigil* was conducted as a series of several-hour long meetings over an extended period of time. *The Way* was the journey through the forest to the Mountain. The Mountain itself was a real mountain outside Wroclaw with a ruined castle which the group had permission to use. The *Mountain of Flame* stage of the project involved work both in the castle and in the countryside surrounding it. Burzynski has noted how the Mountain Project demonstrated several developments from the earlier projects; in particular, he notes the elimination of props. In the early works, environments had often been adapted, and props used to provide stimulus,

But in *The Night Vigil* there was only the empty hall and the people, largely a haphazard collection. In *The Way* the area is as it is, without any planned 'surprises' adapted to the specific nature of the place, as in the case of the Special Project. One might say that this raises difficulties because there are no catalysts. Everything boils down to the simplest elements: you, others and some kind of space. The rest remains to be found: in yourself, in others, in the space. Not as an intellectual exercise, but as an active search with the whole self.²²³

Just as the work on performance had developed the principle of poor theatre which pushed the actors to discover their own creative and expressive potentials, so too paratheatre came to remove all simple stimuli, and leave the participants to find it within themselves. As Burzynski's comment suggests, this encouraged the participants to make

fuller contact with one another, the space, and most importantly, with themselves. For this reason, one reporter has noted that,

Touching on important issues of participation in culture, its institutionality, alienation of artistic creativity, and means of interhuman communication, this program touches the crux of all the great humanistic issues of our times. It is a question directed to the future of mankind and his culture.²²⁴

At core, paratheatrical activity may be seen as a form of de-conditioning, and of re-introducing the participants to aspects of life which are normally lost to them. Grotowski has referred to the modern individual as being unable to experience life in the 'original state' through which a child experiences,

...for the child everything happens for the first time. The forest it enters is its first forest. It is never the same forest. And we - we are already so taught and so tamed, our intellectual computer is already so programmed that every forest - even the one we see for the first time - is the same and we say the same to ourselves: 'this is a forest'. Despite the fact that even the same forest is different each day.²²⁵

Much of the work of the paratheatrical activity is directed towards breaking down defensive personal barriers in order to free natural perceptions and uninhibited emotional and physical reactions. This of course follows principles similar to those of the actor-training. As we have mentioned, in order to facilitate this, certain conditions were established, such as long hours of strenuous work. In addition, work often took place in unfamiliar surroundings or darkened rooms. Participants were sometimes geographically disorientated, or were taken to work outdoors at night. Disorientation in order to disarm was a concept which Artaud had also considered, although he had not imagined its use in this extreme form.

Jacek Zymslowski, the leader of *Mountain Project*, has discussed the result of these disarming devices, coupled with the enforced necessity to find stimuli amongst the group itself;

The most immediate reaction is a joy at discovering unknown resources, then a searching through movement for others, a reaching towards them, co-action, improvisation. Afterwards comes the revelation that touch, sight, hearing - in fact all the senses - have been made more acute, they have been restored to their full sensitivity... Sometimes there is an eruption of joy, a vibrating 'mad' joy.²²⁶

It is worth recording what Kumiega and Kolankiewicz have testified - that despite the unstructured format of paratheatre, the work does not dissolve into chaos. Kolankiewicz tells us that "There is violent freedom and uncanny precision", and a participant who is also a psychologist has noted her amazement that the guides who lead the work ensure its balance, "at the limits of self-control".²²⁷ Kumiega remarks that "a level of non-individual consciousness seems invariably to be reached... a vital and spontaneous cohesion".²²⁸ Whilst this seems at odds with Grotowski's earlier assertion that strict discipline is necessary to facilitate creative freedom, the two activities are substantially different. The performance work required an imposed discipline because it dealt with expression as a means to communication; in paratheatre there is no such system of signs, and furthermore, communication between individuals takes place through mechanisms which are both spontaneous and a-cerebral.

The Mountain Project has been seen as the culmination of the work on paratheatre, which was succeeded by a new period of development, known as the *Theatre of Sources* which lasted from 1977 until 1982. During this period, two major projects emerged; Grotowski's *Theatre of*

Sources, and Cynkutis's *Tree of People*. *Tree of People* differed from the earlier paratheatre in precisely the way that it echoed more recent general tendencies in the Laboratory; by being fully accessible. The group had developed a growing interest in 'active culture' which involved their commitment to opening the paratheatre to as many people as possible and, in particular, travelling to communities usually bereft of cultural forms. *Tree of People* was likewise open to all who wished to participate - as many as four hundred at a time. It also rejected differentiation between periods of work and periods of eating, cooking, sleeping etc.; and the distinction between guides and followers was also dissolved.

Grotowski's work on *Sources* was, in his own words,

devoted to those activities which lead us back to the sources of life, to direct, primary perception, to an organic, spring-like experiencing of life, of existence, of presence.²²⁹

Grotowski's concerns within the theatre, which were ethical as much as artistic, had lead him to search for a new format in which the spectator could enter into a truly activating experience. Having developed and understood the paratheatrical process along with his group, Grotowski appears to have chosen to study the specific details of cultural traditions which provide similar experiences (or elements) to those found in paratheatre. To this effect, *Sources* was a study of cultural traditions from Mexico, Haiti, and India. Flazsen has commented that *Sources* deals with a return to a more primitive or natural form of perception which is not culturally determined. This is directly related to the search for revitalised experience. Osinski writes,

According to Grotowski, a culture programs its people to perceive the world in a peculiar and indirect (as opposed to immediate) way...We think and perceive as we have learned to think and perceive. There is a culturally conditioned "wall" that keeps us from experiencing the world directly. "We think we see," says Grotowski, "but we don't see."²³⁰

Speaking in 1978 Grotowski affirmed that *Theatre of Sources* dealt with a return to "the sources of life, to direct, so we say, primeval perception, to organic primary experiences of life".²³¹

At the time of his departure from theatre performance, Grotowski was met by dismay, scepticism, and a marked lack of understanding from some quarters of the theatrical and critical world. In retrospect, however, from our vantage point of two decades, we can see that there was a definite line of thought and research connecting Grotowski's new endeavour to both his earlier research and to the theatre activity in general. The recurrent and constant concern has been with the nature of experience in the modern world, and with the physical and psychological routes which can return us, as Grotowski says, to "the experience of our own lives".²³²

During the period of Grotowski's work upon which we have focused, there existed a dominant body of theatre in America which was concerned with similar aesthetic and societal issues, and which was highly influenced by the Polish model. The American companies aspired to Grotowski's transcendent theatre but tended, on the whole, toward more accessible solutions to the problems of actor-training and affective communication, and used their theatre toward more directly political ends. Most importantly, perhaps, the American companies achieved a

popularity and cultural significance during the period of their reign which suggests that their desire for affect had resonance within the wider community. Indeed, a study of the American affective theatre of the 1960s and 1970s develops our discussion by drawing upon wider notions of psychological and societal schism. Whilst Grotowski provides us with the clearest and most profound theatrical ideology, the American companies represent a strong case for viewing affective theatre as a societal force.

NOTES

- 1 Jerzy Grotowski, Towards A Poor Theatre University Paperback Edition. (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1975), p. 91.
- 2 Grotowski has commented upon his early sense of, what might be termed, ontological insecurity in 'Conversation With Grotowski', an interview conducted by Andrzej Bonarski in 1975.

"For a long time I suspected myself of non-existence. I suspected that everyone else existed and the world existed, but that I did not really exist. I think that that was to do with reservations about my own nature, in biological terms as well...
...my interest in technique, methodology, and art derived from my overwhelming desire to exist... Most likely the central problem of my non-existence was that I felt a lack of relationship with others, because any relationship I had was not completely real".

Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, The Theatre of Grotowski (London: Methuen London Ltd., 1987), pp. 218-219.
- 3 It may be argued that Grotowski's development of actor-training and 'poor theatre' did not arise from necessity, but were the result of precise decisions from the outset. However, Zbigniew Osinski's discussion of *Cain* includes reference to the fact that the actor's craft was not, then, a major concern. Kazimierz Braun considers that the style of a particular scene in *Orpheus* was the result of "lack of funds". Grotowski, himself, speaks of removing technical trimmings and *then* discovering the riches of theatrical poverty. See Zbigniew Osinski, Grotowski and His Laboratory, trans. Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay, (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), p. 40; Kazimierz Braun cited p. 98 of this thesis; Jerzy Grotowski, pp. 20-21.
- 4 See pp. 107-111 of this thesis.
- 5 Jennifer Kumiega, The Theatre of Grotowski (London: Methuen London Ltd., 1987).
- 6 Ibid., p. 128.
- 7 Cited *ibid.*, p. 20.
- 8 Cited *ibid.*, p. 32.
- 9 Zbigniew Osinski, Grotowski and His Laboratory trans. Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay, (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), p. 39.
- 10 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 23.
- 11 Ibid., p. 24.
- 12 Cited *ibid.*, p. 25.

- 13 Ibid., p. 32.
- 14 Cited *ibid.* p. 31.
- 15 Ibid., p. 32.
- 16 Cited in Ferdinando Taviani, 'In Memory of Ryszard Cieslak'. New Theatre Quarterly, August 1992, vol. VII, no. 31, p. 257.
- 17 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, Grotowski's Laboratory (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1979), p. 17.
- 18 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 21.
- 19 Cited *ibid.*, p. 31.
- 20 Ibid., p. 6.
- 21 Cited *ibid.*, p. 115.
- 22 Cited *ibid.*, p. 114.
- 23 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 23.
- 24 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 116.
- 25 Cited *ibid.*, p. 117.
- 26 Cited *ibid.*
- 27 Ibid., p. 114.
- 28 Ibid., p. 130.
- 29 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 20.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 33.
- 32 Cited *ibid.*, p. 81.
- 33 Cited *ibid.*, p. 35.
- 34 Cited *ibid.*, p. 36.
- 35 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 14.
- 36 Eugenio Barba, 'Theatre Laboratory 13 Rzedow', The Drama Review Spring, 1965, vol. 9, no. 3, T27, p. 156.
- 37 Ibid., p. 163.
- 38 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 38.

- 39 Cited in Jerzy Grotowski, p. 11.
- 40 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 128.
- 41 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 91.
- 42 R.D. Laing, The Divided Self (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), First published by Tavistock Publications in 1960. Laing is discussed in relation to the American experimental theatre in chapter four of this thesis.
- 43 The Collins English Dictionary gives the following definitions -
Apollonian - 2. (in the philosophy of Nietzsche) denoting or relating to the set of static qualities that encompass form, reason, harmony, sobriety, etc.
Dionysian - 2. (in the philosophy of Nietzsche) of or relating to the set of creative qualities that encompasses spontaneity, irrationality, the rejection of discipline, etc.
- 44 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 91.
- 45 Ibid., pp. 85-93.
- 46 Ibid., p. 91.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid., p. 92.
- 51 Ibid., p. 93.
- 52 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 52.
- 53 Ibid., p. 128.
- 54 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 92.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid., p. 92-93.
- 57 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, pp. 128-129.
- 58 Cited *ibid.*, p. 148.
- 59 Cited *ibid.*, p. 73.
- 60 Ibid., p. 133.
- 61 Ibid., pp. 132-133.

- 62 Cited *ibid.*, p. 135.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- 65 Jerzy Grotowski, pp. 185-186.
- 66 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 120.
- 67 *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
- 68 *Ibid.*
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 71 See Zbigniew Osinski, 'Grotowski Blazes the Trails', The Drama Review, Spring 1991, vol. 35, no. 1, T129, p. 111.
Kenneth Walker, A Study of Gurdjieff's Teaching (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957).
- 72 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 121.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- 76 Cited *ibid.*, p. 6.
- 77 Jerzy Grotowski interviewed by Marc Fumaroli, 'External Order, Internal Intimacy', The Drama Review, Fall 1969, vol. 14, no. 1, T45, p. 173.
- 78 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 139.
- 79 David Feldshuh, 'Zen and the Actor', The Drama Review, March 1976, vol. 20, no. 1, T69, pp. 79-89.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 81 Cited in Jerzy Grotowski, p. 37.
- 82 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 40.
- 83 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 84 See Carl Jung, Memories, Dreams and Reflections (London: Collins and Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).
- 85 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 110.

- 86 Ibid., p. 155.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Ibid., p. 156.
- 90 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 156.
- 91 Cited in Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 36.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 111.
- 95 Cited in Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 37.
- 96 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 125.
- 97 Cited in Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 36.
- 98 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 16.
- 99 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 122.
- 100 Cited *ibid.*, p. 122.
- 101 Cited *ibid.*
- 102 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 17.
- 103 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 123.
- 104 Cited *ibid.*
- 105 Cited in Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 37.
- 106 Marc Fumaroli, p. 173.
- 107 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 39.
- 108 Jennifer Kumiega, pp. 41-42.
- 109 Margaret Croyden, The Contemporary Experimental Theatre: Lunatics, Lovers and Poets (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1974), p. 163.
- 110 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 138.
- 111 Jerzy Grotowski, 'An Interview with Grotowski', by Richard Schechner and T. Hoffman, The Drama Review, Fall 1968, T41, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 45.

- 112 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 54.
- 113 Ibid.
- 114 Cited *ibid.*, p. 57.
- 115 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 24.
- 116 Eugenio Barba, p. 157.
- 117 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, pp. 24-25.
- 118 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 64.
- 119 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- 120 Robert Findlay, 'Grotowski's *Akropolis*: A Retrospective View', Modern Drama, March 1984, vol. XXVII, no. 1, p. 2.
- 121 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 59.
- 122 *Ibid.*
- 123 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 63.
- 124 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 15.
- 125 See Jennifer Kumiega, p. 63.
- 126 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 32.
- 127 Schechner, Hoffman, p. 42.
- 128 Cited in August Grodzicki, Polish Theatre Directors (Warsaw: Interpress, 1979), p. 155.
- 129 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 64.
- 130 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 63.
- 131 *Ibid.*
- 132 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 69.
- 133 *Ibid.*
- 134 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 60.
- 135 Robert Findlay, p. 17.
- 136 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 65.
- 137 *Ibid.*

- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Ibid., p. 66.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 Robert Findlay, p. 6.
- 142 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 68.
- 143 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 61.
- 144 Robert Findlay, p. 8.
- 145 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 32.
- 146 Robert Findlay, p. 4.
- 147 Ibid., p. 5.
- 148 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 96.
- 149 Ibid., p. 97.
- 150 Cited *ibid.*, p. 61.
- 151 Ibid.
- 152 Jerzy Grotowski, pp. 64-65.
- 153 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 63.
- 154 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 69.
- 155 Robert Findlay, p. 15.
- 156 Eugenio Barba, p. 157.
- 157 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 69.
- 158 Robert Findlay, p. 5.
- 159 Ibid., p. 18.
- 160 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 67.
- 161 Ibid.
- 162 Ibid.
- 163 James Schevill, Break Through in Search of New Theatrical Environments (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1973), p. 299.

- 164 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 165.
- 165 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 71.
- 166 Ibid., p. 72.
- 167 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 33.
- 168 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 67.
- 169 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 33.
- 170 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
- 171 Ibid., p. 34.
- 172 Christopher Innes, p. 166.
- 173 Ibid.
- 174 Jerzy Grotowski, p. 34.
- 175 Christopher Innes, p. 168.
- 176 Jennifer Kumiega, p. 42.
- 177 Ibid., p. 43.
- 178 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 34.
- 179 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 72.
- 180 Zbigniew Osinski, Grotowski and His Laboratory trans. Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay. (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), p. 79.
- 181 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 72.
- 182 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 35.
- 183 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, pp. 72-73.
- 184 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 35.
- 185 Ibid.
- 186 Ibid.
- 187 Cited *ibid.*
- 188 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 74.
- 189 Zbigniew Osinski, p. 84.

- 190 Ibid.
- 191 Ibid., p. 85.
- 192 Christopher Innes, pp. 172-173.
- 193 Cited in Zbigniew Osinski, p. 85.
- 194 Cited *ibid.*, pp. 85-86.
- 195 Ibid., p. 112.
- 196 Ibid.
- 197 Tadeusz Burzynski and Zbigniew Osinski, p. 56.
- 198 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, p. 89.
- 199 Cited *ibid.*, p. 81.
- 200 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
- 201 Ibid., p. 94.
- 202 Ibid., p. 96.
- 203 Ibid., p. 92.
- 204 Ibid.
- 205 Cited in Zbigniew Osinski, p. 148.
- 206 Jennifer Kumiega, Laboratory Theatre/Grotowski/The Mountain Project, (Dartington, England: Theatre Papers, The Second Series, no. 9, 1978), p. 3.
- 207 Ibid.
- 208 Ibid., p. 19.
- 209 Ibid., p. 8.
- 210 Ibid.
- 211 See Jennifer Kumiega, Laboratory Theatre/Grotowski/The Mountain Project; Zbigniew Osinski and Tadeusz Burzinski, Grotowski's Laboratory; articles by a number of participants at Grotowski's projects in Irvine, U.S.A., and Pontedera, Italy, in The Drama Review, Spring 1991, vol. 35, no. 1, T129.
- 212 Zbigniew Osinski, p. 168.
- 213 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, Laboratory Theatre/Grotowski/The Mountain Project, p. 10.

- 214 Ibid.
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- 216 Cited *ibid.*, p. 164.
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- 220 *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- 221 *Ibid.*
- 222 *Ibid.*
- 223 Cited in Jennifer Kumiega, The Theatre of Grotowski, p. 193.
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- 227 Cited *ibid.*, p. 198.
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- 229 Cited *ibid.*, p. 203.
- 230 Zbigniew Osinski, p. 172.
- 231 Cited *ibid.*, p. 172.
- 232 Marc Fumaroli, p. 173.

CHAPTER FOURTHE LIVING THEATRE, THE OPEN THEATRE, THE PERFORMANCE GROUP

The Living Theatre, The Open Theatre and The Performance Group are three major examples of an experimental theatre form which emerged during the 1960s and early 1970s in America. These were the companies which most fully embraced the notion of affective theatre. Their directors were leading figures of the period both within the theatre and the wider sub-culture. This chapter focuses upon the societal and political profile of their theatre and considers the questions raised by their work. I will also identify the way in which the three may be seen to represent three separate strands of approach and response to the question of affect, and to the awareness of mind/body split.

The Living Theatre were politically motivated, and their work incorporated a degree of 'evangelism' - seeking to convert audiences to anarchism. Judith Malina and Julian Beck, the directors, believed that political change could occur only if there was a simultaneous transformation within the psyche and body of the individual. This corresponds to Artaud's desire to revitalize thought; a connection of which the Living Theatre were well aware.

The Open Theatre, led by Joseph Chaikin, addressed the emotional numbness and physical alienation which Chaikin identified in modern society. Chaikin's theatre was an attempt to remind audiences of their own vitality, physicality, and the hidden realms of emotional and intuitive life. Chaikin worked to create methods of actor-training

which could incorporate physical and emotional techniques, and facilitate an affective communication with the audience.

The Performance Group, under the direction of Richard Schechner, explored the possibilities of environmental theatre in a way which was focused on activating the audience. Like Chaikin, Schechner felt that people too easily relinquish their freedom, and the Performance Group sought ways to elicit physical responses and to press the audience toward making decisions and being wholly involved in the performances they attended. Schechner's early work, in particular, challenged aesthetic notions of audience-passivity. The work, which also involved holistic actor-training and a psychology-based form of de-conditioning, was very much about a return to vital, affective, experience.

All three American companies were directly influenced by Grotowski on his visits to America, and by Artaud's writings. To a much greater extent than either Artaud or Grotowski, these American companies were addressing an ideological issue which had its roots directly in their contemporary culture. During the 1960s a subculture emerged in America which posited values very different from those of the mainstream, and which voiced radical criticisms against the prevailing society. These criticisms focused on the capitalist, urbanised Western way of life and its culpability in the issues of racism, war, injustice, and the widespread dissatisfaction and anomie. It might be noted that the accusations made by the youth culture were not dissimilar to those voiced by Artaud some thirty years earlier in France.

In opposition to the societal norms, the 'hippy' youth culture advocated peace, love, and a return to holistic, harmonious ways of life. In an age of alienation it sought to reassert the bonds between individuals, and to refocus upon experience, "life-lived-now".¹ To a degree not repeated in either America or Europe since, the 1960/70s experimental theatre embodied and expressed the concerns of the youth culture. Issues such as Vietnam, the Kennedy assassination, and the Manson murders were directly addressed by companies like the Open Theatre, and the groups acted as a public voice and meeting place for their generation. More than this, however, the theatre group, as defined by the radical sixties practitioners, became a model for the alternative lifestyle, and shared in a free and reciprocal exchange of views and attitudes with a wide range of other disciplines such as social criticism, psychotherapy, and politics. Bigsby writes,

...the theatre, with its concern with role-playing, its existential thrust, its power to engage the public world, not merely found itself able, literally, to act out the public issues of the day but saw its own procedures being borrowed by psychotherapists, sociologists, teachers and critical theorists. The counter-cultural fascination with communes and a renewed sense of group identity, in process of being asserted by various sub-groups, found a paradigm in the theatre group.²

Central to the ideology of the sub-culture was the issue of unity - between peoples, between the individual and the world, and between/within the body and psyche of the individual. These were the definitive and motivating concerns of The Living Theatre, The Performance Group, and The Open Theatre, and their technical experimentation grew from a desire to find forms adequate to the addressing of these issues, and capable of embodying their beliefs.

Political/societal concern and aesthetic experimentation fed off one another and overlapped in these groups to a profound extent. Their work was formed in the space between these two poles, was the child of these parents. Shank refers to

The two energizing forces of the new theatre - the moral energy of social causes and the spirit of artistic exploration...³

This body of theatre emerged at a time in American history which was unmistakably opportune for their particular experiment in terms of both social commentary and artistic renewal. During the 1950s a new body of societal criticism had emerged in the writings of the humanistic psychologist Erich Fromm, and in the political and sexual radicalism of Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse. These theories were to fuel and articulate a growing dissatisfaction amongst the younger generation of Americans who were seeking alternative standards and lifestyles to those of their parents. Political events made the sixties a time of turmoil and insecurity, with the Vietnam war and the call for equal rights exacerbating the emerging sub-culture's distrust of authority.

At the same time, the 1950s, and even earlier, had seen the development of an artistic re-appraisal which came to the fore and infiltrated the theatre in the 1960s. The aesthetic re-evaluation, initiated in the worlds of dance and music, reached the theatre and allowed for the creation of forms appropriate to the new societal principles. The artistic rebellion became intricately linked with the political one.

An artistic interest in concepts such as spontaneity, the use of chance, an emphasis on process rather than product, and on honesty rather than artifice, were all part of a wider ideology which rejected dead, static, and cerebral forms of art in favour of those which focused upon the live potential of the whole human being. Furthermore, the movement to reinvigorate art was also a move to inject those same principles back into life. This attitude, a response to an unfeeling and numb society as much as to an outmoded form of art, became the paramount characteristic of a variety of fields of creativity and related directly to the concerns of the radical youth movement. Roose-Evans describes the general trends of the new art,

...in the 1960s, there were Happenings, Activities and Events, all of which blurred... the distinction between art and life...most were urging people to look about them with new eyes, to reach out with their bodies, to recapture something of the first child-like wonder of life.⁴

Roose-Evans refers to the words of one experimental theatre practitioner to express the orientation of that movement as a whole,

Since the 1960s, the search has been one for a life-lived-now. Andre Gregory, the founder of the Manhattan Theatre Project, when asked what were the principle goals of his company, replied in words that express the *raison d'etre* of most experimental theatre groups today, especially in America... 'I'd like to think', he said, 'that it is to be more human.'⁵

The emphasis on the live qualities of the human and the heightened experience of the individual led to the development of numerous theories and techniques. Serious inquiry into the fundamental nature of theatre underlay all of the performance work. Actor-training methods were developed, inspired by the influence of Grotowski on his infrequent visits to America; experiments into the role of the audience

were necessitated by the new approaches to theatrical communication; the actors and their relationship to the audience became the point of focus for a theatre only marginally concerned with text. Verbal language was largely replaced by physical imagery, and by the poetic and pre-dialogic use of words. This move may have been inspired, in part, by the distrust of rhetoric which arose from the dishonest and abusive use of words in the expanding fields of advertising and political campaigning. Visceral communication evoking an emotional, organic response was developed to effect meaningful and direct encounters between actor and audience. Various attempts were made to free the spectators from their passive roles, and to encourage a participatory meeting. The emphasis on experience also led to new environmental options in which barriers could be lost, the audience involved, and in which the environment itself could begin to play a part in the expression of the piece. The creative process also came under review, and the creative role was opened up - creativity for all as a way to re-initiate people into active play and healthy use of their capacities for imagination and experience.

The artistic measures and experiments were generally connected to, if not arising out of, the social principles of the practitioners. It was as much for social and political reasons that illusory theatre techniques were rejected, as for a disillusionment with the aesthetic of the proscenium arch. And not only did the theatre attempt to stay in line with societal beliefs, but there was a strong conviction, perhaps fuelled by Artaud's rhetoric in The Theatre and Its Double (available in America in translation from 1959), that the theatre could directly

and profoundly influence the wider world. For The Living Theatre, an anarchist company, political action could not be inspired through didacticism, but rather by effecting personal change in the individual on a deeper level - we might say through conversion rather than persuasion.

The Open Theatre and The Performance Group were less outrightly political in their theatre, nevertheless they too attempted to bring about a change in the consciousness of the audience. The thrust towards experience and affective communication in the theatre was never far from the criticisms of Western civilization which pointed to the destruction of the individual's capacity to live fully and humanly. For this reason, the theatre-makers turned repeatedly to pre-verbal, pre-societal forms for inspiration, and attempted to return to modes of life in which affective experience was possible. John Cage's advocacy of Zen, and the widespread use of meditation and yoga techniques in both rehearsal and performance are major examples of this trend. Poor theatre, with its implied criticism of elaborate and commercial theatre forms, was equally a rejection of the technicalisation of society in which human abilities have been sacrificed to the Western definition of 'progress'. Further, it necessitated a renewed concentration upon the abilities of the performer - perhaps the central feature of the experimental theatre of this time.

In an age of media expansion, the theatre was seeking to reassert its own uniqueness, and therefore the experiments in experiential potentials were also experiments in form. Further, the rejection of the

money-system and its connected emphasis on product led these theatre-makers towards an understanding of theatre in terms of process.

Above all, the experimental theatre was concerned, as Andre Gregory said, with becoming more *human*. And the quest - for personal experience, for self-unity, for the ability to feel - began with the theatre-makers themselves. Grotowski's attempt to unify the actor's physical, spiritual and intellectual impulses through long-term group training was an influential model, both as a method of creating archetypal theatre, and as a route to the re-integration of generally divided parts of the self, namely mind and body. Chaikin also attempted to find exercises which could promote physical expression, and allow for mind/body integrated responses. The Performance Group used group therapy as their model for self-discovery as a means to honest emotion and real action in performance. Whereas Grotowski's actors used physical excess to reveal their inner selves to an audience of witnesses, the Performance Group tended towards a style of confessional in order to strip away the lifemask. The Living Theatre, in their long history, adopted numerous techniques and exercises in an attempt at affective communication with an audience, drawing them in as participants whenever possible, and reaching a peak with their eclectic ritual of sex and politics, *Paradise Now*.

Underlying the experiments in technique and form, and the desire to re-define the theatre, was a fundamental ideology, contemporary to the time and place in which they lived. The avant garde theatre of the 1960s and 1970s was, above all, a cry against society's ability to

isolate and impoverish its people. In this respect, the theatres of The Performance Group, The Open Theatre and The Living Theatre were speaking directly for their generation as a whole. The rebellion against society which the theatre-makers embodied had been largely formulated by writers such as Fromm, Marcuse, Brown, as well as R.D. Laing and others. The overwhelming consensus from amongst this group of writers was that modern, Western man is devoid of emotional life, divided from his fellows and internally divided from himself. With this in mind, the experimental theatre of the 1960s emerges as an attempt at re-unification; the theatrical communication is re-defined as an active, ritualistic meeting in which the individual can find communion with his fellows; the theatrical art is re-defined as a process of healing the numbing and debilitating schism of mind and body; and Artaud's assertion that the theatre is a vehicle for the re-awakening of man to his full, and whole, potential is brought to life in numerous forms and performances.

Amongst a wide field of innovative and societally concerned theatre-forms, The Performance Group, The Living Theatre, and The Open Theatre are the groups which appear to have most directly and consciously employed the ideologies of their time - affect and the healing of mind/body split. They are also groups whose histories have been fortunate enough to survive through critical commentary and records (whilst other, no doubt equally valuable experiments, went unnoticed and unrecorded), and are thereby in a position to be analysed some twenty to thirty years after the event.

Furthermore, these groups represent three important strands of approach to the issue of affective theatre; The Living Theatre sought personal liberation in a culture of repression for political reasons - as a part of their anarchist revolution; The Open Theatre worked through physical styles to effect emotional communication in an age of numbness; and The Performance Group sought mental unity in a time of schism, drawing in particular on theories of environmental theatre as a means by which to activate the spectator.

In order to understand the obsession with unity, and the vision of society as characterised by its alienating, isolating and repressive qualities, we must look at the society as a whole, and at the conditions which led to the emergence of a radical, politically aware and socially critical counter-culture.

The Making of a Counter Culture⁶

"I'm a stranger in the very land I was born in".⁷

Quite clearly, the counter-culture of the 1960s had its roots in the 1950s, both by way of picking up on embryonic themes and of acting in backlash. Todd Gitlin describes the inheritance of the youth culture in terms of the twin features of the post-war years;

A first approximation: this generation was formed in the jaws of an extreme and wrenching tension between the assumption of affluence and its opposite, a terror of loss, destruction, and failure.⁸

The post-war economic boom had provided middle-class America with a new prosperity. To adults, who still remembered the Depression, this must

have seemed like hard-earned comfort. To the young, suburbanisation and the flush of commodities would come to represent the capitalist, consumer society which they, for so many reasons, rejected. Perhaps affluence failed to satisfy the younger generation precisely because it was co-mingled with the "terror of loss, destruction, and failure".

When Christopher Bigsby provides a societal background for the American theatre of the 1960s in Beyond Broadway,⁹ he is quick to identify this prevailing sense of alienation and anxiety dominating the culture. The events of the war were obviously, inevitably, catalytic, and Bigsby points to the change in consciousness and confidence that marked the post-war years.

As Elliott Nugent (co-author with James Thurber of *The Male Animal*) observed: 'The two great flashes over Japan did something to the eyesight and the nerves and spirit of the more civilised, sensitive, thoughtful and humourous people...and this change was reflected in literature, drama, music, art and politics.' In 1949, with the detonation of the Russian bomb, America lost its supremacy and its assurance. In Korea it proved less than invincible. It had come to terms with an unaccustomed sense of insecurity. For the first time in its history its inhabitants had to deal with the fact of total physical vulnerability.¹⁰

Insecurity was rife. Bigsby notes the thematic persistence in the post-war theatre and literature of images of loss and alienation, anxiety and displacement. Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Carson McCullers, and others are represented by Bigsby as writers whose work is dominated by a sense of loss and isolation; "an expression of the collapse of a model of community locatable somewhere in the American past".¹¹ If vulnerability surfaced as a result of political and national crises, it was already the ingredient of a country

increasingly torn apart by the advances of an extreme technological and capitalist doctrine. Society was growing and changing, becoming technicalised and suburbanised. Gitlin reports the rash of social criticism which "agreed that the heroic individual was paying a steep price - in autonomy and meaning - for the security and comfort he was reaping from the managed, bureaucratically organised society".¹²

Social scientists had long agreed that the industrialisation and growth of society created alienation amongst its members. Durkheim's statement from 1897 on modern society as a "disorganised dust of individuals"¹³ could easily be applied to America in the 1950s. Gitlin tells us that social critics of the time 'agreed that authentic community and tradition were being flattened by a "mass society"'.¹⁴

For the children growing up in the fifties - those who would later form the youth culture of the 1960s - insecurity was a fundamental, if unseen, aspect of everyday life. Alienation from one another in terms of the dissolution of community would encourage one form of ontological insecurity - a basic day to day displacement erasing a sense of oneness with the rest of society. The Bomb would represent a deeper, more metaphysical and universal form of the same malaise.

For the older generation in the 1950s, Gitlin tells us, the Bomb was associated with the ending of the war, but for the children and young people, "the future was necessarily more salient than the past. The bomb threatened that future, and therefore undermined the ground on which affluence was built. Rather than feel grateful for the bomb, we

felt menaced". Children were dreaming about the Bomb; on a deep, subconscious level, life was threatened, and they were afraid.¹⁵

Of course, the war itself, and the unspeakable fact of the holocaust, were shadows over the lives of the Jewish population in particular. The worst had happened, and 1950s children, inevitably, wanted to know why. Gitlin, himself a Jewish child in the 'fifties, elaborates;

We were survivors, in short, or our friends were, without having suffered in the flesh ... questions nagged: Why should we have been so lucky? ... Our parents had lived through these horrors. Later, childishly thinking them omnipotent, we wanted to know: How could they have let this happen? How could they not have known?¹⁶

And the response which Gitlin reports contains a familiar 1960s motto:

We were going to be active where our parents generation had been passive, potent where (having once looked so omnipotent) they had finally proven impotent. Then we could tell our parents: We learned when we were children that massacres really happen and the private life is not enough; and *if not now, when?*¹⁷ [Italics mine]

This was the atmosphere into which the 1960s subculture emerged, out of which it grew: the dissolution of a secure environment resulting, inevitably, in widespread ontological insecurity and failure of self-image, and a naive optimism that the new generation could make things better. If the 1950s had produced a literature which expressed the isolation and anxiety of the age, the 1960s would provide an art committed to finding cures.

An artistic and political subculture developed in the early 1960s which identified and rejected those factors which it felt contributed to depersonalisation, the fragmentation of society, and the isolation

of one human being from another. There emerged, from disparate sources, and in different disciplines, a philosophy of humanism and holism; an ideology committed to 'unity' - between men in society, between the individual and the world, between the body and the mind.

If this attitude came to the fore in the sixties and was embraced by the politicised youth, its real beginnings had taken place in the 1950s. Whilst the post-war mainstream was embracing the new affluence and middle-class values, there existed prescient enclaves in which a different cultural and political orientation was developing. One major group were, of course, the Beats, but there were also,

...other tiny bohemias of avant garde culture and political dissonance, notably the radical pacifists of *Liberation*, New York's Living Theatre, San Francisco's anarchist and East-minded poets, jazz connoisseurs, readers of *The Village Voice*, and *Evergreen Review*.¹⁸

Gitlin's list points toward some of the important influences upon the subsequent 1960s counterculture and its theatrical innovations. The Living Theatre themselves were formed in 1951, but it was during the 1960s that their experimental style would achieve recognition. Within the work of the Living Theatre, the influences of anarchy, the east, jazz, and political activism are all clearly apparent; indeed, the Living Theatre might be taken as a microcosm for the influence of those factors on the culture as a whole.

The sub-culture of which The Living Theatre were a part was a vibrant, youthful movement with strong alternative values and doctrines. The underground press circulated theories and influences, and acted as a voice for the attitudes which both shaped, and found

support in, the youth culture. From 1954 there was Dissent, which Gitlin describes as "the anti-communist, anti-McCarthyite, democratic socialist quarterly" in which

Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm could debate Marcuse's Eros and Civilization, where Paul Goodman could make his Anarchist raids on contemporary civilization.¹⁹

In the 1950s Fromm, Marcuse, Goodman, along with R.D. Laing, Norman O. Brown and others were "writing the books, many of them not published until well into the next decade, which set a tone for rebellion, when rebellions came up from the underground streams, looked around, and decided to make history".²⁰ In essence, these writers, seen as a group - as a 'philosophy' - were producing a blend of humanistic psychology, existentialism, post-Freudian psychoanalysis, and Eastern mysticism. Centrally, there was a recognition of society's apparent tendency to destroy the individual's capacity for emotional affect. Man, in the Western world, was seen to be emotionally impotent, divorced from his feelings and instincts, ill at ease in his body and in the world, and motivated by a largely cerebral orientation. The humanist ideology rejected the separation of man from himself and from the world, and called for a re-integrated mode of living.

In Coming Apart, William O'Neill suggests that "On its deepest level the counter-culture was the radical critique of Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, and even Paul Goodman".²¹ The actions and philosophies of the largely youth-oriented counter-culture were motivated by what was both an eclectic mix, and a cohesive body, of social theory. The fundamental 1960s youth attitudes to man and society, which have since

degenerated into cliché and been discredited as naive and unrealistic, were qualified by a whole range of psychological, philosophical, and sociological study. So too, the sub-cultural, societally-concerned theatres were directly influenced by this body of thought. Christopher Bigsby's sketch of the 1960s culture names the definitive contributors: Erich Fromm; Martin Buber; Herbert Marcuse; Norman O. Brown; R. D. Laing; and the proponents, in America, of Zen Buddhism.²²

The Psychology of Togetherness

Since the experimental theatre played a central part in the youth culture of 1960s America, it was inevitable that it should have been open to the influences of the writers who inspired that culture. In fact, the impact of Brown, Marcuse, Laing, Fromm, Buber, and others upon the avant garde theatre makers was direct and unmistakable.

Most of these writers had their roots in psychological theory, and there were clearly areas in which theatre could respond directly to psychoanalytic techniques - group work, self-expression, creativity, as well as the use of archetypes and dream-imagery, and the healing of psychological impediments to expression. As the 'sixties and 'seventies progressed, theatre's 'psychoanalytic' content, in terms of theatre as a form of therapy, and the use of personal discoveries as both the subject and the form of communication, became increasingly important. Furthermore, these were writers who analysed the ills of Western society in terms of its monocerebrality. The experimental theatre which was seeking to re-define itself as a physical, pre-verbal, and pre-rational artform was in a perfect position to carry out the

prescriptions of writers who were positing similar standards for everyday life. The technical discoveries brought about by the revolution in the arts went hand in hand with a political radicalism which aligned itself with theories arising largely from The New Left.²⁹ Taking their cue from the critiques of society (and their own experiences of it), many of the avant garde theatres chose to reject, as best they could, the commercial stage and the financial system. Their abandonment of technological effects and intellectual modes was not just an aesthetic scourge, but a principled act in keeping with the contemporary moral climate of the counter-culture.

However, the relationship between the experimental theatre and the societally critical writers is not merely that of having co-existed in time and place. In fact, there is a complex web of interconnections, and amongst a huge host of writers and thinkers who had impact upon the 1960s theatre and culture, this chapter chooses to focus on those who had the greatest influence upon the theatre-makers in question and, equally, whose work focuses upon affect and mind/body integration. It is generally not possible to attribute any specific technique or ideology to a certain writer, since acknowledged influences occur side by side with techniques and ideologies which relate strongly to social or psychological theory but which, in fact, come from other quarters - Artaud, Grotowski, Zen. Ideas which we might now trace to one or another writer were then current, in general circulation, and less easily pinpointed. Further, the theatre-makers were blending aesthetic concerns with political concerns, and it is difficult to identify whether a particular technique or idea arose primarily in response to a

creative situation, or a political one. It seems likely that the two were almost always intermingled, and that source material was often eclectic. What does emerge, however, is the nearness of apparently disparate fields of thought, on the question of physical experience, and related matters. Bigsby notes some of the connections which spring to mind,

When Chaikin remarks that 'In this age we have too definitely divided the mind from the body and the visceral', he is establishing a direct connection not merely with a contemporary desire for holistic experience but with a clear American tradition. Behind this statement lies Artaud but equally Marcuse, Norman O. Brown and an American line that would include Whitman.²⁴

Beyond the general thematic connections, there are also strong personal links between certain theatre-makers and certain of the writers. We know that the companies, or individuals within them, had read writers such as Brown, Marcuse, Laing and Buber, and had drawn on them, even quoted them in their performance pieces. We cannot know whether Beck, Malina, Schechner or Chaikin had detailed knowledge of the works they referred to, but clearly there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the influence of the writers upon the general culture extended to the experimental theatre-makers, and found expression in the techniques or ideologies of that body of work.

Paul Robinson, a psychology academic, describes Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown as "sexual radicals".²⁵ It is in terms of their contribution to the popular conception of sexuality that many critics have acknowledged the influence of Marcuse and Brown on the 1960s counter-culture. Christopher Bigsby describes the impact of the

writings, Life Against Death, (1959), and Eros and Civilization, (1955), upon the culture of the sixties as "a legacy of sexual transcendence",²⁶ and identifies it as a prevailing concept which the avant garde would have to acknowledge. The flyleaf of Marcuse's Eros and Civilisation describes him as "the spokesman of radical opinion in Europe and America", and O'Neill refers to Brown's Life Against Death as "an underground classic".²⁷ The theories and attitudes which Brown and Marcuse were developing in the 1950s found popularity and approval with the radical youth of the 1960s. Sexual freedom, and the association of peace and love with uninhibited sexuality became a touchstone of wider societal beliefs for the counter-cultural youth. And what may look, in retrospect, like irresponsible naivety, had its roots in a theory of the body which was both serious and profound.

The starting point for both writers was a re-evaluation of Freud, specifically applying the theory of repression to the history of Western society. In discussions which Artaud would surely have sided with, Marcuse and Brown traced the ills of society to the unwholesome base of a culture which denied the instinctual and bodily side of our nature, and enforced a wholly cerebral orientation. Robinson identifies the fact that Brown and Marcuse share "the conviction that Freud's great accomplishment was to remind us of the high price we have paid for our civilization".²⁸ For Brown, the dichotomy between instinct and intellect amounts to that between life and death, since experience is a paramount casualty in the rupture. Both men focus on the "genital tyranny" of the reduction of physicality to sex, the reduction of sex to genital, procreative intercourse.

Brown highlights Freud's theory of repression and the unconscious in his writing; that which we deny does not cease to exist, but carries on within us, growing distorted and disfigured as we strive to subjugate it. As Artaud believed, neuroses and illness derive from sources of energy becoming dammed and warped. Of the individual, Brown says

The fact that repressed purposes nevertheless remain his is shown by dreams and neurotic symptoms, which represent an eruption of the unconscious into consciousness, producing not indeed a pure image of the unconscious, but a compromise between the two conflicting systems, and thus inhibiting the reality of the conflict.²⁹

In Life Against Death, Brown borrows a phrase from Nietzsche for the title of his first chapter; 'The Disease Called Man'. Here Brown discusses the wider context of Freud's theory of the unconscious as it relates to man in society.

The later Freud as we shall see is moving toward the position that man is the animal which represses himself and which creates culture or society in order to repress himself.³⁰

As we mature and struggle to adapt to the constraints of society (which acts, through various forms of authority, as the reality principle) our early experience of "polymorphous pleasure" is subjugated and denied. That which we repress continues to act upon us, surfacing in the form of neurosis. The development of modern, civilised society, in the light of this information, comes to seem like the development of a neurotic, sick species. Brown writes,

... both Nietzsche and Freud find the same dynamic in the neurosis of history, an ever increasing sense of guilt caused by repression. Nietzsche's climax - "Too long has the world been a madhouse" - compares with the dark conclusion of *Civilization and Its Discontents*: "If civilization is an inevitable course of development from the group of the family to the group of humanity as a whole, then an intensification of the sense of guilt will be

inextricably bound up with it, until perhaps the sense of guilt may swell to a magnitude that individuals can hardly support."³¹

Brown holds out for a return to the state of 'polymorphous perversity' in which the whole-body physicality of infancy is re-asserted as the norm. The loss of such a state of being is seen to be concurrent with the development of the reality principle. The reality-principle requires the individual to cooperate with its environment and to accept long-term gratification instead of immediate pleasure. To accomplish this the individual learns to repress certain impulses which conflict with the demands of reality. However, the transition from physical pleasure to rational sense is not an easy one, and the early memory of uninhibited pleasure endures. Domination of the rational over the instinctual becomes an over-emphasis upon the cerebral qualities of the individual and a denial of their physicality.

Marcuse combined Freud's theory of the mind with Marx's theory of society in order to draw Freudian analysis into the realm of political thought. In 1966 he added a 'Political Preface' to Eros and Civilization which succinctly summarizes his approach,

...the title expressed an optimistic, euphemistic, even positive thought, namely that the achievements of advanced industrial society would enable man to reverse the direction of progress, to break the fatal union of productivity and destruction, liberty and repression - in other words, to learn the gay science (*gaya sciencia*) of how to use the social wealth for shaping man's world in accordance with his Life Instincts, in the concerted struggle against the purveyors of Death.³²

Marcuse's admitted optimism lies in the fact that, unlike Freud who could not reconcile his thoughts on repression with the possibility of an unrepressed civilization, Marcuse sees, in Freud's thesis, evidence

that repression and unhappiness are not necessary. Marcuse champions a reversal of society's tendencies, not by renunciation of the present, but by the harnessing of those aspects of 'progress' which could lead towards liberty and happiness for all.

Throughout the political preface Marcuse identifies those aspects of civilised society - "the affluent society" - which he finds destructive and unacceptable. His primary point is that in the affluent society, which exists by virtue of its repressive qualities, some achieve freedom at the expense of others. "...the most effective subjugation and destruction of man by man takes place at the heights of civilization...".³³ Robinson discusses the political slant of Marcuse's work,

Marcuse explained the historical connection between "genital tyranny" and the performance principle in an extraordinarily ingenious piece of reasoning: libido became concentrated in one part of the body, namely the genitals, in order to leave the rest of the body free for use as an instrument of labor...³⁴

From this reasoning it became clear that any political redefinition of society would have to include a redefinition and reassertion of physicality. For political purposes, then, Marcuse requires the rediscovery of the "polymorphously perverse" body; not an increased or improved genital sexuality which would continue to alienate the rest of the body, but a resexualisation of the whole.

Erich Fromm emerged, like Marcuse, from The Frankfurt Institute,³⁵ and although they differ strongly on many points, they share the desire for a re-integrated self, capable of achieving a non-destructive society. Like Marcuse and Brown, Fromm equates aggression and

destructiveness with the highest levels of civilization, and traces them to the disharmony of instinct and intellect.

Fromm's book, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, written in 1974, provides a detailed analysis of the world-view he was developing throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and which is also expressed in works such as The Sane Society.⁹⁶ Fromm examines evidence from anthropology and psychology to construct an argument in which the basis of our mind/body dichotomy is placed firmly within the evolution of the species as a whole. Having lost most of our animal instinctual determinism with the development of rational mental properties, the human species has emerged, in Fromm's thesis, as "the most helpless and frail of all animals".⁹⁷

For Fromm, the loss of instinct and the development of capacities for thought (self-awareness, reason, imagination) have resulted in man becoming the most troubled, and troublesome of all creatures. Because they are motivated by instinct, other animals act in accordance with nature, and are part of nature. Man has no such clear cut orientation to the world. Motivated largely by the exercise of his own reason, man is capable of, perhaps even characterised by, acts of gross and irrational destructiveness toward his world, his fellows, and himself. The overriding result is profound ontological insecurity.

Fromm's evolutionary imbalance connects with Brown and Marcuse's theories at the level of mind versus body. In each account, an early experience of contentment is lost in the development towards

cerebrality - whether as a person or a species. This is a crude reduction and a vast over-simplification of all three writers, but it provides us with a focus for their work in terms which are relevant to the theatre companies who acknowledged them. Fromm's influence on the theatre companies is as a general representative and spokesman for the ideas of the time, rather than a specifically named inspiration.

R. D. Laing was a British psychologist working largely in America throughout the fifties and sixties. His central concern was schizophrenia, and the claim that the disorder was not an 'illness', but a response to society. His comments in books like The Divided Self (1959)²⁸ were intended to indict all of society; the schizophrenics were merely those who had the most severe, or the least socially acceptable, 'symptoms'. The central malaise which Laing identified in his patients was a deep ontological insecurity; a sense of alienation from the world, an inability to experience one's own physical essence, and an inability to feel connected with other people. In this sense, Laing is taking up the discussion which writers like Brown, Marcuse, and Fromm have expounded; their work identifies society's alienating effects upon the self - Laing's examines the condition of that alienation. Once again, there are links to Artaud, who also claimed that his 'schizophrenia' was everybody's disease.

Martin Buber provides a very different approach to the question of societal life. His work has had impact upon, and been classified within, a number of disciplines, but it is specifically of a religious, or spiritual nature. Buber's central significance is his commentary

upon man's relationship to man, and from there, upon man's relationship to God, and to himself. In clarifying his beliefs about the nature of human communication, Buber touches upon those aspects of existence which distance us from our ability to contact one another and to wholly experience 'being'. His theory of communal man had great appeal to the sixties culture which wished to reassert community and the strength of the group.

The Living Theatre were strong advocates of Buber's work. Beck and Malina were also Jewish, and their religion played an important part in their work. Malina notes in her diaries that "Julian became a revolutionary through faith",³⁹ and indeed their anarchistic critique of society, expressed in their theatre as well as in their lives, is deeply imbued with a religious emphasis. *Paradise Now* combines aspects of different religious faiths (Judaism as well as elements from Eastern religions and mysticism) in order to create a ritual by which to achieve 'paradise' and the 'state of non-violent revolution'. Malina describes it;

Theoretically we've taken these steps to Paradise, from a Hassidic concept that Buber describes as the ten rungs. And the rungs are so designed that while they are a sequence, at any point you can go to heaven, at any point you can, like total grace, make it.⁴⁰

Buber's influence upon the company, and their respect for him, is also apparent in their appeal for his support in 1961.

When we were organising the general Strike for Peace, in 1961 we wrote to Martin Buber and asked him for his support. And he answered us that he was in sympathy with our action but that he could not lend us his support for such an undertaking because he feared "the enormous despair" that would result from its inevitable failure.⁴¹

Whilst the Living Theatre went ahead with the Strike, Buber's words

clearly resounded with thoughts of their own, because in 1972 Malina published her diaries under the title, The Enormous Despair; the entry for October 2nd, 1968, refers back to Buber's letter and reads - "Now we are in the twilight of that despair".⁴²

The writings of both Malina and Beck, as well as their work in the theatre, clearly establish their religious orientation and the points of contact with Buber. "Blessed is he who is everyones brother", writes Malina;⁴³ a simple maxim but one which is, profoundly, at the heart of Buber's vision of humankind.

Whilst the Living Theatre strongly identified with Buber's humanist and spiritual beliefs, many of their generation preferred a more secular reading of his work. However, if organised religion was unpopular with the youth culture, the credo of "love thy neighbour" was certainly in favour. Buber's emphasis upon communication and the importance of meaningful human relationships had impact for the generation which championed unconditional love. Bigsby writes,

...Buber's tenets drained of any theological content, became the substance of a secular faith hawked widely and with varying degrees of conviction by American writers from the Beats to James Baldwin, from Salinger to Carson McCullers.⁴⁴

Buber's notion of personal relationships goes beyond the verbal communication of everyday life. He describes an emotional, spiritual communication which does not involve speech, the precondition for which is an inner openness to the world. And our inability to easily achieve such a state of experience is discussed with reference to the culpability of modernity and the industrialization of society.

Buber's understanding of the human is one which embraces strongly the irrational, spiritual, and physical capacities of the individual.

Human reason is to be understood only in connexion with human non-reason.⁴⁵

Thus, it is not surprising that Grotowski has also indicated a fascination for Buber's work.⁴⁶

That which unites Buber with the psycho-sociological thinkers - Brown, Marcuse, Fromm, Laing - is his thoughts on human existence. In Between Man and Man, Buber draws on Nietzsche, (in a thesis which anticipates the much later work of Fromm), to identify man's "violent separation from his animal past".⁴⁷ The development of the human potential for reason and responsibility is again characterised as the source of a separation from physical, instinctual aspects of the self. Ontological insecurity arises, and man fails to live out his potential. The result is alienation, and division from others, and from oneself. Buber's attempt is to re-orientate people with one another through an emphasis on irrational, sub-cerebral capacities, and through the discovery of visceral, spiritual communication and experience.

The Living Theatre

In 1951 Judith Malina and Julian Beck founded a theatre company whose work was to span three decades and become a seminal force within theatrical history. Theodore Shank has said of them that,

The techniques they used over the years comprise a catalogue of nearly all the techniques associated with the alternative theatre in Europe and America.⁴⁸

Indeed, one can draw from their history a list of innovative conventions and practices which trace an ever-developing line of thought, and an increasingly sophisticated, and optimistic, vision of the efficacy of theatrical performance.

Initially, it was the aim of The Living Theatre to produce new and poetic forms of theatre but in the course of their history the aesthetic exploration was equalled by a search for new societal forms. The work of the company increasingly came to have meaning for them beyond the sphere of theatrical research, and as their conviction that life and art are not separate entities grew, so too their political sensibilities came to infiltrate their experiments in performance.

In 1951, The Living Theatre began performing in Malina and Beck's apartment in New York. In reaction to the mainstream theatre which was firmly set in the conventions of the past, they sought non-naturalistic and imaginative forms, and chose plays from a range of sources: the anarchist Paul Goodman, Gertrude Stein, Brecht, Lorca, Rexroth, T.S. Eliot, Jarry, Auden, Cocteau, and Pirandello.⁴⁹ Of this period, Beck has said,

We wanted to change the whole method of acting, but that cannot be done in one stroke. The language had to change, first of all in our reaction against Naturalism, against the American version of Stanislavski, we turned to the contemporary poets, to a poetic theatre. We wanted the theatre to accomplish a revolution, eventually, one that had already transformed the other arts - music, painting, sculpture.⁵⁰

Even before Beck and Malina became avowedly political in their theatrical work and workings they were actively involved, as Anarchists, in demonstrations and other actions. Shank identifies the oblique presence of their political radicalism within the early plays with reference to their activism,

This defiant, individualistic behaviour was reflected in their theatre works which were intended to jolt the audience into a new awareness, to present entirely unique works, and to explore production techniques which would alter the usual audience-performance relationship.⁵¹

As anarchists, and with the influence of Artaud, Beck and Malina saw Western society as a sick, repressive, and unfeeling establishment. If modern life could be seen to be characterised by war, violence, and injustice, then these evils could be traced back to one essential source; man's inability to feel, to actively experience life. By 1968 they had devised a theatre designed to address, not specific political issues, but the underlying malaise itself, which Henry Howard, an actor in *Paradise Now* articulated thus;

Not how to stop the war or feed the people in India. Getting back to the source - its been known for ages...The inability to experience each other.⁵²

It has been noted that "a thread of absolute consistency runs through the history of the Living Theatre",⁵³ and indeed in the various theatrical forms that the company adopted or developed there is a

singularity of purpose. Underlying all that the company undertook was an ideology based on an unremitting faith in the life-force. As early as 1962 or 1963, Beck's definition of the work of the Living Theatre was couched in the metaphysical terms which were to become, increasingly, the motivation for more than two decades of seminal experimentation,

...I said that our aim was to increase conscious awareness, to stress the sacredness of life, to break down the wall.⁵⁴

One of the earliest concerns of The Living Theatre was the idea of portraying real action, as opposed to illusion, onstage. Shank notes that the development of this concept,

...led eventually to eliminating the separation between art and life, between dramatic action and social action, between living and acting, between spectator and performer, and between revolution and theatre.⁵⁵

In 1952 the group staged Paul Goodman's play *Faustina*, at the end of which a character chastises the audience for not intervening in the action of the play. Whilst this was still an entirely fictitious moment in an illusionistic play, as Shank tells us,

The power of the moment came from a shift of audience perception from the illusion of *Faustina* to apparent direct communication by a performer.⁵⁶

Pirandello's *Tonight We Improvise* (1955) and William Carlos Williams' *Many Loves* (1959) also involved devices which were designed to confuse the audience's point of focus and their concept of fiction and reality. In 1958 this convention was taken to its extreme in the group's famous production of Jack Gelber's *The Connection*.

The whole play pivots on the central pretence that the audience are watching a documentary being made; and that the people they are watching are real people: the film director, the camera men, and the drug addicts who are the subject of the documentary. The realistic acting reaches a climax when one addict overdoses before the eyes of the shocked audience. The play successfully confused audiences into believing that they were watching real life. As Shank explains, The Living Theatre felt, at first, that in this they had achieved their aim,

At first Beck and Malina were pleased with this production, believing they had achieved their objective of putting reality on stage and eliciting from the audience a true emotional reaction rather than the modulated feelings orchestrated by traditional drama...However they were eventually disturbed by what they came to think of as their dishonesty in deluding the audience. They wanted to put reality on the stage, not pretence.⁵⁷

By 'fooling' the audience, The Living Theatre were, unwittingly, carrying on the tradition of illusionistic theatre in a way which they, themselves, came to find unacceptably dishonest. However, from this basis a whole new concept of staging reality developed which was to shake the traditional vision of 'acting' to its core, and open up new potentials for theatrical communication.

In 1960 Jackson MacLow's *The Marrying Maiden*, provided an important stepping stone for the company. The pacifist MacLow's work was combined with the influence (and practical help) of John Cage and his ideas for employing the use of chance in the composition of music - or theatre. The performance consisted of sections of MacLow's play and passages from the I Ching being performed in an order dictated by the throw of a dice. The dice also dictated the way in which the sections

should be delivered, in terms of volume, tempo, and manner, and when a tape recorded accompaniment should be switched on and off. In this way, the performance differed every night, and any textual meaning emerged by chance from the random arrangements suggested by the dice. This was much closer to Beck and Malina's desire for real action since the improvisatory nature of the actors' responses to the unpredictable orders highlighted their presence as real people undergoing a real experience in front of the audience.

In May 1963, a major influence upon The Living Theatre's work was brought to the fore in their production of Kenneth Brown's *The Brig*. The preface to the playscript contains Beck's comments on Artaud and their use of Artaudian techniques in connection with the play. The company embraced Artaud's concept of theatre because it corresponded to their own ideas about political art. As anarchists, the company were of the opinion that societal change can only occur after, or simultaneously with, individual change. They saw theatre as the ideal vehicle for personal transformation, and Artaud's theory articulated that concept in a way which resonated with the political and societal beliefs of the time. Innes comments on this,

Their assumption was that individual spiritual change is the precondition for meaningful exterior political change, that dealing with a social issue on its own terms will only perpetuate the established cycle of violence and oppression of which it is a symptom; and their aim was therefore to create images that would act as an emotional inspiration, to challenge taboos and socially conditioned patterns of thought.⁵⁸

Therefore, their politics would not be expressed in an agit-prop or issue-based format but rather, would become the basis for a ritualistic theatre with an in-built structure for emotional conversion.

Just as Artaud had seen that the schism of mind and body produced a detrimental way of life, the Living Theatre saw that a society which represses natural physicality could only result in abnormal and destructive forms of being - the Freudian concept which Brown and Marcuse were expounding. Pierre Biner writes,

They want to unify, to integrate man, body and soul, because 'civilised' man is man divided before he is anything else.⁵⁹

Throughout their writings and interviews the company repeatedly refer to theories of societal repression and alienation,

The theatre has to work with the people to destroy the systems of civilization that prohibit the development of body and brain.⁶⁰

The importance of human emotion and affective response is always stressed,

...if we were feelingful people we simply would not be able to tolerate all of the pain and suffering that there is in the world.⁶¹

Human suffering, then, is seen as the result of the unfeelingness of other human beings whose capacity for affect has been eroded by civilization's emphasis on cerebrality, its denial of natural life forces. 'Feeling' in this context denotes more than straightforward emotional response; it refers to a way of life in which creative, vibrant experience is possible, in which instinctive and subconscious impulses are liberated, and life becomes joyful. This state corresponds closely to Buber's concept of openness to the world of experience, and therefore to the experience of others.

In 1963, *The Brig*, by Kenneth Brown, became the first major experiment in affect, whilst developing the technique of presenting

real action; Brown uses documentary-style writing; he had himself been a prisoner of the U.S. Marine Corps prison in Japan which the play exposes. Moreover, within the fictionally representative setting of the play, the actions of the performers consist of responses which are not 'acted' but real.

The Brig is designed to punish, deny individuality, and enforce uniformity and discipline. It is dominated by the presence of white lines on the floor which, along with a set of rules, regulate the prisoners lives. No movement or speech is allowed until permission has been asked and granted in the prescribed fashion - "Sir, prisoner Number - requests permission to cross the white line, sir". Any breach of the rules, however small, results in the prisoner being beaten or commanded to perform strenuous push-ups or other exercises. Kenneth Brown's script, highlighted by the Living Theatre performance style, reflects the destructive monotony, and is metaphoric in its attempt to portray prison and prisoner. The real life conditions of torturous oppression when portrayed on stage become a microcosm for society, conveying, in Innes' words,

This frightening image of social conditioning as brainwashing, with the military framework implying that the end result of deadening normal human emotions is killing.⁶²

This is precisely the implication that the company wished to make. In a statement which echoes Artaud, Beck articulates the objective of setting this metaphor before a public,

I often think that if the people on the street would realise how the world we live in is a prison, they'd do more yelling and railing, too. The sad, perhaps tragic, thing is that people do not realise they're not free. How thoroughly we have lulled ourselves

with our pride into our brand of limited liberty... people delude themselves because they cannot see the bars.⁶³

The following performance details have been derived from a number of descriptions of *The Brig*, including those by Stuart Little, Pierre Biner, and Theodore Shank. In order to convey the conditions of the Brig to the audience it was essential that the reproduction should be as faithful as possible. For this reason, the strictness of the guards is real, and the punishments are not bluffed, but actually meted out. Conditions were also recreated in rehearsal, in order that the actors could approach an understanding of the meaning of portraying the actions of a guard or prisoner. This was a quite different approach to the 'emotion memory' technique employed in Stanislavskian naturalism and the Method. Significantly, it removed the focus of creativity from the mind to the active body, and was based in reality rather than pretence. The Artaudian nature of the approach was acknowledged in the production notes which Beck wrote for the American publication of *The Brig* playscript,

Artaud believed that if we could only be made to feel, really feel anything, then we might find all this suffering intolerable, the pain too great to bear, we might put an end to it, and then being able to feel we might truly feel the joy, the joy of everything else, of loving, of creating, of being at peace, and of being ourselves.⁶⁴

The Living Theatre hoped that by telling an audience about the Brig in a way which allowed them to understand it on a level beyond the intellectual they would "produce real horror and release real feeling".⁶⁵ Thereby, the audience would be able to fully respond to the connotations of the piece. Shank says of the play,

Director Malina and Beck felt that the production should make the audience want to break down all prison walls. Prison had become

for them a metaphor for what Malina called 'the Immovable Structure', whether that structure is 'a prison or a school or a factory or a family or a government or The World As It Is'.⁶⁶

Since the Brig was not just a metaphor but a reality, the play operated effectively on two levels; on the one hand it was a documentary presented in an emotionally affective format, on the other it was a statement about a wider, more metaphysical condition which was illustrated by the metaphor of the Brig. It was this latter which most closely resembled Artaud's prescriptions for an affective theatre, since his concerns were not political in a temporal and specific way, but rather tended towards universal and abstract descriptions. Beck suggested that The Living Theatre departed from the Artaudian model at this point since Artaud used fantasy and myth as the basis for his cruel and shocking presentations, whilst The Living Theatre felt that real life presented many adequately horrific cases. Like Artaud, the 'cruelty' they dealt with was metaphysical, but they felt that it was also manifest in many real-life situations. By using examples such as the Brig, the group were also raising consciousness about issues from which the public are generally shielded. There is, then, the potential for political action in response to a specific cause. On this level the group were successful with *The Brig* since enough people responded to the play for a commission to be set up to make inquiries which eventually led to the prison being closed down. Whilst Artaud wanted the revolution to occur, first and foremost, in 'thought', Beck and Malina were equally concerned with everyday politics.

In Europe, in 1964, the company devised a performance piece called

Mysteries and Smaller Pieces. As Shank's description tells us, The piece was comprised of exercises which the group used in rehearsal, including yoga; and workshop exercises which they had recently learnt from a member of the Open Theatre. This was the first time that the group considered using training exercises in performance, but it was to be the beginning of a line of development in which the performance provided therapeutic 'exercises' for the spectators to watch or join in with. The use of exercises onstage was a factor which Grotowski disliked about the Living Theatre when he saw their work. He felt that the work lacked the formal discipline which would transform personal experiences into communicable signs. However, the work in progress aspect of presenting exercises, as well as the fact of performing tasks rather than playing roles made exercises as imagery attractive to the group. From this beginning, it is easy to see why the company chose a structure of nine sections for the format of the piece and called it "a public enactment of ritual games".⁶⁷

There was no text, no set, no costumes, and no characters. Items, prepared, improvised, or played were carried out as actions by the group and spectators were free to join in. This was another step forward in the experimentation with real action, and with performers appearing as themselves and not characters. There was no fictional story as such, and no projected time, place, or time scale other than the real one. The lack of all fictionality radically altered the audience-actor relationship, and spectators were invited to participate physically in sections of the play. Several of the exercises were

physically and vocally liberating, and facilitated a sense of closeness amongst the participants.⁶⁹

The beginning of the play was characterised by a technique which has been critically accredited to the influence of Artaud; a man appears and stands unmoving, unspeaking for several minutes whilst the audience become impatient and, inevitably, some feel provoked into shouting. Such a technique to rouse the audience was used in later performances, as we shall see, and was intended to shake the audience out of complacency and the usual theatre-watching mode of passivity into a state of potential involvement - albeit sometimes hostile. Shank tells us that on occasion there were fights in the audience amongst audience members, and Patrick McDermott provides a detailed description of the audience's disturbed and volatile reactions to the standstill.⁶⁹

The Artaudian influence seems to have emerged most strongly, however, in the final scene, (a fictional piece closer to *The Brig* than the rest of the play). A 'plague' scene was enacted in which the cast died in agonies and their bodies were built into a pyre. The section lasted for thirty minutes, and provoked a variety of responses from the audience - some took the opportunity to die along with the cast, others comforted the dying, helped with the removal of the bodies, or tried to hurt or distract the 'dead' performers. Its juxtaposition within the show as a whole also contributed to its effect, as Biner describes,

The preceding scene represents the closest form of harmony and cooperation; this one is its exact opposite...Using a phrase of Artaud's, Julian calls it the "double"...It is the negative counterpart of Scene 8.⁷⁰

The company felt that the enactment of suffering and cruelty, those aspects of society that they despised, was necessary because, as Biner writes,

The theatre existed "to drain abscesses collectively," like the plague, to reveal vileness, hypocrisy, illusion. Hence it had to become the "time of evil."⁷¹

The formal reference to Artaud, and the imagery of the section within the sense of the piece as a whole were two of three levels on which The Plague scene operated; it was also a device through which the performers, and potentially the audience, could achieve a state of release. Indeed, the creation of imagery or the performance of actions which had an intense or disturbing effect on the audience was of equal importance to the group as the content of any piece. As with Artaud, the theatre for Beck and Malina was essentially the provision of an opportunity to feel and to actively experience; to exist on a level of emotion and subconscious. A primary aim of the company was to communicate on a level deeper than intellect, in order that the audience might be reminded of their capacity to experience life at this level.

Although this is, in itself, a revolutionary and political act, since its objective is, "to drench the people in such beauty that they tear down the flags and subvert the armies, form communes and cells and a society in which there is a possibility of being",⁷² the Living Theatre had a further political aim: conversion. In their attempts to convey the message of anarchism to the people, to place "at least some doubt into the fatal illusion",⁷³ the Living Theatre's direct and

emotional communication potentially bridged the gap between intellectual persuasion and a more deep-seated conversion; that which takes place on an emotional level. Again, this was not conversion to a specific cause or party-political line but, as with the writings of Brown, Fromm, and Marcuse, to the necessity to radically alter our way of life.

The people need revolution, to change the world, life itself. Because the way we are living is too full of pain and dissatisfaction. Fatally painful for too many people. For all of us.⁷⁴

Just as Artaud had found, in theatre, a form of personal, and potentially societal, rejuvenation, the Living Theatre recognised the link between active, creative experience which the theatre could offer, and the human potential which the psycho-societal writers had predicted. Theatre, however, in its popular manifestations, was consistently reduced, in the Living Theatre's time as in Artaud's, to the level of entertainment, failing to fulfil its potential as a tool for organic and subliminal communication. The Living Theatre's experiments with theatrical form aimed to rediscover a theatre of 'affect',

Art has become a very contained mental thing and it has a very detrimental effect on the way we look at the world. Now we have a need not for the art but to revive ourselves, our own bodies, our own beings, our own lives.⁷⁵

Theatre then comes to fulfil the role of 'therapy'. The assumption that theatre can produce a lasting effect on the spectator, and that this effect can then be carried into the rest of life and society is one which Artaud also shared. It is also in keeping with the theories of the psycho-societal writers; a return to states of being which ordinary life has repressed. Artaud called this a state of 'inspiration', and

saw in that blissful and united moment the model for life as it might be lived. Judith Malina speaks of the same state of being using the term 'creativity', and her 'void' occurs with the absence of creative thought (a state which Brown considered to be related to the infantile state of pure pleasure);

Any moment that I am not in the creative instant torments me. I suffer whenever I'm not in the creative ecstasy of doing it...because I have this insane desire for ecstasy all the time - and for everyone. I ask myself why, if it is possible some of the time for some people, can't we discover how it occurs and have it forever? Is this fantasy really different from the biblical commandment to choose life?⁷⁶

These are exactly the terms in which Fromm and Buber express the existential dichotomy which society imposes upon us, and Brown entitled his 1959 book on the subject, Life Against Death. Society is characterised by all of these writers as forcing us to deny our whole human existence, and to choose impoverished, monocerebral modes of being.

Frankenstein opened in October 1965, and, according to descriptions by Shank and Biner, it combined the formal techniques of *Mysteries* with an ideological content that portrayed the company's anarchist message on a further level. Shank notes the progression from the 'boxes' set⁷⁷ in *Mysteries* to the three storey, fifteen cell acting structure within which *Frankenstein* took place. The non-moving man on stage at the beginning of the last show also re-emerged in a developed format; *Frankenstein* opened to a group of actors sitting on-stage and meditating around a central figure. Every five minutes an amplified voice explained that the purpose of the meditation was to levitate the woman. Beck has stated that the group believed that the

meditation was possible, and that had the woman levitated the performance would have been over - consummated. In effect, the meditation piece would only work as a real action, and as an honest piece of theatre (in their terms) if they believed the levitation possible. The attempt usually lasted for twenty minutes or so, then the action would change and the fictionality of the piece would take over. Shank notes that audience members were often infuriated at being made to wait for an event which they felt was impossible and, as with the opening of *Mysteries*, they sometimes became hostile. The play seems to anticipate this response as the next action reflects and exposes the mood of hostility. The group blame the woman for the failure to levitate and put her in a coffin. Although this is a fictional, and pre-arranged action - as is the rest of the play - there is still a highlighted division between the player and the part. Rather than being fully illusionistic, the performers use methods to remind the audience that they are actors showing the actions of others; they wear their own clothing, they play a number of parts - some abstract.

The piece continues in an Artaudian array of murder: an actor objects to the killing of the woman and the group turn on him and hang him; someone else objects and they are executed. One by one all are beheaded, crucified, shot, electrocuted, or guillotined in the cell-like compartments of the stage set. Eventually only Frankenstein and two others remain. The action then changes and Frankenstein asks a question pertinent to all of The Living Theatre's later work; 'How can we end human suffering?' The message of Frankenstein and the format of

the company's approach to affective theatre provide, in part, the answer which Beck and Malina wished to suggest.

From Shank's description of the play, we might infer that physical and visual imagery was dominant; the Creature was created from the bodies of the cast hanging on the scaffold and making a man-shape three storeys high. The Creature is also represented in two other sizes - by an actor, and by lights on the scaffold picking out the shape of the monster's huge head, again three storeys high. Words are used in the play in the form of extracts from the novel and quotations from Mao, Bertrand Russell, Walt Whitman, Marx, and Shakespeare. There is little straightforward dialogue but an important moment - and message - occurs when the Creature delivers a passage from Shelley's novel in which, according to Shank, he "tells of his discovery of the physical world - darkness, light, fire, etcetera - and his discovery of society - division of property, wealth, poverty - and his rejection by it".⁷⁰ This is a significant articulation of the play's message, and an interesting use of intellectual delivery of a concept. The group are here beginning to mingle the use of affective conversion with intellectual persuasion; two very different forms of communication.

The rejection of the Creature generates new violence, and he disappears causing a hunt in the auditorium by Frankenstein and his assistants. Actors in the audience are captured, interrogated, fingerprinted, and imprisoned in the cells of the structure; they revolt and kill the guards. Frankenstein starts a fire in his cell and dying screams are heard. Violence begets violence in a chain-reaction. Shank

articulates the message - "The structure of society is the cause of perpetual violence".⁷⁹ At the end there is optimism when the creature, again created out of bodies, raises his arms in a gesture of peace.

The play, like the book, is a condemnation of Western society and its destructiveness. Shank writes,

The two-and-a-half-hour performance is intended as a metaphor for the evil in each human being, the monster in each, which comes together to form our societies which perpetuate violence. The compartmentalized physical structure animated by performers is a visual articulation of the structure of society.⁸⁰

Even the setting of the play had been designed to convey the message; so whilst there was certainly an intellectual communication, there was also contact on a number of other levels. Non-verbal vocalising and movement was used to convey waves and wind, some sections incorporated improvisation. And as with *The Brig* the audience were given the opportunity to experience something of the horror and evil which the company were discussing by the use of the death scenes and the manhunt which takes place in the auditorium, amongst the spectators. As with *The Brig* the group had tried to get close to their material in the rehearsal process on a personal level. Since the anarchist perspective focused on the evil created in all of us by society, which is in turn created by each of its individual inhabitants, a rehearsal technique was devised which involved the confession of crimes each of the company members had committed. Beck and Malina called it "an ugly and painful rehearsal technique", but one which would help them to uncover and understand the "evil madness" in themselves; "this evil that is corrupting all the great efforts of man is in each heart".⁸¹ Shank tells us that,

The production was more coherent than *Mysteries*, was more compelling visually, and presented more explicitly than ever before the Living Theatre's view of the relationship of the individual and society...^{e2}

In February 1967, a production similarly representative of their political/sociological viewpoint was presented. Judith Malina had translated Brecht's version of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Malina and Beck's anarchism and pacifism is clearly expressed in the play, and the tyranny of order and authority (in the form of Kreon) is exposed. Antigone's action is reminiscent of the acts of civil disobedience which the company had themselves performed, and is defended in the play as an act of conscience. Shank says that for some it was a metaphor for Vietnam but, bearing in mind the metaphysical quality of the earlier plays, it is likely that the company were concerned with universal conditions as much as specific ones. Shank's account of the play shows that once again the company opened with hostility toward the audience, although this time it had a more thematic purpose; the audience were cast in the role of Argos, against whom the actors, representing Thebes, were opposed. The actors open by staring at the audience and talking about them in an unfriendly manner. When the hostility has mounted the 'war' begins; the actors create the sounds of gunshots, air-raid sirens, planes, bombs, and troops as they enter the auditorium, and, amongst the spectators, enact the killing of Polyneices. As with *The Brig* the rationale behind exposing the audience to violence, which the company disapproved of, is couched in Artaudian reasoning;

if people feel how atrocious it is to kill each other,

if they feel it physically then perhaps they'll be able to put an end to it.²³

As with *Frankenstein*, the fictionality of the piece was offset by the 'acting' style of the performers who retained their own identities whilst demonstrating the actions of the characters. Everyday clothes emphasised this, and the non-naturalistic use of mimed props and organic sound effects detracted from any tendency to closely associate the performer with the part. Physical inventiveness again replaced verbal communication and provided the opportunity for poetic expression. The elders of Thebes become Kreon's throne and actors' bodies represent the prison walls. Beck wished to highlight "the physical presence of the human being", in order to escape the cerebrality that was dogging creative work both in the theatre and beyond it, and also as a reassertion of the body in the face of technology. The physicality of the actors and the fact that their bodies and voices were the company's primary tools was highlighted by the large cast - twenty performers - being on stage throughout the piece. Beck and Malina had come to see that the early plays had been "bound inside the theatre of the intellect", and were thereby, products of "rational civilization".²⁴

During their time in Europe the Living Theatre had attempted to find new forms which were relevant to their particular definitions of theatre and of their own task. The work on *Antigone* had sought to further depart from the traditional concepts of performer, and led to expressionistic movement and vocalisation. The actor was required to

unite speech with "an actual physical locality in the body",⁸⁵ so that new forms of communication could emerge from the natural language and capacity of the body. Meaning is expressed obliquely through imagery which reveals the hidden, unspeakable aspects of the subject. The system against which Antigone struggles is portrayed as "a writhing compact mass of actors in which the individual seems to have given up his freedom to the control of the whole".⁸⁶

These were concepts which the Open Theatre was also exploring, and which Grotowski had developed to an extraordinary degree. It is not accidental that the focus should have been so firmly on the live actor and not the character; not only was escapist fantasy replaced by an art for real life but the assertion of life over fiction, real people over pretence, and the human over representation had impact within a counterculture for whom loss of the personal and alive seemed a very real threat. Further, abandoning the previous modes of performance allowed for systems in which spontaneity, and with it physical and vocal freedom, could be granted to the actor. In this way, actions would be authentic, not pre-arranged. Mental faculties would no longer control physical and emotional responses to the point of overwhelming them. Above and beyond artistic pleasure in these changes the fact remained that dominant rationality was considered to have devastating effects on humanity. By abandoning monocerebrality in the theatre these companies provided a backlash which had the potential to transform not just art but life too.

In July 1968, the Living Theatre presented *Paradise Now*, a new

work devised collectively (with the final edit by Malina and Beck), which reverted to the non-fictional structure of *Mysteries*. *Paradise Now*, however, did not communicate through form alone, but developed the dialogue of the previous works. Whilst the other works exposed societal ills in a therapeutic framework, *Paradise Now* attempted to provide suggestions for action. This was to be a positive step towards attaining the revolution which they had spoken of for so many years. This discussion of *Paradise Now* is based on the extensive detailing of the production in the company's book, Paradise Now, as well as on commentaries by a number of critics.

The format of the piece articulated their radical definition of theatre quite distinctly. The 'script' was in the form of a map, and the performance was a collective journey in which the cast acted as guides for the participating spectators. *Paradise Now* attempted to go beyond discussion into the realms of real action. The piece was designed as a ritual through which the individual's political and spiritual consciousness could be changed - revolutionized - through affective and direct experience. The motivation for such an extreme version of audience participation, and for such confidence in theatre's power to change people lay in their belief - partly inspired by Artaud, partly by the psycho-societal writers - that if people were reminded of their inner and emotional selves then the acceptance of society as it is would become too painful to be borne. Beck and Malina firmly believed that the political change they sought could only be achieved if it was accompanied by personal change, "an interior revolution, a spiritual change".²⁷

The structure of the ritual was adapted from Martin Buber's version of the 'Hassidic Rungs'. The Hassidim, a Jewish mystical sect, had described a model of salvation based on the idea of an eight-runged ladder. Malina explains,

...the rungs are so designed that while they are a sequence, at any point you can go to heaven, at any point you can, like total grace make it.⁸⁸

In *Paradise Now*, the rungs lead, not to heaven but to a revolutionary state of consciousness. The eight sections of the play represented the eight rungs, "a vertical ascent toward permanent revolution"; each rung had three parts, worked on three levels, a 'ritual', a vision (image), each performed by the cast, and an action which the cast introduced and which the audience played. The play is a journey, a rite of passage, which transports the participants from the acknowledgement of societal repression to a state of altered consciousness in which it would no longer be accepted. Freedom and unity of mind and body become intricately linked in the performance which aims to achieve both - not in an illusory sense, but in reality. *Paradise Now* is a ritual in the sense that it provides a structure through which participants can experience an emotional and physical conversion. This conversion would consist in the rejuvenation of mind and body, and the re-establishment of repressed faculties, as these comments by members of the company show

In Paradise, everything is vitally interesting. A constant renewal of experiences.... Unification.... Ecstatic intuition... Unity of language... The absence of mundane time.⁸⁹

This statement of the company's view of the paradisiacal condition reveals that which they consider to be missing in life; in life,

reality is dull, we live at a remove from our senses and are thereby robbed of sensation, and experience; we live at a remove from our bodies and are thereby divided, not whole. As Artaud described, the thought becomes separated from the word; the logical mind disassociated from the subconscious. Life is mundane because we have lost the capacity to experience it. *Paradise Now* is designed to restore to its participants the capacity to feel, in order that they need no longer live half-lives in which they condone suffering. And the starting point for change is the body.

The first rung included a statement which explained much of their work, and which provided the base line and source for all further societal ills which the piece sought to work through;

The Living Theatre believes that society makes one ashamed of one's body which causes a disunity between the physical and spiritual self, but if a harmony between these two selves could be achieved, all destructive urges would be eradicated.⁹⁰

Prohibitions such as "I am not allowed to take my clothes off...smoke marijuana...travel without a passport..." were used to rouse the audience, and to highlight the myriad of small ways in which society inhibits freedom. The prohibition against nudity was especially targetted by the group who saw it as "the final absurdity". They announced,

The body itself of which we are made is taboo. We are ashamed of what is most beautiful; we are afraid of what is most beautiful.⁹¹

The 'action' was an invitation for the audience to disregard society's repressive norms and participate: "Act. Speak. Do whatever you want. Free theatre. Feel free. You, the public, can choose your role and act it out".⁹² This was an introductory section in which traditional

norms and ways of being could be discarded. The second rung used that essential starting point to move on to the specifics of anarchism. Significantly, anarchism is introduced with physicality - the actors gently touching the spectators - both an image for personal relations as they might be, and an important tool in breaking through everyday reserve to the human beneath.

The 'vision' for this section was the portrayal of the words 'anarchism' and 'paradise', spelt out by the actor's bodies. Again the message is quite clearly a connection of physicality with anarchy and freedom. The third rung works from the assumption that the participants are now ready to consider revolutionary action. The action involves discussion of revolutionary cells which could continue beyond the duration of the performance.

The fourth rung deals with violence through sexuality; sexual repression as "the fundamental taboo that is channelled into violence".⁹³ The rung begins with 'The Rite of Universal Intercourse'; for the preparation of which the group read Brown. Performers are partially or fully undressed in the Rite, and perform a group caress amongst themselves and any spectators who wish to join in. Some may leave the mass group and caress in pairs, but full sexual intercourse is illegal. There were often arrests and police interference on this count. This rite is juxtaposed by the vision of the cast paired into executioner and victim, repeatedly the executioner shoots and the victim falls. Eventually the victim starts to speak gently to the killer who replies with the list of prohibitions from the

first rung, until the scene ends with their embrace. The action returns to Universal Intercourse again - "the actors/guides seek to consummate the action by a sexual unification" and as a result "the division between actor and public diminishes".⁹⁴ The suggestion is that the act of love can destroy hostility, a belief articulated in their slogan, "Fuck means peace".⁹⁵

The fifth and sixth rungs are images of a possible future with conflicts and divisions between peoples eradicated, but with the inevitable "period of struggle between the non-violent revolutionary forces of love and wisdom and the reactionary forces of violence".⁹⁶ The seventh rung reveals the post-Revolutionary world with the symbolic action of participants 'flying' into the arms of those waiting below (a trust exercise which was taken up by many other groups as an image or workshop technique). The last rung makes the essential move from the theatre into the world outside; the cast lead the way into the street, saying, "The theatre is in the street. The street belongs to the people. Free the theatre. Free the street. Begin".⁹⁷ Of this moment, Shank writes, "For the Living Theatre life, revolution and theatre had become one".⁹⁸

The company's documentation of *Paradise Now* refers to "apokastasis, the transformation of demonic forces into the celestial".⁹⁹ The ritual of apokastasis which they attempt is the changing of the audience's consciousness into a state of potential revolution. The journey takes place both intellectually and emotionally, and theatrical forms are used which encourage spontaneous

emotional responses, and facilitate communication on an organic, as opposed to cerebral level. *Paradise Now* is both "...a spiritual voyage and a political voyage".¹⁰⁰ Beck had remarked that the work of the company was to,

find ways of communicating with each other beyond those which involve speech. To find a way of communicating our feelings and our ideas through signs and being.¹⁰¹

This is close to Artaud's search for a theatrical language, and indeed, some of the company's techniques were derived from the theories of The Theatre and its Double. In *Paradise Now*, this most seductive of performances, emotionally charged action, based on subconscious communication, was developed to a high degree. The objective was, in Bigsby's words, "a realisation of the self through the other".¹⁰²

In a sense, the central significance of *Paradise Now* was the fact that it existed at all; the formalistic structure of the piece, the very act of communicating on a personal and emotional level, was, in itself, an acutely political action. Quite apart from its ultimate effect, it remains, as a member of the company said, that "To do a play called *Paradise Now* in a world doing a play called *Hell* is a revolutionary act".¹⁰³

In July 1968, the Living Theatre played *Paradise Now* at the Avignon Festival in France. Shank reports that,

At the end of the second performance about two hundred people surrounded the Living Theatre in the street celebrating their sense of new-found freedom.¹⁰⁴

No doubt disturbed by the potential of such a liberated crowd in the wake of the events of May of that year, the Mayor of Avignon asked the

company to substitute another play for *Paradise Now*. The company withdrew from the festival, explaining in their 'Avignon statement' that they were morally incapable of complying.

Because you cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time, you cannot serve the people and the state at the same time, you cannot serve liberty and authority at the same time, you cannot tell the truth and lie at the same time, you cannot play *Antigone* (which is about a girl who refuses to obey the arbitrary dictates of the state and performs a holy act instead) and at the same time substitute *Antigone* in the place of a forbidden play.¹⁰⁵

Having been living in self-imposed exile in Europe since 1964, the company returned to America for a seven month tour in 1968. In the four years that they had been away, the revolutionary spirit in America had changed quite drastically, and the group found things very different on their return.

Students had been radicalized through demonstrations against university authoritarianism. They were subjected to arrest and police violence. Only a month before the arrival of the Living Theatre hippies were being transformed into radical Yippies at the Democratic Party convention in Chicago where demonstrations were met with police brutality. The non-violent stance of blacks had been eroded by the Watts riots in Los Angeles, the F.B.I. persecution of the Black Panthers, and the assassinations of black-power advocate Malcolm X and civil rights leader Martin Luther King.¹⁰⁶

The violent climate is apparent in Malina's account of the period in her book, The Enormous Despair. The return was greeted by much press coverage and the tour was successful in that there were full houses - 4,000 in Chicago. There were, however, incidents with the police, arrests for nudity, indecency, and breach of the peace. Moreover, the company were beginning to doubt the efficacy of playing pieces like *Antigone*, *Mysteries*, *Frankenstein* and *Paradise* to the

middle class and student/hippie audiences who came to the performances. In Europe the situation had been similar but the political activism of the students there made the group feel that they were making progress. During the American tour they came to seriously doubt their effectiveness, as Shank describes,

The lives of the middle class audience and society remained unchanged by the experience. Malina and Beck came to believe that they were being assimilated as other trappings of social change were assimilated, thus forestalling a fundamental change in the structure. Even the words 'revolutionary' and 'radical' came to be used in the programmes of President Nixon and in advertising new products.¹⁰⁷

What is more, the Living Theatre now seemed to occupy an uncomfortable position between the revolutionaries and the establishment, rather than within the radical movement. Shank tells us that

Some French students had criticised the Living Theatre for working within the bourgeois system, accepting contractual arrangements from established organizations and performing in the theatres subsidized by the state. When they took *Mysteries*, *Antigone*, *Frankenstein*, and *Paradise Now* to the United States there were other criticisms from the political left....their anarchist revolution was not the revolution envisaged by young Marxists and other political radicals who felt the Living Theatre was out of touch with the American situation and naive in believing radical change could be brought about by non-violent means.¹⁰⁸

The atmosphere of the American counter-culture had changed during their time away, and commitment and pacifism had given way to disillusionment and the violence of despair. As pacifists the group could not accept the position of violence which the revolutionary movement, in its various forms, now insisted upon. Malina, in her diary, struggles with her feelings of being outside the movement, unable to be, any longer, a part of it. Whilst she had respect for groups like the Black Panthers, whom she recognised as her 'brothers'

in the struggle, she could not condone their violent approach, believing that it branded them with the same mark as the system they were trying to beat. The Living Theatre decided that their work could no longer be presented for middle-class audiences in theatres and universities, and that the peaceful revolution would be inspired elsewhere. They decided to begin performing for the poor and disenfranchised of the world, for whom the revolution was most necessary. In early 1970, Beck, Malina, and a small group of actors went to work in Brazil with the intention of creating theatre in the streets and communities. In its way, this was as much a departure from the 'theatre' as Grotowski's withdrawal from creating performance that same year.

In Brazil, the company began work on the *Legacy of Cain* cycle of plays, which they hoped would prove relevant to other communities of the world also. *Legacy'* was a street spectacle comprising a number of different plays which would take place in different parts of a city over a period of time. Beck describes the cycle,

The Legacy of Cain is an attempt to bring to a community, and out of the community, an analysis of the current political, social, economical and psychological condition, and at the same time to discuss ways out. All our forms are based on a Master-Slave syndrome, and consequently in need of change. *The Legacy of Cain* is an attempt to analyze the grip of violence in the society in terms of hierarchical forms, like government, money and class system, violence and war, property and ownership rights, ownership of things and of people. And in terms of the conditions which are at the beginning and at the end of these circumstances, the condition of love and death that it leads to. So there are six major themes in *The Legacy of Cain* and the seventh is the way out.¹⁰⁹

The six sections of the *Legacy'* were entitled Love, Property,

Money, The State, War, and Death, and these each represented a scene or stage within each of the plays of the cycle. The original intention was to create 150 different plays within the cycle, each designed for a certain community or section of the community. The form of these pieces was designed for the audience in very specific ways - requiring simplicity and immediacy for the faveladoes, and in order to avoid censorship in the town square, using only actions without words. Further, as Beck explains, the form was interconnected with the efficacy of the meaning;

I think also that if people are going to be inspired or excited by a new idea the very form in which the idea is presented has considerable importance. We want to change perception. We want to condition people to change.¹¹⁰

In this way, the group continued to use Artaudian elements, despite the simplicity of form that language barriers necessitated. However, the group saw the *Legacy* cycle as a major departure from their earlier works, bridged, as it were, by *Paradise Now*. Whilst earlier pieces had exposed certain aspects of human life through the medium of theatre, *Paradise Now* had both suggested change, and had pointed toward a theatre, not of buildings, but of the street. Despite the radical innovation of *Paradise Now* it was still 'a play', whilst *Legacy* was a commitment both to appropriate and vital forms and direct action for change. Malina has said,

The Legacy of Cain is not a play. It is a project done in a place, in which we are trying to have a certain effect on the community.¹¹¹

The interplay of didactic, propagandist pieces and affective imagery was still a strong aspect of the work. Whilst they were

committed to clarity, Beck has also said,

I don't think that it is necessary always for the spectator to understand. Often we create the images because we want these images to be disturbing and change the dream patterns of the spectators.¹¹²

Further, Malina has noted the efficacy of converting as well as convincing,

A human being is not changed because of an interesting lecture. The learning process is a process of breaking through resistances to feel. Art is a process that can heighten the sensibility through various techniques. To make these resistances to fall and open the possibility for a certain change.¹¹³

For Beck the theatre's ability to touch the imagination was an important part of preparing the ground for discussion, particularly in the streets and amongst the poor where numbed acceptance would often otherwise create resistance to change. The interplay of cerebral and affective communicative devices is significant; the play was attempting to work on two opposing levels - both to "analyse the grip of violence in the society..." and to look for "different ways to change consciousness. To create a perception".¹¹⁴ For the most part, the affective work acted as a route to discussions which would occur on a cerebral level, but would be fired by the experience and affectiveness of the performance;

We create trances, we create images, we create effects which make it possible to lead up to the discussions with the audiences. The purpose of the theatre is in large measure to stir the imagination. The reason why we want to bring theatre out into the street is because we want to stir the imagination in the street where the imagination has been drained of its life blood by the oppressive forms of the society. I think that because the imagination is stirred the discussions are possible.¹¹⁵

The plays which were created in Brazil as elements of the cycle drew on techniques and images from older periods of work, in particular

from *Paradise Now*. The group had often re-used imagery from one show to another in the past, and in Brazil this became a necessary technique due to the timescales to which they were working. "Visions, Rites and Transformations", a piece designed for a town square, included a long procession in which onlookers would be greeted with "the look of *I and Thou*", taken from *Paradise Now*, and inviting an association with Buber, as well as the 'apokastasis', also originated in *Paradise Now*.¹¹⁶ This play also followed the main topics of concern (money, war etc); the company describe the scenes as "plays without words, done in an Artaudian style, ritualistically and repetitiously".¹¹⁷ As with other plays of the cycle the piece culminated in the audience unchaining the actors - a simple and active image, which, in itself, necessitated an act of civil disobedience on the part of the spectator-participants.

After leaving Brazil, the company's work in Europe and America continued to interweave theatrical and political actions in this way.¹¹⁸ Their work throughout the 1970s and early '80s shed much of its public profile. In contrast to the large-scale event of *Paradise Now* they concentrated on localised actions which were directly relevant to specific political causes. In some respects they may be seen to have abandoned political theatre in favour of theatrical politics; concentrating on actions such as presenting bread and roses as an offering of peace to the police in Italy, or handing out apples to peace marchers in New York in the mid-eighties. Whilst this certainly retains the mark of their earliest experiments with fiction and reality, it bears little of the therapeutic or ritual quality that had once seemed the crux of their revolution.

The Open Theatre

When the Living Theatre went to Europe in 1963, one of the actors, Joseph Chaikin, stayed behind to continue a workshop he had been running within the Living Theatre. He was approached by a group of students from a defunct theatre workshop and together they developed the Open Theatre.¹¹² The group was designed to act as a laboratory for its members. Although projects and experiments were run by different members within its boundaries, the work led by Joseph Chaikin came to be recognised as the mainstay of the group. Chaikin's experiments resulted in the evolution of many influential exercises and techniques and in the creation of innovative and memorable performance works.

The Open Theatre's emphasis on 'process' and experimentation meant that work was often carried on for long periods of time without an audience. During the various projects that he led, Chaikin devised hundreds of exercises to lead the actors and himself towards a greater understanding of, and skill for, theatre. The 'openness' of the group, and the lack of pressure to produce performance works or to please an audience, meant that the work could be allowed to follow its own natural evolution. The emphasis on experimentation, however, did not deny the role of the audience in the theatrical equation, and Chaikin was equally interested in experiments with the spectator and with the nature of communication. To this end, several influential performance works evolved; *VietRock*, *The Serpent*, *Terminal*, *The Mutation Show*, and *Nightwalk*. By 1973, and on the strength of these shows, the group's reputation was well-established and attracting financial assistance.

Rather than become commercial, and risk compromising their explorations for the sake of maintaining critical and popular acclaim, the company disbanded. Chaikin continued his work for several years in a seasonal workshop called The Winter Project which demonstrated many of the features of the Open Theatre. He has also worked in a number of freelance situations as both a director and an actor, and in collaborations with, amongst others, Sam Shepard.

To express the extreme joy of being alive at a certain moment is practically impossible - and really worth trying.¹²⁰

As a child Joseph Chaikin suffered from an illness which left him with a heart complaint; on several occasions he has almost died, and it may be this which has given him his particular interest in the heightened awareness of experience and the 'aliveness' of performance. In 1981, Chaikin said,

I always think I won't make it through the day. I don't see things as going on at all. And this has an impact on a way of being, certain choices that one makes.¹²¹

Although by 1981 Chaikin's condition had certainly become more serious than it was in his Open Theatre days, it may be that this was the very attitude which led him towards the exploration of aliveness and presence which characterised his work and which reached its fullest expression in the performance piece, *Terminal*. Eileen Blumenthal has referred to this aspect of Chaikin's life as the underlying motivation in his work;

While much of his work has addressed the darker regions of experience, behind his obsession with these questions - and his engagement with the theater medium itself - is a startling alertness to the thrill of being alive.¹²²

Chaikin's work is very much concerned with American society; in particular he has identified and addressed an emotional and physical impoverishment of the American people. Chaikin has written,

In America many people live in their bodies like in abandoned houses, haunted with memories of when they were occupied.¹²³

His early work was greatly concerned with reintroducing actors to their own bodies since he saw a widespread alienation from natural physicality. To this end he devised numerous 'psycho-physical' exercises which encouraged the free flow of impulses between mind and body within the performer. This was a similar exploration to that being carried out by Grotowski in Poland although Chaikin worked through different means and established different techniques.

Chaikin's own near-death experiences had given him a sense of the temporality and preciousness of life, and it may have been from this privileged viewpoint that he recognised a societal tendency for individuals to avoid, or be separated from, their own experience.

In his book, The Presence of the Actor,¹²⁴ Chaikin refers to R.D. Laing's The Politics of Experience¹²⁵ in which Laing examines the Western condition of ontological insecurity. Laing speaks of society's repression of modes of behaviour which are considered unacceptable; the individual's true self is outlawed and one is forced to conform and become like others. In Laing's diagnosis this results in the individual developing false personality constructs - inner schisms - and eventually leads to the psychological condition, schizophrenia. For Laing (and for Grotowski), Western society itself is schizophrenic; all

of its members to some extent suffer from internal schisms and ontological insecurity. 'Schizophrenic' individuals, as Laing has described, do not feel that their experiences are their own since the personality which they project is not a true representation of the inner person. Chaikin's theatre was in part an attempt to address this issue; his performers were encouraged through exercises and training to discover their repressed emotions and capacities, and those hidden aspects of human life were presented to audiences. In 1971, a performance was developed, *The Mutation Show*, which directly addressed the way in which people hide behind defensive 'life-masks' which serve only to mutate them and divorce them from their real capabilities. Live experience was highlighted for both actors and audience.

For Chaikin the very basis of theatrical art lies with the human presence of those playing and those watching;

I believe that the ultimate value in the theatre is the confrontation of all the live bodies in the room with the mortality they share.¹²⁶

Just as Grotowski had focused upon this concept to develop a theory of theatre which fully exploited the ability of the actors, Chaikin moved from this premise towards a theatre which was dedicated to highlighting live presence, not just in the actor, but in the individual. For Chaikin the actor was present on stage, first and foremost, as an individual rather than as a character. In this way the actor was not separated from the experience of being in the performance, and the audience were not permitted to passively view the action as though it were entirely fictional and irrelevant to their lives. Chaikin has said,

When we as actors are performing, we as persons are also present and the performance is a testimony of ourselves. Each role, each work, each performance changes us as persons. The actor doesn't start out with answers about living - but with wordless questions about experience. Later, as the actor advances in the process of work, the person is transformed. Through the working process, which he himself guides, the actor recreates himself.¹²⁷

So too, the actor's heightened presence is intended to affect the audience and encourage a recognition of their own vital presence, hence the title of Chaikin's book, '*The Presence of the Actor*'. He wrote,

You're there in that particular space in that room, breathing in that room...That's what the theater is. It's this demonstration of presence on some human theme or other and in some form or other.' And in this way it can bring people to 'an appreciation of being.'¹²⁸

The reality of the performance as a real event in real time was highlighted, then, to remind people of their own immediacy and mortality - an issue close to Chaikin's heart. It was also an issue with strong societal implications which Chaikin was aware of. In an interview during the Vietnam war, Chaikin said,

I think that people are very divided from a kind of reality, so that it's very easy for someone in a plane to push a button and drop a bomb on a village because he has no relationship to that village at all, none; he sits on a plane. And in a sense I think that people have lost the sense of people being alive. They say: I am alive, but other people are projections of mine, they don't feel like me.¹²⁹

This theory of atrophied affect is one which Chaikin shares with a number of psychologists and other writers; Erich Fromm discusses this concept - using the same example - in his book *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, in which the separation of human mental and physical capacities and the Western monocerebral orientation is outlined as a self-destructive course. Martin Buber, too, stresses the importance of the relationship 'I-Thou' in affirming the reality of the other, and

Chaikin quotes Laing in The Presence of the Actor: "Each of us is the other to the other".¹³⁰

The theatre, then, has a strong social mission since it is an arena of live human contact in which people can reforge their communication with the affirmed presence of the other. If our atrophied sense of affect and access to experience can result in destruction, then it is clearly an important task to re-create a state of ontological vitalism in the individual. For Chaikin, our social lives daily separate us from our greater human potential, and the experience of theatre can redirect us to our physical, emotional and a-cerebral selves;

We are born little animals unable to care for ourselves and crying with anger at being alive. Our voices become what is necessary to speak English with. Our wishes are modified by what seems possible to attain. The whole spectrum of imagination humbles itself to what is available to understand. We must unmask and be vulnerable all over again.¹³¹

This is similar to Grotowski's view of inhibited potential and the necessity to strip away the 'life-mask'. Chaikin, like Grotowski, is clearly aware of human possibilities beyond those manifest in everyday Western life. Whilst theatre is capable of drawing the participant on to deeper, hidden, levels of the self, those levels and capacities are also the point at which theatre - communication - can best occur. Chaikin comments,

Then there is that other level, from which we also act, where there is no possibility of fixing conclusions or exchanging facts. In that creative stage the actor is in a bafflement which has no sophistication and no direct information. He has suspended his personal protective armor and is without what we know to be an organized identity. But it is on this level that it is most possible to meet him.¹³²

In an age in which people lead monocerebral lives in which the contents of their subconscious, imaginative, and intuitive minds are lost to them, Chaikin's theatre served as a socially therapeutic force.

Initially, the Open Theatre's societal criticisms were directly addressed through political theatre, but in time the group marginalised direct political comment, feeling that agit-prop had a limited usefulness and that it hampered the creativity and openness of the company. Nevertheless, the work continued to be informed by their social morality, and the form, in particular, expressed radical societal critiques. Chaikin and the others were also politically active in their wider lives; Chaikin being an active pacifist and a draft-counsellor during the Vietnam War.¹³³

Chaikin's dissatisfaction with American contemporary society was very much in keeping with that of his generation. He attributes his politicisation to the time he spent with the Living Theatre. Many of the writers he refers to are those whom we have seen as contributing to the emergence of the politically and artistically radical 1960s culture; Laing, Marcuse, Brown, and Paul Goodman. The artistic objectives of the Open Theatre were undeniably a reaction against the commercial and Method-based theatre conventions of the time. However, they can also be seen to clearly address and reflect the 'politics of experience' and the sexual/physical radicalism which have since been considered to characterise the 1960s. Chaikin writes,

I would like to change my life and everyone else's. I don't know how to do it. If not the life, then the day, the evening, the hour, the minute.¹³⁴

Chaikin, like many of his actors, had been trained in the Method technique of acting, and had come to reject its psychological realism as outmoded and ineffectual. Chaikin has noted that innovation in the arts must reject even those conventions which were, themselves, once innovatory. By the 1960s, the Method seemed, to Chaikin, to be inappropriate and limited. He has also noted that, "There are times when certain emotions are encouraged or invited, other times when they are not allowed".¹³⁵ Method may have permitted expression of a certain range of emotions, but it was also guilty of defining that range. Chaikin wanted a theatre form which could express the whole range of human emotions, including those currently and culturally 'exiled'. In an age which he has described as characterised by "a real momentum toward numbness", the rediscovery and reassertion of human emotion was a particularly important - and topical - goal. Peter Feldman, an actor with the Open Theatre has revealed,

Our objective was to make visible onstage those levels of reality which usually are not expressed in situations: the elusive, irrational, fragile, mysterious or monstrous lives within our lives; the elements of personality which lie behind the roles we assume as our identity...¹³⁶

These comments clearly bring Chaikin's theatre into line with those of Artaud and Grotowski. Rather more like the Living Theatre, however, Chaikin places such concerns within a directly societal context;

...I also feel that this question of expressing feelings in the theater is linked to something political. I sense that there's a kind of increasing need to repress emotions, to cancel and neutralize emotions. I'm very aware of certain emotions being forbidden little by little, more and more.¹³⁷

This societal rejection of emotional states has also been reflected in the theatre. As Chaikin himself recognises, theatre was

originally a forum for affective communication; "from the time of the ancients, it has been a place where intense passions can be manifest".¹³⁹ But today, the theatre has marginalised emotions; even those artists who comment on the 'numbness' do so in emotionally numb ways. As Chaikin says, "they are also citizens of it". Chaikin's overriding concern has been to discover theatrical ways of expressing emotional and affective states.

Our training has been to be able to have access to the popular version of our sadness, hurt, anger, and pleasure. That's why our training has been so limited. Shock: We live in a constant state of astonishment which we ward off by screening out so much of what bombards us...and focusing on a negotiable position. An actor must in some sense be in contact with his own sense of astonishment.¹³⁹

Chaikin has suggested that the search for emotions in the contemporary American theatre was the appropriate search for his time, just as Brecht's theatre was emotionally appropriate for its context. He explains,

The V-effect was to *observe* and *look* in the middle of all that push-button emotion of Germany during that period. It really came out of that particular sensibility.¹⁴⁰

Throughout his work Chaikin has attempted to reassert the need for emotional expression and to rediscover the ability to discard defensive masks and experience honest, human reactions. In several pieces of work he has addressed the concept of mourning; "I feel like mourning is healing", he tells us.¹⁴¹ Both *The Serpent* and *Terminal* involved mourning ceremonies, and beyond the Open Theatre Chaikin continued the exploration in *The Dybbuk*, *Antigone*, and *Trespassing*.

Chaikin's search, then, has been for a theatrical form which would

permit access to those substrata of experience and emotion which are not usually visible. This was a challenge to the cerebral orientation of most Western theatre, and indeed life. It was also, as Feldman mentioned above, a route to that which lies "behind the roles we assume as our identity". Feldman noted the social and personal implications of these objectives; confronting the realms of life which are generally denied to us and exposing the impoverishment of current experience, and the latent potential of the hidden, unconscious self.

As we have seen, the emphasis upon a-rational and spontaneous forms of mentality has its roots in other artistic innovations which had been developed throughout the 1950s and 60s by John Cage and others. The Living Theatre had experimented with the use of chance procedures in 1960 in *The Marrying Maiden* and generally embraced the use of random and illogical expressions in their work. However, for Chaikin, the use of improvisatory forms was always accompanied by a greater degree of rational control and discipline. For example, he did not use scripts which had been generated in improvised situations but employed a writer to transfer this raw material into accurate expressions. For this reason, Grotowski expressed a much greater interest in the Open Theatre than in its contemporaries for whom the importance of personal expression sometimes overrode artistic standards.

One of Chaikin's major motivations in setting up the company was to explore the possibilities of ensemble playing. Defining their aims in 1964, Chaikin said that he wanted to "redefine the limits of the

stage experience, or unfix them", and also to "find ways of reaching each other and the audience", and, as it turned out, the connection between these two objectives lay in the third, "To develop the ensemble".¹⁴²

Within the context of a secure group, Chaikin had the opportunity to develop work over long periods of time and to create an on-going vocabulary of both terms and experiences. In this way the group had access to a form of collective experience which is missing from modern urban life for many people. If the group could draw others - an audience - into the experience of this 'community' they would be fulfilling one of theatre's most archaic and essential roles. Chaikin has defined the function of theatre as "community affirming",¹⁴² and his experiments in sharing and communicating with an audience make it quite clear that his concern is for a sense of community with the public and not just the ensemble.

Chaikin's work with the Open Theatre consisted largely in the devising of exercises through which to explore aspects of theatrical communication. He is particularly noted for his 'psycho-physical' exercises through which defensive personality splits in the actor were overcome in order to allow for increased creativity and expression. Chaikin has said of this work,

The first we always have to do is to unlock the body and the voice from the ruts into which they fall in everyday life, and move from there.¹⁴⁴

In response to the cerebral orientation of Western actors, Chaikin's exercises were centred on a return to the body, and a healing of the

schism between mind and body. As with Grotowski's de-conditioning exercises, Chaikin's work was designed to re-sensitise the actor, as well as opening up channels of organic expression and communication,

The basic starting point for the actor is that his body is sensitive to the immediate landscape where he is performing. The full attention of the mind and body should be awake in that very space and in that very time (not an idea of time) and with the very people who are also in that time and space.¹⁴⁵

Joyce Aaron, an actor with the group, has spoken of the therapeutic role of the performance work,

The play becomes the actor's language, only his, and the play defines him and helps him to be in touch with his true nature.¹⁴⁶

This understanding of theatre was one that was very much in vogue during the 1960s; companies such as the Performance Group placed great importance on the use of theatre as 'therapy', and writers like Norman O. Brown and Eric Berne noted the similarity between the theatre group and theatre games, and forms of psychoanalysis and group therapy. For Chaikin, however, there was a strong distinction to be made between work which developed the ensemble and the actor in relation to performance, and work which was targetted specifically at the personalities and neuroses of the individuals.

In a sense, Chaikin's work was the more ambitious in terms of psycho-therapy since it aimed to create a theatre capable of affecting the consciousness of the audience, rather than merely the actors.

The audience is very important when one has to give visibility to a certain kind of experience, a certain range of experience. Theatre is not a closed thing, it's not therapy and its not meant only for the release and the particular development of the persons who are working on it, but meant to be understood and transmitted to people.¹⁴⁷

It was this very distinction which caused a difference of opinion in the group in 1971, serious enough for Chaikin to disband and reform the company. What Chaikin wished to do was not merely to unleash the neuroses and inhibitions of his actors, but to use the material which was thereby generated to create communication at an unconscious and evocative level. Whereas Grotowski's search was for ancient and archetypal, universal, forms of expression, Chaikin was seeking to touch people through a rediscovery of honest and unhindered emotion and affective rhythms and imagery. Rather than look into our primitive roots for primal associations, Chaikin looked into the shared present for American myths that would strike a chord with the audience. *The Serpent* (1967) began from an exploration of parts of the Book of Genesis, in particular the myth of the fall. The stories came to take on meaning for the group in terms relevant to their contemporary lives; they found images which reverberated with the existential sense of loss, guilt and regret that Chaikin saw in modern life. Blumenthal writes,

The story of the fall is the event to explain why we live in 'a state of regret', Chaikin noted in a work book. One of the actors has commented that they began 'to sense a connection between the Biblical myths we were exploring and the images of American violence which obsessed us'.¹⁴⁰

From its earliest conception, then, this performance piece was an exploration through ancient myth into contemporary life. Joseph Campbell worked with the company on the subject of myths and of Eden as he would also later work with the Living Theatre on their exploration of Paradise. Margaret Croyden tells us of Campbell's view:

He introduced the notion of earthly paradise as a place of unity, "timeless, deathless, passionless (desireless), egoless"; after

the bite of the apple, opposites emerged, good and evil, man and woman, suffering and joy, I and Thou.¹⁴⁹

This clearly has relevance to Chaikin's vision of Western humanity; the 'fall' of man is represented as the point at which primordial harmony was shattered into schism. The group began to work through images of Eden as a harmonious circle from which the individuals separated out, unable to return. The 'fall' of man was portrayed as the move from unity into isolation. This corresponds to Erich Fromm's theory of the evolution of mankind moving from an organic holism into an imbalanced separation of mind and body; in which the atrophy of emotion further divides individuals from themselves, from each other, and from an organic relationship to the world. In *The Serpent*, the banishment from Eden is also a banishment from harmony and unity;

Now shall come a separation
Between the dreams inside your head
And those things which you believe
To be outside your head
And the two shall war within you...

...Accursed, you shall glimpse Eden
All the days of your life.
And you shall not come again.
And if you should come
You would not know it.¹⁵⁰

Mankind, then, is seen as living in a state of loss, guilt, and disunity because of the fall. The sense of separation from the world which Chaikin believes to be felt in contemporary Western society is given mythic roots and assumes mythic importance. From descriptions by John Lahr and Eileen Blumenthal, we can infer that the form of the piece addressed this existential condition as directly as the play's content did. Lahr comments,

...*The Serpent* aspires to the most holy (and fundamental)

theatrical impulse - to return the actors and the audience to an intuition of the primordial state and a fuller comprehension of the immediate moment, retracing (to understand) the myths which shape Western consciousness.¹⁵¹

If the group recognised an existential condition, then they also attempted to redress it; their theatre acted as a medium for thematic discussion, but it also attempted to provide an antidote through form. In this respect, Lahr describes the play as working through the dynamics of ritual

The alienation is healed by the spectacle...Just as the tree and the serpent are brought together in one image, the rupture between Heaven and Earth is mended in primitive ties. In the excitement of ceremony (modern actors perform in trance states as in primitive cultures), divisions are forgotten in ecstasy.¹⁵²

The 'spectacle' reunites fundamental divisions in the spectator; firstly, it provides a community of experience in which the spectator achieves contact with the performers, and possibly with the other audience members; secondly, the force of communication on an a-cerebral level draws the viewer away from daily cerebrality into a renewed contact with latent levels of the psyche. Joseph Campbell describes the way in which art communicates with the individual;

In art, in myth, in rites, we enter the sphere of dream awake. And as the imagery of dream will be on one level - local, personal, and historic, but at bottom rooted in the instincts, so also myth...The message of an effective living myth is delivered to the spheres of bliss of the deep unconscious, where it touches, wakes, and summons energies; so that symbols operating on that level are energy-releasing and channelling stimuli. That is their function - their 'meaning' - on the level of Deep Sleep.¹⁵³

This is highly reminiscent of Artaud and his desire to recreate dream imagery precisely in order to reach the unconscious mind of the audience. John Lahr quotes Campbell's definition of mythic function in

order to describe the Open Theatre;

to let go the past, with its truths, its goals, its dogmas of "meaning" and its gifts; to die to the world and to come to birth from within.¹⁵⁴

Lahr sees *The Serpent* in these terms, and indeed one can easily identify the mythic elements of the play's content and the associational and a-cerebral force of the play's form. The writer, Jean-Claude van Itallie has voiced the opinion that,

Plays should be instruments to get into people's dreams. If you can get into somebody's dream, that's exciting, perhaps the most profound change you can effect.¹⁵⁵

This is quite literally the approach of the Open Theatre; to "get into somebody's dream" as "the most profound change". To achieve this in Chaikin's emotionally numb America, is indeed to have accomplished a political act.

In order to highlight the group's own connections between the biblical stories and their own society, the Biblical material was supplemented with what the group saw as contemporary myths. The Kennedy assassination as it was seen by millions in the Zapruder film was recreated by the live bodies of the actors and played with winding-back and replay motion. Croyden identifies the effect thus,

The effect is to imprint forever on the human consciousness not only the magnitude of the horror, but the impact of the media image.¹⁵⁶

The assassination - and its implications of cold, affectless violence - was contrasted with the Biblical first killing; Cain kills Abel without knowing either how to kill or what 'killing' means. Lahr puts this in context - "Progress has now given us instruments of destruction and a

climate of banal death far removed from that first thrilling and overwhelming impulse".¹⁵⁷

The piece began with the modern material and moved back in time to the Eden scenes, so that the ancient material would be seen as the root of the contemporary events. Croyden sees this as,

...groping, backward and forward in time, in an effort to define themselves and American culture.¹⁵⁸

John Lahr, however, sees the retraction into the past as an affirmation in itself of history and connectedness;¹⁵⁹

The intention of the performance is to call up a new totality in the actor, to call up a world intimately *connected* with the imaginative past as well as the concrete present.¹⁶⁰

Chaikin's concern with emotion is evident in the play; in one scene emotional extremes are compacted into a short image of life from birth to death, as one of the actor's describes;

This fantastic transformation took only 15 minutes, but was so powerful in its humanness and "reality" that my eyes were filled with tears in the face of such agony, joy, and sadness condensed into such a small space and short time.¹⁶¹

Again this is reminiscent of Artaud in its compacted use of time, and strong emotional appeal.

Chaikin's use of language was poetic and the group placed great importance on the development of their work vocally as well as visually. Language was as much a part of the equation - and the exploration - as physical and visual imagery. Chaikin has stated;

I do not feel the kind of renunciation of language that some people that work this way do feel. But I like language in an attempt to recreate itself in a poetic way in which the language is charged again with experience rather than being a data. In

theatre often, even if the breathing and the voice is charged, it stops with the words that become data and weaken in turn the charge of the actor.¹⁵²

In *The Serpent* choral vocalising was used to convey emotional states in a directly affective format. Likewise, physical action and tableau was intended to act as a direct appeal to the unconscious by suggesting association. For Lahr, the multiple associations evoked by an image such as the physical arrangement of bodies which represented the serpent was "exhilarating", precisely because it went beyond the scope of everyday language.¹⁵³ Margaret Croyden called the company's work, "a stunning example of evocative theatre".¹⁵⁴

'Evocative' is an apt word for Chaikin's work, and one which seems to fit into the descriptions of the Open Theatre as 'American'. Chaikin's sense of lost, better ways of being might be seen as a kind of nostalgia; an idealised retrospectivism. Evoking associations is also a form of bypassing cerebral analysis; Chaikin stirs emotions, memories, and feelings, and thus taps into a realm of mental behaviour which is not cerebral. So too his work uses humour; he writes,

Laughter is a collapse of control in response to something which can't be fitted into the file cabinet of the mind. It is a form of ecstasy, a collapse of reason into basic clarity.¹⁵⁵

Chaikin, in a programme note, had outlined the illogical structure of the piece;

Don't lose any thought wondering what connects the scenes or what logic applies from one scene to the other. The connections are in your head.¹⁵⁶

The work has, itself, sprung from unconscious layers of the

creators' psyches, freed by the process of the psycho-physical exercises. Just as images had emerged from the personal associations of the creative group, they were intended to be received at an equally sub-rational level. To some extent, 'meaning' only existed in as far as the spectator could affectively relate to the material.

The group are intimately connected with the material which they have generated, and through the physical processes of the work, they embody their themes. In this proximity of form and content there resonates an energetic and intangible *message* which is as important as the articulated message of any performance. Lahr comments,

The energy of the event becomes its theme, appealing beyond the reasoning intellect, breaking physical and intellectual boundaries...The thrill of *The Serpent* lies in its consistency as 'primitive' ritual.¹⁶⁷

The intention is to act as a paradigm for an active and whole life; to draw people back into contact with their own creativity, activity, and vitality. *The Serpent* ends with Cain waiting vainly for Abel to come back to life; the ever-present motifs of guilt and death hang in the air until suddenly the cast spring into life singing 'Moonlight Bay'; Lahr calls the moment "a leap of faith".¹⁶⁸ Chaikin explains this,

The intention is a moment of celebration. The stillness of Cain's waiting, the fact of death - you can really get dragged down by that and die from it. Or you can just go another way.¹⁶⁹

This is as much the message of the play as any other; Chaikin is trying to give people back control of their lives. It was Chaikin's concern for life and mortality which led him, in 1969, to work on a piece that was all about death and dying: *Terminal*. Presenting a play about

death was precisely in order to remind audiences of their aliveness; to encourage them to inhabit their own lives, enjoy their own experiences.

Chaikin writes,

'As we started going into our own fantasy and imagining our impermanence, we began to think that there was a conspiracy to keep us from being aware that we were, in fact, part of nature: that we are alive now, and one day we will not be.'¹⁷⁰

Chaikin felt that to fully, affectively, understand this would "have a really profound effect on living in the present".¹⁷¹

Work on the text involved an exploration of the actors' own feelings and experiences about death, along with a study of various aspects of death and dying. Joseph Campbell¹⁷² was again called upon to discuss the material in terms of mythology, and as with the other shows there was a final writer; in this case Susan Yankowitz. According to Shank's description of the piece, it was both dark and clinical, and also funny and uplifting. Set in an institution, the play presented physical decline, embalming of the dead, and voices from beyond the grave. In one scene an actor was systematically debilitated as an attendant said "This is your last chance to use your eyes", and handed him a blindfold, then proceeding through the other physical functions. This was a stark and poignant reminder to the audience that they still have their vital capacities. The piece was not without its wider political comments; a dead soldier possesses another actor and repeats 'Dead because I said "Yes", dead because you said "yes"'.¹⁷³ Chaikin's message is very clear, and is ultimately stated by the 'Judge';

The judgement of your life is your life... You neither faced death nor participated in your life, but straddled the line between one place and the other, longing for both. The judgement of your life is your life.¹⁷⁴

As Bigsby comments, the play goes beyond a contextual expression of the issue to a formal attempt at cure;

And the antidote is implicit in the process of the play itself which has been precisely concerned with linking body and mind, and with creating meaning communally by means of gestures, music...and movements which have in effect been a denial both of simple literalism and of alienation.¹⁷⁵

The Mutation Show, in 1971, examined society's tendency to transform people into 'freaks' by forcing them to repress their natural impulses and conform. The play, as described by Shank and Bigsby, presented a number of 'mutants' which had each been developed through the actor's work on their own personalities. Shank tells us,

They project personalities which society has imposed upon them or which have resulted from their adaptations to the expectations of society.¹⁷⁶

The mutants included, significantly, a 'Petrified Man'; the extreme image of the non-feeling, non-experiencing individual whom Chaikin identified in modern society. The petrified man is reminiscent of Laing's schizophrenic individuals who are robbed of their own ability to actively experience their lives. The mutants were developed, in rehearsal, from the actors' work on their own personalities, and each developed "his or her own vocal sounds suggesting a pre-language state where the distinction between human and animal is unclear".¹⁷⁷ The mutant, then, was the badly adapted individual in whom the process of adaptation towards conformity has created a visible contradiction of original impulses and imposed behaviour,

To this end, two characters seem particularly evocative of the primal or animal state: Kasper Hauser, 'The Boy in the Box'; and Kamala,

'The Animal Girl', both taken from true stories. Kaspar was isolated from all human contact until the age of sixteen by his unknown keeper; Kamala and her sister were children found living wild with wolves. In both cases the children were brought into society and educated in the ways of civilization. They all died. The appropriateness of Kaspar as an image for the inhibiting and deforming influence of society is testified to by the fascination he has held for other affective theatre practitioners. Brook directed the play, *Kaspar*, written by Peter Handke, and Eugenio Barba created a performance piece, *Kaspariana*, about the boy's life.

The stories and images of *The Mutation Show* clearly question society's values, and show the development of characteristics of conformity as debilitating and self-destructive. At the end of the piece the actors show pictures of themselves at other times in their lives in order to demonstrate how they too have changed; "The performers, like the characters they have been demonstrating, are social mutants".¹⁷⁸ Thereby, Chaikin clearly projects the content of the piece onto the real lives of the cast and, by implication, the audience. Rather than see the characters as 'freaks' and outsiders, different 'others', the mutant represents everyone in the advanced society. Bigsby writes,

Mutation comes to stand for the process of adaptation and accomodation whereby the self is lost in the process of socialisation and the process whereby people modify themselves in the course of their lives.¹⁷⁹

Again, the work of the actors was to go beyond the representation of the characters, and by simultaneously showing themselves, to suggest

the possibility of autonomy, of the individuals' ability to take control of their lives, to be themselves.

Chaikin's techniques and formalistic concerns in the theatre, in effect may be expressed as an ability to present a double-image; on the one hand his actors show the content of the piece with its social or moral implications about human life; on the other, their presence within the piece and their own emotional and physical capacities become a paradigm for the audience's own action. Chaikin's societal battles were fought in the theatre because, as Bigsby puts it,

...it was there that the distinction between identity and role, enactment and re-enactment, presence and absence was a matter of critical concern.¹⁸⁰

These were precisely the concerns which Chaikin saw at the root of his contemporary society's troubles; confusion of personal identity, subservience of the individual to the societal norms, loss of faith in - and access to - personal feeling, immediacy, and experience; personal life.

THE PERFORMANCE GROUP

In 1967, Richard Schechner, a professor at New York University and editor of The Drama Review,¹⁹¹ set up an experimental company with a particular interest in environmental theatre and group training. This first concept - environmental theatre - was largely of Schechner's own devising, although it had its roots in the performance art happenings of the 1960s, and Schechner acknowledges a debt to both Kaprow and Cage.¹⁹² An early manifestation of Schechner's contribution to this field is his 'Axioms for Environmental Theatre' published in The Drama Review in 1968.¹⁹³ The second concern - group training - was influenced by Schechner's encounters with Grotowski. At about the same time that the Performance Group was forming, Grotowski and Cieslak were running a four week workshop at New York University, and the group had the opportunity to learn, directly, exercises which they were to take into their own performance work. Schechner also interviewed Grotowski for the The Drama Review.

The Performance Group found an empty garage on Wooster Street in New York which they converted into 'The Performing Garage'; this was a flexible space painted white to highlight its structure, and ideal for the spatial experiments and designs which were to come. Between 1968 and 1970, three major environmental pieces were developed, *Dionysus in '69*, *Makbeth*, and *Commune*, and in 1973, Schechner published a book, Environmental Theatre¹⁹⁴ on that aspect of the group's work. The early plays are probably most demonstrative of the group's exploration and philosophy. In all, they created twelve performance pieces, including

environmental versions of well-known plays, and explorations into the creation of specific environmental contexts.¹⁸⁵

The formalistic concerns of Schechner and his group were always part of a wider theory of the theatre which equated the theatrical group with the social group, theatrical models with models to be applied to societal life. Environmental theatre was, in large part, a way to animate audience participation. In this way, the 'axioms' of environmental theatre which Schechner identified, along with the group and group-training philosophies of the company and the ideologies implicit in both the content and the form of their productions take on significance as social commentary, and elevate the role of theatre from mimesis to a form of societal intervention.

Like Artaud, Schechner was dissatisfied with the distinctions traditionally made between art and life. Through spatially mingling action and audience he hoped to re-instate the theatre event as a life-event, thereby giving it renewed relevance for the spectator-participants. The garage was designed, for each performance, to use all of its space for both actors and audience. Schechner also stated in the axioms that a 'found' space - not a theatre at all - could be used in the same way. *Dionysus in '69* was scenically arranged inside the garage in a multi-platformed space designed by Michael Kirby and Jerry Rojo, but the original design had arisen from an outdoor exercise by the group using a nearby rooftop.¹⁸⁶ Schechner's concept of 'focus' in environmental theatre was very different from traditional theatre arrangements. 'Multi-focus' meant that action would take place in

different places simultaneously; 'local focus', that action may occur in spaces visible to only a fraction of the audience. In *Makbeth*, these conventions were used to draw the audience into an atmosphere of secrecy and intrigue, but in their wider usage they were also intended to animate the audience into active involvement in which they had to move around, make choices, and physically confront the action. Another Artaudian feature was the idea that the performer would act alongside the other elements of the presentation, and sometimes would be 'treated as mass and volume, color, texture, and movement'; in part an appeal for a form of 'total' theatre in which all aspects played their part fully in the whole, this was also, in part, a strategy for involving the widest possible expressive abilities of the cast. As with other innovative theatre-forms of its time, and in accordance with this latter point, Schechner rejected the supremacy of the text, declaring that it "need be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all".¹⁸⁷

Whilst these ideas, particularly with their resemblance to Artaud, represent a re-evaluation of the definition of 'theatre' they also have their roots in Schechner's theory of society. Since he believed in theatre as a vital form of communication between people, and since he perceived that it no longer performed this function, Schechner's formulation of an 'environmental theatre' plan was no less than an attempt to revitalise the theatrical event. Schechner has noted that,

Participation is a way of trying to humanize relationships between performers and spectators. This process far transcends what goes on in a theater.¹⁸⁸

In a sense, participation in the theatre is a model for participation

beyond the theatre; a microcosmic attempt at communication and community. Through participatory exercises built into the performances, Schechner witnessed evidence of how much this opportunity was missing in people's societal lives;

Underlying much participation in *Dionysus* was a wish of spectators to get closer to the Group as a group...I know that often people were projecting - they wanted to find a community so they found one in us.¹⁸⁹

and,

Many attend "new theater" in the hope of taking part in a temporary community, in being invited to use responsivity instead of having to suppress it.¹⁹⁰

The Performance Group developed exercises, both in performance and workshop situations, to develop their own understanding of participation. One such exercise was carried out with the actors and a group of students, and was designed to investigate, and if possible to 'exorcise' their fears of one another. It was led, at Schechner's invitation, by an outsider to the group. The work centred on the psychotherapeutic expression of the performers' fears of the audience and their need for support. The work developed into physical actions which gave the students the opportunity to actively participate. There emerged questions of power, powerlessness, 'deadness' of response, and fear of judgement. One of the participants noted that when the audience were not able to move and interact, there was nothing for them to do but be passively judgemental. The necessity to provide an opportunity for the spectator to partake of the action and creativity was clear.. Schechner's conclusion to the exercise was that,

Once again I was face to face not with the problems of theater alone, but with the problems of society.¹⁹¹

Similarly, Schechner was interested in the theatre group as a paradigm for the social group, and was convinced (as Chaikin was) that the work of the actor could only grow within the context of an ensemble;

...in our days the performer exists only as part of the ensemble, the group, the commune: a community within the alienated society at large.¹⁹²

The rehearsal and exploration periods of the group revolved around the use of improvisation, and exercises largely derived from Grotowski, or devised by Schechner himself. Schechner has described the use of the Grotowski exercises as being to "relate the body to the mind in such a way that the two apparently separate systems are one".¹⁹³ This work revolved around a simple and central principle that the work of The Performance Group was to develop the ensemble, rather than rehearse towards a specific performance. Rather than develop a vocabulary of signs for one production, they aimed to develop a community in which the articulation of such signs was natural and spontaneous. For this reason, the work was fundamentally on the actor, and on group relations.

Schechner's book, Environmental Theatre outlines some of the exercises which he used with The Performance Group in order to sensitize them to both the environment and their own bodies. Schechner's use of space was very strongly linked to a theory of the body, and the environmental contact he urged his performers to achieve was very much a visceral one. He wrote,

I believe there is an actual, living relationship between the spaces of the body and the spaces the body moves through; that human living tissue does not abruptly stop at the skin.¹⁹⁴

Since Schechner sees the Western spatial orientation as a visual and cerebral one, much of his work with actors is towards "acoustic, thermal, tactile, olfactory" understandings of space. To this end, exercises are devised such as one described in Environmental Theater which involves interaction between a group of actors and a large basket of fruit, with an emphasis placed on the use of the mouth and nose - the 'snout' - in handling and eating the fruit, and contacting one another. Schechner reports that such work activates 'visceral space-sense' and encourages natural and primal reactions.

A large number of the exercises used by The Performance Group involve physicality, sensuality, and nakedness. In support of this, Schechner quotes Marcuse;

Smell and taste give, as it were, unsublimated pleasures *per se* (and unrepressed disgust). They relate (and separate) individuals immediately without generalized and conventionalized forms of consciousness, morality, aesthetics.¹⁹⁵

Another major source for ways of working was the realm of psychoanalysis, in particular group training, sensitivity training and encounter groups. This was an area which Chaikin had avoided with the Open Theatre but for Schechner it was both a way of revealing the individual, and of injecting reality into the performance situation. Schechner's work on the actor amounted to a form of psychotherapy in itself, since he was concerned, as Grotowski was, with revealing the inner person of the actor. As part of the theatrical process all members of the group attended therapeutic encounter groups with professional therapists. From this work, The Performance Group adapted and evolved exercises for their work.¹⁹⁶ Schechner describes the

approach as aiming to "expose our feelings, to reveal ourselves, to be open, receptive, vulnerable".¹⁹⁷

For Schechner, the psychotherapeutic approach to the actor corresponded to Grotowski's psycho-physical exercises and his definition of the 'holy actor';

The actor is a human being who has dis/covered and un/covered himself so much that he re/veals [=unveils] something of man. He is the miracle.¹⁹⁸

Psychotherapy represents a very 'cerebral' route to the self, and in this sense differs from Grotowski's use of the body as a key to the whole person. The 'association exercises' used by Schechner correspond more closely to Grotowski's work since they centre the actor's personal discoveries firmly within the visceral body; or rather, they create a fluency between mind and body which denies their segregation;

Association exercises are a way of surrendering to the body. They give experiences counter to the view that the mind and body are separate entities in relentless combat. There is no "mind over body" or "body over mind" in the association exercises. The exercises lead to "whole body thinking" in which feelings flow to and from all parts of the body with no distinction between "body" and "mind".¹⁹⁹

Just as workshops aimed to physically and mentally train the actor to be capable of the work of performance, so too the performance acted as a further route to the individual; Schechner refers to Grotowski again in the use of "the role as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask - the innermost core of our personality - in order to sacrifice it, expose it".²⁰⁰

In *Commune*, described by Schechner in Environmental Theatre, an act of nakedness is used to 'expose' the actor in just this way;

Stephen Borst in the character of David Angel walks naked and alone around the room, looking at the audience and speaking directly to them.

Schechner tells us,

I hear in David's speech two voices. The first is of the character David Angel, a man condemned to die...The second voice is Stephen Borst's. He is speaking for all performers: "You are the audience and I am a performer. Here I am, this is me, I belong to you."...

David Angel's nakedness - or is it Stephen Borst's? - is more difficult than the mass nakedness of *Dionysus in 69*. The one-to-one contacts, the simplicity, the duration and the aloneness of David are startling. Through David the audience sees Stephen Borst...David Angel's dance becomes a walk that is not dramatic, nor is it a celebration. It is a showing.²⁰¹

For Schechner this act lies at the heart of performance along with the story being told;

The performance stimulates the audience to react *in their bodies* to what's happening to the performer. The stories are variations on a few basic themes...²⁰²

And whilst the story may operate on a social level, it does so in connection with the visceral effect of the physical actor's 'showing';

During each performance the performer tries to find in himself - and undergo in front of the audience - the process of birthing, growing, opening up, spilling out, dying, and rebirthing.²⁰³

In this way, Schechner connects the act of the performer to that of the Shaman; "This is the kernel of theater's most personal experience, located at that place where art, medicine, and religion intersect".²⁰⁴

This emphasis on the actor's self was to be a model for the audience, as well as a tool for the creation of theatre. Just as the use of the group was to act as a challenge to the loss of community and widespread alienation in society, the actor's uninhibited communication was to be an image and a message in itself. For this reason, elements of the exercises used to generate and explore material also entered

into the performance work as imagery. Schechner's theatre, like Grotowski's, attempted to be an arena in which the mental, the visceral, and the spiritual interacted as they do in some Eastern forms of theatre, as they do in ritual, but as they are rarely found to do in Western theatre. The group began work on *The Bacchae* by Euripides as their first task. As Schechner's 'axioms' had predicted, the text was not performed but used as a springboard; the performance piece was ultimately three hours long, used about half of the original text, along with lines from other sources including the actor's own writing and improvisation. The environment was transformed into a multi-levelled arena in which audience and cast moved together, and in a number of other ways the division between reality and fiction was challenged.

The main theme of the piece was the conflict between Dionysiac irrationality and the control and rationalism which the character Pentheus represents. Schechner and the company were interested in the parallels between this mythic dichotomy and their own society in which a Dionysiac youth culture was fundamentally opposed to an authoritarian societal structure. The performance, which is described in the company's book, Dionysus in '69, followed the story-line of the play but replaced certain images with more pertinent, contemporary ones. In particular, they highlighted the presence of the actor in such a way that events in the storyline became indistinguishable from real events that had an actual effect on the actor. Actors could be referred to by either their own name or their character's name, and likewise, at times they used lines from the text, at other times used their own writing or

improvised speech. Most importantly, the performer underwent the experience of the play directly. Feelings and reactions were actually provoked rather than being imitated or called up in the actor's memory.

In the text, Pentheus is humiliated by Dionysus (as punishment for opposing him) by being dressed in woman's clothing. Schechner replaced this action with one which had real meaning and involved real humiliation for the actor playing Pentheus. For William Shepard,²⁰⁵ a deeply unpleasant and mortifying act would be to kiss another man, and therefore this became the substance of the 'mortification scene'. In another version, he was asked personal questions until he was finally unable to answer. The company's documentation also describes a scene in which Shepard was, paradoxically, trapped in his theatricality whilst the other 'characters' were dropped and the actors emerged to talk about their private lives. "Pentheus is left alone in the midst of a project which everyone else has temporarily abandoned".²⁰⁶

Whilst such devices raised questions about the nature of life and art, and reality and fiction, they also referred to the 'masks' of personality that we adopt in daily life. Grotowski had commented, in Schechner's interview with him, that he had observed certain features of the American 'daily mask'; he said,

There are qualities of behaviour in every country that one must break through in order to create. Creativity does not mean using our daily masks but rather to make exceptional situations where our daily masks do not function.²⁰⁷

This was a concept which Schechner, like Chaikin, was also concerned with. In rehearsal he used psycho-physical exercises to move beyond the

surface reality of his actors, and in *Dionysus* this concern was reflected in the formalism of the performance also.

However, there was a general problem within the play since the character-actor devices were difficult to control, and had a limited life-span. In a long-running performance it was not possible to maintain the effect of real humiliation since the performers became accustomed to what once had impact. On one occasion Pentheus was 'kidnapped' by a group of students. As Christopher Bigsby suggests, whereas this would have meant the consummation of the play for the Living Theatre and would have taken on meaning in political terms, Schechner merely called for a volunteer so that the play could continue; thereby negating anything the play had to say about freedom and the artificiality of the life-art boundary. The Performance Group, in this instance, were attempting to deny the artificiality of performance whilst at the same time adhering to certain artificial elements, such as the repetition of performances and the necessity to follow the play through to the intended end. Likewise, one actress who decided to use her own freedom to refuse to kill Pentheus found she could not shed the theatricality but had to remain within the constraints of the play.

Schechner was not unaware of these problems; he continually changed the exercises which created the images of the piece, in search of suitable conventions which could work within the strange conditions of the life-art interface. For a time certain games were used such as "ritual combat" (a no-contact fight) between Dionysus and Pentheus, or

a forfeit game. However, in each of these cases the game had to be 'rigged' since Dionysus had to win, therefore the attempt to move away from fiction was negated. A game of 'forfeits' which relied on the assumption that Pentheus would not be able to seduce a woman in the audience failed on the occasion that he did just that. For Schechner, however, the uneasy relationship between the fictional and the real aspects of the play had meaning beyond that of the storyline;

...we do not have an audience that believes in the old myths. What we have is an audience that wants to believe in our performance and knows the power of modern ecstasy. We show a performance breaking down. Our private lives fill the breach, and we display ourselves shamelessly.²⁰⁸

In order to stress the physical presence of the actor, the group began, during the run of *Dionysus*, to perform some sections naked. This was a rejection of clothing as a social mask, and also a way to highlight the physicality of the actor. Further, it acted as an image for the sexuality and physicality which a Dionysian culture would embrace but which Western society has sought to repress. Schechner discusses nakedness in terms of its ability to highlight internal processes in the actor as they are manifest on the flesh and musculature of the body, but more than this, with its many associations, "Nakedness is a social condition".²⁰⁹

The Dionysiac quality of the form was extended to the audience in that they were invited to join in a celebratory dance which escalates into ecstasy. When Pentheus calls it to a stop, it is clear that the audience themselves have been involved in the bacchanal. Likewise, the company move amongst the spectators to engage in a group caress.²¹⁰

However, if the audience were being implicated with the Bacchae, the overall statement of the play in content and form was not so clear. As we have seen, the intended freedom and reality of the actor within the play was somewhat ambiguous; further, some critics have pointed out that Schechner's own authoritarian position as director acted in direct opposition to the anti-authoritarian thrust of the play. As Bigsby discusses, the group were on the one hand showing a play in which the revelry ends in death, on the other offering the group caress to the audience as a gesture of positive contact. A messenger in the play delivers a speech which observes the dichotomy of the dionysiac and the rational;

Night after night you go along with Dionysus, just as we do. And night after night you confirm the need for a Pentheus.²¹¹

Whilst the play, in content, represents the paradox of the two opposing elements, the physical and the cerebral, in form the group were clearly embracing the Dionysian attitude. For Bigsby, this represents a failure and a contradiction;

The ambiguity about the power of physical presence, about non-verbal communication and an instinctive sense of community, is expressed in terms of the play's content; it is not, for the most part, acknowledged in terms of the group's dramatic strategy, its practices or its philosophy.²¹²

It may be the case that Schechner was fully aware of this imbalance, but that in a society of cerebrality and authoritarianism he chose to positively discriminate, as it were; to excessively highlight physicality in order to redress an existing imbalance and eventually move to a more moderate position in which dionysiac qualities are tempered by a proportionate degree of cerebrality and order.

Whatever the wisdom of Schechner's personal philosophy, the fact remains that the play itself, although it highlighted the paradox, did not create a cohesive structure through which to discuss it. Bigsby writes,

It's exercises are built on the possibility of reaching for a level of personal truth behind the mask of the performed self. The play, indeed, is built around the possibility of such a release...²¹³

But that release is, in actuality, denied; the actors *must* kill Pentheus, the play *must* follow its course. The boundaries may have been moved a little, but *Dionysus* remained a fiction. Therefore, freedom was ultimately presented in the context of an over-riding cerebral and ordered structure.

If *Dionysus* had presented a paradox of content and form, Schechner did not manage to correct this inconsistency in the creation of The Performance Group's 1970 piece, *Commune*. The performance arose, not from a single text, but from improvisation around a number of sources which the company read on the subject of 'community'. The resulting piece centred on two contemporary events; the killing of Sharon Tate and her friends by the Manson family, and the My Lai massacre in Vietnam by a group of American soldiers. Schechner saw these two events as "rather identical incidents of national policy";²¹⁴ the play implicated American society - at least a portion of it - in the blame for these atrocities of violence;

The existential crime of being born in America, the rich land; of being born white, the oppressor class/race?...American history = killing of Sharon Tate.²¹⁵

Bigsby notes that this "liberal guilt" and "longing for a lost

community" is similar to that expressed by Arthur Miller.²¹⁶ It thereby may be seen as a product of its country and its time. Likewise, the difference between Miller and Schechner, the latter's optimism that he can suggest an antidote, is equally a product of its time; reflecting as it does the enthusiastic activism of the 1960s American youth.

From accounts by Shank, and Schechner we derive the following descriptions of *Commune*. The cast represent a group of young people whose search for Utopia starts with the Mayflower sailing to the New World, crosses the continent, involves the killing of the Indians, service in the army, and brings them, as it brought Manson and his disciples, to Death Valley, California. Thus the history of America begins with a search for Paradise, and ends with a vicious and wanton mass-murder. If The Performance Group embraced the philosophy of 'group' in their own training, and indeed in the definition of the function of theatre, they were equally aware of its failures and dangers.

Schechner had made it clear, however, that a communality was what he sought in the theatrical event; in a notebook for 1970 he outlined his objective for the piece,

No longer a theatre of telling a story - or even doing a story. But doing/showing something here and now. The audience as partner-participant. Most impassioned speeches not dialogue but addresses to audience. Ritual *vis-a-vis* audience. Not to search for story but for themes and gestures, for sounds and dances *vis-a-vis* audience and with ourselves. To be at once absolutely personal and absolutely collective - communal.²¹⁷

Accordingly, the form of *Commune* included devices for drawing the

audience into the action; the audience were asked to remove their shoes and leave them in a large pile; they were also asked to put anything they would like to burn into a container which later became a campfire. The removal of the audience's shoes was, in part, used to draw attention to the thematic concept of private property, in part an associational device;

For me, the significance of taking off shoes is multiple. It is an actual gesture of collaboration focusing on an item of personal property; it is a mild initiatory ordeal; it makes everyone in the theatre alike in at least one way; it has some metaphorical references to the victims of Auschwitz and My Lai; and because the performers wear the shoes while depicting the Sharon Tate murders, there is the suggestion of audience involvement - group responsibility - in that act. Removing one's shoes is a way of accepting hospitality; in Asia guests always leave their shoes at the door.²¹⁸

This is a strong example of the ways in which the participatory devices used by The Performance Group act on both an imagistic and an actual level; involving real actions and inferences as well as touching associational depths. The audience's reluctance in handing over their own possessions becomes, amongst other things, an image of the American obsession with property. This attitude was inherent within the play also: "Everything belongs to everybody" it is stated, whilst the commune members show their own culpability in the face of consumerism with their desire to own dune-buggies; "They are all infected with the American dream".²¹⁹

Beyond these particular instances, the performance was, itself, designed to create a sense of communality. The title is pronounced as a verb, not a noun, and Schechner intended the cast's actions and the

audience involvement to stand as an image of interaction which could be applied to society. The play ends with a section called 'Possibilities' in which the cast wash in a large onstage tub, the audience retrieve their shoes, and there is an opportunity for interaction and discussion. Again, this implies the same incompatibility of form and content which Bigsby identified in *Dionysus in 69*; further, their own coercion of the audience - into giving up their shoes etc. - might justifiably be seen as an image for the kinds of societal coercion which they were supposed to be challenging. And as Bigsby points out,

What never emerges from the play is the mechanism which distorts the group experience in the direction of violence or the legitimacy of presenting such moments of apocalyptic cruelty as an image of a specifically American experience.²²⁰

The Performance Group were clearly highly concerned with the relation, and the balance, between two extremes of being; a sensual, physical, id-inspired anarchy and a logical, ordered, cerebral adherence to the reality-principle. Both *Commune* and *Dionysus* represent the ambiguous - even dangerous - quality of the former, the dionysiac, culture. Yet, in form and philosophy Schechner and his group seemed committed to just such an approach. Bigsby comments,

His rhetoric is suffused with nostalgia for what is presumed to be a lost organicism, an art which was an extension of life, a golden age preceding the fatal dualisms bred by scientism.²²¹

Schechner's theatre was, indeed, built upon an idea of society which embraced notions such as those expressed by R.D. Laing, by Erich Fromm, by Brown, Marcuse and others - that modern societal life deprived people of a sense of community, and of their own human potential. When Schechner discusses the shaman in relation to the performer, he quotes

Eliade: that whilst the shaman may display psychotic symptoms, "He is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself". And he refers the reader to Laing's ideas about psychosis, which, as we have seen earlier, diagnose the madman as sane, the society as sick. Schechner's performers, like the Shaman, are those who have regained their own wholeness within an unwholesome society.

Despite the dangers of both dionysiac qualities and communality, which emerged as contextual themes in the group's productions, they sought the elevation of these concepts in the workings of their own group, and in their theatrical models. Within his own discussion of 'Groups' in Environmental Theatre,²²² Schechner embraces these contradictions pointing out both that "All murders are family murders, either within a literal family or in family-replica situations",²²³ and that "the performer exists only as part of the ensemble".²²⁴ In Schechner's discussion - as in the dialogue of form and content in the plays - the group emerges as both the source of communality and essential human contact, and as the breeding ground for many problems and neuroses. The Performance Group's work on and within the group was both an act of faith in the community within a society of alienation, and an attempt to find ways of working harmoniously together. Schechner's discussion refers often to Laing's comments on the family group as the root of psychosis, and indeed the history of the group shows up many instances of group relations adversely affecting the work, even precipitating breakdown. Nevertheless, the theatrical community continued to stand, for Schechner, as a paradigm for social life and as an arena in which the model might be perfected. For the

generation that followed him, including those younger members of The Performance Group the 'community' failed to be a viable option.

Like the Living Theatre, Brook, Grotowski and others, Schechner turned to Eastern and primitive cultures for paradigms of organic life. The birth scene in *Dionysus* is taken directly from a ritual of the Asnot of West Irian.²²⁵ Those exercises which he created himself were also based on a kind of retrospective romanticism, finding merit in a return to animal and pre-verbal forms of life. In the 'snout' exercise mentioned earlier, Schechner reports that the actors quickly reverted to a spontaneous, animal-like relationship to the environment and those around them. Eastern theatrical and religious training is an important source for work which unifies the mind and the body, as Schechner's 'association exercises' aimed to do. As Schechner has stated,

...Asians make no separation between spirit and body. This dichotomy is part of the Western tradition of "soul"...the idea of a soul separate from the body creates grave difficulties for performer training. The performer thinks of "his body" and not "himself." Training deteriorates into gymnastics, routine, a deadening repetition without growth of knowledge or insight...To the Western performer training is an alienated means to a desired end. This *instrumental* view of training is opposed to the Asian *holistic* view.²²⁶

For this reason, Schechner studied and adapted Eastern forms of actor-training as well as the "arts-skills-therapies-philosophies of yoga and Zen".²²⁷ Grotowski, too, derived much of his technique from study of these sources, and for similar reasons. However, Grotowski was, himself, highly critical of the assumptions of The Performance Group and their contemporaries (apart from Chaikin). The emphasis on the actor's spontaneity and the use of psychological exercises to un-mask the actor and reveal his true nature were criticised by Grotowski for their

naivety, and their ineffectuality as theatrical communication. Whilst Grotowski's work was based upon the self-discovery of the actor, this was always within the highly disciplined context of finding communicable archetypes of expression. Schechner's work failed, for Grotowski, precisely because he did not apply the self-conscious discoveries of the cast to the search for communication. Further, within the "warm waters of family relations with the other members of the group",²²⁸ Grotowski felt that weak and insignificant actions would be vindicated and affirmed as worthwhile. Bigsby points to the different societal backgrounds of Schechner and Grotowski to clarify this difference of position;

For Grotowski, a product of a collectivist society, a naive faith in the virtues of the group was by no means self-evident; for those in revolt against a fierce individualism the group seemed a source of alternative values.²²⁹

Grotowski was also concerned about the basis of Schechner's physical work;

If I boast of questing for a reconciliation with myself, and of seeking a totality which would put an end to my division into body and soul, sex and intellect, it amounts to saying that I refuse any longer to feel apart from my own body, my own instincts, my own unconscious, that is, from my own spontaneity. The trouble is that spontaneity could end in a lying spectacle.²³⁰

Not only did Grotowski distrust the use of spontaneous forms, but he felt dissatisfied with a theatre which wished to immerse itself in the physical. Whilst Schechner would have been within the justification of writers like Brown and Marcuse in identifying a need to redress the mind-body balance, Grotowski was concerned with that which went beyond the boundaries of the mental and physical; Grotowski was seeking the transcendental and spiritual self. Further, whilst the unification of

mind and body in the actor (and perhaps thereby in the spectator) was a goal for a society of divided individuals, Grotowski was seeking an artform which transcended the personal and touched elements of human life which are archetypal. No doubt, the religious context of his country and childhood played their part in this. Somehow, the American vision was for an altogether more day-to-day salvation.

The rationale behind Schechner's work was an assumption that physical and mental unity could act as a pre-condition for artistic wholeness.

...I believe that healthy persons (= whole persons = self-aware persons) are more able to create full, rich, and suggestive art than are wounded, fragmented persons.²³¹

Coupled with this was a recognition that society had lost any notion of shared values and shared experiences. Schechner's theatre was first and foremost a place of re-unification - of the individual and of individuals with one another. Bigsby refers to this concept in terms of a "humanist dream",²³² and makes the point that they developed "not merely in reaction against an exhausted and utilitarian theatre but against *Gemeinschaft* become *Gesellschaft*".²³³ Clearly, Schechner was concerned with something wider than the single theatre event;

Once you make a whole out of many parts you've constructed a social model; intentionally or not you've constructed an alternative City.²³⁴

If Schechner's alternative was not always consistent, it was, at least, an attempt to apply a moral and social reading of society to an art form which he felt could have a real effect. If the moving of boundaries ultimately opened up new and equally problematic questions,

at least Schechner tried to keep moving them. The Performance Group were instrumental in the defining of an environmental, performance theatre which carved out new and innovative theatre conventions and definitions, at the same time addressing their social situation with the critical vigour (if not rigour) which characterised the period. Furthermore, it is clear that Schechner was concerned with a concept which was not 'aesthetics'.

In one version of *Commune*, the play is stopped if members of the audience who are asked to participate refuse. There are a number of options open to the spectators in question to enable the play to resume, but on one occasion in 1971 the breakdown of the play lasted for three hours and only recommenced when many of the audience - and some of the performers - had already gone home.²⁹⁵ Schechner's responses to this event - and the fact that the cessation of performance was allowed to continue - make it clear that The Performance Group were more interested in this real event, and the discussions it facilitated, than in the aesthetic standards of performing a play. From this view point, the contradictions of form and content in the early performances, and flaws in The Performance Group's philosophy, seem insignificant in the light of the questions they raised and the moral, societal definition of theatre which they pursued.

As The Performance Group grew older its members developed their own theatrical strategies, and initiated their own work separately from Schechner until, in 1980, Schechner decided to leave the company

altogether. The remaining actors, largely now under the direction of Spalding Gray and Elizabeth LeCompte, renamed themselves as the Wooster Group and continued to work from the garage. Schechner continued his work through other means; in particular, he has extended his interest in 'ritual' through projects and writings, and is a leading figure in the developing field of 'Theatre Anthropology'.

We will return to the connotations of Schechner's departure from the Performance Group, and the divergent developments of the director and the company which he left. However, before we follow the trail of Grotowski and the American directors into the 1980s, there are two further figures whose work demands mention within this study. In particular, the survey of major affective practitioners of the 1960s and '70s would not be complete without Peter Brook. Whilst Grotowski and the American companies were carrying out their early researches, Brook was initiating similar work in Britain. Peter Brook was responsible, in 1964, for a 'Theatre of Cruelty' season, dedicated to Artaud, which facilitated research into affective forms. He has collaborated with Chaikin, Grotowski, and Schechner, written reviews of the Living Theatre, and generally shared a platform with the other practitioners discussed in this thesis. In turning our attention to Brook we will complete the picture of the central affective practitioners, whilst at the same time raising further questions, about the nature of affective techniques and the relationship between aesthetic and societal concerns.

NOTES

- 1 James Roose-Evans, Experimental Theatre From Stanislavsky To Peter Brook 4th ed., (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1989), p. 102.
- 2 C. W. E. Bigsby, A Critical Introduction To Twentieth Century American Drama. Volume 3: Beyond Broadway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 25.
- 3 Theodore Shank, American Alternative Theatre (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 3.
- 4 James Roose-Evans, p. 102.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 This heading is taken from the book of the same name by Theodore Roszak, published by Faber and Faber, England in 1970.
- 7 Cited in C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 16. The words come from the play, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, by William Inge in Four Plays, (New York, 1979).
- 8 Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), p. 121.
- 9 C. W. E. Bigsby, pp. 1-61.
- 10 Ibid., p. 4.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Todd Gitlin, p. 19.
- 13 Emile Durkheim cited in C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 8.
- 14 Todd Gitlin, p. 19.
- 15 Ibid., p. 23.
- 16 Ibid., p. 25.
- 17 Ibid., p. 26.
- 18 Ibid., p. 28.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 William O'Neill, Coming Apart (New York: Times Books, 1973), p. 234.

- 22 C. W. E. Bigsby, pp. 39, 71.
- 23 See Massimo Teodori, The New Left: A Documentary History (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969).
- 24 C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 104.
- 25 Paul A. Robinson, The Sexual Radicals (London: Temple Smith, 1969), pp. 223-233.
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- 28 Paul A. Robinson, p. 149.
- 29 Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), pp. 4-5.
- 30 Ibid., p. 9.
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- 32 Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilisation (London: Sphere Books, 1969), p. 11.
- 33 Ibid., p. 23.
- 34 Paul A. Robinson, p. 206.
- 35 See Zoltan Tar, The Frankfurt School (New York: John Wiley and sons, 1977).
- 36 Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977). First published by Jonathan Cape in 1974.
Erich Fromm, To Have Or To Be? (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1978).
- 37 Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 302.
- 38 R. D. Laing, The Divided Self (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965). First published by Tavistock, England, in 1960.
- 39 Judith Malina, The Enormous Despair (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 39.
- 40 Judith Malina, 'Containment is the Enemy', Judith Malina and Julian Beck interviewed by Richard Schechner, The Drama Review Spring, 1969, vol. 13, no. 3, T43, p. 30.
- 41 Judith Malina, The Enormous Despair, p. 57.

- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., p. 38.
- 44 C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 9.
- 45 Martin Buber, Between Man and Man. 3rd Impression (Great Britain: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1974), p. 196.
- 46 See page 22, note 22, of this thesis.
- 47 Cited in Martin Buber, p. 183.
- 48 Theodore Shank, p. 36.
- 49 The early plays include:
Doctor Faustus Lights The Lights by Gertrude Stein (1951)
He Who Says Yes and He Who Says No by Bertolt Brecht (1951)
Childish Jokes by Paul Goodman (1951)
Dialogue of the Young Man and the Manikin by Garcia Lorca (1951)
Desire Trapped by The Tail by Pablo Picasso (1952)
Sweeney Agonistes by T.S. Eliot (1952)
Ubu the King by Alfred Jarry (1952)
Orpheus by Jean Cocteau (1954)
Tonight We Improvise by Luigi Pirandello (1955)
- For full list see Judith Malina, The Diaries: Brazil 1970 Bologna 1977 (Dartington, England: Theatre Papers, 1979), p. 51.
- 50 Cited in Pierre Biner, The Living Theatre (New York: Avon Books, 1972), p. 27.
- 51 Theodore Shank, p. 9.
- 52 Henry Howard in The Living Theatre, 'Paradise Now: notes', The Drama Review, Spring 1969, vol 13, no. 3, T43, p. 97.
- 53 Stuart Little, Off-Broadway (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1972), p. 202.
- 54 Ibid., p. 70.
- 55 Theodore Shank, p. 9.
- 56 Ibid., p. 10.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
- 58 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 188.
- 59 Pierre Biner, p. 68.

- 60 Julian Beck, The Life of the Theatre 2nd ed., (San Francisco: Limelight Editions, 1991), p. 55.
- 61 Cited in Aldo Rostagno, We, The Living Theatre (New York: Ballantine Books Inc., 1970), p. 26.
- 62 Christopher Innes, p. 189.
- 63 Cited in Stuart Little, p. 214.
- 64 Cited in Pierre Biner, p. 68.
- 65 Julian Beck cited in Theodore Shank, p. 13.
- 66 Ibid., p. 12.
- 67 Cited *ibid.*, p. 13.
- 68 See Chapter 18 of Pierre Biner. Of particular note is "The Chord" on page 87. The exercise was devised by Joseph Chaikin; Biner writes, '...for the Living Theatre it became a "coming together" device; a profound expression of belonging to the community: the human community in general, the company in particular'. Pierre Biner, p. 88.
- 69 See Theodore Shank, p. 14; and Patrick McDermott, 'Portrait of an Actor, Watching: antiphonal feedback to the Living Theatre', The Drama Review, Spring 1969, vol. 13, no. 3, T43, pp. 74-83.
- 70 Pierre Biner, p. 91.
- 71 Ibid., p. 52.
- 72 Julian Beck, p. 56.
- 73 Judith Malina wrote in her diary of the work in Brazil that she "Felt we had placed at least some doubt into the fatal illusion". Judith Malina, The Diaries: Brazil 1970 Bologna 1977 (Dartington, England: Theatre Papers, 1979), p. 24.
- 74 Julian Beck, The Life of the Theatre, p. 55.
- 75 Aldo Rostagno, p. 20.
- 76 Judith Malina, The Diaries, p. 7.
- 77 Theodore Shank, p. 16.
- 78 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
- 79 Ibid., p. 17.
- 80 Ibid., p. 17-18.

- 81 Julian Beck cited *ibid.*, p. 18.
- 82 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 83 Cited in Stuart Little, p. 159.
- 84 Cited in Theodore Shank, p. 19.
- 85 Cited *ibid.*
- 86 *Ibid.*
- 87 Cited *ibid.*, p. 21.
- 88 Judith Malina and Julian Beck, 'Containment is the Enemy', p. 30.
- 89 Statements by the company, The Living Theatre, 'Paradise Now: notes'.
- 90 Theodore Shank, p. 21.
- 91 Julian Beck and Judith Malina, Paradise Now (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 17.
- 92 Cited in Theodore Shank, p. 21.
- 93 Cited *ibid.*, p. 22.
- 94 Cited *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
- 95 Cited *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 96 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 97 Cited *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 98 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 99 Julian Beck and Judith Malina, Paradise Now, p. 77.
- 100 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 101 Judith Malina and Julian Beck, 'Containment is the Enemy', p. 42.
- 102 C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 89.
- 103 The Living Theatre, 'Paradise Now: notes', p. 95.
- 104 Theodore Shank, p. 24.
- 105 Appendix to Biner, p. 222.
- 106 Theodore Shank, p. 25.

- 107 Ibid., p. 26.
- 108 Ibid., p. 25.
- 109 Julian Beck in an interview by Dan Ronen (Pittsburgh, 1975), in "The Experiential Theatre", unpub. PhD thesis, Carnegie-Mellon University, U.S.A., 1976, p. 185.
- 110 Cited *ibid.*, p. 186.
- 111 Cited *ibid.*
- 112 Cited *ibid.*, p. 188.
- 113 Cited *ibid.*
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- 202 Ibid., p. 172.
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- 204 Ibid.
- 205 Shephard was one of the actors who played Dionysus; during its run roles were reversed and played by both men and women.
- 206 The Performance Group, Dionysus in '69 Richard Schechner (ed.), (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1970), n. pag.
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- 210 By coincidence, this is very similar to the Rite of Universal Intercourse which the Living Theatre were then developing in Europe for *Paradise Now* which was premiered there one month later.
- 211 C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 129.
- 212 Ibid.
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- 218 Richard Schechner, Environmental Theatre, p. 46.
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- 223 Cited *ibid.*, p. 243.
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CHAPTER FIVEPETER BROOK AND THE SEASON OF CRUELTY

The title of Peter Brook's collection of writings, The Shifting Point,¹ refers to the inconsistent and evolving nature of his world-view and his theatrical perspective. In the introduction to The Shifting Point, he writes "I have never believed in a single truth', and 'as time goes by, as we change, as the world changes, targets alter and the viewpoint shifts".² This tendency to change and to move in new directions is manifest in the various stages of Brook's long history of work, in contradictory statements about those stages, and in the stark differences between say, his 1968 version of *The Tempest* and his 1990 version.³ In all, Brook has directed more than fifty plays, only a fraction of which feed into the body of work with which we are concerned. Therefore, this chapter will not attempt to accredit Brook with an enduring world-view or guiding motivation based in mind/body dualism; nor will it attempt an overview of Brook's work as a whole. Rather, it will consider those aspects of his career which touch most significantly on the concept of mind and body. To this end, we will focus upon the period 1964 - 1966, during which time Brook's work was directly addressing Artaudian concepts, and was most clearly intersecting with the techniques, terminology, and influences discussed elsewhere in this thesis. In a sense, Brook is most relevant to this study in the extent to which he has deviated from the 'pattern' established by the other practitioners. Brook's over-riding interest in aesthetics, and his political neutrality, ultimately divide him from the other practitioners, despite his close association with them. By

pointing out Brook's work as a parallel, it is hoped that the central concerns of the affective practitioners will emerge more clearly. Further, the reasons for Brook's differences of opinion raise significant questions.

In 1964, Peter Brook formed a company of actors within the auspices of the Royal Shakespeare Company to experiment with ideas inspired by the writings of Artaud. The twelve-week workshop, led by Brook and his American colleague Charles Marowitz, was designed to be purely experimental, and to sidestep the pressures of creating performance. This was an opportunity for Brook to exercise his fascination with the theories of Artaud which were then largely known only in their written form. Along with the Living Theatre's *The Brig* of 1963, Brook's 'Theatre of Cruelty Season' represented one of the earliest practical experiments into Artaud's writings on the theatre.

The work, which took place at the London Academy for Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), was created under the heading, 'Theatre of Cruelty', more by way of tribute to Artaud than of definition, as Brook explains;

We used his striking title to cover our own experiments - many of which were directly stimulated by Artaud's thought - although many exercises were very far from what he had proposed.⁴

In fact, there was an eclectic mix of material drawn from sources such as Genet, Jarry, and writings and improvisations by the collaborators themselves. However, references to the work's aims make clear the proximity of Brook's intentions to those of Artaud; Brook speaks of trying to create "the poetic state, a transcendent experience of life";

to "arouse sensations of heat and cold"; "all flooding one's consciousness simultaneously"; to find physical rhythms "whose crescendo will accord exactly with the pulsation of movements familiar to everyone" corresponding to "the broken and fragmentary way in which most people experience contemporary reality"; "a rediscovery of the terror and awesomeness of the original semi-religious theatre".⁵

Such terminology is instantly recognised as relating to the 'holy' and metaphysical theatre which Artaud had envisaged; and Brook is clearly working from similar assumptions about the possibility of physical and visceral communication. Both men were searching for a theatrical language which did not rely on logical and verbal communication, and which could effect a transcendent experience within the participants. In part, Brook's workshop was a technical exploration of new vocabularies for communication; in part it was a search for new and revitalised definitions of the theatrical event. In The Empty Space, published in 1968,⁶ Brook asks a question which had underpinned all of the work on Artaud;

Is there a language of actions, a language of sounds - a language of word-as-part-of movement, of word-as-lie, word-as-parody, of word-as-rubbish, of word-as-contradiction, of word-shock or word-cry??

By creating vocabularies of movement and non-verbal vocalisation, and by forming expressions which could not be analysed for meaning, but which could be apprehended on a physical level, Brook hoped to bypass intellectual communication. The theatre he sought was one which did not speak solely to the conscious mind of the spectator, but to the emotional and physical self as a whole. Since the mainstream tradition

of Western theatre had concentrated on cerebral levels of communication almost to the complete exclusion of any other, Brook's work sought to redress the imbalance by an intensive search for physical and emotional forms.

The workshop began with the most simple and basic questions about the nature of theatrical communication, in order to strip away all superfluous technique. The first exercise set out to discover the least an actor needs to convey understanding; taking nothing for granted the group sought to exclude all sound and movement in order to find the starting point for communication. From this base they experimented with rhythm, sound, wordless languages, and silence, using the barest of signs. Brook concluded that,

The actor then found that to communicate his invisible meanings he needed concentration, he needed will; he needed courage; he needed clear thought. But the most important result was that he was led inexorably to the conclusion that he needed form. It was not enough to feel passionately - a creative leap was required to mint a new form which would be a container and a reflector for his impulses. That is what is truly called an 'action'.²

The emphasis on basic questions about the fundamental nature of theatrical communication, along with the discovery that 'form' and discipline are essential to expression, are points which coincide with Grotowski's work which, in 1964, was still unknown to Brook.³ The similar and divergent points of Brook and Grotowski's work shall be examined later in the chapter.

Whilst the LAMDA season was designed to facilitate experimentation without the constraints of creating a performance, it was necessary

that the work should be presented to an audience. Since the question of communication through non-verbal forms was directly concerned with the actor-audience relationship, performances were planned to test the workshop's discoveries. To this end, a presentation was given, at the end of the twelve weeks, which consisted of a number of short pieces of work-in-progress. It was presented without any explanatory notes in the form of a programme, in order that pre-conceived notions, which might inhibit the audience's natural reactions, would be avoided. Brook has noted that the first performance created a far greater sense of danger within the audience than any successive performance. On the first night, he concluded, there was no knowledge by word of mouth or the press to prepare the spectators, and they did not have the comfort of knowing that all had occurred without danger the night before.¹⁰ As we have seen in the discussion on the Performance Group, it is a problem of much of the work of this kind that shock tactics are quickly insulated by exterior circumstances such as the repetition of performance and the context of the theatrical event. As Brook's theatre developed through the work on *Marat/Sade* (1964) and *'US'* (1966), he came to believe that less violent forms could, for these very reasons, have further-reaching results. Thus, his particular development has drawn him, ultimately, away from the theatre of affect.

The presentation consisted of performances of Artaud's *A Spurt of Blood*, short abstract word collages by Paul Ableman, two surrealist sketches by Brook, a scene from Genet's *The Screens*, a montage of *Hamlet* by Marowitz, a piece by John Arden, and some mime and

improvisation exercises.¹¹ Descriptions given here have been derived from Brook's The Empty Space, and Innes' Holy Theatre.

Marowitz's '*Hamlet*' montage was a short collage which anticipated his later full-length adaptation. The play used dialogue fragments, re-assembled in a film-like structure of what Innes called, "cross-cuts, close-ups and slow-dissolves".¹² Marowitz's intention in deconstructing the original text was to create an impression of the subconscious mind by expressing "subliminal flashes out of Hamlet's life". It worked on the assumption "that there was a smear of Hamlet in everyone's collective unconscious", and that the non-linear and fragmentary arrangement would correspond "to the tempo of our time".¹³ This provides an interesting parallel with Grotowski's dialectic and fragmentary use of text, which he was then developing independently in Poland, (see appendix).

Artaud's play, *The Spurt of Blood*, was presented with the dialogue replaced by screams. Ambiguous in itself, in that the audience were apparently unsure whether to take it seriously or not, it was followed by a comic interlude. Brook explains the effect of this juxtaposition;

Now the audience was lost: the laughers did not know whether to laugh anymore, the serious-minded who had disapproved of their neighbours' laughter no longer knew what attitude to take.¹⁴

In a sense, this technique is similar both to Artaud's attempts, in *The Ghost Sonata* and *A Dream Play*, to disorientate the audience through perceptual tricks, and to Grotowski's use of blasphemy and taboo to confuse conventional responses.¹⁵ The Cruelty performances involved nudity (in the form of the undressing of an actress) as a further

challenge to theatrical conventions, and as a shock to the audience's preconceptions. Brook noted that the audience, robbed of familiar theatrical communication, and therefore disarmed of conventional reactions, were confused and unable to respond freely;

We could observe how an audience is in no way prepared to make its own instant judgements second for second.¹⁶

For Schechner, similar discoveries with The Performance Group's exploration of actor-audience relationships, had served to strengthen his resolve that the theatre should be redefined as a ritual in which audiences were permitted to take active involvement, and were no longer 'spoonfed' passive entertainment. For many of the American companies, this aspect of theatre amounted to an important social force in persuading people to take a more active role in their own experiences - both in the theatre building and in life. There is no suggestion that Brook shared this vision of theatre as social therapy (a concept which may also be found in Artaud), however, the 'cruelty season' was clearly borne of considerations beyond the aesthetic. It was an assertion of a vision of human nature which rejected superficial reality as being the sole reality, and delved into the inner life of the human mind - and body - for a complete picture, a truth greater than the socially-mutated truth in which we live our daily lives. Brook writes,

We were denying psychology, we were trying to smash the apparently water-tight divisions between the private and the public man - the outer man whose behaviour is bound by the photographic rules of everyday life, who must sit to sit, stand to stand - and the inner man whose anarchy and poetry is usually expressed only in his words.¹⁷

Clearly, this work corresponds to that of Grotowski and the American companies, and along with them echoes the surrealist obsession with the

unconscious as well as the absurdist emphasis on irrationality. Brook had drawn upon Jarry in the workshop, and went on to produce *Ubu* in 1977, however his comments on Artaud and the Absurd reflect his own position in relation to absurdist and surrealist philosophy;

Fantasy invented by the mind is apt to be lightweight, the whimsicality and the surrealism of the Absurd would no more have satisfied Artaud than the narrowness of the psychological play. What he wanted in his search for a holiness was absolute: he wanted a theatre that would be a hallowed place; he wanted that theatre served by a band of dedicated actors and directors who would create out of their own natures an unending succession of violent stage images, bringing about such powerful immediate explosions of human matter that no one would ever again revert to a theatre of anecdote and talk.¹⁸

Like Artaud, Brook had come to the search for revitalised communication through a deep dissatisfaction with conventional forms of theatre. The theatre of mimesis and of the everyday, for Brook as for Artaud and the other practitioners of affective theatre, amounted to a distortion and reduction of theatre's true potential. In fact, Brook has used a striking metaphor to discuss theatre's squandered potential; in Mexico, he tells us in The Empty Space, slaves would carry great weights through the jungles and mountains, whilst their children's toys had tiny rollers - "The slaves made the toys, but for centuries failed to make the connection". When theatre audiences enjoy second-rate theatre primarily because of its costumes or sets, Brook says, "have they noticed what is underneath the toy they are dragging on a string? It's a wheel".¹⁹ With Artaud as his guide, Brook's rejection of the prevailing naturalism was in favour of "a theatre, more violent, less rational, more extreme, less verbal, more dangerous".²⁰ In place of psychologically-drawn characterisation and the portrayal of surface

reality, Brook proposed that theatre act as an insight into the invisible elements of life;

Our aim for each experiment, good or bad, successful or disastrous, was the same: can the invisible be made visible through the performer's presence?²¹

Brook's work is based on the notion that the theatre is a realm in which invisible aspects of life can become visible and tangible and, indeed, he suggests that many audiences would "answer positively from their own experience that they have seen the face of the invisible through an experience on the stage that transcended their experience in life".²² By the "invisible", he refers to the inner life of the person in which thoughts, emotions and dreams occur in forms and images which are not usually given exterior expression. By finding expression for this inner life, Brook felt that the theatre would be both dealing in important, metaphysical content through affective forms, and also expanding the everyday perceptual limits of the spectator.

In this Brook's work strongly echoes Artaud's thoughts on a 'metaphysical' and 'alchemical' theatre, in which the 'magic' of performance would reveal all that is daily kept hidden. This exploration was also shared by Chaikin and Schechner for whom the 'invisible-made-visible' was an enduring fascination. For Artaud, to look beneath the surface was to find 'cruelty', violence, bloodshed. Whether or not Brook shared Artaud's opinion that this was what lurked beneath the veneer of civilization, he certainly felt its portrayal appropriate to his own work in the sixties,

...we still wish to capture in our arts the invisible currents that rule our lives, but our vision is now locked to the dark end of the spectrum. Today the theatre of doubting, of unease, of trouble, of alarm, seems truer than the theatre with a noble

aim.²³

Furthermore, Brook was interested in the extreme because of its effects upon an audience. The use of shock tactics, and the breaking of tabboos, by dismantling an audience's defensive mechanisms, were expected to facilitate deeper levels of communication. Furthermore, Brook's treatment of form was, he felt, appropriate to the age in which he was living;

We are presenting our programme at a time in which all theatrical conventions are being challenged and rules no longer exist. Our group has in turn taken apart story, construction, characters, technique, rhythm, grand finale, great scene, dramatic high point, starting from the premise that the turmoil and complexity of our lives in 1965 must cause us to question all accepted forms.²⁴

To a lesser extent than the American youth culture, Britain in the sixties was caught up in the great backlash against authority and conformity. Experiments in theatre, as in other aspects of culture, were popular, and from our retrospective viewpoint we can see how the dismantling of technique in the theatre befitted the ambience of the 1960s. Artaud's writing, whilst of some interest to the artistic community during his lifetime, came into its own with the youth culture of the 1960s who shared his anarchic rejection of society and implicit belief in the subcurrents of human life. In this way, the 'cruelty' season, whilst referring to a theory written twenty-five years earlier, was entirely contemporary. Brook has written,

A stable and harmonious society might need only to look for ways of reflecting and reaffirming its harmony in its theatres. Such theatres could set out to unite cast and audience in a mutual 'yes'. But a shifting, chaotic world often must choose between a playhouse that offers a spurious 'yes' or a provocation so strong that it splinters its audience into fragments of vivid 'nos'.²⁵

Brook's rejection of accepted form, and his search for new language was informed by another Artaudian concept, one which has continued to have relevance to Brook's work throughout the seventies and eighties - 'holy theatre'.²⁶ Artaud's term, and its associations with transcendence, ritual, and the sanctity of the actor's craft, all held meaning for Brook, who later adopted the term in The Empty Space. In 1964, Brook's definition of 'ritual' was very closely related to his desire to bypass cerebrality; he has referred to the use of ritual in the cruelty season in terms of "repetitive patterns, seeing how it is possible to present more meaning, more swiftly than by a logical unfolding of events".²⁷ In later works such as *Orghast* (1971) and *The Ik* (1975), Brook's use of ritual would be developed into a more sophisticated form referring to actual primitive rituals, and drawing on the relationship of ritual to myth. Whilst this would bring its own problems, it was clearly a more accurate use of the term, and one which more closely paralleled the other affective practitioners.

For Brook, there was a further, less apparent, point of contact between himself and Artaud; he has noted that "Artaud found confirmation of his theories in Oriental theatre, in the life of Mexico, in the myths of Greek tragedies, and above all in the Elizabethan theatre".²⁸ Throughout his work in the theatre, Brook has exhibited a consistent fascination for Elizabethan theatre, in particular for the works of Shakespeare in which he has found an ideal vehicle for his own metaphysical theatre. For Brook, the sense of the invisible-made-visible is found inherently in the Elizabethan theatre form. He has written that,

Elizabethan theatre allows the dramatist space in which to move freely between the outer and the inner world.²⁹

In this respect, Brook equates Artaud's work directly with Shakespeare's;

From a certain point of view, the "cruelty" of Artaud could be considered an effort to recover, by other means, the variety of Shakespeare's expression, and our experiment, which uses the work of Artaud more as a springboard than as a model for literal reconstruction, may also be interpreted as the search for a theatrical language as flexible and penetrating as that of the Elizabethans.³⁰

For Brook, Shakespeare is the great and enduring model of an 'immediate' theatre - one in which metaphysical content is balanced by an accessible form.³¹ The relationship between subliminal, emotional communication of abstract themes and a simple and instantly understandable theatre language has proved to be an enduring conundrum for Brook. The Cruelty season represents his first major research into the realm of affective and a-cerebral forms, and along with the two performance pieces which grew from it - the *Marat/Sade* and 'US' - it demonstrates what we may see as positive discrimination on behalf of the irrational to an extent which he would not maintain in the work to follow. Brook's work, in this period, stands out as a significant experiment into Artaudian and affective forms; this is perhaps all the more remarkable since it took place within the mainstream institution of the Royal Shakespeare Company.³² As an exploration of theatre language and physical expression, the season raised important questions within Brook's own work, and on the wider field it exerted influence as an example of Artaudian theory-in-practice, and as a seminal model of non-cerebral theatre.

The work which had been initiated and tested in the Cruelty exercises came to more complete fruition in Brook's production of the *Marat/Sade*, also created in 1964.³³ Peter Weiss's play is an uncommon mixture of Brechtian and Artaudian elements - two styles (arising from two visions) which would normally be considered mutually exclusive. For Brook, it was this diametric opposition, above and beyond the interest in solely Artaudian features, which attracted him to the play. Brook has written of his fascination with Shakespeare's ability to portray all aspects of a situation, rather than a specific point of view, so it is not surprising that in his own work he should largely steer clear of any single, over-riding, aspect of technique or vision. Brook has written,

Neither Brecht nor Artaud stands for ultimate truth. Each represents a certain aspect of it, a certain tendency, and at our time perhaps their respective viewpoints are the most diametrically opposed. To try to discover where, how, and at what level this opposition ceases to be real is something I have found very interesting, particularly during the period in 1964 between the season of the "Theatre of Cruelty" and the production of the *Marat/Sade*.³⁴

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the two forms may well have been assumed to more appropriately convey an 'immediate' theatre, by providing *sense* onto which the affective forms could deflect *feeling*. If the American companies had been criticised for too strongly embracing a physical and irrational theatre, Brook was interested in balancing all the strands of theatrical communication open to him. He has written,

For Artaud, theatre is fire; for Brecht, theatre is clear vision; for Stanislavsky, theatre is humanity. Why must we choose among them?³⁵

The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed By The Inmates at the Asylum at Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade (as the full title reads) proved a perfect vehicle for Brook's exploration into the amalgamation of divergent techniques. The play is both visceral and intellectual; it portrays vivid, visual imagery with immediacy and impact, and at the same time develops arguments which require analysis. It is both emotionally shocking, and psychologically distancing. The events occur within a system of concentric rings which confuse the audience's position in relation to actions which are themselves ambiguous. The real audience watch a stage audience watching a play which is performed by the inmates of the asylum. If this in itself does not confuse the moral position of the viewer there is the additional factor that the play-within-a-play has been directed by the Marquis de Sade. The reactions of the contemporary audience are filtered through - or contrasted with - the stage audience which is set in 1808. However, if the audience are alienated and set to thinking, they are also emotionally arrested by images of lunacy and murder. Brook has commented on the marriage of the theatres of Reason and Unreason,

Brecht's use of "distance" has long been considered in opposition to Artaud's conception of theatre as immediate and violent subjective experience. I have never believed this to be true. I believe that theatre like life, is made up of the unbroken conflict between impressions and judgements - illusion and disillusion cohabit painfully and are inseparable. This is just what Weiss achieves. Starting with its title...everything about this play is designed to crack the spectator on the jaw, then douse him with ice-cold water, then force him to assess intelligently what has happened to him, then give him a kick in the balls, then bring him back to his senses again.³⁶

If this was an innovative position for Brook to take, it is also one which has its roots - in Brook's assessment - in the Elizabethan

theatre in which vision is panoramic as in real life, not narrowed into a specific world-view. It is also a theatre which more closely unites the mind with the body since it does not positively discriminate in favour of the latter. Brook's comments on the writer, Jan Kott, reveal something of the spirit of his own work in this respect,

...Kott is an Elizabethan. Like Shakespeare, like Shakespeare's contemporaries, the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit are indivisible. They coexist painfully in the same frame: the poet has a foot in the mud, an eye on the stars and a dagger in his hand. The contradictions of any living process cannot be denied. There is an omnipresent paradox that cannot be argued, but must be lived: poetry is a rough magic that fuses opposites.³⁷

The rehearsal work on the *Marat/Sade* took the form of discovering 'madness' adequate to the portrayal of the inmates. Brook describes something of the process,

In the *Marat/Sade*, as kinetic images of insanity rose up and possessed the actor and as he yielded to them in improvisation, the others observed and criticized. So a true form was gradually detached from the standardized clichés that are part of an actor's equipment for mad scenes...the play is about madness as it was in 1808 - before drugs, before treatment, when a different social attitude to the insane made them behave differently, and so on. For this, the actor had no outside model - he looked at faces in Goya not as models to imitate but as prods to encourage his confidence in following the stronger and more worrying of his influences. He had to allow himself to serve these voices completely; and in parting from outside models, he was taking greater risks.³⁸

This clearly has resonance with the work Grotowski was pioneering into the self-penetration of the actor's psyche. It also to some extent anticipates The Performance Group's emphasis on their own personalities; and it is hardly coincidental that the motif of insanity should be central, bearing in mind the part that Artaud had to play in influencing this body of work.

The wider, societal implications of Brook's use of both the play and the techniques of mind/body integration are unclear. It is true that he has quoted Marat, "The important thing is to pull yourself up by your own hair. To turn yourself inside out and see the whole world with fresh eyes",³⁹ and has said of the play, "It is firmly on the side of revolutionary change". When the actors clap back to the audience at the end of the play they deny the theatricality of the performance, and deflect the insinuations back onto the wider world. Whilst it seems clear that in the hands of Beck and Malina, or even Schechner, this aspect of the play - its social criticism - would have been exploited as a political tool propagating change, other comments by Brook go on to confuse the matter;

The American audience reacted much more directly, they accepted and believed the propositions that man is greedy and murderous, a potential lunatic.⁴⁰

There exists within Brook's work an unsettling pessimism about human nature which undermines the associations one might usually connect with affective, mind/body theatre. Judith Malina remarked in her diary that Brook's 1964 film, *Lord of the Flies*, (based on Golding's novel) was pessimistic about human nature because it showed the breakdown of society as resulting in a collapse of values and destructiveness. The fact of Brook's choosing to produce the film, together with his comments on the societal breakdown, suggest that he shared Golding's view of human nature. Commenting humourously on working with the cast of young boys, Brook wrote,

My experience showed me that the only falsification in Golding's fable is the length of time the descent to savagery takes. His action takes about three months. I believe that if the cork of contained adult presence were removed from the bottle, the complete catastrophe could occur within a long weekend.⁴¹

Here, as in the *Marat/Sade*, Brook seems to view humankind as inherently destructive, kept in order only by the constraints of society. For the American practitioners, it was society which was destructive, and a collapse of civilised values was championed as an antidote. Artaud had certainly written of the dark undercurrents of life, but for him evil spilled forth as a result of repression on the part of society; hidden within his vision was a belief in the true nature of natural man. Brook suggests nothing of this in his comments, and despite the revolutionary nature of Weiss's play, Brook's *Marat/Sade* seems far from humanistic,

In 1966 Brook arranged for Grotowski to come to London and work with the RSC. According to Kumiega, Grotowski had already visited England the previous year to give a lecture and discussion, but this time he came to work practically, over a two week period.⁴² The visit coincided with the group's work on their next piece, 'US', for which Joseph Chaikin, incidentally, was acting as an advisor, (for comparisons of stages in their respective careers, see appendix). Brook describes the work as a 'series of shocks' for the actors;

The shock of confronting himself in the face of simple irrefutable challenges. The shock of catching sight of his own evasions, tricks and cliches. The shock of sensing something of his own vast and untapped resources. The shock of being forced to question why he is an actor at all.⁴³

There were major differences between Grotowski's work and Brook's, in particular a notable variance in their respective approaches to the actor's personal study and commitment. A major impact of Grotowski's work with Brook's group lay in the challenge that the Polish actors' sacrificial example gave to the British actors, and in the implicit

definition and value of theatre which this evoked. Grotowski has spoken of the Laboratory actors' relationship to their craft, saying "A way of life is a way to life".⁴⁴ Indeed, the Laboratory actors were using their theatre as a route to heightened experience and to full immersion in their whole selves, and therefore in their whole lives, in a way that the British actors were not even approaching. Michael Kustow's 'Narrative' in the published text of '*US*', relates the play's central motif to Grotowski's influence,

Over the weekend, Brook, Hunt and Reeves have gone through all the material we have explored, and decided (certainly influenced by the fiery commitment which Grotowski had succeeded in drawing from our actors) that BURNING, the act of burning oneself, could become the central image of the play's action.⁴⁵

'*US*' was a play about the British response to Vietnam and the sense of impotence and passivity which people felt in the face of the horrors they witnessed through the press. For this reason, the exploration of self-immolation was an attempt to understand both the state of mind involved in such an act, and the state of mind of each of the cast as witness to this event.⁴⁶

The work on '*US*' was dissimilar to Brook's previous work in that it did not arise from an existing text. Perhaps it is a sign of the avant garde passions of the 1960s that even Brook with his great interest in plays and texts turned, for this project, to devising with a group. Further,

The birth of *US* was allied to the reaction of a group of us who quite suddenly felt that Vietnam was more powerful, more acute, more insistent a situation than any drama that already existed between covers...For common sense is outraged by the supposition that old wars in old words are more living than new ones, that

ancient atrocities make civilized after-dinner fare, whilst current atrocities are not worthy of attention.⁴⁷

Rather like the work on the '*Marat/Sade*', the piece aimed to strike a balance between affective, immediate communication and thought-provoking discussion, as the company's published documentation reveals. The 'Norman Morrison' scene juxtaposed an impersonal news report of the real event with a re-enactment of the young Quaker's self-immolation, accompanied by a woman's screams. This act was followed by a 'funeral meeting' in which Morrison's normal, human qualities and the 'sense' of his act were spelt out. Within the text itself, there was evidence of the reasoning behind showing Morrison's act on stage.

For most of us, a pin prick at the end of our finger is far more real than people being bombed in a nameless jungle.⁴⁸

The documentary and affective techniques intersected at the point where they each had the capacity to convince an audience of the 'reality' of the situation in Vietnam. As with the Living Theatre's *The Brig* (which Brook and the actors had probably seen when it played in London in 1964), '*US*' was an attempt to awaken human response to an inhuman situation. The piece was full of societal criticisms of the kind which Erich Fromm and others were making in books dealing directly with atrophied human affect. The discussion on Morrison continues,

In a society where it is normal for human beings to drop bombs on human targets, where it is normal to spend 50% of the individual's tax dollar on war, where it is normal to give war toys for Christmas, where it is normal to have twelve and one half times overkill capacity, Norman Morrison was not normal. He said, "Let it stop. Let us personally witness against this kind of normality. Let us be abnormal, in the sense that Jesus and Ghandi were abnormal."⁴⁹

The notion of the sick society which Artaud and Grotowski had spoken of and responded to, is therefore apparent within 'US' also. Further, this is an interesting point of contact with Grotowski's 'sacrificial individual'. Kustow has told us that Grotowski had, to some extent, inspired the use of this material, and we can certainly see a thematic similarity between Norman Morrison and the Constant Prince or Gustaw-Konrad. Whilst Grotowski's imagery was generally intended to reflect universal themes, it is possible that the sacrificial 'total act' had resonance with audiences, in part, because it gave insight to the contemporary sacrificial self-immolation of Morrison and the Buddhist monks.⁵⁰

The actor-audience relationship in 'US' was manipulated in order to disorientate conventional response and effect real communication. Innes describes this,

The experiments with audience relationships, in which the spectators were surrounded by action or changed places with the actors, were extended in *US* (1966) where the actors with their heads covered by paper bags (as in *The Spurt of Blood*) stumbled groaning in among the spectators, representing the maimed of Vietnam and requiring physical assistance from the audience.⁵¹

This type of interaction was also used by the Living Theatre in their own appropriation of Artaudian technique for the Plague scene of *Mysteries* in 1964/5. Innes considers that Brook's use of the audience was, "an unfortunate confusion of symbolism with actuality", although he concedes that it had meaning within the context of the piece as "an attack on the self-satisfied comfort of the 'uninvolved' British public ('us' rather than 'U.S.' - hence the absence of a coherent statement about the war)".⁵²

The play ended with the apparent burning of a live butterfly, followed by the cast's refusal to leave the stage before the audience had left. This was, as Innes describes it, a way of "forcing the audience into a 'decision' - to walk out, symbolising their avoidance of moral responsibility or involvement".⁵³ This type of audience manipulation (with its ambiguous implications) was carried through to the extreme in 1971 in the work of the Performance Group whose work '*Commune*' relied on the participation and active involvement of the audience. In the light of Schechner's anecdote about the three-hour long interruption and debate which arose during one performance, Brook's use of the actors to clap back at the end of *Marat/Sade* and to stay onstage at the end of '*US*' seem relatively weak. For Innes, the butterfly-burning together with this ending reveal "two intrinsic flaws in Brook's approach, its tendency to simplification and aestheticism".⁵⁴

Like the *Marat/Sade* rehearsals, the work on '*US*' involved the actor's personal exploration of the painful themes of the play - both the war and murder in Vietnam and their own culpability in the face of it. For Brook this is the essence of the role of the actor - to undergo the experiences of discovery on the part of the spectator;

The actor is paid by you as your servant, your protagonist, to go through something very exacting so that you can in a short space of time acquire in concentrated form what he has actually gathered over a long period of time. The actor becomes a filter, translating this bewildering chaos of material, coming back and back to Vietnam and relating it to what he can experience for real in himself. Eventually for three hours we relive this with you.⁵⁵

This is quite different from Grotowski's perspective in which the work of the actors is to undergo experiences, not in order to present the

material uncovered, but rather the effect on their souls of the experience itself. For Brook, the work is clearly dealing more solidly with the portrayal of actual information (albeit on a sensual level) than for Grotowski and others for whom the experience and actuality of the form somewhat outweighed, or rather embodied, the content of the theme. Nevertheless, Brook does speak in terms of the actor's experience and of the necessity of their personal journeys;

Today we find that to ask a group of actors who have worked together to do scenes of torture, brutality, violence and madness is frighteningly easy and frighteningly pleasurable for all of us...When the actors sit in silence at the end of *US*, they are reopening the question, each night, for all of us, of where we stand at this moment here and now in relation to what is going on in ourselves and the world around us. The very end of *US* is certainly not, as some have taken it to be, an accusation or a reproach to the audience from the actors. The actors are truly concerned with themselves; they are using and confronting what is most scary in themselves.⁵⁵

The approach of '*US*' was based on similar premises to those of '*The Brig*'. Artaud's comments on the effect of theatre to prevent war (for example) by showing it in all its horror, were reflected in both plays; hence the indulgence of violent spectacles in both anti-war pieces. For Brook, the mechanism of this experience-by-proxy is found in the person of the actor who undergoes the process of discovery and experience on behalf of the audience. Since spectators generally do not have the opportunity to immerse themselves in affective experience, it is the role of the actor to present a compacted version of such immersion. Brook explains this,

...if everyone could hold in his mind through one single day both the horror of Vietnam and the normal life he is leading, the tension between the two would be intolerable. Is it possible then, we ask ourselves, to present for a moment to the spectator this contradiction, his own and his society's contradiction? Is there any dramatic confrontation more complete than this? Is there any

tragedy more inevitable and more terrifying? We wanted actors to explore every aspect of this contradiction, so that instead of accusing or condoling an audience, they could be what an actor is always supposed to be, the audience's representative, who is trained and prepared to go farther than the spectator, down a path the spectator knows to be his own.⁵⁷

This approach was clearly more cerebral than Grotowski's technique of totally immersing his actors in emotional and physical experiences which could act as images for the content of the performance. Grotowski's actors performed an act which 'stood for' another in the context of performance, whereas Brook's actors 'acted out' events which they believed they had gained insight to.

As with the earlier work, Brook used a number of affective strategies in 'US', in order to allow the spectator's experience to occur through different mechanisms. The piece aimed to work on a variety of levels, and to juxtapose and fragment material in order to bypass conventional responses, and stir emotional and subliminal reaction to the material. However, Brook was at pains to balance the emotional material with communication of a more rational kind in order to avoid the difficulty of sustaining work on an affective and meaningful level. He believed that "when the first reaction is so strong, it is not possible to go very deep. The shutters fall fast".⁵⁸

The question of creating the kind of affect which Artaud had spoken of, and fulfilling the kind of potential which Brook glimpsed in the theatre, was not a simple one. Brook felt that shock tactics, which caused defensive masks to drop momentarily, often tended to have short-lived effect, and failed to facilitate the transference of emotion into

a change of consciousness. Further, the theatre event brought with it a history and tradition which served to insulate people from the necessity to translate the event into meaning for their lives. In 1968, during work on Seneca's *Oedipus*, Brook found that, for the audience, "culture is a talisman protecting them from anything that could nastily swing back into their own lives".⁵⁹ Thus, for Brook, the inclusion of documentary material in '*US*' was an attempt to deepen and prolong the effect of the imagistic and metaphysical material by relating the spectator directly to 'real life'.

The relationship between 'reality' and the 'fiction' of the theatrical images was not unproblematic. Alan Brien, reviewing '*US*' for the Sunday Telegraph made the following criticism,

Peter Brook is entitled to believe that we have never before really known the horrors of modern war until it is mimicked by flesh-and-blood people in our presence. But it is at least arguable that anyone who has seen monks in flames, legless children, mutilated corpses, charred countryside, through the electronic immediacy of television may find the sight of well-fed actors hobbling and gibbering an impressive illusion rather than an unbearable reality.⁶⁰

Bryan Magee's review for the Listener proposed that where the company attempted to perform documentary-style realism, they could only "distort and diminish". However, he felt that they succeeded at the points where they created artistic imagery. For Magee, the play's strength was precisely its affective qualities. On an intellectual level, the performance could be neither believed nor comprehended without vast simplification of the complex subject. However, in its affective and emotional appeal, he felt that the play became "the theatre of compassionate involvement".⁶¹ For Jean-Paul Sartre, the

tension between fiction and reality in the piece was central; and he identified the main thrust of the work as being towards affect;

By itself this play has no meaning and we cannot call it a play. The performance must take place on a stage before the public and there is a succession of scenes, words and violent acts without any purpose other than the affective which in the middle of the confusion inspires the two themes of the play.⁶²

For Sartre, 'reality' was present in that the performance was 'live', and events such as the burning of the butterfly (which he took to be real), entered into the reality of the participants. Thus, he highlighted the notion of performance as an event on a level with life, and played down the extent to which 'US' was attempting mimesis. It seems that Brook's production was capable of tackling its emotive themes when it used affective and imagistic forms. As a 'representation' of war, it could only appear ineffectual.

In 'US', Brook had chosen to discuss Vietnam from a wholly modern perspective through the devising of a new piece of writing, yet he found that neither this approach nor the use of existing, classical writing could facilitate the audience's immersion in the work. He has written,

The contemporary event touches raw nerves but creates an immediate refusal to listen. The myth and the formally shaped work has power, yet is insulated in exact proportion.⁶³

Thus, once again Brook came to the conclusion that neither one direction or another is wholly suitable to the work of affect, but that emotional communication must be balanced by, and deflected onto, intellectual meaning. For Brook, the marriage of Brecht and Artaud represented a theatre which could reach the whole man in a way which was quite different from the other theatres of affect;

Distance is a commitment to total meaning; presence is a total commitment to the living moment; the two go together.⁶⁴

If this sounds contradictory in theory, in practice it is even harder to realise. The subjugation of our irrational and physical human capacities by intellectual processes is such a daily occurrence that it is difficult to provide a format in which they work easily together. On the whole, the very presence of intellectual thought causes the immediate experience of the moment to be destroyed. Brook's response in the years following the 'cruelty season' was very much towards an 'immediate' theatre in which physical and ritualised communication was strongly offset by an intellectual format. In 1968, Brook's production of Seneca's *Oedipus* opposed techniques of objectivity with subjectivity, proximity with distance. Brook's treatment of the material amounted to a confrontation of the traditional tragic mode of catharsis, where, as Brook describes it, "we leave an experience of horror finally strangely comforted"⁶⁵ with a harsh 'Beckettian' objectivity in which cruelty is not ultimately comforted and forgotten. In this respect, Brook sees the faculties of mind and body working closely together;

...emotion is continually illuminated by intuitive intelligence so that the spectator, though wooed, assaulted, alienated and forced to reassess, ends by experiencing something equally indivisible. Catharsis can never have been simply an emotional purge: it must have been an appeal to the whole man.⁶⁶

In response to the paradox of using modern or classical material, Brook chose to present Seneca's archetypal situation in a translation, by Ted Hughes and David Turner, designed to comment *indirectly* on the contemporary situation (once again, Vietnam featured by association).

From Innes we learn that the highly disturbing text was offset against a stage technique in which human cruelty was thrown "into stark relief through impersonal presentation and ritualised response".⁶⁷ The whole presentation was plain, and punctuated by periods of extreme immobility. Facial expressions were suppressed by rigidly held and depersonalising 'masks' such as Grotowski had also developed with his actors. Emotional vocal effects were created through the use of chant, rhythmic panting, and ululation. Unlike most of the other works discussed here, Brook's use of ritual was not celebratory and retrospectively romantic, but rather, employed to further a stylistic impersonal quality.

Innes sees the dispassionate expression of extreme violence as effecting "an impact of almost unbearable intensity";⁶⁸ nevertheless, it is significant that Brook associates the ritual and primitive techniques he adopts with the portrayal of violence, and that unlike the other theatre-makers discussed in this work, he does not seek to counter dispassion and coldness with these cultural forms which are usually associated with emotion and activity. Whereas the use of Eastern and ritual techniques is, for the others, at least by implication, a political comment, for Brook, primitive ritual is associated with the dark side of life, and used, it would seem, largely for theatrical and affective impact.

The implicit negativity of Brook's use of ritual and primitivity can be traced in other works of the period. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, produced in 1970, drew on circus skills and imagery which, in Innes'

words, "corresponded to the submerging of rational verbal communication beneath acrobatic activity".⁶⁹ John Kane, the actor who played Puck, described the sense of "immediacy" and "wild joy" which Brook unearthed in the piece; "the wood and its inhabitants pour forth a primitive wildness which infected all who came into contact with it".⁷⁰ In this sense, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* corresponds to the Dionysian use, and championing, of primitivity and anarchy which the Performance Group had explored with *Dionysus in 69'*. However, if Schechner's group had sought to discuss and embody the Dionysian because of their personal and cultural fascination with the overthrow of reason, it is, again, not so easy to be assured of Brook's rationale. Brook's production of *The Tempest* (1968) had centred upon Prospero's words about Caliban - "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" - and Brook had significantly presented the two characters as aspects of the same. Innes writes of,

...the intellectual, spiritual aspect of the mind losing control of the atavistic, instinctual Caliban, so that the performance became an exploration of the anarchic and primitive side of human nature.⁷¹

For Innes, images of sexual violence in these plays, such as Jocasta impaling herself on a phallic spike in *Oedipus*, and Caliban raping Miranda in *The Tempest*, are "paralleled" and "balanced" by other elements in the plays; of the latter example he wrote; "...this 'dark' side of sexuality was balanced against an innocent paradise of pre-civilised responses to nature, in which the final marriage ceremony was performed as a mating ritual".⁷² However, there remains within the plays a paucity of positive comment on, or outcome to, the cruelty

which Brook employs. The aesthetic and theatrical exploration seems to constantly overwhelm any wider thought, despite the fact that Brook was dealing - directly with '*US*' and indirectly with *Oedipus* - with political material.

For Innes, Brook's approach in these plays falls short of nihilism;

Not only is Beckettian honesty itself seen as 'the most positive' attitude available in the twentieth century context of genocide, political torture and total warfare, but the destructive anarchy of sexual urges expressed in these productions was itself considered liberating.^{7:9}

If this is the case, Brooks's productions show none of the celebration of physicality and irrationality that mark the works of his contemporaries in this field. The suffering of Grotowski's actors resulted in transcendence; the Living Theatre equated physical freedom with social liberation; the Performance Group sought personal wholeness through the confrontation of their hidden natures. Even Artaud's dark hatred is borne along by a momentum towards individual and societal change. For Brook, primitive and animalistic human nature leads to destructiveness; for the others, it is civilised man who is destructive, and the Dionysian which acts as antidote.

Despite the ideological gulf between Brook and his contemporaries, there were marked areas of similarity and definite points of contact linking Brook with Grotowski, Beck and Malina, Chaikin, and Schechner. Throughout the 1960s and '70s, Brook explored many of the areas of work which we have discussed elsewhere; audience manipulation, the sonic potential of language, languages of gesture and movement, ritual,

cruelty and violence. However, as we have noted, Brook is separated from the main body of affective theatre by his tendency towards aesthetic rather than ideological choices, by his distinctive lack of a humanistic motivation, and by his consistent interest in juxtaposing physical and subconscious communication with intellectual conventions.

In 1970, the year that Grotowski announced that he was no longer involved in making performance, and the year that the Living Theatre abandoned their format of playing at colleges and festivals, to work instead on the streets of Brazil, Brook also made a change. At the invitation of Jean Louis Barrault, Brook had been working, since 1968, on projects at the Theatre de Nations in Paris. In 1970, he decided to leave Britain and work permanently from a base in Paris, and it was here that he founded his inter-cultural research-based company, the Centre for International Theatre Research (CITR).

The first year of work was dedicated to a study of sound and vocalisation, which continued the research initiated in the Cruelty season. CITR presented the opportunity for a thorough examination of non-verbal, universal, languages which might bypass all linguistic and cultural differences. The variety of ethnic backgrounds of the actors involved facilitated the search for common understanding. Brook's interest was in the sonic structures, rhythms, associations and evocations involved in vocal usage as opposed to the conceptual and literal meanings. Thus the work was designed to communicate on a wholly physical level as opposed to an intellectual one. Like Grotowski, Brook saw the work very much as a liberation of latent abilities rather than

a learning of technique;

Liberate the voice, not so that one learns how to do, but how to permit - how to set the voice free.⁷⁴

The exploration of language went beyond the almost wholly technical studies of the other groups by seeking to find hidden levels of communication in the sonic structures of certain ancient languages. In a sense, this search paralleled the study of myth which ran alongside it in the group's work together. Myths were employed in order that the essence of their enduring quality be mined and absorbed into a modern communication; that which is universally applicable to the human condition be drawn out and incorporated. This corresponds somewhat to the Jungian notion of archetypes; that within myth reside images and messages which appeal to our deepest racial memory, and which have meaning for the subconscious apprehensions of our own lives.

These two strands of thought came together in 1971 with *Orghast*, created in association with Ted Hughes. The play deals with the myths of creation, and is performed in a new language created for the occasion by Hughes. The language, also called 'Orghast', was designed to work wholly on the levels of sound and association, and not to convey literal or conceptual meaning. The creation and performance of the play revolved around central questions about the nature of language in theatrical communication. Hughes created a vocabulary of approximately two thousand words which were drawn from onomatopaeic and sonic associations. The ancient ceremonial language of Avesta was both incorporated into the new language and used as a model for the group's work; Brook describes the bases of Avesta;

The letters of Avesta carry within them concealed indications of

how the particular sounds are to be produced. When these indications are followed, the deep sense begins to appear. In Avesta there is never any difference at all between sound and content. In listening to Avesta it never happens that one wants to know "what it means."⁷⁵

Brook considers that the language of 'Orghast' was "impossible to separate into sense and sound";⁷⁶ that the words were not codes for meaning but embodied the meaning itself. However, there is some critical disagreement as to the success of *Orghast*, and certainly the experiment was not repeated. Innes has noted that the play's abstraction of the myths - stripping away details to reveal essence - had also stripped the stories of much of their human and emotive quality. The characters were then not sufficiently defined for spectators to recognise them. Innes concludes that this,

...indicates that despite T.S.Eliot's principle that poetry communicates before it is understood, its true message being subliminal, too direct an appeal to immediate experience can be counter-productive in attempting to bypass intellectual understanding altogether.⁷⁷

Innes found, in general, that *Orghast* relied too heavily on anti-rational forms of communication, thereby sacrificing sense to visceral experience. It may be that Brook, too, derived this from the work because his later pieces have tended further and further from affective forms, and he has found another mechanism by which he hopes to create 'immediate' theatre.

The main current of the work at CTR revolves around the cross-cultural dimensions of the group. The work with actors from a number of ethnic backgrounds was initiated, not as an attempt to synthesise

different skills and cultures, but as an exploration of the common ground beyond superficial difference.

Stripped of his ethnic mannerisms a Japanese becomes more Japanese, an African more African, and a point is reached where forms of behaviour and expression are no longer predictable. A new situation emerges which enables people of all origins to create together, and what they create takes on a colour of its own... It becomes possible for people who have no common language or references, no shared jokes or grumbles, to establish real contact by what could be described as telepathic intuition...If this microcosm of people is capable of collective creativity, then the object it produces can be perceived in a similar way by other people. Our aim is to seek something in the theatre which touches people as music does.⁷⁸

It seems, then, that in the multi-cultural, or inter-cultural, group Brook had discovered what, for him, is a way to create 'immediate' theatre through forms which are not based essentially on physicality and affect. However, Brook continues to work from the natural and basic material of the actor's body, using exercises which appeal to the whole human and which delve deeper than intellectual communication. The work may be seen as a search for conditions and techniques which enable deeper realms of the human experience to come to the surface;

The purpose is to find instruments that transmit truths which would otherwise remain out of sight. These truths can appear from sources deep inside ourselves or far outside ourselves. Any preparation we do is only part of the complete preparation. The body must be ready and sensitive, but that isn't all. The voice has to be open and free. The emotions have to be open and free. The intelligence has to be quick. All these have to be prepared. There are crude vibrations that can come through very easily and fine ones that come though only with difficulty. In each case the life we are looking for means breaking open a series of habits. A habit of speaking; maybe a habit made by an entire language. A mixture of people with lots of habits and without even a common language have come together to work.

This is where we begin...⁷⁹

In this way, then, his early concerns have continued to occupy him, finding a new current of activity to fulfil them.

In The Shifting Point, Brook describes a conversation with Grotowski in which their respective approaches to theatre were discussed. Grotowski pointed out that whilst his study was with the actor and the director, Brook's was with the actor, director, and audience. And indeed, this has been a further central strand of the work at CITER;

From the start, we studied what an audience means, and deliberately opened ourselves to receive its influence... we tried, in our travels, to make our work fit the moment of playing. Sometimes this came from pure improvisation, such as arriving in an African village with no fixed plans at all and letting circumstances create a chain reaction out of which a theme would arise as naturally as in a conversation.⁸⁰

Work with an audience is always a two-way process; one can study the effect of the theatre on the group, and the effect of the group on the theatre. Both concepts have interested Brook, and he has found African audiences to be ideal testing-grounds. For Brook, using African villages as performance venues was an extension of the original motivation of CITER - to work "outside contexts";⁸¹ Africa being outside the contexts of the group's language and cultural fields of reference.

Work with audiences who did not understand the language of the performance had, in earlier work, first awakened Brook to the possibility of exploiting those other levels of communication which the audiences were obviously reading. In The Shifting Point, Brook describes moments of the trip to Africa in which the group felt tremendous communication and unity with the tribal groups they encountered. Quite apart from the question of archetypes and bases of expression and communication, Brook defines his search for a universal

theatre in terms which are reminiscent of the Living Theatre's work in Brazil, also started in 1970. Both Beck and Malina, and Brook sought a simplicity of form which could convey profound ideas across language barriers.⁸² Brook writes,

What we're looking for is very simple, and very hard for us to come by. That is, how, in the theatre, to make simple forms. Simple forms which, in their simplicity, are both understandable and yet packed with meaning...

Real simple is simple in the sense that a circle is simple, and yet it's the most charged symbol...⁸³

Brook's work with different cultures is also based on his belief in the intercultural nature of man himself. In a sense, Brook is attempting to find humans as they existed before the events at the Tower of Babel divided them. From that time, language has separated the human race, and different cultures and nationalities have developed, as if in isolation, in different directions. For Brook, intercultural study is not a case of denying difference, but, on the one hand of discovering what preceded it, and on the other, of discovering latent images of ourselves in the cultural personalities of others. Brook believes,

...that we are each only parts of a complete man: that the fully developed human being would contain what today is labelled African, Persian or English.⁸⁴

Although Grotowski's work also drew on Eastern and other cultural techniques to act as a source of work for his actor's self-penetration, his theatre did not go so far as Brook in this respect (although since abandoning performance he has followed this line further). For Brook, the many cultures and countries of the world - as expressed through

their languages, rhythms, gestures etc. - act as keys to the actor, the individual, to finding personal wholeness;

...I have tried to use the world as a can opener. I have tried to let the sounds, shapes and attitudes of different parts of the world play on the actor's organism, in the way that a great role enables him to go beyond his apparent possibilities.⁶⁵

This is not necessarily at odds with his earlier pessimism, although it is possible that his experience and intercultural connections have endowed him with a new humanism.

In 1975, Brook's anthropological interests led to the creation of a play about an African tribe, *The Ik*. This work developed Brook's interest in combining affective forms with intellectual communication. Whilst it conveyed actual, documentary material, the forms of the theatrical communication appear to have informed the work with a sensitivity and encouraged subjective response. For Brook, it is theatre's ability to encourage affective relationships which constitutes much of the social importance of the theatre event. Not only does the spectator enter into an affective relationship with the characters (the performers) but also, in participatory and ritualised theatre, the spectators become unified with those around them in the audience. Brook has written that,

To my mind, the theatre is based on a particular human characteristic, which is the need at times to be in a new and intimate relationship with one's fellow men.⁶⁶

However, it may be said that the social element of his interest in the theatre has not, or at least not always, received the same attention as his aesthetic concerns. If, as Grotowski suggested, Brook deals with the theatrical equation - director/actor/spectator - then perhaps the

intention to appeal to the audience has sometimes overwhelmed more critical analysis of theatre's social connotations. For, it must be said that the bulk of Brook's recent work in the West, despite the nature of his meetings with tribes in Africa, has not ventured far from the traditional theatrical model. This may be because of his love for Elizabethan theatre, and his belief that this is the optimum vehicle. Nevertheless, it remains to be said that his work, of all the affective theatres, has stayed closest to traditional models, and leaned more heavily on aesthetic principles, despite the early encounter with Artaud.

One might say that the life/art division, which was a major preoccupation for Brook and the other affective practitioners, had eventually unseated them. This was literally the case with Schechner's work which, as we have seen, floundered (albeit fruitfully) on the very questions he raised about the relation of art to life. The ambiguity of the life/art division also had influence in another sense. Workers like Beck, Malina, and Chaikin were unable to reconcile their principles in the theatre with the economic realities of operating within a commercial system. It was this which eventually all but defeated them. Grotowski and Brook, having attempted to create an artform intrinsic to the life of its society, each withdrew to one pole or the other - Brook to the aesthetic concerns of the stage, and Grotowski to a study of human life beyond the theatre.

Thus, despite the great advances made within the realm of actor-training, and despite the development of sometimes profound theories

for an affective theatre, this group did not provide a working example of an artform with a comfortable and meaningful relationship to the wider society. The image with which we are left is one of a theatre struggling to achieve its place in the world, but finally subsiding - crushed, dissuaded, or bored by the odds against it.

In the light of this, the work of Eugenio Barba at the Odin Teatret becomes increasingly important. Barba's work is, in many ways, a second-generation affective theatre; his 'apprenticeship' took place at the Theatre of the Thirteen Rows, watching Grotowski's early developments; later, when he formed his own theatre, he would call on Beck, Malina, Chaikin, Schechner, and Brook, as well as Grotowski and Cieslak, to provide lectures and workshops. The work of the Odin Teatret, and Barba's discussions of the actor's craft are significant contributions to the study of affective theatre. Most important of all, however, is the way in which Barba has uncovered a new middle ground between artistic innovation and social relevance. The organisational structure of the Odin and the group's unique understanding of their own function have served to overcome many of the problems which beset the American companies. Thereby, the societal awareness which we have seen underpinning the affective theatre is both safeguarded and attenuated. The next chapter looks at the work and theories of Eugenio Barba, and considers his relevance as a model for a contemporary affective theatre.

NOTES

- 1 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point (London: Methuen Drama, 1988).
- 2 Ibid., p. xiii.
- 3 Brook's early version of *The Tempest* was violent and affective - see Christopher Innes' description in Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 137-138. In 1990, Brook brought a multi-cultural CITER group from Paris to Glasgow and played a version which was almost wholly static and relied on verbal language, some sparse elemental signs, and the racial character of the individual actors to present the material.
- 4 Peter Brook, The Empty Space (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), p. 49.
- 5 Quotations cited in Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 129.
- 6 See note. 4.
- 7 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 49.
- 8 Ibid., p. 51.
- 9 In The Shifting Point, p. 41, Brook remarks that it was during this period of work that he was first told of Grotowski's work in Poland. (For comparisons of their respective work at this time, see Appendix, p. 381).
- 10 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, pp. 145-146.
- 11 A proposed second part of the Cruelty programme, which was to include work on *The Jew of Malta*, Buchner's *Wozzeck*, *Ubu Roi*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was never undertaken. However, three months later further work on *The Screens* was presented as a work-in-progress.
- 12 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre, p. 138.
- 13 Charles Marowitz cited *ibid.*
- 14 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 145.
- 15 Artaud produced *A Dream Play* in 1928. He made production plans for *The Ghost Sonata* but never staged it.
- 16 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 130.
Note that Brook makes similar deductions about audience behaviour in his article about The Living Theatre's *The Connection*, 'From Zero To The Infinite', reproduced in;

Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, Owen Hale (Editors), New Theatre Voices of the Fifties and Sixties 2nd Edition (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1981).

- 17 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 152.
- 18 Ibid., p. 53.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
- 20 Ibid., p. 54.
- 21 Ibid., p. 52.
- 22 Ibid., p. 42.
- 23 Ibid., p. 45.
- 24 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 60.
- 25 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 39.
- 26 Ibid., p. 49.
- 27 Ibid., p. 52.
- 28 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 57.
- 29 Ibid., p. 57.
- 30 Ibid., p. 58.
- 31 See Brook's discussion of 'The Immediate Theatre' in The Empty Space, pp. 110-157.
- 32 Note that the early Royal Shakespeare Company was designed to be 'experimental', in terms of researching the art-form and encouraging young directors. See John Elsom's comments in John Elsom, Post-War British Theatre rev. ed., (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1979), pp. 168-177.
- 33 Peter Weiss, *The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, English version by Geoffrey Skelton, Verse adaptation by Adrian Mitchell. (London: John Calder Ltd., 1965). Originally published in Germany in 1964.
- 34 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 42.
- 35 Ibid., p. 43.
- 36 Ibid., p. 47.
- 37 Ibid., p. 44.

- 38 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, pp. 124-125.
- 39 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 48.
- 40 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 26.
- 41 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 198.
- 42 Ibid., pp. 37-40.
- 43 Ibid., p. 38.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Peter Brook, et al, 'US' (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1968), p. 135
- 46 Michael Kustow describes the process of work, and the source of material used, for the self-immolation imagery, in 'Narrative Two' contained in the playscript of 'US', pp. 135-152.
- 47 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 61.
- 48 Peter Brook, et al, 'US', p. 108.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 108-110
- 50 It may be interesting to note that in a workshop led by the former Laboratory Theatre actor, Zygmunt Molik, in Cardiff in 1990, the image of self-immolation was a dominant theme.
- 51 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre, p. 131.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 131-132.
- 53 Ibid., p. 132.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 61.
- 56 Ibid., p. 62.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid., p. 63.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Peter Brook, et al, 'US', p. 188.
- 61 Ibid., p. 193.

- 62 Ibid., pp. 199-200. The two themes which Sartre refers to are the horror of the war in Vietnam, and the impotence of the Left.
- 63 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 63.
- 64 Ibid., p. 66.
- 65 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre, p. 133.
- 66 Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 126.
- 67 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre, p. 136.
- 68 Ibid., p. 135.
- 69 Ibid., p. 132.
- 70 Cited *ibid.*, p. 133
- 71 Ibid., p. 133.
- 72 Ibid., pp. 133-134.
- 73 Ibid., p. 133.
- 74 Cited in Jacqueline Martin, Voice in Modern Theatre (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 77.
- 75 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 110
- 76 Ibid., p. 109.
- 77 Christopher Innes, Holy Theatre, p. 142.
- 78 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 106.
- 79 Ibid., p. 107
- 80 Ibid., p. 130.
- 81 Ibid., p. 124.
- 82 See Judith Malina, The Diaries: Brazil 1970 Bologna 1977 (Dartington: Theatre Papers, 1987).
- 83 Peter Brook, The Shifting Point, p. 128.
- 84 Ibid., p. 129.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid., p. 147.

CHAPTER SIXEUGENIO BARBA

Barba's place within the network of interconnections linking the affective theatre practitioners is guaranteed by his close relationship with Grotowski. From 1960 until 1963, Barba worked alongside Grotowski as an observer and writer, and as co-director for *Akropolis*. Barba wrote the first book about Grotowski, In Search of the Lost Theatre, and edited Grotowski's own book, Towards a Poor Theatre.¹ When Barba founded his own group, the Odin Teatret, in 1963, he financed their experimentation by organising workshops with visiting practitioners such as Barrault, Marowitz, Chaikin, Beck and Malina, Grotowski and Cieslak.² Thus, his early work was influenced by eminent affective practitioners, and in many ways Odin Teatret continues to bear the mark of these encounters.

Despite being almost the same age as Grotowski, Barba had played the role of 'disciple' during his time in Poland - indeed, he continues to acknowledge Grotowski as his 'master'.³ Nevertheless, it would be wrong to see Barba as merely a recipient of the knowledge which Grotowski (and the other affective practitioners) had developed. As early as 1963, Barba was making important contributions to the theatre - and to Grotowski's work in particular. In 1963 he spent six months in India, studying the classical dance form, Kathakali. He was particularly impressed by the training exercises and by the 'philosophy' of strict preparation and discipline with which the actors approached their art. On his return to Poland, Barba introduced

Grotowski to the training exercises he had witnessed and, according to Schechner, these became the basis for Grotowski's 'plastique' exercises.⁴

Barba's development of affective theatrical communication has also been significant. His discussion of the invisible realms of actor-audience communication, and his development of vocabularies for such discussion, help further understanding of several of the affective formats which have been discussed earlier in the thesis. Likewise, his holistic actor-training and affective performance style have widened the scope, and intensified the effect of a mind/body integrating theatre. Most important, however, are the ways in which Barba has chosen to carry out the work of his company. Unlike the American practitioners whom I have discussed, Barba has effectively shunned commercialism and fashionable popularity. In a theatre traditionally divided into the mainstream and the avant garde, Barba has created a third category - a theatre which remains true to the search for understanding, and the commitment to process. Rather than follow the conventional patterns of producing theatre, Barba asserted his and the group's need to find their own paths, both artistically and in the organization of the company. It is in this respect, above all, that Barba's work has proved influential. In his consistent, independent, work over two and a half decades, Barba has provided practical models for affective theatre within the context of commercial society. By avoiding conventional theatre systems and processes, Barba has discovered ways of existing as a theatre-maker which do not compromise ideological values. In this way, he has succeeded where the American

companies did not, and has persevered in a sphere which both Grotowski and Brook abandoned.

In 1963, the Odin's initial concern was with actor-training which Barba based on the Kathakali example, and on the plastique exercises which Grotowski had devised. From the outset, the Odin's emphasis was very strongly on process, as opposed to product. Their work throughout the 1960s involved private, internal studies which only occasionally resulted in performance. In the early 1960s actor-training of the kind Barba and Grotowski were pioneering was little known, and it was considered unusual for a theatre group to have a low public profile and to spend its time on private activities rather than on the creation of performances. Of this period, Barba has written,

According to what one normally expects from a theater, we heard repeated year after year that our theater was of no use, that we were people obsessed by private needs, living "outside history."⁵

It was important for Barba that the group should avoid the conventional theatre system and forge its own, independent ways of working. Rather than use performance commercially, the group financed their work by organizing workshops, and publishing books and magazines. Since it proved difficult to maintain the work in Norway, the group accepted an invitation in 1966 to move to Holstebro in Denmark where they have been based ever since. In 1969, the group's third production, *Fera!* brought them such critical success that Barba, fearing that their independence was threatened, disbanded the company. On reforming, Barba insisted that the group return to their roots with a renewed commitment to training and experimentation. They did not produce another performance until 1972.

Barba's theatre research has concentrated on those unseen, intangible aspects of performance which are, nevertheless, highly significant. He has examined the nature of 'presence' - that which makes some actors appear charismatic and seductive in terms of holding the spectator's concentration;

There are certain performers who attract the spectator with an elementary energy which 'seduces' without mediation. This occurs before the spectator has either deciphered individual actions or understood their meanings.⁶

Clearly the examination of presence amounts to research into one of the areas of subliminal communication open to the actor. The seductive power of the actor's presence creates a relationship with the audience based on purely organic, and usually unconscious, signs. The actor who demonstrates such presence has what Barba calls a "body-in-life", or "dilated body".⁷ In his analysis, presence is the result of our ordinary energies being activated in new ways;

...the particles which make up daily behaviour have been excited and produce more energy, they have undergone an increment of motion, they move further apart, attract and oppose each other with more force, in a restricted or expanded space.⁸

That which occurs normally in everyday life is invigorated by the conditions of performance, and becomes "visible". For Barba, the "dilated body" is "above all a glowing body".⁹ A strong example of an actor demonstrating such physical presence may be found in the work of Ryszard Cieslak during the performance years of Grotowski's Laboratory. Cieslak has been described as having "some kind of psychic luminosity" in the character of the Constant Prince.¹⁰ That such organic energies transmit *meaning* to the spectator is attested to by critics and observers who found themselves deeply moved by witnessing Cieslak's experiences. Ferdinando Taviano claims that "Countless lives, in

theatre and outside it, have changed direction after encountering that production".¹¹

Clearly, however, this communication occurs on a deep and incomprehensible level of the psyche. Barba asserts that presence alone does not amount to theatrical communication;

...neither seduction nor comprehension can last for very long without one another: the seduction would be brief, the comprehension would lack interest.¹²

Here then, is a very basic example of Barba's understanding of the necessary interplay in theatrical communication between mental and physical processes. The spectator must be seduced through an organic relationship with the performer, and communicated with on a level which connects with the mind. Indeed, for Barba, physical and intellectual communications necessarily involve one another, and it is this understanding which provides a basis for his work.

...a way of moving in space is a manifestation of a way of thinking: it is the motion of thought stripped naked. Analogously, a thought is also a motion, an action - that is, something which mutates, starting at one place in order to arrive at another, following routes which abruptly change direction. The performer can start from the physical or from the mental, it doesn't matter which, provided that in the transition from one to the other, a unity is reconstructed.¹³

This thinking provides the rationale for Barba's way of working, (which is also Grotowski's); exercises are never purely gymnastic but incorporate both physical and mental creativity and discipline. Physical skill alone is not considered by Barba to be useful to the actor; rather it must "reach down into the performer's being, made up of her mental processes, her psychic sphere, her nervous system".¹⁴

Indeed, it is on the "bridge which joins the physical and mental banks of the river of creative process" that the actor must work.¹⁵ This guarantees the imagery an organically whole basis, and facilitates the flow of impulse from idea to physical realisation; from physical impetus to creative association.

Barba's work, both in the creation of imagery and improvisation, and in the compilation of production scenarios relies heavily on the association of ideas within both the creators and the spectators. Barba has discussed his early use of devices such as peripeteia to dilate the narrative of a performance;

During the first few years of my work in the theatre, I interfered with the text, which was the point of departure for the production, by creating unexpected changes of direction, breaking the text's linear development and composing the general action through the montage and interweaving of two or more simultaneous actions. The text in these cases was like a wind blowing in one direction. The production sails against the wind, in the opposite direction.¹⁶

This way of working may be traced in Barba's documentation of the group's first production, in 1965, *Ornitofilene*. *Contradictions and ethical dilemmas overwhelmed the storyline, necessitating a certain abandonment of comprehension and judgement on the part of the spectator, and calling into play a new way of perceiving the events. This use of negation and contradiction to confuse the moral and perceptual position of the spectator was similar to Weiss's simpler devices in the Marat/Sade, and to Grotowski's use of taboo and blasphemy.*

Whilst peripeteia and negation are important elements in the

construction of scenario for Barba, these terms are also employed by him to describe the creative process. Just as a scene may project a meaning opposite to that suggested by the action within it (a device used frequently by Grotowski), so too, meaning may be derived from the actor's improvisatory work which is contrary to that which was originally intended. In this instance, the *meaning* of the action lies, not in its content, but in the energy which it creates. In this way, "thought-in-life", the mental equivalent of the dilated body, informs the meaning of the work; and meaning is "not rectilinear, not univocal"; neither following conscious logic, nor presenting a single truth.

Whilst association of ideas and the richness of meaning in an image occurs in all good theatre, Barba has set himself the task of understanding the mechanisms by which these accidental riches may be invoked. Through understanding the life of creative thought (on the part of both the actor and the spectator), it becomes possible to speak directly to levels of the psyche which are bypassed in straightforward, informative narratives. Whereas the mainstream theatre relies on the logic of the everyday, Barba is concerned with the secret logic that creates dream and imagery, and which finds and forges personal associations. Whilst much of the avant garde - including Brook and Grotowski - had sought to uncover specific universal archetypes which were assumed to convey emotional associations to everyone, Barba has concentrated on understanding the process of personal association, private thought.

The power of theatre depends on one's ability to safeguard the independent life of other logics beneath a recognisable mantle.

Logic - that is, a series of motivated and consequent transitions - can exist even if it is secret, incommunicable, even when its rules cannot extend beyond a single individual's horizon.¹⁷

Min Fars Hus (My Father's House), was produced in 1972 after the group had spent two years concentrating solely on personal study. This was the first work to be produced, not from a text, but from a scenario written by Barba himself. The material consisted of stories and images from the life and works of Dostoevsky filtered through the subjective responses of the group. Taviani has written of *Min Fars Hus*, that it,

is Odin's most personal performance, bordering on the limits of privacy. But it is also a performance that acquires a living, often burning significance for audiences of different backgrounds and ages.¹⁸

Despite the early criticism of their insular working style and concerns, it had become clear to Barba and the actors that their social significance was fed, rather than diminished, by the concentration on interior work. In Europe, as in America, there had arisen interest in the theatre group as a model for societal life. This aspect of experimental theatre had certainly played a part in the popularity of groups like the Living Theatre and the Performance Group. For the Odin, the workings of the group had been highlighted to such an extent that their personal history and group culture - generally invisible in a theatre's performances - pervaded their public work. In this way, the inner life of the Odin, made visible in performance, could act as a metaphor for the social and personal life of the audience.

In 1974, the company moved temporarily to Italy to embark upon a new dimension of work. In the first ten years of its life, the Odin had

produced only four performance pieces, all of which played to small, intimate audiences. Between 1974 and 1979, they produced five new shows which they kept in repertoire, and played extensively - generally to non-theatre-going audiences, and in a variety of venues, including the streets. This work facilitated an intensive study of the actor-audience relationship; Barba was intent on discovering ways of working which could encourage a genuine and meaningful encounter.

It was during the stay in Italy that the concept of theatre as 'barter' first arose. Barba has compared the theatre event to the exchange of objects which tribes use to formalise their meetings with other tribes. As Taviani points out, these tribal exchanges often involve items of no intrinsic value; their worth lies in the contact which they make possible. Taviani expands upon this,

A man cannot meet another man if not *through something*; from this comes the paradox of the utility of apparently useless things. The theatre as barter is connected with the utility of waste, of *potlatch*, of the dissipation of energies not used to produce things, but to produce relations.¹⁹

For Barba, despite the Odin's intense concentration on theatrical skill, the real value of theatrical communication lies, not in the theatre product, but in the relationships which it inspires. Theatre, then, for Odin, is seen directly in terms of process as opposed to product. Whilst groups such as Chaikin's and Schechner's had concentrated on training as a commitment to process, Barba has extended the notion into the use of the theatre event itself. Barba's approach represents a refusal to accept the widespread use of theatre as a

commercial entity; it emphasises the theatre of experience, and denies audience passivity.

The 'barter' amounts to a sharing of cultures by the theatre group and the community they encounter. In a typical 'barter' meeting, the Odin would perform their theatre pieces and dances, not in exchange for money, but in exchange for a dance, song, or story from the audience. Whilst many of the groups in this study dreamt of a theatre beyond words which could communicate universally, Barba seems to have found an answer - not in technique, but in the use of the theatre event itself. As Taviani explains it, Odin,

does not look for a "code" that permits communication, but for a situation that permits contact between the actors and audiences despite their differences and which fascinates precisely because of the differences which separate them.²⁰

In 1976, the Odin made a trip to Caracas in Venezuela to present the performance piece, *Come! And the day will be ours*. After a month of work in the city they travelled into Amazonia for an encounter with the Yanomani tribe of Amerindians. Barba had long demonstrated an interest in themes of travel and of acculturation; in 1967, the Odin had made a performance piece, based on the life of Kaspar Hauser, which dealt with the destruction of the individual through learning, and which commented on their own recent experience of having moved to a foreign culture.²¹ *Come! And the day will be ours*, picked up on those threads once again, in a piece based on their travelling in Italy and elsewhere, and which Taviani describes as focusing on,

the destruction of cultures, the elimination of that which is

different and the final blow to those already destroyed by the use of their culture as folklore.²²

In Amazonia, the group performed their piece as a barter with the Indians who replied with dances and with their Shaman's performance of the myth of the tortoise and the jaguar. This must surely have been the most poignant and meaningful presentation of *Come! And the day will be ours*, since the Yanomani are themselves a tribe for whom the original way of life is fast slipping away.

In 1980, these themes were again the subject of performance. *Brecht's Ashes* deals with emigration, as Barba had read it in his study of Brecht's life. Barba writes,

...he was especially attracted by that particular type of emigration which an intellectual, an artist, came to experience - a man in disaccord with his times and impotent to alter the course of events, but faithful to his vocation as witness even when his words seemed shouted in the desert or committed to pages which no one would read.²³

Barba's affective theatre is an unlikely platform for an exploration of Brecht, yet as with Brook's early experiments, there turns out to be fruitful areas of contact between the two genres. Whilst modern productions of Brechtian works often portray the alienatory devices as the outcome of aesthetic style or objective good sense, Barba's play contextualises the estrangement. Taviani writes,

In *Brecht's Ashes* Barba - as Brecht has often done in his poetry - shows how the distance from reason to emotion is the result of bitter necessity, is a splitting, a laceration, which brings understanding, but which is produced by the madness of the times.²⁴

In this production, Barba directly considered the theme of mind and

body which had informed his practical work throughout. And as with earlier works, the content of the piece was discussed as thoroughly in the form as in the text. Taviani explains,

Through simple and theatrically surprising means, Barba succeeds in making the audience experience the sorrowful state in which reason, in order to be able to understand and judge, must separate itself from emotion. Thus, the production does not offer a discourse on Brecht, but a direct experience.²⁵

According to descriptions given by Barba, and James Roose-Evans, *Brecht's Ashes* is performed in a style which incorporates simultaneous action throughout a large performance space. Each of the actors is constantly involved in their own activity, and for the spectator actions and images merge in and out of focus, and are caught up in the meaning of the whole as it progresses. Roose-Evans gives a description of one section of the play which demonstrates how suggestive imagery is involved, and how the individual actions contribute to the overall effect; Mother Courage's daughter,

...is dragged down from the booth by a young soldier who thrusts her to the ground, pulling her skirt over her head. She lies with the material clenched between her teeth, so as not to scream. The actor playing the soldier brings a bowl of water and places it between her thighs, close up to her crutch. He throws himself down and begins sucking at the water noisily. The mother sits by her booth, watching. Later, at the moment of the girl's execution, while another soldier reads a girlie magazine, the Cook, who has been watching with absorption, drops a plate which smashes to pieces. The Cook murmurs a soft apology and hands the cooked omelette to the executioner who scoops it into his mouth with the same loud sucking noises as those of the recent sexual assault.²⁶

In a sense, the scene acts as a Gestalt; the individual actions finding meaning through their position in the whole; the associative resonance of each connecting and interconnecting in unsettling and affective ways. Barba's theatre, drawn from the personal associations and

imaginings of his actors, is designed to speak to the audience at a level of understanding which is not cerebral but which exists on a level akin to dream. The spectator correlates the imagery of such scenes, not through cerebral analysis, but through an immediate and visceral comprehension. Roose-Evans considers that,

Such a form of theatre speaks directly to the fundamental experience of each person present, to what Jung described as the collective unconscious. It is a theatre of symbols.²⁷

I would suggest, however, that Barba speaks less to the 'collective' unconscious, as to the personal unconscious. The assumption is not so much that we share common archetypes, as that common experiences are similar enough from person to person that the associations of the actors will have resonance with those of the audience.

Barba's use of association and simultaneous action are connected issues. For Barba, simultaneity represents a specific model of communication, which is, intrinsically, an affective one. He has suggested that the linear developments of plot and meaning - *concatenation* - may be related to left brain thinking; *simultaneity* to right brain thinking.²⁸ In the following quotation he describes the effect of the latter device;

...meanings do not derive from a complex concatenation of actions but from the interweaving of many dramatic actions, each one endowed with its own simple meaning, and from the assembling of these actions by means of a single unity of time. Thus the meaning of a fragment of a performance is not only determined by what precedes and follows it, but also by a multiplicity of facets whose three-dimensional presence, so to speak, makes it live in the present tense of a life of its own.

In many cases, this means that for a spectator, the more difficult it becomes for him to interpret or to judge immediately the meaning of what is happening in front of his eyes and in his head, the stronger is his sensation of living through an experience. Or, said in a way which is more obscure but perhaps closer to the

reality: the stronger is the experience of an experience.²⁹

In this way, Barba's use of multiple imagery is seen to relate directly to the issues of both subliminal communication and experiential theatre. Multiple imagery cannot be absorbed and intellectually analysed in the way that concatenated performance can; it requires a more instantaneous appraisal. The spectator is involved experientially. Since defensive mechanisms are less easily constructed in the midst of immediate experience this is an important element of affective theatre. In Barba's theatre, simultaneity and concatenation are intermingled, in order to produce a theatre-form which works through both rational logic, and the personal, subconscious logic of association.

As Barba's work in the theatre progressed, he came to trust more and more in the power of personal associations and creative leaps of thought. In the later studies, he has created processes of work whereby the initial departure point may be left behind altogether, and the work allowed to follow the contradictions and associations that arise. This is contrary to the conventional way of making theatre which develops upon an established theme or text, and remains faithful to the initial idea throughout the creative period. In Barba's group, the performance is allowed to grow organically, to leave its beginnings behind, and to become a performance or study which the group themselves may not have been expecting.

In 'The Dilated Body',³⁰ Barba describes the process of work which eventually resulted in the 1985 performance piece, *The Gospel According to Oxyrhincus*. Each of the six actors was asked to choose a character

from a story for themselves, and to create a scenario around it. The seventh scenario was Barba's and drew upon a story by Borges on which the group had previously been working. Borge's story concerns a band of outlaws; the position of the leader of the band is gradually usurped by a young man who goes so far as to seduce the leader's lover. Suddenly, the young man realises he is about to be killed; his presence had been tolerated only because his death had been planned from the outset. Barba tells us that the story had set in motion two lines of association for him; stories of Brazilian outlaws by other writers, and,

The outline of the story (the older leader who has a young man killed, the last supper, the shadow of incest) had made my imagination leap to other contexts: the Keeper of the Law who kills those who revolt; Creon, who had his son killed, and Antigone, the bride he had promised to his son; Judas, who died along with his Messiah; the Prodigal Son; God the Father, who caused his Son's death.²¹

Projecting the image of God and Christ onto the material of the story led to a further association, with gnosticism; hence the connection with Oxyrhincus (site of the discovery of three gnostic manuscripts). In turn, this material led to the unravelling of connections which involved the actors' chosen characters; Sabbatai Zevi, Antigone, Joan of Arc, a Brazilian outlaw, the Grand Inquisitor of Seville, a Hassidic Jew.

Despite the seemingly random nature of these starting points, there were clearly links between the actors' choices and Barba's story. This is perhaps not surprising considering the nature of the group's work together and their subsequent shared field of reference. From the material gathered, Barba identified numerous channels of association,

and links between the chosen characters and the themes within the story;

These tumultuously co-existing associations and images could take on a meaning and could attain a unity because there was another logic contemporaneously in motion which had to do with the work of the whole group and which imposed a certain order.³²

Further, the central structure of the Borges' story was adhered to; each actor being required to direct their version of a scenario derived from it. From these stories, scenarios and characters, Barba created a montage study. And although this work was not originally intended for performance, it was eventually formulated into the production which became *The Gospel According to Oxryhincus*.

Barba has highlighted the personal associations and chance coincidences of meaning that occur naturally in creative work, and made them the basis of his own process. Divergent ideas which were, in fact, intrinsically linked (though in unapparent ways) through the deep texture of the group, combine in Barba's composition to create a performance piece which is rich in the associations of all seven creators; Barba writes,

There are seven gates, but there is only one Thebes. The audience will enter Thebes through one of the gates: a production about the manifestations of faith in our time and about the Revolt which is buried alive. But the other six gates into Thebes remain open.

Who can tell the dancer from the dance?³³

In Barba's theatre, theme and association overlap; meaning is to be found as much in the process, the energy, and the context of the piece, as in the piece itself. This might be seen as an optimum combination of Grotowski's use of associative imagery and the American experiments with the social nature of the ensemble.

The independence of Odin Teatret has been crucial to its history; it is the refusal to accept existing forms and definitions which has permitted Barba to search for other, more acceptable, means. We have already noted that the private and interior work came to be recognised as having public significance, and so too the assertion of their own principles and definitions has enabled them to find forms which are relevant to the audiences they encounter. It may be that the personal history and private concerns of Odin act as metaphors and models for the modern world as a whole. Certainly, Taviani sees the group's identity as 'emigrants' - geographically and within the theatre-world - in this way,

The word "emigrant" makes one think of the economic and political constraint of a voyage and of separation, something, in short, which resembles a private earthquake, an interior laceration, an intimate violence. It makes one think of our own near society, with its ravaging landslides of unemployment and its emigration of the young, not only from places, but from the values they were born and grew up with.³⁴

Barba's writing is full of references to the state of being an 'emigrant' or 'outsider'; he speaks of his personal experience as a foreigner in a way which turns it into a metaphor for the act of making theatre. For Barba, the creation of new theatre takes place outside of established cultural contexts. He has used the image of the 'floating island' to illustrate the uncertain territory which theatres such as his own must inhabit; stepping outside of historical contexts in order to make new discoveries. In his discussions of theatre in these terms, and in his attraction to theatre "which does not recognise the boundaries assigned to our craft by the surrounding culture",³⁵ Barba has given credence to theatres which avoid the commercial mainstream

and avant garde. He calls these maverick theatres the 'Third Theatre', and his support of the work of these diverse, isolated, but dedicated and independent, companies has brought their work into the public eye. 'Third theatre' encounters have been arranged by Barba throughout the world; the term - and the phenomenon - is now widely known.

The term 'third theatre' does not define a theatrical movement, as such; rather the state of marginalisation. Third theatres may or may not use affective performance styles, nevertheless, Barba's work in this area has great impact on the affective theatres for several reasons. Due to the emphasis on the actor, affective theatres tend to rely on intensive actor-training, and for this reason their work is focused on process. This confounds any attempt to be economically viable. Further, the experimental and ideological nature of the work insists that commercial standards be rejected for aesthetic, and even political ones. As the case-histories of the American companies show, the struggle to maintain experimental work within a commercial system is often a fatal one. The Odin have found a new way of working in the theatre - not only in terms of technique and style - but in the whole definition and lifestyle of their work, and in the way in which they present their work to an audience. More than any of the other groups in this study, the Odin have created an alternative to the commercial theatre system which strangles so much innovative work, and which had dogged the Living Theatre and the Open Theatre. Whilst Brook and Grotowski have stayed within the system, merely finding privileged places for themselves within it, Barba has solidly repudiated the notion that theatre is about creating wares. He writes,

In order to understand the social value of theater it is necessary to look not only at wares, the performances produced, but also at the relationships established by producing performances.³⁶

He has unearthed active models for a theatre based on the creation of relationships, and as Horacio Czertok, an Argentinian critic, has written,

We can say that Jerzy Grotowski has opened a new dimension for the actor's work. Eugenio Barba's Odin Teatret has opened a new dimension in theatre which includes the former and projects it into society.³⁷

Another important element of Odin Teatret's 'practical' work is their relationship to pedagogy, to passing their knowledge to younger performers. After an unsuccessful period of attempting to absorb new students into the established group, an understanding was reached.

Taviani comments on this:

...a few of the actors decide to "adopt" some of these young people, taking the economic and professional responsibility for their presence within the group and working separately with them...In this way, a situation of exchange between the new adoptees and the "old" actor who has adopted them is achieved.³⁸

The importance of this point will become clear when we discuss the recent history of the other affective theatres in the concluding chapter.

In 1979, Barba founded the International School of Theatre Anthropology, thereby demonstrating a consistency of interest with his colleagues, Grotowski, Brook, and Schechner. After twelve years of ISTA conferences and research, Barba and a colleague, Nicola Savarese, produced a 'Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology', The Secret Art of the Performer, which includes chapters by both Schechner and Grotowski.³⁹

In the preface, Barba gives the following definition of 'theatre anthropology':

Theatre Anthropology is the study of the behaviour of the human being when it uses its physical and mental presence in an organised performance situation and according to principles which are different from those used in daily life. This extra-daily use of the body is what is called technique.⁴⁰

Within this description, we can see that mental and physical faculties, and their interaction, continue to absorb the work of Barba and his colleagues. Indeed, it is possible to identify several lines of thought and interest connecting theatre anthropology with the affective work that predated it. Like Barba and Grotowski's actor-training, the work with ISTA is a study of performance techniques and energetic, psycho-physical processes as they occur in performance situations. Barba tells us that the study of performance traditions from diverse cultures is "a question of understanding not technique but the secrets of technique, which one must possess before one can go beyond technique".⁴¹ Inherent in this, also, is the yearning towards a state championed by Grotowski, in which one may 'learn to learn'.⁴²

Grotowski has suggested that Barba's investigations with ISTA parallel his own work on *Sources* and, it might be inferred, his more recent project, *Ritual Arts*.⁴³

There exists a profound relationship between what Barba is doing in ISTA and what I am doing in the Theatre of Sources: we are both concerned with transcultural phenomena. Culture, any specific culture, determines the objective bio-sociological base because every culture is linked to daily body techniques. It is therefore important to observe what remains constant when these cultures vary, what transcultural elements are discernible.⁴⁴

These comments are reminiscent of Brook's explorations with CITR in their emphasis upon intercultural study, and the value of discerning

that which exists beyond difference. Schechner's current research is also within this field, with a particular emphasis upon ritual which, as we know, was a factor in his earlier theatre work.

Of these four practitioners, it might be noted that Barba alone continues to develop the affective work which he began in the 1960s. Grotowski no longer uses performance in his work; Schechner's theatre work, when it occurs, is rarely in the public eye; and Brook creates theatre in which affective forms are no longer central. Barba, however, continues to apply the findings of his research to his work with Odin Teatret. Barba's commitment to making theatre on his own terms continues and, significantly, his work plays to communities, as opposed to the "coterie" audiences for whom Brook directs.⁴⁵

The Odin's ability to survive on their own terms, and to find ways in which to share their skills, and promote accessibility is an important model for experimental theatres of all kinds. As Czertok said, above, Barba's work has projected affective theatre into society; beyond the realm of academia and theatrical elites. The work of Odin in many ways fulfils the wishes of Brook, Chaikin and the Becks: a meaningful, affective and immediate theatre.

NOTES

- 1 Eugenio Barba, Alla Ricerca del Teatro Perduta - una proposta dell' avanguardia Polacca (Padova, Italy: Marsilio Editori, 1965)

Jerzy Grotowski, Towards A Poor Theatre (London: Methuen and Co., 1969). First published by Odin Teatrets Forlag, Denmark, 1968.
- 2 See Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), p. 248.

Note that Barrault had worked with Artaud and that Marowitz and Brook worked together on the *Theatre of Cruelty Season*. Note also, that these workshops were an important source of learning material for the isolated Odin Teatret.
- 3 Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands, pp. 43-44.
- 4 See Richard Schechner, Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983), p. 147

Note that Barba's subsequent articles on Kathakali were responsible for drawing attention to the art-form in the West. See Eugenio Barba, 'The Kathakali Theatre', The Drama Review, Summer 1967, vol. 11, no. 4, T36.
- 5 Eugenio Barba, Theatre Presence Theatre Culture (Dartington: Theatre Papers, 1979), p. 35.
- 6 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 54.
- 7 See 'The Dilated Body', *ibid.*, pp. 54-63.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Jozef Kelera, cited in Zbigniew Osinski, Grotowski and His Laboratory (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), p. 85.
- 11 Ferdinando Taviani, 'In Memory of Ryszard Cieslak', New Theatre Quarterly, August 1992, vol. VIII, no. 31, p. 259.
- 12 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, p. 54.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- 15 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, p. 55.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

- 17 Ibid., p. 60.
- 18 Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands, p. 252.
- 19 Ibid., p. 267.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 For details of *Kaspariana*, see Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands, pp. 31-34. The performance was the first that Odin Teatret created after their move to Denmark. Taviani writes,

"The theme is the transmission of culture and the subsequent dialectic between violence and education, liberation and colonization. This problem exists within the group itself since there is a new generation of actors'. Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands, p. 248.
- 22 Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands, p. 163.
- 23 Ibid., p. 271.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 James Roose-Evans, Experimental Theatre From Stanislavsky To Brecht 4th ed., (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 165.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology, p. 70.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 See 'The Dilated Body', *ibid.*, pp. 54-63.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands, pp. 270-271.
- 35 Eugenio Barba, 'The Third Theatre: a Legacy from Us to Ourselves', New Theatre Quarterly, February 1992, vol. VIII, no. 29, p. 8.
- 36 Eugenio Barba, Theatre Presence Theatre Culture, p. 27.
- 37 Cited in Eugenio Barba, Beyond The Floating Islands, p. 270.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 269.

- 39 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology. The book includes the chapters 'Restoration of Behaviour' by Richard Schechner, and 'Pragmatic Laws' by Jerzy Grotowski.
- 40 Ibid., p. 5.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Grotowski's piece was written in 1980; the *Ritual Arts* programme began in 1985.
- 44 Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology, p. 237.
- 45 Christopher Bigsby writes, "His performances in Paris and London tend to be viewed by a coterie audience", C. W. E. Bigsby, A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama. Volume Three: Beyond Broadway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 145.

CHAPTER SEVENCONCLUSION: THE DEATH OF AFFECT

It's like what happened to the counterculture of the '60's in the U.S.A. It doesn't exist anymore: it folded up; it's not that there weren't any elements of sincerity or of great value in it, but there wasn't enough competence, enough precision, enough consciousness. It's like the old film by Bergman, whose title in Polish was "She Danced For Just One Summer." That's right, it was the 60's: they danced for just one summer, and then they gave it all up without wondering whether it had any value or not. Great fireworks, dancing, ecstasy, and afterwards, nothing was left.¹

As Grotowski's comment suggests, the American counterculture which had possessed so vital and innovative an artistic avant garde throughout the sixties and early seventies was, by 1980, almost non-existent. Even in 1970, on return to America from Europe, the Living Theatre had found disillusionment, and a marked shift amongst young radicals from pacifism to violence.² By the time that decade was out, the violence too would have been absorbed and converted into complacency. As political activism and optimism faded, so too did the belief that theatre could affect lives. The Open Theatre closed in 1973. The Living Theatre spent the seventies creating street theatre and directly political acts with impoverished and industrial communities, having turned their back on the student and middle class audiences for whom they had previously played. Schechner's Performance Group closed in 1980, but their major, affective, works had already taken place by 1970. Across the wider field of experimental theatre and the avant garde, such a wind-down was also in evidence.

These developments were not limited to America. Patrice Pavis's

sketch of France between 1968 and 1988 reflects the European position;

After maximal openness in 1968, there followed the 'leaden years' (*annes de plomb*) of artistic and ideological isolation, elimination of dialectic thought and historicized dramaturgy, the last sparks of theoretical fireworks, the end of a radical way of thinking about culture which was still that of Freud and Artaud. From 1973 to 1981, the retreat of ideology and historicity became even more pronounced...³

Grotowski's move away from theatre in 1970, and then his complete abandonment of it in 1980 was seen by many to be a rejection of assumptions which had characterised the earlier performance work; assumptions such as the actor as a model for integrated human life, theatre as a forum for metaphysical issues, the theatre group as a realm for philosophical study. In 1980, it appeared to many that Grotowski had simply given up - that his journey, despite the great riches discovered, had brought him finally to an impasse.⁴

Brook, too, to some extent, had turned his back on public work with the creation, in 1970, of CITER. Although the work he carried out there continued to demonstrate his tireless search for an 'immediate theatre', as Bigsby has commented, there was a significant change of emphasis;

The experiments continue but where once they could appear to reflect a genuine sense of cultural crisis, a revolt against authority in all guises, a society in search of a language and an iconography commensurate with a sense of spiritual need, by the late 1970s this resonance was largely missing and the experiments of the previous decade threatened to become simple mannerism.⁵

For both Schechner and the theatre commentator, Herbert Blau, the significant period of affective, experimental work had closed with the

ending of the Vietnam War. Schechner tells us that,

experiments in performance after the end of the Vietnam War were mostly formal because artists did not believe that their art could effect social change.⁶

Accelerating throughout the latter part of the 1970s and into the eighties, then, was a definite decline in significant and meaningful experimentation, and a retreat from the conventions and ideologies that had characterised affective theatre. As we have seen, the leading practitioners of the affective, group-based companies had all demonstrated a change of direction. Within the wider field of the avant garde there was also a tendency toward other forms, and the ideologies of the group, mind/body integration, and affect seemed to lose momentum. For many critics and practitioners this represented, not a new phase of experimentation, but a "decline and fall"; a loss of moral and aesthetic ground. Schechner, writing in 1982, said "...the heart of the movement is stopped".⁷

It is clear that experimental theatre no longer maintains the position of popularity and significance within the culture which it did in the 1960s in Europe and America. The sense of vitality and optimism coupled with strong leadership from eminent practitioners which coloured theatre work at all levels during the brief tenure of the sixties is now over. Audiences no longer seek social models and vicarious communities in the theatre.

The demise of the affective theatre is both interesting and puzzling. It is clear that the theatres in question were highly successful: they created and renewed artistic criteria and conventions;

they reached wide and appreciative audiences; they provided a theatre which had immediacy and impact for society, and they believed that that theatre could play an important part in the life of its audiences. In the hands of Julian Beck and Judith Malina, the theatre entered into the realm of public debate on political and societal issues; it acted as both a forum for discussion and a model for change. In the hands of Grotowski, the theatre momentarily regained its definition as a 'holy' art, with spiritual and transcendent potentials. Yet the result was not a lasting re-invigoration of theatre. By 1980, as we have seen, affective theatre work was no longer a dominant strand in performance ideologies. Artaudian features had been adopted, for a time, as a trend, and then discarded. Like so many things in the consumer society, affective theatre was consumed, absorbed, and then deemed 'out of fashion'. Why should the affective theatre have reigned for so short a time? The practitioners were, and indeed are, highly respected within their field; singularly and as a group they made a strong case for defining the theatre as, essentially, a forum for affective experience. Yet subsequent generations of theatre-makers have not inherited their principles, their theories, or their techniques.

In The End of Humanism,⁹ Schechner provides us with several good reasons for the failure of his generation to continue its momentum into the work that has followed it. He cites the lack of dramatic texts, and a reluctance to develop pedagogic methods through which to pass on performance knowledge as two reasons why the 1960s theatre has left so few traces. Financial constraints clearly played their part in undermining Chaikin and the Living Theatre, and in informing Brook's

decision to work in his current capacity. Indeed, the principles of the American companies, in particular, made it difficult for them to exist comfortably in an artistic world which was so clearly a part of the larger commercial and capitalist system. As Schechner has pointed out, the ambiance of the times also altered; where once audiences were open to alternatives and to the desire for change, by 1980 they had arrived at a new cynicism which found the earlier humanist values and optimism laughable, and which was best served by a cynical and nihilistic theatre.

The work which has been discussed in this thesis may be seen as one of the major casualties in the move from sixties optimism and expansion to the work of today. The role of the actor, and its concurrent emphasis on physicality, mind/body integration, and self-expression, has now been overtaken by a new emphasis on the director. The humanist ideologies and political radicalism which led so frequently to considerations of human experience and to the optimistic positing of alternative models of existence has now been replaced by a nihilism and cynicism which is manifest in both content and technique. In her response to Schechner's comments in the 'Decline and Fall' article, Bonnie Marranca identifies this development in the contrast between Joseph Chaikin's *Tourists and Refugees* and the work of Mabou Mines;

Chaikin's delicate sentiment seems out of fashion in today's theatre which values self-consciousness, ironic art, the raw, the overtly personal, an overflow of contradictory imagery, technological expertise - his work seems too simple, undercooked. If Chaikin is trying to discover what each moment *feels* like, others are more interested in what each moment *looks* like.

...Conversely, Mabou Mines exemplifies the contemporary movement of theatre from myth to metaphor, from the universal to the cliché, emblem to image, acting to performing. The transition is from theatre about life to theatre about theatre. I think we've lost something important - moral seriousness - and gained something questionable - cynicism - in the shift.⁹

The affective laboratory theatre of the 1960s and early 1970s has been superseded by two dominant strands of experimental performance. Firstly, there is what Schechner calls "new performance theatre"; work such as that made by Mabou Mines, or the Wooster Group (which evolved out of Schechner's Performance Group).¹⁰ Such work leans toward the art-based visual aesthetics of 'performance art', and tends to highlight the role of the individual director and the personal perspective. It is this current of avant garde theatre about which both Schechner and Marranca write in their discussions of experimental theatre's development since the 1960s and 1970s.

A second major development in avant garde performance is 'anthropological theatre' which Barba and Schechner are both actively involved in, and which, as a category, may also be taken to include the intercultural work of both Grotowski and Brook. That which these two quite different fields share is a sense of the personal and interior. In theatre anthropology, there is a certain insularity marking the research of Grotowski, Brook, etc. Whilst the research may well be fruitful, there is no longer a direct line to the majority of theatre workers and performers, except in the case of Barba and the Odin. Much anthropological research is completely sequestered from the outside world, and feeds interests which, for now, are wholly private.¹¹

Although Brook continues to stage performances, there is little sense of a social significance and the work is performed, as Bigsby has pointed out, for "coterie" audiences.¹² Productions such as *The Mahabharata* and his 1990 version of *The Tempest* demonstrate few of the affective techniques developed in the earlier work. Whilst Grotowski's work continues to be an exploration into humanity, with a particular concern for the contemporary western human, there is at present little public or social profile for, or outcome to, his research. Brook has defended the insularity of Grotowski's work, and by implication his own, in an article, *Grotowski, Art as Vehicle*.¹³ He writes,

For the theatre world is extremely intuitive, and its great quality is that it is quite capable of catching what is in the air. The great influences, when they are strong, penetrate quickly and go a long way. That's why I can say that the work at Pontedera concerns and touches the theatre world.¹⁴

Indeed, Brook's C.I.T.R. is formally associated with Grotowski's Workcenter, in order that the work which is essentially private may 'nourish' Brook's public work. Nevertheless, the fact remains that neither artist is, today, directly addressing the notion of an affective theatre for a widespread audience. Affective communication through the actor-audience encounter no longer dominates the thought of these major figures.

'New performance theatre' is characterised by its autobiographical quality, and by the narrowed perspective of a work created by an individual in whom the roles of actor, writer, and director are often combined. Schechner paraphrases the approach of performance theatres as being "toward the personal, the private, the monological, the narcissistic".¹⁵ Where once the emphasis on the actor had been an

integral part of a 'whole' made up of actor, director, and the participating spectator, today the focus has been narrowed to exclude all but the single creative individual, thus rendering personal a vision which once attempted to be universal.

Of the contemporary performance companies, Schechner has noted an emphasis on formalism and, significantly, a tendency towards frontal staging. This is clearly a means to highlight visual elements, and to distance the audience; that is, to maintain the event as a work of art to be viewed, not entered. Schechner makes an important point when he writes,

...the staging is a retreat: a signal of rejection of much of what experimental performance pioneered.¹⁶

That which is rejected is the experiential content which Schechner, amongst others, had propounded. The denial of the life-art boundary, and the affective, emotional quality of the highlighted actor-audience relationship are no longer significant concerns. These were the lynchpins of the affective theatre; their rejection is also the rejection of the humanist ideologies which informed them.

One important upshot of the move towards the actor/director's self-sufficiency is the demise of the group ethos. Although work still takes place within theatre groups, the 'group' is no longer a dominant trend; nor does it command the same interest as a model for social life. Despite their continued belief in group theatre, neither Schechner nor Chaikin currently work collectively. For Schechner, this is apparently due largely to financial reasons, and it must be noted

that financial constraints have played their part in directing new generations of theatre-makers toward the self-contained status of the monologist or director/'auteur'. The demise of the 'group' ideology may also be due to the fact that theatre workers on the whole no longer recognise the positing of alternative models as a part of their function. To this end, there is also a current tendency to retreat from content, meaning, and message in an excessive emphasis upon form and technique. Clearly, this amounts to a rejection of affective theatre's assumption that the theatre has a moral and social mission.

The evolution of the Performance Group into the Wooster Group in many ways embodies wider trends. Here, Bigsby describes Schechner's response to that development;

There was much he could find to praise in their work but in some fundamental sense he saw it as a betrayal - a betrayal of that humanist dream which he rightly saw as lying at the heart of performance theatre. Because, as he said of the attempt to create a theatre group, what was at stake was not just the construction of a theatre but also the creation of a putative society... Thus the decay, the closure or the radical change in the various groups was not just the exhaustion of a particular line of theatrical enquiry; it was the end or the deferment of a particular model of social action.¹⁷

The personalism of the new groups, coupled with the formal reluctance to create alternative models, and the sublimation of content to form, appear to be the result of a 'passivity'; artists are no longer suggesting change, or participating in it. Virtuosity has replaced ideology; content has been deferred in favour of the polished veneer.

More than anything, that which changed between the sixties and the eighties, had to do with ways of viewing reality. Many of the

principles of the early affective theatre workers have, by now, fallen into doubt and disrespect. Herbert Blau writing in 1981 says,

After a period of deconstructing the ego into a metamorphosing self, we are no longer quite sure that the repressed ever returns...¹⁹

And Schechner himself writes,

I've even come to doubt that there is a core or single self that a person can "be."¹⁹

The Freudian notion of the repressed self, especially as it was articulated by Brown and Marcuse, was enormously important to the sixties performance work. Much of the rationale for training and performance techniques required there to be an 'inner' person to free, a subconscious to communicate with. Artaud's theory of theatre as a plague scourging society, Grotowski's de-conditioning of his actors, and the social and psychological assumptions of the American groups all belonged, at heart, within a specific world view and psychological model. Contemporary work neither shares that view nor the opinion that it is the place of the theatre to be concerned with such matters.

There is, of course, room for the new currents of work, and the criticisms of Schechner and others may be seen to be the failure of one generation to accept the artistic viability of younger work based on contrary principles. Nevertheless, it must be said that the new work has left behind certain areas of theatrical concern; elements which were once held to be essential and unique to the art-form, are now no longer addressed. Grotowski's initial task had been to find the fundamental bases of theatre, and to avoid technological trimmings which were more suited to the realms of television and film.²⁰ Despite

widespread respect for his discoveries, the notion that the human is the central element of the theatre is no longer embraced. The inner, emotional life of the actor which Grotowski hoped to free is today largely ignored, and video technology is often used to enhance the contemporary *art of surfaces*.

Schechner's fear, in relation to work such as that done by the Wooster Group, is that personalism is not enough; that it amounts to "Evidence rather than drama which is evidence plus reflection and analysis".²¹ Further, he feels that the new theatre is not about *people*, formerly the central concern of the theatre, and the main point of focus for himself, Grotowski, Chaikin and the Becks. Herbert Blau has suggested that the 1960s theatre's search for archetypes had initiated its own demise in this respect;

While character is a construct, its default is related to a weakening sense of personal identity, arising from the absence of a unifying bond in the culture...There is something aphasic in the ecstasy which we see in Artaud's poetry...where the actor is somewhere between a selfless image and a solipsistic incantation. In denying, however, the primacy of the person - or the character of the self-important actor - we are always uneasy that in gaining a compositional resource for the theatre, or the icon/archetype of a cosmic identity, we may be losing its major figure.²²

This may indeed have been the case in Brook's *Orghast*;²³ however, for the most part the affective theatre denied character only in so far as it highlighted the actor. The actor's presence may have altered the traditional concept of character, but, if anything, it *emphasised* human presence in performances such as *Dionysus*, *The Brig*, *The Constant Prince*, and *The Mutation Show*. I would suggest that if theatre has lost its central figure, it is not through the displacement of character, but through the subsequent withdrawal of human presence in

terms of actor's technique, and a perspective wider than the single, narcissistic individual.

If the new performance theatre seems to have concentrated on theatre forms to the exclusion of human content, theatre anthropology has initiated an examination of human performance techniques outside of the contexts of both performance and the theatre group. Although Grotowski's current work is undoubtedly meaningful, and bears relation to the theatre (almost by default), the lack of widespread dissemination of technique or philosophy divorces it from wider contexts and applications. If one considers that throughout Grotowski's work he has preceded public developments with private research, it is perhaps not too optimistic to suggest that he might, in future, re-emerge in a more public and accessible capacity. It is clear that that capacity is very unlikely to be 'theatre' as we have known it. Nevertheless, it is possible to take heart from the fact that Grotowski's research, which is so intimately concerned with transcendence of schism, began in the theatre. Indeed, he still continues to refer to, and draw his studies from, performance techniques. I would suggest that this in itself might be seen as vindication for the place of affective communication in the theatre, and as evidence of the intimate connection between performance and transcendence.

In carrying out this research I was overwhelmed by the amount of material referring to mind/body split and affective communication which

was available. Indeed, it became increasingly clear that a full-length study of any one of the practitioners in relation to these concepts could be supported. I believe, however, that in detailing the work as a 'movement', represented by an intricately connected group of practitioners, I have been able to paint a fuller picture of the concept of affective theatre and to discuss it in its wider theatrical and societal context.

This research has brought to light two central points: that mind/body integration was closely linked, in the theories of the practitioners, with affective communication, and that affective communication was seen to be theatre's essential task and quality. The affective theatre-makers shared a distinct way of looking at life and at the theatre in which human capacities were of the greatest importance, and modern societal developments were viewed with suspicion precisely because of the degree to which they undermined human abilities and distorted human experience.

It was assumed, perhaps even proved, that mind/body integrating techniques could aid the actor, and that the integrated person of the actor could then create an affective communication with an audience. Thus we find that two processes were involved - mind/body integration for the performer in actor-training, and affective communication with the spectator. It seems, however, that none of the practitioners satisfactorily identified the precise way in which the spectator could achieve an experience akin to that of the actor. The intention behind

certain of the performance techniques was to bypass the spectator's cerebral defenses and thereby achieve a subconscious, and visceral communication. However, the extent to which either this process or the witnessing of the 'total act' could in any way effect an experience of 'mind/body integration' within the spectator is unclear. Grotowski's departure from theatre performance was certainly fuelled, in part, by the concern that the spectator could never achieve the experience to which the actors had access.

In terms of this study, Grotowski's move away from theatre is somewhat haunting in its implication that a theatre providing affective experience for both actor and audience could not be achieved until the notion of 'spectator' was effectively replaced by that of 'participant'. In a sense, however, the degree to which the actor and spectator shared the same level, or even kind, of experience is irrelevant. What emerges from the theories and techniques of the affective theatre practitioners is an art-form dedicated to the provision of realms of experience which are missing in everyday life. The spectators would not achieve, for themselves, the total and transcendent act, but they could, for the duration of the performance, be involved in a relationship which drew upon, and made contact with, levels of their minds and bodies habitually neglected in daily life. The affective theatre strove to speak to the hearts, souls, bodies, and dreams of their spectators, not just to the rational mind. In this sense alone, in the context of the cerebral society, it was performing a radical and humanist act. The affective theatre voiced a profound faith in the human being, and presented a convincing case for

appraising the theatre in terms of its human qualities. It established itself as an artform intrinsically linked to life; able to comment upon society's central sickness whilst providing in form and example an antidote to it. In many ways it was theatre as an act of faith, and the loss of such faith seems, to this writer, a loss indeed.

NOTES

- 1 Jerzy Grotowski, 'You Are Someone's Son', The Drama Review, Fall, 1987, vol. 31, no. 3, T115, p. 31.
- 2 See comments and developments throughout Judith Malina, The Enormous Despair (New York: Random House, 1972).
- 3 Patrice Pavis, Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 7.
- 4 See Joseph Chaikin's comments in Continuing Work: An Interview with Peter Hulton, (Dartington: Theatre Papers, 1982), pp. 21-22.
- 5 C. W. E. Bigsby, A Critical Introduction To Twentieth Century American Drama. Volume Three: Beyond Broadway. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 145.
- 6 Richard Schechner, The End of Humanism (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982) pp. 17-18.
- 7 Ibid., p. 23.
- 8 Richard Schechner, The End of Humanism.
- 9 Bonnie Marranca, Theatre rewritings (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1984), p. 140.
- 10 Since Bigsby uses the term 'performance theatre' to classify the Living Theatre, the Open Theatre, and the Performance Group, and since I am not aware of a definitive term to classify the main body of American experimental theatre which has succeeded those groups, I have taken the term, 'New performance theatre'. I believe that this term usefully highlights some of the characteristics which I discuss in the text.

For discussions of performances by the Wooster Group, see Bonnie Marranca, pp. 123-126; Theodore Shank, American Alternative Theatre, (London: The Macmilan Press Ltd., 1982), pp. 170-179.
- 11 See Jerzy Grotowski's comparison of the "public" and "personal" realms of his work, cited in Zbigniew Osinski, 'Grotowski Blazes the Trails', The Drama Review, Spring 1991, vol. 35, no. 1, T129, p. 98.
- 12 See page 363, note 45, of this thesis.
- 13 Peter Brook, 'Grotowski, Art as Vehicle', The Drama Review, Spring 1991, vol. 35, no. 1, T129.
- 14 Ibid., p. 93.
- 15 Richard Schechner, The End of Humanism, p. 34.

- 16 Ibid., p. 27.
- 17 C. W. E. Bigsby, pp. 134 - 135.
- 18 Herbert Blau, Take Up The Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point, (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1982), p. 3.
- 19 Richard Schechner, The End of Humanism, p. 14.
- 20 See chapter one of Jerzy Grotowski, Towards A Poor Theatre, (London: Methuen and Co., 1969), pp. 15-25.
- 21 Richard Schechner, The End of Humanism, p. 53.
See also Bonnie Marranta, p. 140.
- 22 Herbert Blau, p. 282.
- 23 See pages 328-329 of this thesis.

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF SELECTED EVENTS

Key to Abbreviations:

- JC - Joseph Chaikin.
- EB - Eugenio Barba.
- RS - Richard Schechner.
- OT - The Open Theatre.
- TPG - The Performance Group.
- Lab' - The Laboratory Theatre of the Thirteen Rows.
- ISTA - International School of Theatre Anthropology.
- CITR - Centre for International Theatre Research.
- JG - Jerzy Grotowski.
- PB - Peter Brook.
- LT - The Living Theatre.
- RSC - Royal Shakespeare Company.
- TDR - The Dress Review.

YEAR	ORGANISM	LIVING THEATRE	OPEN THEATRE	PERFORMANCE GROUP	PETER BROOK	EUGENIO BARBA
1959	The Theatre of the 13 Rows founded. Orpheus.	Many Leaves. The Connection. (The Theatre and 11A Double published).	JC with LT.			
1960	Esia. Mystery-Bouffe. Shakuntala.	The Marrying Maiden. In The Jungle of the Cities.	JC with LT.		PB writes review of The Connection - see LT 1959.	EB with JG.
1961	Dezidy.	The Apple.	JC with LT.			EB with JG.
1962	Founded The Laboratory Theatre of the 13 Rows. Kroffen Akropolis.	Man is Man.	JC with LT.		King Lear with RSC.	EB with JG.
1963	The Fragical History of Doktor Faustus.	The Brig	The Open Theatre founded.		Theatre of Cruelty - season.	EB with JG. Trip to India to study Kathakali.
1964	The Hamlet Study	European exile begins. Mysterios. The Brig plays in London.			Lord of the Flies film.	Odin Teatret founded.

YEAR	GROTHSKI	LIVING THEATRE	OPEN THEATRE	PERFORMANCE GROUP	PETER BROOK	EUGENIO BARBA
1965	<i>The Constant Prince</i> First book on JG, written by EB. First tour of W. Europe, organised by EB.	<i>Frankenstein</i>	<i>America Hurrah.</i> <i>Viet Rock.</i> JC working with PB.		<i>Merat/Sada.</i>	<i>Ornitorfina.</i> EB's book on JG published. Odin organise Lab's tour in W. Europe.
1966	renamed <i>The Laboratory Theatre of the 13 Rows</i> - Institute of Research into Acting Method. JO working with PB.				JG and JC assist on 'US', 'US'.	Odin move to Holstebro in Denmark. re-named <i>Odin Teatret</i> - Inter-Scandinavian Theatre Laboratory for the Art of the Actor.
1967	JO at New York University.	<i>Antigone.</i>	<i>The Serpent.</i> The OT attend workshop with JG at NYU.	The Performance Group founded - attend workshop with JG at N.Y. University.		<i>Kasperiana</i>
1968	<i>Towards A Poor Theatre</i> written (see EB 1968). <i>Apocalypse</i>	American tour. Avignon Festival. <i>Paradise Now.</i> Occupation of Odeon Theatre; Paris riots.	JC with PB at the Theatre des Nations in Paris	<i>Dionysus in '69</i>	<i>The Empty Space</i> published. <i>The Tempest</i> <i>Oedipus</i> Theatre des Nations in Paris with JC.	Odin publish JG's <i>Towards A Poor Theatre</i> , edited by EB.
1969			<i>Terrain.</i>	<i>Nekbeth.</i>		
1970	renamed Aster's Institute = Laboratory Theatre 'Holiday' speech = end of creating performance; open invitation to participate.	Brazil trip.		Commune	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> C.I.T.R. founded.	
1971			The Mutation Show Disbanded and re-formed.			
1972	2nd version of <i>Apocalypse</i> completely replaces 1st		RS visits Kethkali school - see EB 1963.		<i>Handke's Kasper.</i>	<i>Min Fare Hus.</i> European trips begin.

YEAR	GROTONSKI	LIVING THEATRE	OPEN THEATRE	PERFORMANCE GROUP	PETER BROOK	EUGENIO BARBA
1973	Special Projects.	'7 Meditations'.	Nightwalk. Closure.			
1974		Pittsburgh residency.				Book of Dances. Italian trip. 'Barter' initiated.
1975	renamed 'Institute-Laboratory'. University of Research with PB, JC, EB.	Six Public Acts. Destruction of the Money Tower. Return to Europe.				Iben's journey.
1976	The Mountain project.				The Ik	Come! And the day will be ours. 'Third Theatre' manifesto. 1st Third Theatre Encounter
1977	Theatre of Sources begins. Work with multi-cultural group begins.					Anabasis.
1978		Prometheus.				The Million. Beyond The Floating Islands published.
1979	Cynkute' Tree of People project.				Conference of the Birds. Meetings With Remarkable Men film.	I. S. T. A. founded.
1980				ES-JAAVAJ IFC. renamed The Woodier Group.		1st Odin visit to Britain. Brecht's Ashes.
1981	1st performance of Apocalypsis.					
1982	JG in U S. A.					

YEAR	GROTOWSKI	LIVING THEATRE	OPEN THEATRE	PERFORMANCE GROUP	PETER BROOK	EUGENIO BARBA
1963	Objective Drama at Irvine, U.S.A.					
1964	official dissolve of the Institute Laboratory.					renamed Nordiek Teaterlaboratorium.
1965	JG Workcenter at Pontedera, Italy. Ritual Arts Project begins.	Jullien Beck dies.				The Gospel According To Oxyrhincus. The Dilated Body published.
1966						Anatomy of the Actor published.
1967					The Mshabherata	
1968					The Shifting Point published.	Tefebot.
1969						
1990					The Tempest 2nd version.	Odin 2nd visit to Wales.
1991	Detailed accounts of work at Irvine and Pontedera appear in TDR.					The Secret Art of the Performer published.

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- 2) Secondary Material on the theatre.
- 3) Other Secondary Material.
- 4) Unpublished Secondary Material.

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