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Dionysus and Eros: The Shape of Intimacy in Theatrical Conceiving

by

Robert Morris Black

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of**

Doctor of Philosophy

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2002

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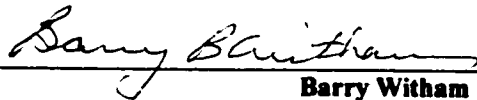
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Abstract

Dionysus and Eros: The Shape of Intimacy in Theatrical Conceiving

by Robert Morris Black

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee

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This study offers a theory of theater by way of an exploration of the role of metaphor in theatrical conceiving. Its focus is on the ways in which theater joins together its worlds—linguistic, optic, acoustic, and so on—and on the ways in which those worlds are themselves built from metaphor. Finally, this study explores the sense of life and value implied in the ways these joinings are made.

“The Establishment of Principles,” section provides a critical orientation, outlining and defining the main terms of the discussion, and providing theoretical ground for the analytical work that follows. Within this section, theater as a “Fiction ” is explored, moving it away from stock notions of truth and the language of verisimilitude. The essay on “Metaphor” provides an historical discussion of metaphor theory, and outlines a unique theory of metaphor based on the notions of participation, identification, organization, innovation, and intimacy. The closing essay of this section, “Intimacy,” extends theories of empathy to focus instead on how intimacy—whether it be an intimacy established in a work, in its reception, or

in its cultural use—alerts us to the ways in which we share in the humanity of others.

The “Poetic Logic” section is an analytical exploration of four theatrical examples, each preceded by a brief essay on a particular poetic or fictive category: 1) Conflict and ancient Greek theatrical conceiving; 2) Play and postmodern cinematic conceiving; 3) Gesture and Romantic theatrical conceiving; and, 4) Style and Baroque theatrical conceiving.

The conclusion offers not the culmination of a grand theory, but a hortatory call for the enlargement of our capacity to see, feel, hear, think, and act with respect to the theater and dramatic art. It claims that dramatic art is about creative generation, about coupling, and about experiencing the linking of our selves to another “living” thing or other “living” things, including the products of metaphor, and makes a case for nominating Eros, rather than Dionysus, as the patron deity of the theater.

Table of Contents

Preface	ii
The Shape of Intimacy in Theatrical Conceiving	1
The Idea of the Work.....	1
The Establishment of Principles	20
Fictions.....	20
Metaphor.....	35
Intimacy.....	66
Poetic Logic.....	79
Interchapter: Conflict.....	81
Conflict as Intimacy: Copulation in Attic Tragedy	92
Interchapter 2: Play.....	126
Play as Intimacy: Copulation in Postmodern Cinema.....	137
Interchapter 3: Gesture	174
Gesture as Intimacy: Inside-Out in Expressivist Drama	183
Interchapter 4: Style	218
Style as Intimacy: All The Stage Is A World (The Shakespearean Baroque)	224
Conclusion: Dionysus and Eros	267
Bibliography.	275

Preface

**Ask an impertinent question
and you are on your way
to the pertinent answer.**

-- Jacob Bronowski

This dissertation took me far too long to complete, and during the course of writing it I am certain that I drove not only myself crazy, but also my friends and family. This work began under the direction of my friend and former doctoral professor Michael Quinn, whose early death still saddens me but who remains overwhelmingly inspiring to me. I wrote the chapter on the Antigone for Michael as part of my General Examination and published a version of it in Text and Presentation: Journal of the Comparative Drama Conference. After Michael's death, I proceeded to write the sections entitled "The Idea of the Work" and "The Establishment of Principles" under the direction of Hazard Adams, with whom I took many classes and Independent Studies while at the University of Washington. Unfortunately, I was not able to complete this dissertation before Professor Adams retired. This work was finally completed under the direction of Barry Witham, the first person I ever talked with from the University of Washington and the man who will forever remain in my memory as the only professor I ever had who could sing songs from my favorite Rolling Stones record, "Exile On Main Street."

The primary reason I took so long to write this dissertation stems from the obsession I had wherein I had to read everything ever published that was even remotely related to my topics. This obsession proved to be foolhardy and expensive, as well as an inhibiting factor in a timely delivery of a final paper. My wife got to know the delivery man from United Parcel Service well, for he was bringing about fifty pounds of books a week to our door. Giving up that obsession was not only mentally (and financially) sound, but it finally allowed me to make progress with my own ideas. As a result of that obsession, I have been liberal with reference; not to lend authority to my arguments, but to chart the territories through which I traveled for better or worse. Still, I lament the many books and words that were finally left out.

The content and tenor of this paper began as a reclaiming of my interests in poetics after what had been a strong diet of politics from the doctoral curriculum. My thinking on intimacy came specifically after reading Ted Cohen's article "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," which briefly considers the aspects of understanding the import of metaphor, relating the process to the understanding of jokes. Cohen's title, however, remained suggestive to me like an open equation: theater is fundamentally metaphorical and metaphor is fundamentally about intimacy, so how, then, is theater a cultivation of intimacy?

With much trepidation, I undertook to explore that question with the belief that there was a real need for new terms of critical discussion, despite the evidence offered by the catalogues of the publishing industry. The courage to complete this exploration, however, I owe to my trust in a wonderful remark made

by Dr. Jacob Bronowski in his Television Series, The Ascent of Man. While pronouncing specifically on the nature of scientific exploration, I take Bronowski's remark to be relevant to exploration in any human endeavor: "Ask an impertinent question and you are on your way to the pertinent answer."

That sentence is the animating force behind the sentences in the following pages. The errors of direction and argument are my own, and I accept them as volitional. At best they may prove to be (as Joyce's Stephen says of Shakespeare's errors in the Ulysses) "portals of discovery."

Dedication

This work, and the effort spent in researching and writing it, is doubly dedicated: to my son, Ian Morris Howell Black, and to my wife (and Ian's mother), Leslie Howell Black.

Ian was beginning Kindergarten when I began my doctoral study. During the summers, he attended some of the classes I taught (and even volunteered for some of the class exercises), he came to after-hours seminars, and attended most of the plays presented by the School of Drama. Once, Ian even accompanied the doctoral students on a road trip to the Northwest Drama Conference in Monmouth, Oregon. Though Ian's own schoolwork and interests have grown in degree and kind since the time I began writing this dissertation, he has always found time to keep tabs on my progress and never failed to find ways to continually encourage me to complete it.

Leslie endured and survived many moves and job changes to allow me to pursue my doctorate, while keeping our family threesome together. Though it will never be evident from the reading of this document, Leslie is the one who wagered the most on its completion. I hope that I can repay the rewards on that wager in dividends that far surpass her investment. I thank her for her support and her sacrifices, and I thank her most for helping to make Ian.

The Shape of Intimacy in Theatrical Conceiving

The Idea of the Work

At least since Aristophanes brought Aeschylus and Euripides to argument in The Frogs, quarrels have continued among theater theorists and critics over the characteristics, aims, methods, and functions of theater. Never has there been a general consensus as to what theater *is* let alone what it should do, how it should do it, and why. It is safe to say that such a consensus never will, nor should, be reached. That this is the case is testament to the infinite fruitfulness of dramatic art, the human need to create value and meaning, and the ubiquity of conflict. So quarrels rage on: sights of theory refocus, targets for criticism change, and theater theorists and critics persist in our folly—if not to become wise, then at least to make a gesture at understanding aspects of ourselves and of our culture that seem important to us. Perhaps, as Rilke urged, we simply learn to love the questions. Nevertheless, the theater—imperfect and in constant need of refurbishing—is continually reinvented as it struggles against its own products and transforms those inherited from the past. As Francis Fergusson wrote nearly a half century ago, “[W]e need the ‘Idea of a theater,’ both to understand the masterpieces of drama at its best, and to get our bearings in our own time.”¹

¹ Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theater: The Art of Drama in Changing Perspective (Garden City: Doubleday, 1949), p. 15.

The principle of mimesis is responsible for orienting some of the earliest, most pervasive and recurring ideas of theater. In its most common and rudimentary formulation, a mimetic orientation focuses attention on the relationship between the dramatic work and the empirical world with the work being considered more or less an imitation or re-presentation of some aspect of the world. As Shakespeare's Hamlet put it, "The purpose of playing, whose end, both at first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show nature her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Though commonly yoked in tropes like Shakespeare's "mirror" to innocent copying, mimesis is no simple, let alone innocent, matter. It has been, at least since Plato and Aristotle, the source of critical controversy and debates over its nature have been conducted on numerous occasions throughout the history of critical theory. Yet despite all controversy, the conception of theater as mimesis is so tenacious and has such prevalence, that it seems theater theorists and critics, regardless of their theoretical orientations, end up in some way either endorsing, renouncing, or qualifying it.²

Among the reasons often attributed to the persistence of the mimetic perspective has been that the theater, more than other arts, has a presence that

² For an excellent and thorough account of the history of critical thought on mimesis, see Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas*, tr. Christopher Kasparek (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980). For a more recent survey utilizing current critical parlance, see Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

is more or less analogous to substantive human encounters and experiences offstage. Such a presence would cause Gotthold Lessing, for example, to consider the drama almost a “natural” sign.³ Accordingly, issues of verisimilitude and theater’s claims to truth have gone hand in hand with issues of mimesis. Even in creations which veer strenuously from vestiges of verisimilitude and naturalism, like Surrealist or Expressionist theater, onstage events are commonly viewed as having a presence analogous to some inner human state by way of a mimetic and metaphoric relationship and can be seen—as Murray Krieger has phrased it (in an allusion to W. B. Yeats and M. H. Abrams)—as “the mirror of the lamp.”⁴ The case for insisting on theater as mimesis prevails even in dramatic forms such as puppet theater—like the Japanese *Bun-Raku* or Javanese *Wayang Kulit*—where stage figures carved from wood or cut from leather are intended and taken as proxy for humans.

But this view denies as much as it affords. To be sure, theater as mimesis suggests that our offstage and onstage worlds can be linked in a fundamentally metaphorical way and that even in our most detached states of aesthetic response, theater has the power and ability to reveal and reference non-theatrical reality and our involvement in it. It is this conception of mimesis that Paul Ricoeur has described as “an index of the discourse situation,” for “it

³ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laocoön: An Essay Upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry, tr. Ellen Frothingham (New York: Noonday, 1963).

⁴ Murray Krieger, Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 82.

reminds us that no discourse ever suspends us from belonging to a world."⁵ This is an important feature—one that I will amplify in the course of this work. But insofar as a connection exists between the fictive theatrical world and the so-called real world, mimesis, traditionally, only has value when it animates pragmatic concerns and issues over the consequences one world has on the other. Familiar examples include therapeutic concerns (as in Aristotle's conception of *catharsis*), educational concerns and concerns for pleasure (as in the Horatian formulation of *utile* and *dulce*), and ethical concerns (as in much contemporary consideration for a politics of recognition occasioned by the representation of race, gender, ethnicity, and so on).

But because mimesis is always secondary to something—a "given" world or some practical interest— theater, as mimesis, surrenders its creative power and agency to cultivate and achieve its own values and truths. As in Platonic metaphysics, the theatrical work is in some sense denigrated, reduced to the mere status of an illusion, a document of some external reality or, as in Marxist interpretations, a socially and economically determined object. As such, theater is laid open to all manner of specious critical constitutions, most of which do a meager job of redeeming what has been significant about my own theatrical experiences. A fair and representative sample of such a constitution can be

⁵ Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, tr. Robert Czemy, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John Costello (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 43. For a discussion of the extent to which this "belonging" is the case, see Bruce Wilshire, Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theater as Metaphor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

found in an oft-quoted (an oft-imitated) remark by Jean-François Lyotard:

“Theater places us right at the heart of what is religious-political: in the heart of absence, in negativity, in nihilism as Nietzsche would say, therefore in the question of power.”⁶ For Lyotard and his restrictive semiotics, we can no longer take the theatrical work positively or affirmatively, but only as illusion and only in subordinate relation to what it refers to. The absent reference is then affirmed as truth or power, and the difference or gap (in Latin, the *nihil*) between the two requires a system of beliefs to guide that connection. Lyotard, then, invokes religion in its etymological sense (from the Latin *re-ligare*, to bind together) as his connecting system for overcoming the *nihil*. Of course religion has many faces, particularly in criticism. One can find, therefore, many congregations campaigning to fill that semiotic gap—each with its own guru, holy book, and buzzwords. I would like to suggest that what this view requires begins with a simple change of diction. As I will argue, this view calls not for a theory of “binding together” as in *religion* but, rather, a theory of “joining together” as in *copulation*—in other words, a theory of metaphor.

One of the other, more provocative, reasons attributed to the persistence of the mimetic perspective centers on mimesis as an anthropological disposition. Aristotle initiated this course of speculation in his Poetics, declaring that all poetry (as in *poiesis*) springs from “two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature”: first, the “instinct for imitation,” or mimesis; and second, “the pleasure

⁶ Jean-François Lyotard, “The Tooth, The Palm,” Sub-Stance 15 (1976): 105.

felt in things imitated.”⁷ Aristotle did not pursue or develop that claim, nor did he offer evidence as to how this instinct took shape in human endeavors apart from a few extremely limited examples in Greek tragedy and comedy, but others have. Sigmund Freud, for example, picked up this thread indicating what he termed “ideational mimetics” to be the “instinctual somatic innervation” of ideational activity—a human “need” aroused by the “requirements of communicating.”⁸ Freud considered such innervation mimetic because the body (including the voice-producing muscles) apparently mimics the shape of perception, particularly when demonstrating quantities or intensities. According to Freud, thinking of or describing a mountain produces expansive vocal, facial, and bodily movement, while thinking of or describing a pebble produces the opposite effects. While this notion has had particular force in acting theory, most notably in Michael Chekhov’s idea of the “psychological gesture” and Brecht’s notion of “Gestus,” whereby a character’s intellectual, emotional, and social life is given figuration in the body, it still relegates the theatrical creation subordinate to some pre-existent material that it then rehearses.⁹ With a mimetic theory, however, neither Freud, nor Chekhov, nor Brecht can account for a corporeal

⁷ Aristotle, Poetics, tr. S. H. Butcher, in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 51.

⁸ Sigmund Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, tr. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 192f.

⁹ See Michael Chekhov, To the Actor (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), pp. 63-76; for two analyses of Brecht’s scattered remarks on “Gestus,” see Carl Weber, “Brecht’s Concept of Gestus and the American Performance Tradition,” Gestus V 2/3 (Fall 1986): 179-185; and Michael Quinn, “The Semiosis of Brechtian Acting: A Prague School Analysis,” Gestus V 2/4 (Winter 1986): 265-275.

rhetoric without getting tangled in the politics of resemblance. To be sure, issues of resemblance are important to a thorough understanding of theater, but pursuing its problems lead back inevitably to questions of verisimilitude and basic claims to truth which, to paraphrase a somewhat uncharitable Northrop Frye, have no business in theater.

I by no means intend to deny the anthropological disposition of mimesis, for it clearly functions in a variety of human capacities and cultures: I think here of Michael Taussig's studies in the sympathetic magic of so-called post-colonial cultures, Jean Piaget's pioneering work in the onto-genetic development of humans, or René Girard's provocative hypothesis on the nature of desire to recognize that mimesis may well be a fundamental human faculty and, concomitantly, may play some role in theatrical conceiving.¹⁰ But my personal experience and study of the broad range of humanly-created forms conceived as theater in the history of theatrical thought and practice more fruitfully suggests that theater may be evidence not of the human instinct to copy but, rather, to copulate.

I have employed the words copulate and copulation in an effort to connote the fundamental ideas of theater that animate and guide the explorations of this book. First, my claim is that the matter of theater—and mimesis, for that matter—is metaphor. Though in the following section I will explicate the theory

¹⁰ See, for example, Michael Taussig, Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses (New York: Routledge, 1993); Jean Piaget, Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood, tr. C. Gattegno and F. M. Hodgson (New York: Norton, 1962); and René Girard, Violence and the Sacred, tr. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

of metaphor that grounds this work, it should suffice here to say that my sense of metaphor dissents from the stock view of metaphor as a rhetorical embellishment and deviance from the norm of language—and from this, that the stage world is an embellishment on and deviance from some *real* world. I claim metaphor as the fundamental and ineluctable norm of language and of theater as a particular kind of language and world. From the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Richard Wagner to the “poor theater” of Jerzy Grotowski, metaphor is both the source of theater’s formal logic and ethical endowment. Metaphor here is not a matter of decoration, substitution, or denomination but, rather, a matter of copulation, or “joining together,” and so—as I will explore—a matter of things like participation, identification, and intimacy. My attention, then, will focus formally on the ways in which theater joins together its worlds—linguistic, optic, acoustic, haptic, and so on—and on the ways in which those worlds are themselves built from metaphor. The move from formal analysis to ethical implication occurs by inquiring as to what sense of life and value is implied in the ways these joinings, invitations to participation, and identification, are made. How, in other words, do subjects take objects unto themselves—or in the parlance popularized by George Herbert Mead, how do they take *the other*—and what is the nature of that contact? The contact I refer to includes not only to the objective and internal qualities of the theatrical expression itself, but also to the conditions of its relation to an audience and culture.

Second, I have invoked theater as a matter of copulation with a nod to

that term's sexual connotation. As in sexual union, so in theater: copulation is an action or process of coupling together that has the synergetic power to produce something as a result of the union. Bert States captures this point quite bluntly when he writes, "In theater there is always a possibility that an act of sexual congress between two so-called signs will produce a real pregnancy."¹¹ This pregnancy comes from the germane and seminal power of metaphor. As such, theater is not exhausted by whatever illusionary or referential character it might possess or make, but takes on what speech act theorists have called a "performative" character, capable of creatively *producing* meaning and *accomplishing* certain intentional acts.¹²

Lastly, I have invoked theater as copulation to imply that, like sexual couplings, theater is the cultivation of an intimacy—and possibly (and impertinently) a gesture of love: "The great secret of morals," wrote Shelley, "is love, or a going out of our nature and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own."¹³ Shelley's formulation of love—a formulation which I carry-over here—behaves according to the same principle as metaphor and may therefore be exemplified by dramatic

¹¹ Bert States, Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 20. It is likely that States is also alluding to the semiotics of René Thom: see "De l'icone au symbole," in Cahiers Internationaux de Symbolisme 22/23 (1973): 85-106.

¹² See, for example, J. L. Austin, How To Do Things With Words (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); for a direct application of Austin's principles to theater, see David Saltz, "How to Do Things on Stage," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 49:1 (Winter 1991): 23-41.

¹³ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 519.

works, the ground of which is metaphor. The copulative mingling which I attribute to the metaphorical nature of theater arouses, then, in its creative capacity, a kind of intimacy as a constituent of the work. As such, it not only provides a model for ethical identification, as I will show, but also demands an imaginative reciprocity of cognitive and emotional engagement with its audiences which, in William Blake's phrase, "rouse the faculties to act," and so contributes to the enlargement of the human capacity to create meaningful lives.

But theater itself *is* life, or as R. P. Blackmur wrote about poetry, "life at the remove of form and meaning; not life lived but life framed and identified."¹⁴ After laying the critical groundwork for this project, my business will be to explore the ways in which theater cultivates intimacy by attending to the "poetic logic" of a variety of formal theatrical expressions from a variety of histories—in other words, to the ways in which certain theatrical expressions have framed and identified human concern. Following Giambattista Vico, I take metaphor and the other tropes to be corollaries of this poetic logic. In addition, I assume a profound connection between artistic style (framing and identifying) and ethical project.

This study, then, offers a theory of theater by way of an exploration of the role of metaphor in theatrical conceiving. My intention in undertaking this study is threefold: first, to broaden critical apprehension of theater by marking the "before unapprehended relations of things" theatrical; second, to build a

language for theater that will cultivate what I see as a humane, capable and previously unavailable practical criticism; and third, to engage a conversation which may contribute to coupling theater with its heretofore unacknowledged patron: Eros. My method, like my subject, is comparative, which is to say that it operates by joining things together. My conviction behind this method is that meaning and value arise at the juncture, and in the conflict, of these joinings.

Following this introduction, I have arranged this work into three sections. The first section, "The Establishment of Principles," provides a critical orientation, outlining and defining the main terms of my discussion. The purpose of this section is to provide theoretical ground for the analytical work that follows and to explore the limits and potentialities of my critical categories. The second section, "Poetic Logic," constitutes the main body of this work and undertakes an in-depth, comparative analysis of a variety of theatrical expressions, extending over a variety of histories and cultures. The purpose of this section is to explore how these various expressions constitute intimacies through metaphor and the other principles explicated in the critical orientation. I have endeavored to include expressions from a wide range of theatrical approaches, aspiring to engage some of the most challenging historical and practical problems of the art of theater. In addition to the specifically theatrical, I have also attempted to engage relevant collateral expressions in other disciplines.

¹⁴ R. P. Blackmur, "A Critic's Job of Work," Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 885.

I should note that, here, history is not laid out as it is in many books, with each period carefully delineated and separated. For history, as I deal with it, has no periods. It has commas, semi-colons; dashes—running on and overlapping like a chorus of Molly Blooms. Though I will sketch out the lineaments of historical contexts within which particular expressions were created, I do so only to demonstrate how certain theatrical languages found coherence in a specific cultural grammar and to show how particular theater-makers used that grammar as a context for innovation. Because I am trying to suggest an approach to theater, I am not interested in typesetting facts, but to show how these facts, however mingled, can maintain active and alert commerce with contemporary minds and contemporary values. Yet this history is not merely a history ranging freely in the zodiac of my own wit, to borrow Sir Philip Sidney's phrase; nor is it insensitive to history. I purposely engage in what Kenneth Burke, in a Nietzschean/Spenglerian mood, has called "perspective by incongruity," which by "extending the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it was habitually used and applying to another," one can discuss "the Pergamene quality in Wagner, the Mozartian elements in Phidias, the calculus mathematics emergent in Gothic."¹⁵ In other words, history is conceived here as copulation, as metaphor. But this approach does not defile the critical process. On the contrary, the value of such an approach is that it expands insight and

¹⁵ Kenneth Burke, Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 89.

possibility, providing new points of contact between humans and things humanly-made, by educating the imagination and enabling a lively vision of the present and future by forming a lively vision of the past.

The final section, "Dionysus and Eros," is intended as both a tentative conclusion and *envoi*. My intention is to consolidate the projects gestured at by the examples in "Poetic Logic," and direct them toward projects for future work. In so doing, I make my case for shifting attention from the well-worn characteristics that nominate Dionysus as the champion of the theater, to those exemplified by another lesser Greek divinity: Eros. In no way do I intend to offer the culmination of a grand theory. Instead, I modestly hope to enlarge a reader's capacity to see, feel, hear, think, and possibly, act—knowing full well that even the slightest success will die into tyranny and require another's impertinent critical gesture.

But before concluding this introduction, allow me to briefly reason and compare. I feel compelled to anticipate certain criticisms and address briefly what I presume will appear somewhat disconcerting about this work, especially given the current critical climate in theater studies. First, my attention to formal elements and techniques is currently considered a remnant of an empty and outmoded liberal humanist aesthetics. Further, my *prima materia*—metaphor, gesture, style, and so on—now carry a cachet of the quaint or passé. And my conclusions about intimacy and human concern will no doubt sound suspicious or even dangerous: presumably interpreted as abstractions or mystifications in

the service of some hegemonic other. But I take aesthetics not in the eighteenth-century tradition of the “beautiful” popularized by Alexander Baumgarten (though I am with Hans-Georg Gadamer that the beautiful is indeed “relevant”¹⁶), but in its etymological sense as having something to do with the sensitive (*aisthetikos*) and the ability to perceive (*aisthanesthai*). Form and style teach us to see, feel, discern, and act with greater clarity and precision. Fashionable alternatives—such as gender, race, and ethnicity, to name a few of the most popular—cannot even be clearly understood without first being sensitive to their concrete (so formal and stylistic) manifestations. And as to the conceptions of unity or harmony such as I have put forth with terms like copulation and intimacy, they are today generally viewed with disdain: as “nostalgic,” and reflective of “a deep desire for stability,” as Raymond Williams put it; or in the terminology of Jean Baudrillard, one of the most *precieux* of current *ridicules*, unity is a “delirious dream.”¹⁷ But as I have stated above, my sense of these terms includes, indeed emphasizes, conflict. Here, I am with Ernst Cassirer, who, quoting Heraclitus, insists that the impulse to unity be not confounded with simplicity:

It does not overlook the tensions and the frictions, the strong contrasts and the deep conflicts between the various powers of man. These cannot

¹⁶ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, tr. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 169; Jean Baudrillard “Symbolic Exchange and Death,” *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 141.

be reduced to a common denominator. They tend in different directions and obey different principles. But this multiplicity and disparateness do not denote discord or disharmony. All these functions complete and compliment one another. Each one opens a new horizon and shows us a new aspect of humanity. The dissonant is in harmony with itself; the contraries are not mutually exclusive, but interdependent: 'harmony in contrariety, as in the case of the bow and the lyre.'¹⁸

My point is that attention to formal qualities, metaphor, gesture, and style provide the foremost way of discovering and understanding these identities, contrasts, conflicts, and harmonies. So while I agree with current criticism that old-style aesthetics may be no longer adequate for striving with contemporary systems, I dissent from their alternatives.

But part of the problem with many of these alternatives is simply a problem with the theories that they embrace—theories which gravitate toward impossibility and loss. For example: emboldened by a *post-structuralist* corruption of Saussure and alluding to Jacques Derrida's infamous catchphrase, "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte," Julia Kristeva has concluded "Modern theater no longer exists outside the text"—indeed, that "Modern theater does not take (a) place."¹⁹ Though Kristeva's pronouncement is now almost two decades old, similar thinking still persists and little has been done to "create afresh the

¹⁸ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay On Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 128.

¹⁹ Julia Kristeva, "Modern Theater Does Not Take (A) Place," *Sub-Stance* 18/19 (1977): 131.

associations that have been thus disorganized," despite talk to the contrary. For example, the Association for Theater in Higher Education—an association whose membership includes theater professionals from all over the world—announced the theme for its "Gateways to the Next Millennium" conference, stating that their purpose for convening was to afford the opportunity "to disrupt old structures and demand new visions."²⁰ But the song remains the same. A panel entitled "A Theater of Love?" composed of a distinguished panel of three and formed with the admirable belief that "The meanings of love need to be relocated within the analysis of the text, theater history, and theater practice," could only produce impossibility. In point of fact, "Impossibility in Love," a study of the dramaturgy of Marguerite Duras written and presented by Gabrielle Cody of Vassar College, served as synecdoche for the entire panel. And the source of this impossibility and of loss of critical agency? All a result of following Jacques Lacan to the letter. Lacan's theory of love follows his theory of language which presumes that it can never say what we want it to; there is always (as in Lyotard) a gap or *nihil* between what we say and what we mean (not to suggest that we must always mean what we say). Signifiers are never united with signifieds, but always "sliding" incessantly underneath them. Though meaning has moments of anchorage, these moments are considered narcissistic, fixed retroactively, and structured as a kind of bondage to the

²⁰ Taken from Vice President for Conferences Juli Burk's opening remarks as printed in the conference program.

“phallus/law,” otherwise always displaced in infinite regress.²¹ And so with love: no habitation or name, only airy nothing and all because of a commitment to a specious, though trendy, theory. And while I cite only a single isolated instance, it is a fair and representative example of a phenomenon all too common today at professional conferences and in professional journals.

This problem is compounded by the fact that today appears to be an age of theory. Perhaps more so than any other time in history, the theoretical speculation of the last thirty years has aroused a dizzying proliferation of “ideas” of theater, making the achievement of getting one’s bearings in theater studies a difficult task. Today, such a task demands a familiarity with an assortment of theoretical doctrines, a collection which calls to mind Polonius’s naming of dramatic genres: semiotic, psychoanalytic, Marxist, neo-Marxist, feminist, new historicist, post-colonialist, multi-culturalist, phenomenological, deconstructionist, queer, and combinations thereof to name but a few of the most pervasive. Without question, the concern of the majority of these positions has been political and, as such, the contributions of these positions have worked to expose injustices and antagonisms in social life while providing ways of coping with and interpreting texts and other fictions. There is, however, a sense that though these positions seek to serve life, they often do so at the expense of prescribing fixed and limited modes of living. Critical reflection that begins with

²¹ For a clear summary of Lacan’s theory of love, see Juliet Flower MacCannell, Figuring Lacan: Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

doctrines typically constitutes the works in its purview by making them serviceable only to its doctrinal ends rather than exploring possibility and potential for dialogue. So while I concur with the aims of many of these positions, I dissent from their results.

And that brings me to my second anticipation: nowhere do I endorse any of the popular and prominent political perspectives. To be sure, in this critical ambiance, the attempt to offer an idea of theater not explicitly political is suspiciously considered a political move in and of itself. But because it is impossible to answer such tautologies with reasonable argument, I'll answer more appropriately by offering a poem:

*Politics*²²

"In our time the destiny of man presents its meanings in political terms."
 Thomas Mann

How can I, that girl standing there,
 My attention fix
 On Roman or on Russian
 Or on Spanish politics,
 Yet here's a traveled man that knows
 What he talks about,
 And there's a politician
 That has both read and thought,
 And maybe what they say is true
 Of war and war's alarms,
 But O that I were young again
 And held her in my arms.

Whether or not such a politics is possible is not my point. My point is simply to keep alive the possibility of imagining such a thing.

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²² W. B. Yeats, The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1989), p. 348.

The Establishment of Principles

Fictions

CYRIL: But you don't mean to say that you seriously believe that Life imitates Art, that Life in fact is the mirror, and Art the reality?

VIVIAN: Certainly I do.

--Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*

In this section I want to explore the specific facets of theater that animate this study. The greater part of my effort here will be directed toward offering definitions of certain key terms, enlarging the range of their received meanings, and in some cases revising modes of thought about these terms that have been unnecessarily problematic. Taken together, these terms constitute categories for a poetics. These categories are by no means intended to be exhaustive nor are the definitions intended as definitive. They are, to use William James's felicitous phrase, "programs for work": not final solutions but beginnings only, designed to provoke enterprise, and conceived so as not to negate possibility, dialogue, uncertainty, or eventual revision. It is my belief that these principles are capacious enough to enable rich critical discussion—one that can appreciably describe the range of human attributes and concerns that take shape in theatrical works as diverse as ancient tragedy and contemporary film. In particular, what I want to bring out and examine here is the fertile environment of languages with which we can conceive of and acknowledge dramatic art.

More broadly, I want to explore how these languages render a portrait of theater as not a representation but as a producer of human culture—culture here emphasized as “something we are *always proceeding to make* rather than *referring back or outward toward*”²³—and as an agent in the cultivation of intimacy.

The first facet I want to explore is that of fictions and, specifically, of theater as a fiction. Commonly, the word “fiction” is invoked to indicate something somehow cloven from “reality” and, concomitantly, the “truth.” Truth, in such a view, is predicated always on a faithful correspondence to “given” reality. Typically, “fiction” is invoked in contradistinction to “fact,” as a way of sorting out truth from falsity. But like the view of mimesis as an imitation of reality (or nature, or life), truth as correspondence to reality presents more problems than opportunities, particularly when trying to engage works of art, whose truths are more like warranted assertions. As Northrop Frye has suggested:

The poet, like the pure mathematician, depends, not on descriptive truth, but on conformity to his hypothetical postulates. The appearance of a ghost in Hamlet presents the hypothesis “let there be a ghost in Hamlet.” It has nothing to do with whether ghosts exist or not, or whether Shakespeare or his audience thought they did. A reader who quarrels

²³ Hazard Adams, Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1991), p. 342.

with postulates, who dislikes Hamlet because he does not believe there are ghosts or that people speak in pentameters, clearly has no business in literature.²⁴

Yet attitudes that regard artworks as “lies” persist. The theater, in particular, has historically received frequent condemnation for being fictitious, a form of deception—so much so that its terms (especially those relating to “acting”) have become synonymous with deceit.²⁵ In turn, such attitudes have engendered a tendency to either dismiss theater’s importance, regarding it as a mere diversion, or to be anxious about what is seen as its cunning disingenuousness. Or further, attempts to validate theatrical experience are made by seeking to derive the truth of drama from other practices such as science, sociology, or psychology. This need not be the case.

Allow me here to make two preliminary points; the first point concerns the issue of truth as I will consider it. This conception of truth I take from the eighteenth-century Neapolitan professor of rhetoric, Giambattista Vico. In his De Antiquissima Italorum Sapientia (On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians), written in 1710, Vico pointed out: “For the Latins, *verum* (the true) and *factum* (what is made) are interchangeable, or to use the customary language of the

²⁴ Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 76. Elsewhere Frye usefully points out that truth and falsehood are not literary categories or qualities but “elements of the social acceptance of or response to literature.” See Frye’s The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 17f.

²⁵ For a detailed account of this tendency, see Jonas Barish, The Antitheatrical Prejudice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

schools, they are controvertible," and "the true is precisely what is made (*verum esse ipsum factum*)."²⁶ Truth, in other words, is itself a fiction: not something given, but something *produced*—though comprehended in accordance with a particular cultural grammar which is itself humanly-conceived and articulated.

This leads me to my second preliminary point concerning the issue of fiction. As I take it here, fiction, too, is simply something *made*. Like its Greek ancestors *poiema* (anything made) and *poien* (to make), and its Latin ancestors *fictio* (a making) and *ingere* (to form), fiction emphasizes the human capacity to create and invent, not to deceive or imitate. I invoke these etymological traces in order to emphasize that theater is first of all a *making*: a locus of imaginative and material activity in which meaning takes place. Fictions do not imitate or represent reality (though they often do, as Dr. Johnson noted, bring other realities to mind), but *produce* it by providing the forms through which we conceive of reality, articulating and arranging the world of our experience. It is in this sense that Oscar Wilde's comically irreverent reversal of the old mimetic formula, "art imitates life," takes on an utmost seriousness. There is no need, then, to look to science, religion, psychology, or other practices to bestow validity on theatrical fiction for such practices are themselves fictions or, in Ernst Cassirer's terminology, symbolic forms—each humanly made and each with its own constitutive capacities. As Cassirer elaborates:

²⁶ Giambattista Vico, On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians, tr. L. M. Palmer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 45-6.

Every authentic function of the human spirit has this decisive characteristic in common with cognition: it does not merely copy but rather embodies an original, formative power. It does not express passively the mere fact that something is present but contains an independent energy of the human spirit through which the simple presence of the phenomenon assumes a definite "meaning," a particular ideational content. This is as true of art as it is of cognition; it is as true of myth as of religion. All live in particular image-worlds, which do not merely reflect the empirically given, but which rather produce it in accordance with an independent principle. Each of these functions creates its own symbolic forms which, if not similar to the intellectual symbols, enjoy equal rank as products of the human spirit. None of these forms can be simply reduced to, or derived from, the others; each of them designates a particular approach, in which and through which it constitutes its own aspect of "reality."²⁷

But this is not to imply for fiction a solipsism of any kind. For Cassirer, these "image-worlds" or "symbolic forms" are interdependent, coexisting and interacting with each other in a complementarity that would be contradictory or negating in empirically-oriented discourses. The theater in particular I see as a congeries of fictions—with each fiction able to contain a variety of languages,

²⁷ Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume 1: Language, tr. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 78.

perspectives, and registers of emphasis—providing a site where several such forms enter into dialogue with each other. In theater, literary fictions couple promiscuously with pictorial and architectural fictions, musical and other acoustical fictions, physical-gestural fictions, and various technologies of stagecraft and actor/audience configurations. In many ways, the environment of the theatrical event has as much to do with the theatrical experience as does the play-text. Some thinkers, namely John Dewey and Paul Crowther, have specifically developed “ecologies” of art to address the interactions of these various symbolic forms—and their human makers and attendants—with their environments.²⁸ Such will I do also in later chapters. But more to the point of what I want to discuss here is Cassirer’s movement “from unique truth and a world found and fixed to a diversity of right and even conflicting versions or worlds in the making,” thereby extending the line of modern philosophy that began, as Nelson Goodman has pointed out, “when Kant exchanged the structure of the world for the structure of the mind, continued when C. I. Lewis exchanged the structure of the mind for the structure of concepts, and now proceeds to exchange the structure of concepts for the structure of several symbol systems of the sciences, philosophy, the arts, perception, and everyday discourse.”²⁹

²⁸ See particularly John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1934); and Paul Crowther, Art and Embodiment (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁹ Nelson Goodman, Ways of Worldmaking (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), p. x.

My insistence on linking fiction to making is the first part of an effort to shift critical concern away from the ontological and/or epistemological registers where theater's compulsions to verisimilitude (or what Marvin Carlson, following C. S. Peirce, has called "iconicity"³⁰) and other issues regarding correspondence to something external persist and detract from what I hope to show to be the art's most salient and humane values. To be sure, there is such a thing as reference, but it is a provisional reference compelled by the constitutive capacity of fictions; the so-called existential world has, then, a place within fictions, but that place is always held in an ironic tension. The actor who declares "Ay, every inch a king," is engaging in paradox for clearly he is also every inch not a king, though in a non-theatrical register but which is still present. (René Magritte famously captured this delicious irony in his delightful painting The Treason of Images {known commonly as *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, or *This is not a pipe*}, prodding us to remember that the work is, of course, a painting!) On this point, alluding to Hans Vaihinger's notion of the "as if" aspect of fictions,³¹ Murray Krieger's words offer augmentation:

Drama, with its peculiar conjunctions of reality and make-believe, works to remind us of the unstable relation between presence and illusion in all

³⁰ See Marvin Carlson, "The Iconic Stage," Theatre Semiotics: Signs of Life (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 75-91. Carlson admits that there are other types of sign presentation at work on the stage, yet develops iconicity as the primary constituent of theatrical production. He then draws on Wittgenstein's distinction between "seeing" and "seeing as" to explore how reception of such iconicity must work with a language of illusion.

³¹ See Hans Vaihinger, The Philosophy of 'As If,' tr. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

signifier-signified relations—especially within the fictional realm. Drama also leaves us with the thematic implications about the illusory, role-playing nature (the “dramatistics”) of all symbols of our presumed realities or, conversely, the apparently realistic consequences of our illusory realms of make-believe. So, with each stage both affirming and denying its own “real” reality or having it denied by another stage, we move into infinite regress of illusions within illusions, or presence within presences—as the distinction between presence and illusion blurs before us. And we can move out from drama to discover our similar responses to the other poetic genres, as we observe the power given words to close together *as if* holding a presence within them: indeed, we can observe this about words or any other formal element that is pressed into service as a medium of aesthetic presentation in the struggle to bring to presentation what otherwise seemed to function as no more than self-effacing materials of representation.³²

But rather than be concerned about whether the event in question involves a Danish prince or a non-union actor from Sheboygan (clearly, he is both, and much more³³), or occupied with how easily one might suppose a bush from a bear—both of which perpetuate ontological and epistemological concerns—I’d

³² Murray Krieger, “Both Sides Now,” Words About Words About Words: Theory, Criticism, and the Literary Text (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 198.

³³ As Nelson Goodman has pointed out, “the object before me is a man, a swarm of atoms, a complex of cells, a fiddler, a friend, a fool,” and so on. See his Languages of Art (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), p. 6.

like to abandon such concerns altogether and adopt a new key.³⁴

The concerns of this new key are neither ontological nor epistemological but, rather, anthropological and ethical, which is to say occupied with human expression and form-making and with human judgment and conduct as embodied in the variety of symbolic forms and cultural characteristics produced through such expression and making. To focus on fiction as something made is a way of calling attention to the making itself as a purposive activity, a performance, or a gesture exemplifying human concern thereby reminding us, as Frank Kermode has written, "it is ourselves we are encountering whenever we invent fictions."³⁵

The truth of fiction is an ethical truth which is based in and which exploits the power of metaphor. It asserts, in other words, that two or more times, places, persons, or what have you, are identical and can co-exist in their relationship of identity while at the same time maintaining their self-identity. As Hazard Adams has suggested:

The coexistence of the mutually incompatible, when identified with the fictive, suggests that the fictive has something in common with metaphor.

In the trope, a third term is implied as a contrary to the negation

³⁴ Those interested in an extended and sophisticated analysis of these issues should see Kendall Walton, Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). I have, incidentally, borrowed the phrase and idea of a "new key" from Susanne K. Langer's book, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (New York: Mentor, 1951).

³⁵ Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (New York: Oxford UP, 1967), pp. 38-9.

sameness/difference. A metaphor insists on sameness and difference at the same time. In this view of metaphor, it is not merely a pleasant decoration or a momentary deception that covers over a fundamental difference, nor is a mystical assertion of the same, negating difference. Rather, it is an expression of an ethical state of identity. The term "identity" is for this purpose a double term that implies individual identity or difference while at the same time it can be said that this identity may be identical with something else. Clearly we are not speaking here ontologically but rather have moved to the ethical, which is antithetical to the ontological view. That is, we would be crazy to claim that two things in nature clearly separate and distinct are also the same. But ethically it might make a good deal of sense to claim that they are both the same and different, as does metaphor.³⁶

So thanks to its fundamentally metaphorical nature, fiction makes it possible for the forest of Arden and a Seattle stage to co-exist both temporally and spatially; it allows us as audience to be both Ganymede and ourselves—and her/him, us. Not animated by a compulsion for fact, nor subject to external proof, fiction demands not explanation but, rather, participation. The very structure of theatrical performance strongly implies this by its very public context: it is a communal process of experience of and inquiry into human values and

³⁶ Hazard Adams, "An Antithetical Turn," Why Literature Matters (forthcoming), article proof page 3.

investments that forges (a provisional) community in that process. But more, it demands of us a kind of intimate participation that involves an imaginary transposition of the self into otherness and an accommodation of otherness into ourselves, but always maintaining a tension in the act of copulation that disallows synthesis.³⁷ In his recent work The Fictive and the Imaginary, Wolfgang Iser considers this aspect of fictive acts as a kind of heuristic “boundary-crossing” which makes “inroads into existing versions of the world” in order to “open up for ourselves what we are otherwise barred from.”³⁸ Ultimately I will argue that such poetic movement, based on imaginative sympathy and reciprocity, cultivates intimacy—whether between one and other, or hearth and cosmos—and provides a model for human conduct. Again, Oscar Wilde’s Cyril and Vivian come to mind with the idea that, in this sense, life imitates art—or would do well to.

In effect, then, fiction encourages us to see, feel, and think double, and in so doing enlarges human capacities by breaking down stock notions and habits (a process that people like Shklovsky and Brecht have described as “defamiliarization” or “estrangement”) and opening spaces of play to the range of the possible. Shelley understood this when he wrote that poetry “awakens and

³⁷ I should note here that the anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl has written specifically about “participation” in this sense. In his studies of the north-Brazilian Trumai tribe, he claims that these individuals see objects, beings, and other external phenomena as at once identical with themselves and as something other than themselves. See his Primitive Mentality, tr. Lilian A. Clare (Boston: Beacon, 1966).

³⁸ Wolfgang Iser, The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. xiv-xv, 303.

enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. . . . and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar;" and further "creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration."³⁹ With fictions we are compelled to construct other worlds and in so doing are forced to cast familiar worlds into relief, simultaneously mapping out new perspectives for living. Writing expressly about such heuristic value, Michael L. Quinn has called the theater

a kind of institution for concrete social experiments, a place where different attitudes toward life, different values, different strategies for the solution of problems, get played out for public evaluation. And the point of the public experiment is not to allow the audience to walk away with certainty that their lives are perfect; rather, the point is to ask people to constantly re-evaluate their most basic assumptions and impulses. The theater offers us important ways to think about our world, to experience other, possible worlds, and to do so in a public context that encourages us to work out our opinions about behavior with other members of our social world.⁴⁰

³⁹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), pp. 519, 528.

⁴⁰ Michael L. Quinn, Appendix "A," in John R. Wolcott and Michael L. Quinn, Staging Diversity: Plays and Practice in American Theater, (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1992), p. 430.

Fiction is always, therefore, revolutionary. For not only does it call received orders and worlds into question, demanding always to be remade, but further exercises the imagination—itself an ethical instrument and the well-spring of revolution. Though speaking about the function of utopia, Paul Ricoeur might as well be speaking about these constituents of fiction when he asks:

May we not say then that the imagination itself . . . has a constitutive role in helping us to rethink the nature of our social life? Is not utopia [read fiction]—this leap outside—the way in which we radically rethink what is family, what is consumption, what is authority, what is religion, and so on? Does not the fantasy of an alternative society and its exteriorization ‘nowhere’ work as one of the most formidable contestations of what is?⁴¹

This contestation is an ethical opposition to received orders and worlds which threaten to negate all life by fixing meaning and value. This is true of all art, but unusually evident in the theater, which, in its activity of continually making and remaking worlds, amounts to a constant revolt against established order. It is for this reason that Shelley called poets the “unacknowledged legislators of the world,” or that, as Adorno has suggested, “The driving force of art may not be naturalistic imitation at all but protest against reification.”⁴²

Some will be quick to point out that there are only a limited amount of possibilities for a limited amount of languages—each with limited vocabularies;

⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur, Lectures on Ideology and Utopia (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 16.

⁴² Theodor Adorno, Aesthetic Theory, tr. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 449.

and, that while art appears to be a schema for freedom, it is bound to the particular cultural systems that govern meaning. This is correct up to a point, but it should be emphasized that first, those cultural systems are built by those languages; and second, those systems are indeed changed by those languages. Such systems, then, are neither necessarily nor sufficiently oppressive. Art as a schema for freedom is constituted through the human ability to reshape those received languages and transform them by putting them to new combinations (as I stated in my introduction, such acts of copulation have the power to produce something new as a result of the union)—thereby liberating life by humanizing it, or as Murray Krieger has written, by “making it fit for human habitation.”⁴³ On this apparent anthropological need for form-making and play, Krieger elaborates:

This is the ultimate humanistic formalism, one that emphasizes not man’s general power to make forms for his world but his power as poet to remake his world by remaking his language into a newly made object. Such an act requires him to accept his bondage to a routinely received language and a routinely received world, but only so that he can work to assert his freedom to reshape both. . . . But he can remake language only by struggling with it, forcing his organic purpose upon it to defeat the mechanistic tendencies he finds in its dead forms that he picks up from others.⁴⁴

⁴³ Murray Krieger, Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 163.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-31.

Like the best educations, then, these systems become (to paraphrase a line from Blake's poem "Jerusalem") ones with which one must strive in order to deliver individuals from those systems. Indeed this is the tack taken by feminists such as Judith Butler and Donna Haraway, who, like W. B. Yeats, have turned to theatrical and tropological models of self-creation.⁴⁵ Finally, many will hasten to remind that art—rarely revolutionary—frequently confirms the prevailing order, upholding or valorizing the power of those in authority. Clearly such things need to be addressed when vile and vigorously evident, yet too much attention has the tendency to give that very authority the kind of life that a fan gives a fire. I therefore find it more critically advantageous to rather find and share the human investments manifest in art's gestures and the ways in which these investments offer contraries to orders that would tyrannize or negate. This contrariety is found in the copulation and conflict of metaphor, fiction's most rudimentary constituent, to which I now turn.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Judith Butler "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Theatre Journal 20:3 (Winter 1988): 518-36; Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149-181; W. B. Yeats, "Estrangement," The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 311-36.

Metaphor

Of the soul is the word that increases itself.
—Heraclitus

In the last several decades or so there has been an unusually potent interest in metaphor, particularly as the guiding questions of inquiry in a variety of disciplines have shifted from epistemological questions to linguistic questions. Indeed, the study of metaphor has become central to such inquiry—proving a fertile topic for philosophy, anthropology, the arts, and even the sciences. Despite this recent boom of interest, however, much of what is being said about metaphor is not so new. In fact many of today's most prominent ideas about metaphor come from Aristotle's initial theorizing in both the Poetics and the Rhetoric. Some of those ideas are inadequate, many simply misguided, but all nonetheless pervasive.

First, it is important to know that Aristotle conceives of metaphor as a matter of denomination; hence, for him, metaphor operates at the level of the word and not at the level of the sentence or of discourse. Of all Aristotle's remarks on metaphor, he posits for it two main characteristics, both of which have been carried over into subsequent discussions: deviation and transference. Aristotle first assumes a distinction between the so-called literal and figurative uses of language in his discussions of *enargeia* and *energeia*, or clear diction and vivified diction. Metaphor, of course, belongs to the latter. As such, he then

defines it in terms of a deviation from literal usage, employed in order “to prevent the diction from being ordinary and mean.”⁴⁶ Thus began the tradition of rhetoric that viewed tropes as decoration and delectation for the purposes of persuasion and culminated in monuments like the apocryphal Rhetorica Ad Herennium and Quintilian’s De Institutione Oratoria Libri Duodecim. It is important to note here that, in Aristotle’s view, so-called literal language assumes a priority over figurative language in the same way that the existential world does over the fictive in Aristotelian mimesis. Like the given “world,” literal language is deemed prior and truthful, while so-called figurative language is deemed derivative and deceitful, albeit with pragmatic uses.

The second main attribute of Aristotle’s metaphor is its principle of transference. This principle actually has two closely related varieties, borrowing and substitution—both of which amount to aspects of denomination (though Aristotle’s distinctions and examples are left somewhat vague). As for the principle of borrowing, Aristotle writes: “Metaphor is the transference of a name from the object to which it has a natural application; this transference can take place from genus to species or species to genus or from species to species or by analogy.”⁴⁷ This principle is for him a predominantly technical matter: a denomination made by borrowing a term from its proper and originary domain (where it has “literal” meaning) and applying it to a domain where it then

⁴⁶ Aristotle, Poetics, tr. Leon Golden (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1981), p. 37.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

becomes "figurative." He provides the example, "This ship of mine stands there," taking "anchors" as a species of standing. Along the same lines but more radical is the idea of substitution, in which the ordinary term is absent but implied through a term derived from an alien domain. He provides the example "wineless cup" as a metaphor for the shield of Ares, the alien domain being that of Dionysus. In these last cases, however, metaphor conveys "instead of" meaning as opposed to "as well as," or what Owen Barfield has called "concomitant," meaning.⁴⁸ In every case, Aristotelian metaphor refers to "something else" and must do so in a clear and obvious manner.

Aristotle valorizes metaphor for its ability to serve diction (*lexis*) and style, whose perfection presumably breeds virtue. But of particular interest is a passage where he praises metaphor not for its capacity to enhance discourse through enlivened diction, but for its capacity as a cognitive instrument:

It is a great thing, indeed, to make a proper use of the poetical forms, as also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor [*to metaphoricon einai*, to be metaphorical]. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from other; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor [*eu metaphérein*, to metaphorize well] implies an intuitive perception of similarity in dissimilars.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See Owen Barfield, "The Meaning of the Word 'Literal'," *Metaphor and Symbol*, eds. L. C. Knights and Basil Cottle (London: Butterworths Scientific Publications, 1960), pp. 48-63.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, tr. Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 38. I've taken this passage from the Bywater translation as I prefer his rendering over other popular translations for its invocation of an other and a sense of copulation: "similarity *in* dissimilars."

In the Rhetoric, where Aristotle shifts his emphasis from the poet to the reader, this notion of metaphor as a cognitive instrument gets developed further. In his discussion of *Asteia* (Urbanities) from Book 3, Aristotle remarks that "Metaphor most brings about learning," by "bringing-before-the-eyes" [*pro ommaton poiein*, or visualization] and by conveying things as "engaged in an activity."⁵⁰ He consistently remarks on how the audience of metaphor "sees" something in a new or different way than the way that habit offers and thus comes remarkably close to anticipating later discussions of defamiliarization. Consistent too in his diction is the notion that metaphor implies movement; indeed, it should be noted that the word metaphor itself implies movement: *meta-pherein*, to carry over. With respect to such movement, Arthur Danto has pointed out that "metaphors achieve what catharsis is supposed to achieve in the experience of tragic art": a moving or *troping* of cognition and/or emotion.⁵¹ But despite these few declarations of metaphor's heuristic power, Aristotle's view of metaphor remains extremely limiting in its opposition and subordination to literal meaning. And yet, by and large, his is still the most pervasive and influential view of metaphor.

Other popular translations of the final line are S. H. Butcher's "an eye for resemblances" and Leon Golden's "the ability to see essential similarities."

⁵⁰ Aristotle, On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse, tr. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 244; 245; 248.

⁵¹ Arthur Danto, "Metaphor and Cognition," Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1992), p. 78.

Today metaphor has garnered quite an impressive collection of emissaries, yet the overwhelming majority of their theorizing tends mainly in two distinct directions—both in some ways still wrestling with Aristotle. Leading the charge in one direction, Jacques Derrida has, following Nietzsche, declared all meaning metaphorical—indeed he claims no such thing as literal meaning. Yet, like Aristotle, Derrida maintains a view of metaphor as essentially substitutive—endlessly so—and therefore without any real constitutive power of its own.⁵² Derrida, however, must in fact posit an *idea* of literal meaning in order to show its impossibility. For Derrida's followers, then, this view incites a tragic failure of language and all that language makes. Witness, for instance, Paul de Man: "It is the distinct privilege of language to hide meaning behind a misleading sign, as when we hide rage or hatred behind a smile. But it is the distinctive curse of all language as soon as any kind of interpersonal relation is involved, that it is forced to act in this way."⁵³ In this way, then, de Man carries on the position held in the empiricist tradition whose view of tropes has been most famously stated by John Locke:

[I]f we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the

⁵² See Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," Margins of Philosophy, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 209-271.

⁵³ Paul de Man, Blindness and Insight (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 11.

judgment, and so indeed are perfect cheats; and, therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them. . . . It is evident how much men love to deceive and be deceived, since rhetoric, that powerful instrument of error and deceit, has its established professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great reputation.⁵⁴

Both Derrida and de Man render language incompetent, or competent only in deceit, by assuming some fixed entity independent of it of which it can only then be an inadequate sign. As Derrida has stated in one of his most notorious passages (on Rousseau's Confessions): "[T]here have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the "real" supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus to infinity. . . ."⁵⁵ In other words, for Derrida: metaphors of metaphors of metaphors.

⁵⁴ John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 268. I use this example in particular as De Man himself "deconstructs" Locke in his essay "Semiology and Rhetoric," also contained in Critical Theory Since Plato, pp. 1174-1182.

⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, tr. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 159.

On the other extreme, Donald Davidson has declared that there is no such thing as figurative language and that all metaphors possess *only* their literal meaning. In his quite uncompromising view, Davidson avers:

(My) thesis is that metaphors means what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more . . . a metaphor doesn't say anything beyond its literal meaning (nor does its maker say anything, in using the metaphor, beyond the literal) . . . as much of metaphor as can be explained in terms of meaning may, and indeed must, be explained by appeal to the literal meanings of words.⁵⁶

To say that a man is a pig (to use Davidson's own example) is not to deceive but simply to arrange the facts about a particular man in a particular way. His is a nominalism where the metaphorical utterance performs an illocutionary act. His emphasis on literality doesn't require that one need be Odysseus speaking to his mates on Circe's island to call a man a pig, but merely requires agreement on the part of the interpreter as per the said arrangement of facts. Davidson doesn't deny the possibility of metaphorical truth *per se*, but he does deny it semantically. Both Davidson and Derrida share the lack of a sufficient notion of conflict as part and parcel of their theories and so are haunted, fundamentally, by a negating opposition. Each, in imprisoning metaphor within the old literal/figurative debate, privileges one side of the declared opposition and then suppresses or obliterates the other. Each conceives all meaning, then, in a

single way (Derrida concerning himself with the genesis of determinate meaning and Davidson with interpretation) and each miss the bounty of metaphor's ethical offerings.

Before I launch into my own claims for metaphor, I should pause to acknowledge that thus far I have been using metaphor as a generic term for all tropes, and as a distinctly linguistic phenomenon. So will I continue to do with the former, addressing specific cases (synecdoche and irony, for example) as needed in the course of analysis; as for the latter, I find that, particularly when discussing the hybrid art of theater, metaphor operates not only in the linguistic domain, but also in the visual, gestural, musical, and other domains employed by the theater, so metaphor is operating in a whole range of registers simultaneously. Staging the characters of The Merchant of Venice in contemporary business dress, for example, exemplifies the formation of one possible metaphor as the claim of a relationship of identity between the world of the play and contemporary off-stage life through a concrete visual presence made through metaphorical predication. (Of course staging the same play in costume appropriate to sixteenth century Venice and Belmont works in an identical fashion, but with different claims to identity.) In another register, the character of Shylock can function—in addition to a merchant and a moneylender—as a trope of, say, empathy. I hasten to remind that I am by no

⁵⁶ Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 245-6, 256-7.

means using metaphor as substitution, but as an act and process of bringing two or more things into a specific and tensive intimacy.

Historically speaking, the claim of metaphor's fundamentality finds its earliest explicit partisan in the eighteenth-century with the rhetorician of Naples, Giambattista Vico. Vico considered the earliest humans to be poets, which is to say *makers*, who shaped their world by imagining concretely according to what Vico called "poetic logic." The corollaries of this poetic logic are tropes, (Vico presents four master tropes: metaphor, "the most luminous, and therefore the most necessary and frequent" of tropes, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony) which he views, contra-Locke, as "necessary modes of expression," governing both consciousness and culture-making.⁵⁷ Vico, in effect, offers a theory of human nature grounded on the metaphorical nature of language:

[W]hen we wish to give utterance to our understanding of spiritual things, we must seek aid from our imagination to explain them and, like painters, form human images of them. But these theological poets . . . did the opposite and more sublime thing: they attributed senses and passions . . . to bodies, and to bodies as vast as sky, sea, and earth.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, tr. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 131. It should also be noted that the phases of movement in Vico's tropological consciousness and culture bear a real and strong resemblance to later four-fold versions of the same; well-known examples include Hegel's substantial, individual, universal, and conversion; Freud's condensation, displacement, representation, and secondary revision; Marx's elementary, extended, generalized, and absurd; and Jean Piaget's sensorimotor, representational, operational, and logical.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

So for Vico's ancient poets, Jove does not "stand for" the sky, nor Neptune for the sea; they *are* the sky and the sea—thunder an action of Jove's body, waves an action of Neptune's—made so by the trope. And through the trope, Vico's poets unite the commonplace division between language and thought as their imaginations body forth and give shape, as Shakespeare's Theseus says, to the forms of things unknown. Language here is not deceitful, nor signficatory, but creative—creative of the forms through which a people conceive of their world and build their cultures. As Vico continues:

[Man] in his ignorance makes himself the rule of the universe . . . as rational metaphysics teaches that man becomes all things by understanding them (*homo intelligendo fit omnia*), this imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by not understanding them (*homo non intelligendo fit omnia*); and perhaps the latter proposition is truer than the former, for when a man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.⁵⁹

Irony, of course, provides an instance of a situation where the trope exemplifies a cognizance and familiarity with, rather than an ignorance of, the said universe (Vico in fact claims that it arises later, "after the period of reflection"). Metaphor, however, establishes and entitles felt and imagined identities and provides the

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 129-30.

means through which identification occurs between the feeling and imagining body and the body made in the figure. Such identification appears as the hallmark of much so-called “primitive” thought—from Vico’s ancient poets, all the way to Lévi-Strauss’s *bricoleur*—but need not necessarily be reserved for such. Following the line of thinking on metaphor led by Vico, and traveled by Herder and Shelley, Ernst Cassirer has attempted to extend the scope of metaphorical identification as a function of all language. As Cassirer writes:

[F]or mythic thinking there is much more in metaphor than a bare ‘substitution,’ a mere rhetorical figure of speech; that what seems to our subsequent reflection as a sheer transcription is mythically conceived as a genuine and direct identification. In the light of this basic principle of mythic metaphor we can grasp and understand, somewhat more clearly, what is commonly called the metaphorical function of language. Even Quintillian pointed out that this function does not constitute any *part* of speech, but that it governs and characterizes all human talk; *paene quidquid loquimur figura est*. But if this is indeed the case—if metaphor in this general sense, is not just a certain development of speech, but must be regarded as one of its essential conditions—then any effort to understand its function leads us back, once more, to the fundamental form of verbal conceiving.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, tr. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1946), pp. 94-5.

My point, extending Cassirer, is to take metaphor not only as an essential condition and fundamental form of verbal conceiving but as an essential condition of all human expression, and therefore as the fundamental form of theatrical conceiving.

I should pause again, however, to briefly recognize others who have extended the role of metaphor beyond its received status as a mere figure of speech. Perhaps the most magnanimous position in this regard belongs to Emmanuele Tesauro who, in 1655, penned a large categorical index and how-to manual for metaphor. The book, whose shortened title, Il cannocchiale aristotelico (The Aristotelian Telescope), offers the view that the entire world and everything in it is a metaphor—with God as the supreme witticist. Metaphor (in a nod to Tesauro's countryman Galileo, who nearly fifty years earlier had built the first astronomically correct telescope) is, in fact, the Aristotelian Telescope: that which brings the far away near. In our own century, Stephen Pepper has argued that what he calls the various "world hypotheses" of the sciences boil down to six fundamental and paradigmatic (in the Kuhnian sense) "root metaphors;" Hayden White, following Vico and Pepper, has made similar claims for historiography; psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (following Roman Jakobson's "poles" of language) has claimed metaphor and metonymy as the fundamental processes of his linguistically structured subconscious; and cognitive scientist and linguist George Lakoff, with philosopher Mark Johnson, has argued that metaphor

governs cognition, imagination, and emotion—and so action, meaning, and morals—and therefore governs the way we live.⁶¹

I'd like now to offer my working definition of metaphor, outlining the claims I make for it, and describing both how it works and how it extends—or carries over—outside the text, performance, or *mise-en-scène*. I will purposely keep my definition of metaphor as capacious as possible, tending less to what a metaphor *is*—for such a pursuit will not likely lead to an enrichment of our responses to the languages of art—and focusing in greater detail on what metaphor *does*.

In the broadest terms I define metaphor as an elemental *fiction*—essentially what Vico meant when he called metaphor a “fable in brief,” or what Paul Ricoeur (interpreting Monroe Beardsley on metaphor) meant by calling metaphor a “poem in miniature.”⁶² To be sure, metaphor, like fiction, is a *making*: a locus of imaginative and material activity where meaning takes place. Specifically, the activity of metaphor is copulation: an act or process of joining

⁶¹ No English translation of Tesauro exists. See Emmanuele Tesauro, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (Venice: Baglioni, 1968); Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Roman Jakobson “The Metaphorical and Metonymic Poles,” *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), pp. 1041-1044; Jacques Lacan “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud,” *Écrits*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 146-178; and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). By far the most comprehensive study of metaphor is Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, tr. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John Costello, SJ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977). Another useful collection is Mark Johnson's (ed.) *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), which includes distinguished essays by I. A. Richards, Max Black, Paul Henle and John Searle, among others, and an annotated bibliography.

⁶² Vico, *The New Science*, p. 129; Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, p. 94.

two or more things into a specific and tensive intimacy. I use the word tensive because I view the copulation of metaphor as harbor to a particular kind of strife or conflict that is constituted by the continued interaction between semantic congruence and incongruence or competing meanings—in short, among identities. In language, metaphor is most commonly recognized in this act of conflictual copulation by the presence or implication of the verb *to be*, as in “All the world’s a stage/And all the men and women merely players.” (Keeping in mind that, as Paul Ricoeur is fond of saying, “The metaphorical ‘is’ at once signifies both ‘is not’ and ‘is like.’”⁶³) In this typical conjunction, a claim is made whereby the involved subjects are understood and experienced in terms of each other—the resultant meaning being a product, not a synthesis, of the interaction. Additionally, (and more commonly, according to Christine Brooke-Rose⁶⁴), one can find other metaphorical families such as “the A of B” (“the hostel of the heart”), and “the A B” (“her brave face”) couplings. The achievements of these joinings are many; but of metaphor’s abundant brood, I will concentrate for characterization’s sake on four faces: 1) Participation, 2) Invention, 3) Identification, and 4) Organization. These faces correlate with four elements of poetic logic—1) Conflict, 2) Play, 3) Gesture, and 4) Style, and combine to incorporate my major claims for metaphor and the ways in which it bears upon imaginative and erotic experience—both of which ultimately pertain to the

⁶³ Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor, p. 7. Ricoeur rephrases this claim frequently throughout the book.

⁶⁴ Christine Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor (London: Secker and Warburg, 1958).

ethical. In the remainder of this chapter, I will sketch out my claims for metaphorical participation, invention, identification, and organization, deferring explication of conflict, play, gesture, and style to my direct discussions of various forms of theatrical conceiving in the Poetic Logic section below.

Participation. Upon its attendants, metaphor imposes a labor. By occasioning the copulation of words or images from different contexts—each bearing their own web of associations—metaphor “rouses the faculties to act” and invites us to participate in that simultaneous performance by figuring out the point of the coupling. In the words of Murray Krieger, the bearer of the metaphor wrenches us out of our context and into his, unmakes our pattern by making us construct his, by deviating from the commonplaces, the norms, that are the generic meanings that we bring as our context of expectations to his fictional configuration. It is the jarring and the disturbance that force us to construct patterns that are at variance with our own (as well as with patterns of the generic convention, of course) and which we did not know we could apprehend until we have done so under his guidance.⁶⁵

Part of the labor demanded by metaphor is a call to confer with our own cultural encyclopedia and range of experience. To say, for example, that someone is radiant demands that we recognize the identities of both that someone and of radiance; the concomitant meaning of this particular interaction might be an

⁶⁵ Murray Krieger, *Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 186-87.

identification of anything from that person's emotional warmth to their ability to excite photosynthesis in geraniums. But another part of the labor demanded by metaphor is a call to exercise our imaginations, to stretch beyond our cultural encyclopedia and experience, particularly when the metaphorical coupling (to paraphrase Dr. Johnson) violently yokes heterogeneous objects (as in, say, Lautréamont's famous figuring of beauty as the chance encounter, on an operating table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella). In any case, the achievement of meaning requires an entrance into dialogue and negotiation—both with ourselves and with the metaphor—and the labor our of participation delivers a concomitant third meaning which is the fictive meaning, or the meaning *made* by the metaphor and by our participation.

But in addition to the achievement of meaning, the participation demanded by metaphor results in the achievement of a kind of intimacy. I borrow this idea from University of Chicago philosopher Ted Cohen who uses the analogy of jokes to illustrate how “getting” a metaphor, like “getting” a joke, requires a shared foundation of knowledge.⁶⁶ That shared foundation, according to Cohen, marks the acknowledgment of a provisional community that, in turn, establishes a provisional intimacy between teller and hearer. Clearly, there are instances when metaphors (and jokes) foment exclusion or quandary rather than community, distance rather than intimacy. In the communities and intimacies

⁶⁶ Ted Cohen, “Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy,” On Metaphor, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 1-10.

offered in fictions, however, the exclusions, quandaries, and distances that act as stumblingblocks often serve (as Sigurd Burckhardt has suggested⁶⁷) as cornerstones of a work's fullness and complexity. On the other hand, there are surely communities and intimacies which one might prefer to avoid. As Cohen reminds:

Intimacy sounds like a good thing, and I have been urging attention to the use of metaphor in its cultivation. It is not, however, an invariably friendly thing, nor is it intended to be. Sometimes one draws near another in order to deal a penetrating thrust. When the device is a hostile metaphor or a cruel joke requiring much background and effort to understand, it is all the more painful because the victim has been made complicitor in his own demise. Do not, therefore, suppose that jokes are always for shared amusement, or metaphors always for communal insight. Some of the most instructive examples will be the ones in which intimacy is sought as a means to a lethal and one-sided effect. I leave the construction of examples to you.⁶⁸

Without the labor of participation, however, one cannot adequately adjudicate among possible communities and intimacies. The question a poetics must put to its examples inquires as to the nature of the participation demanded, and the character of the community and intimacy cultivated by the metaphor.

⁶⁷ Sigurd Burckhardt, "Notes on the Theory of Intrinsic Interpretation," Shakespearean Meanings (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 289.

⁶⁸ Cohen, "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy," pp. 9-10.

Invention. Challenges to existing metaphorical coherences and organizational rubrics have a revolutionary character. By forging new couplings in new metaphors, fresh associations are born that can revolutionize old patterns fixed through habit, thus reorganizing the way we think about things and so act with regard to them. Breaking these coherences typically leads to anomie, the overall state of disorder caused by the process of change in the social (or semantic) order, but it is with such ruptures to these fundamental, organizing paradigms that new paradigms emerge. This has been remarked upon famously by Thomas Kuhn with regard to the history of science, but also with regard to the history of art and ideas generally by Jean Duvignaud, who sees anomie as an “important factor in the creation of new human possibilities,” and notes that “it should be pointed out that the great creative periods nearly all coincide with such upheavals.”⁶⁹ Metaphor, then, as the principle mechanism of imagination and understanding, is the well-spring of revolution.

Like the interaction of egg and sperm, the principal efficacy of metaphor is its creative, formative power. As I have put forward, it cultivates intimacy, creates identity, and enables understanding; it creates new meanings and invents new patterns for thought and action. As Lakoff and Johnson explain:

New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. This can begin to happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of a

⁶⁹ Jean Duvignaud, *The Sociology of Art*, tr. Timothy Wilson (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 59. See also Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it. If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to. Much of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones. . .

. It is reasonable enough to assume that words alone don't change reality. But changes in our conceptual system do change what is real for us and affect how we perceive the world and act upon those perceptions.⁷⁰

To be sure, metaphors can only begin with the inherited loam left by old metaphors; they are invented from each other and through each other in the way that M. C. Escher's well-known Drawing Hands create each other: one drawing hand is made by the drawing hand that it draws. In time, any new innovation becomes convention and the sediment upon which newer realities and worlds will be made. This activity must be a playful, ceaseless, and prolific one if culture is to remain alive and sensitive to the needs of those who compose it. My point is that these makings begin with metaphor: the word, as my epigraph from Heraclitus suggests, that "increases itself."

⁷⁰ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 145-46. On this topic, see also George Lakoff, Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Also relevant here is Erich Auerbach's essay "Figura," which attempts to show "how a word may grow into an historical situation and give rise to structures that will be effective for many centuries." See Erich Auerbach, Scenes From the Drama of European Literature (New York: Meridian, 1959), pp. 11-76.

Identification. Above I remarked that in addition to copulation, metaphor is a matter of predication. So being, the chief claim made by metaphor is one of identity. Though it is a passionately contested topic these days, identity, in its most common sense, typically entails specificity or (as the etymology of the word suggests) essence. Metaphor gives concrete expression to what is specific and essential about a given thing or act in a given context or situation and so confers identity by asserting that germaneness. When, for example, Macbeth predicates life as a "walking shadow," and "a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/Signifying nothing," he gives life an identity which, not surprising for someone near the end of a killing spree, seems tragically apt. But while Macbeth's metaphor creates an identity for life, it does so through identification with something other. This act of identification, accordingly, entails a simultaneous bestowal of individuality *and* an assimilation of kinship, which connects, associates, and intimately involves that other. As respondents, we must be able to individually identify the components that compose life, *and* those that compose walking shadows (itself a metaphorical construction) and the furious tales of an idiot in whatever fashion imagination and experience allows. Ultimately, we are invited to hold these various identities together in a single thought and witness, *in* their interaction and *through* their differences (again, not in synthesis), the conception of a new identity produced *by* their copulation.

Circumscribed within this act of identification is the provision of perspective. As Kenneth Burke puts it:

Metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else. It brings out a thisness of a that, and a thatness of a this. If we employ the word 'character' as a general term for whatever can be thought of as distinct (any thing, pattern, situation, structure, nature, person, object, act, role, process, event, etc.,) then we could say that metaphor tells us something about one character as considered from the point of view of another character. And to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a *perspective* upon A.⁷¹

It should be noted, however, that the perspective provided by metaphorical identification is not simply B upon A. Metaphor encourages rather a double and curious perspective, for it demands that we entertain both perspectives simultaneously: B upon A, but also A upon B. It is for this reason that W. Bedell Stanford has declared that metaphor cultivates "stereoscopic vision."⁷²

But more significantly, metaphor's act of identification articulates relationship. Not only do we obtain a particular attitude or point of view from the metaphorical identification, but we also receive a sense of the character of the association it forges through its coupling. The character of these various associations is expressed in the act of bestowal. By bestowal I refer to the bequeathing of value or entitlement that occurs in the act of identifying the terms

⁷¹ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 503-4.

⁷² W. Bedell Stanford, *Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 105.

of the metaphor. For example, on one hand, to bestow someone's ardor as a whirlwind (as in "the whirlwind of her passion") is to predicate a relationship on, say, wild nature and the unpredictable. On the other hand, to bestow someone's ardor as clockwork (as in "the clockwork of her passion"), predicates a relationship on the engineered and the calculatingly predictable. Both "whirlwind" and "clockwork" have identities which include movement; but whereas clockwork suggests the rote and measured movement of a machine, whirlwind suggests the indeterminate movement of a living being—incidentally, a relationship of respect which Martin Buber calls an "I-Thou" relationship.⁷³

But these relations extend to our reception and our relationship with the metaphor and the fictive act as a whole. Part of our commitment as respondents is to identify—emotionally, imaginatively, and erotically—with the identification that takes place in the metaphor. Metaphor is, after all, "always trying to tell us something about our relations to the other and the relations of one other to another," as Hazard Adams insists.⁷⁴ And, if we are perceptive and empathic readers, auditors, and viewers, we participate in the same identities, perspectives, and relationships, and our identification becomes part of the complete meaning of the metaphor. I would hasten to add, however, that, like metaphor, this identification maintains a conflictual double vision. Brecht, as is

⁷³ See Martin Buber, I and Thou, tr. Rev. Ronald Gregor Smith, B.D. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955).

⁷⁴ Hazard Adams, "The Dizziness of Freedom; or, Why I Read William Blake," Antithetical Essays in Literary Criticism and Liberal Education (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), p. 10.

well-known, theorized specifically on such a vision as a political necessity. Following Bedell Stanford and using diction to suggest the metaphorical, Brecht called this vision “binocular vision”—yet its purposes were intended to yield distance, not (tensive) intimacy.⁷⁵ On this point I believe Brecht to be mistaken, for the metaphorical, like Tesauro’s Aristotelian Telescope, brings the faraway near.

Indeed, metaphorical identification announces what may be an anthropological and ecological disposition to connect ourselves with others and with our environments. Clearly this is the case in ritual boundary crossings and rites of passage where metaphors and metaphorical identifications provide models for the symbolic action required for social adaptation. A salient example of this is the Japanese tea ceremony, where the natural world (tea) is metaphorically linked with the social world of gesture, design, and etiquette:

In my own hands I hold a bowl of tea: I see all of nature represented in its green color. Closing my eyes I find green mountains and pure water within my own heart. Silently sitting alone and drinking tea, I feel these become part of me.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Bertolt Brecht, “Binocular Vision in the Theatre: The Alienation Effect,” The Messingkauf Dialogues (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. 76-83.

⁷⁶ Taken from Soshitsu Sen, Tea Life, Tea Mind (New York: Weatherhill, 1979), and used as an epigraph for Benjamin N. Colby, “The Japanese Tea Ceremony: Coherence Theory and Metaphor is Social Adaptation,” in Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology, ed. James W. Fernandez (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 244-260.

Such identification may in fact be the animating ground for metaphor. As Northrop Frye (recalling Wallace Stevens) writes, "The motive for metaphor . . . is the desire to associate, and finally to identify, the human mind with what goes on outside it."⁷⁷

Today, the notion of identity is beset with contention. If a recent special issue of Critical Inquiry is any indication (and I believe it is), this contention remains confined within a very limited set of concerns—namely concerns focused on race, class, and gender.⁷⁸ One point, however, remains uncontested: identity and identification are contingent upon social grammars. As Charles Altieri remarks, "[I]dentity and identification depend on social grammars, and social grammars are woven into the work institutions do in fostering the specific content that we take on when we make identifications in terms of race, class, and gender."⁷⁹ This much is clear; but to stop there, Altieri continues, "is to ignore a great deal. This perspective must be complemented by another stance that focuses on what is involved in our forging identities out of those identifications by making articulate how and why we offer certain ways of acting as markers of who we want to be."⁸⁰ I take Altieri's injunction as a call to attend

⁷⁷ Northrop Frye, The Educated Imagination (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 33.

⁷⁸ I refer here to Critical Inquiry 18 (1992), devoted to the topic "Identities," and edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah. This issue was recently (1995) published as a book by Chicago University Press.

⁷⁹ Charles Altieri, Subjective Agency: A Theory of First-Person Expressivity and its Social Implications (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

more intimately to the bestowals of identity made by our metaphors, to the ways in which we identify with them, and finally to the ways in which these social grammars make available certain interpretations and choices and certain conditions for our involvement. I will add, however, that these social grammars are themselves deeply metaphorical and are in fact defined and organized by systems of metaphors—as I will show momentarily. Ultimately, I will argue that the conception of new identities, interpretations, choices, conditions for involvement—indeed new social grammars—begins with the making of new metaphors.

Organization. Over a century before Heidegger's now popular remark that "Language is the house of Being," Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote "Man thinks, feels, and lives within language alone and must be formed by it."⁸¹ I've already suggested that language itself is, to borrow Shelley's phrase, "vitally metaphorical;" what I'd now like to explore is how the shared foundations or social grammars that sanction our interpretation and understanding of languages (including those of painting, gesture, music, and so on) are metaphorical in nature, how metaphor organizes experience, and how it provides a means for thinking, feeling, and living.

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 1093; Wilhelm von Humboldt, Humanist Without Portfolio, tr. Marianne Cowan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 298.

The most detailed and extensive work exploring how metaphors organize experience has been done by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.⁶² What Lakoff and Johnson have shown is that metaphors ground the ordinary human conceptual system and so pervade our perception and behavior. These “metaphors we live by” provide a coherent base from which issue entire webs of belief—from which, in turn, proceed habits of action. The expression “I *spent* all night dancing” likely issues from a more fundamental expression: the metaphor TIME IS MONEY (I follow here Lakoff and Johnson’s procedure of expressing these fundamental metaphorical predications in capital letters). That single metaphor, too, may organize and help orient an entire system of expressions: “I don’t *have* enough time to *give*,” “He *invested* years in that dissertation,” and so on. Further, a culture may require *paying a debt* to society by *donating* time in a particular way; it may initiate *hourly* wages or plan *annual* budgets in accordance with such a metaphor. This predication accents certain things and provides the basis for certain coherent statements while it conceals others. While it emphasizes that time can be possessed and exchanged, it obscures its sense of energy and life. On the other hand, when Shakespeare’s Hector greets Nestor in Troilus and Cressida, he says, “Let me embrace thee, good old chronicle/That hast so long walk’d hand in hand with time,” thereby making the claim that TIME IS A PERSON, he accents time’s energy and life. (Shakespeare takes this

⁶² See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), and Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

trope of personification into a whole other dimension, of course, in The Winter's Tale, by making Time an actual character in the play.)

Many of the most common organizing structures provided by metaphors are spatial and are often rooted in basic physical and cultural experience. For instance, the orientational metaphors HAPPY IS UP/SAD IS DOWN provides coherence for a whole host of expressions: "We were in *high* spirits," "Her face always gives a *lift*," and so on; or, "He *fell* into a *deep* depression," "I'm feeling *down* today." Consider, too, how these emotional states often take figure in the body: erect posture is commonly identified with a positive emotional state, while sadness and depression frequently find figure in a slouched posture. And, if a culture equates happiness with the favorable and unhappiness with the unfavorable, it may produce fundamental metaphors like GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN, correlating basic values with spatial experience. These persistent predications can also extend and grow into combined forms as in the common orientational metaphor BIGGER IS BETTER, which proceeds from the coupling of GOOD IS UP and MORE IS UP. To be sure, these are simple examples and are not without their conflicts. Still, when they obtain in a particular linguistic community, they cultivate certain interpretive options that map out patterns for thinking, for expressing value and emotion, and for directing action.

Not only are these fundamental and organizational metaphors found in language, they can also pertain in other symbolic forms as well. Indeed, metaphor gives meaning to form itself. For instance, it is not uncommon for a

painting or piece of music to express joy or sadness, among other things. One can easily formulate metaphors for paintings such as, "Picasso's Guernica is violent," "Vermeer's View of Delft is calm," Van Gogh's Artist's Room is sad," or "Pollock's No. 14 is happy." One can say that a painting is sad because its lines may be weak or broken or because its tones are muted; likewise, one might consider a painting violent because its lines are sharp or its forms thrust into each other—both instances demonstrating metaphorically shared attributes of sadness. Analogously, one might feel somewhat bewildered or uneasy viewing the disjointed montage of a careening baby carriage in the Odessa Steps sequence of Eisenstein's Potempkin, thereby identifying cognitively and emotionally with the chaos of the narrative moment.⁸³ This kind of metaphorical "carrying over" is familiar in music, too, where minor keys are often said to express sadness, uptempo pieces are felt to be exhilarating, or compositions without tonal centers—as in twelve-tone or serial music—are found to be confusing. Clearly, these formal and stylistic elements have some kind of metaphorical equivalence—family resemblances, one might say—to the same concepts as otherwise expressed in language only they are "carried over" into a

⁸³ For thought on visual metaphors, see James Heffeman, "Resemblance, Signification, and Metaphor in the Visual Arts," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 44/2 (Winter 1985): 167-180; see also Virgil C. Aldrich, "Visual Metaphor," The Journal of Aesthetic Education 2, no.1 (1968): 73-86; and E.H. Gombrich, "Visual Metaphors of Value in Art," Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art (Oxford: Phaidon, 1963), pp. 12-29.

different domain.⁸⁴

Insofar as metaphors organize human cognition and emotion, they also provide a map for human conduct. It is as George Eliot declared in her novel Middlemarch, “[W]e all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them.” If one conceives fundamentally that ARGUMENT IS WAR, then one might *attack* an *opponent’s* position and *defend* his own—and may actually even emerge *victorious* or *devastated*. If one conceives that ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY, the conditions of the argument may take a different *course*: one might then *set out* to prove a thesis by *proceeding step-by-step*, finally *arriving* at a conclusion of some kind. How might Othello’s actions be based on a conception that LOVE IS AN OBJECT—to behold, to possess, to give or to lose—and how might they differ if animated by a conception that LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART?

The anthropological linguistic work of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf has shown that in cultures as diverse as Aztec, Pintupi, English, and Hopi, the habits of language influence patterns of behavior. As Whorf in particular has shown, the very conception of a situation does in fact direct action within the circumstances of that situation. In a series of analyses studying the start of fires and explosions, Whorf observed:

⁸⁴ Nelson Goodman, in particular, has spent a great deal of time exploring these issues. See especially Section II, “The Sound of Pictures” in Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), pp. 45-95.

Thus, around a storage of what are called "gasoline drums," behavior will tend toward a certain type, that is, great care will be exercised; while around a storage of what are called "empty gasoline drums," it will tend to be different—careless, with little repression of smoking or of tossing cigarette stubs about. Yet the "empty" drums are perhaps the more dangerous, since they contain explosive vapor. Physically the situation is hazardous, but the linguistic analysis according to regular analogy must employ the word 'empty,' which inevitably suggests a lack of hazard. The word 'empty' is used in two linguistic patterns: (1) as a virtual synonym for 'null and void, negative, inert,' (2) applied in analysis of physical situations without regard to, e.g., vapor, liquid vestiges, or stray rubbish in the container. The situation is named in one pattern (2) and the name is then "acted out" or "lived up to" in another (1), this being the general formula for the linguistic conditioning of behavior into hazardous forms.⁸⁵

For the most part, the organizational metaphors that authorize expression are unconscious, a matter of cultural conditioning, which may indeed prove to be the real source of danger—particularly as we may act naïvely on perverse and inhumane metaphors for things like labor, equality, freedom, and so on. Clearly these matter behoove our attention, for the "command of metaphor," as I. A.

⁸⁵ Benjamin Lee Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," in Critical Theory Since 1965, eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1990), p. 711.

Richards meditated, will be “the control of the world that we make for ourselves to live in.”⁸⁶

And yet, for all the coherence and organization of thought and action established by metaphor, it also—at the same time—offers a challenge to that very coherence and organization. This is, in part, due to the paradoxical “is/is not” structure of metaphor itself, though it regularly occurs by way of the trope of irony. Irony, of course, performs this challenge by calling convention into doubt or question. As Gary Handwerk puts it, “Irony is nothing more than a question designed to draw another subject into discussion of who and where one is.”⁸⁷ Its role is to break monopolies and provoke interrogation for the purposes of keeping alive an intellectual democracy that, in turn, may pave the way for a social one.

⁸⁶ I. A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 135.

⁸⁷ Gary Handwerk, Irony and Ethics in Narrative: From Schlegel to Lacan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 16.

Intimacy

Only through the joining, effected in language, of an
 'other' to an 'I' do there arise all the profounder and
 nobler feelings which motivate the whole man, which
 in friendship and in love and in every communion of mind
 make the connection between two things the loftiest and
 most intimate of all connections.
 --Wilhelm von Humboldt

Nothing in this world is single;
 All things by a law divine
 In one another's being mingle
 Why not I with thine?
 --Shelley, *Love's Philosophy*

Throughout the preceding pages, I have invoked intimacy repeatedly and implied as to its significance for a poetics. I have, for example, pronounced intimacy a result of the participatory demands made on the reader/auditor by both fiction and metaphor. With respect to the formal dimension of a work, I have also claimed intimacy as the consummation of metaphor's copulative mingling and identification with an other. I have further held that intimacy is exemplified in the pattern of connections established by the play of its various fictive constituents. In this, segment of my establishment of principles, I endeavor to provide sense and reference of the term intimacy and furnish a context for its use. Finally, I propose to extend and carry over my claims into the anthropological dimension of love and hence to identify what I consider the ethical implications of this poetics.

Though I will put closer reign on the term momentarily, I will first characterize intimacy broadly as the constitution of a provisional community and

use it to describe the various registers and levels of unity in a work and in the experience and cultural use of such a work. Intimacy should not strike one as too remote a principle for critical discourse. Indeed its kin—identified by familiar terms like empathy (*Selbst-Affektion, Einfühlung*), rapprochement, and intersubjectivity—have found great critical currency, particularly in the tradition of German romantic philosophy from Kant to Theodor Lipps, as well as in both the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions. With few exceptions, however, these traditions employ a diction of merging with which my principle of intimacy cannot go along.

This diction of merging is most extreme in the phenomenology of Georges Poulet whose notion of total merging may be the critical theorization of Rimbaud's famous ejaculation, "*JE est un autre.*" For Poulet, aesthetic experience foments an invasion of authorial consciousness on the reader to the point of complete immersion. Poulet, for example, describes the act of reading as "the act in which the subjective principle which I call *I*, is modified in such a way that I no longer have the right, strictly speaking, to consider it as my *I*. I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers, and acts within me."⁸⁸ But the intimacy suggested by Poulet's conception of the act of reading permits a loss of identity and interdependence among work and reader due to both its entrapment in the negating epistemological opposition of subject/object and its

⁸⁸ Georges Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading," *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 1149.

lack of a sufficient condition of conflict.

In the phenomenological tradition, Heidegger comes closer to the conflictual identity I intend for intimacy with his notion of aesthetic experience as conversation. Borrowing the poet Hölderlin's conception of intimacy (and sounding quite like Heraclitus), Heidegger considers the conversation of aesthetic experience a relation of "belonging" which "keeps things apart in opposition and thus at the same time binds them together," and which "occurs through the creation of a world and its ascent, and likewise through the destruction of a world and its decline."⁸⁹ This conflictual belonging, as Heidegger writes elsewhere:

carries the opponents into the source of their unity by virtue of their common ground. . . . [It] does not let the opponents break apart; it brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline. Truth establishes itself as a strife within a being that is to be brought forth only in such a way that the conflict opens up in this being, that is, this being is itself brought into the rift-design.⁹⁰

Though I do not subscribe to the political implications harbored elsewhere in Heidegger, I concur with his emphasis on conflict in aesthetic/ethical experience, particularly as it prevents the mastery that the extreme subjectivism of Poulet

⁸⁹ Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Language of Poetry," Critical Theory Since 1965, eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), p. 759.

⁹⁰ Martin Heidegger. "The Origin of the Work of Art," Poetry, Language, Thought, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 63.

promotes (or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, the mastery of objectivism as proposed in the interpretive contrivance of E. D. Hirsch⁹¹).

I would further concur with the notion—implicit in Heidegger, but positively explicit in Gadamer—that discourse and the systems of language which individuals use to define themselves and their worlds are finally social and require, therefore, entrance into dialogue in order to achieve meaning. Though he places less emphasis on conflict and more on play, this is essentially Gadamer's goal in his hermeneutic notion of the "fusion of horizons," which, like Heidegger's notion of conversation, cultivates intimacy under the name of community. As Gadamer remarks:

Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language. Something is placed in the center, as the Greeks say, which the partners in dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another. Hence reaching an understanding on the subject matter of a conversation necessarily means that a common language must first be worked out in the conversation. This is not an external matter of simply adjusting our tools; nor is it even right to say that the partners adapt themselves to one another but, rather, in a successful conversation they both come under the influence of the truth of the object and are thus bound to one another in a new community. To reach an

⁹¹ See E. D. Hirsch, "Objective Interpretation," Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), pp. 1100-1115.

understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but of being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were.⁹²

I cite this passage from Gadamer for in it I find two points particularly useful for my own conception of intimacy. First, I find valuable his notion that community depends upon engaged interdependence; and second, I find noteworthy his suggestion that this engagement has a creative, productive, or transformative element. Taken together, I find in Gadamer's formulation a movement toward an ecology of discourse, which is to say a view of discourse that addresses the interaction of entities among themselves and with their environments and elucidates how they "in one another's being mingle" and affect each other. Gadamer obviously focuses on "successful" interaction and so tacitly assumes some broad rules of communicative implicature—something akin to what Paul Grice has called the "cooperative principle."⁹³ The possibility of unsuccessful interaction notwithstanding, it remains to be said that the formation of community is not without its antinomy. As Ernst Cassirer reports:

⁹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, tr. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1991), pp. 378-79. Relevant here is Habermas's notion of communicative action; See Jürgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, vol. 1, tr. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). For further relevant study, see Lue Morgan Douthit, "Drama as Communicative Action." Diss. University of Washington, 1995.

⁹³ These are for Grice: 1) Provide as much information as possible; 2) Be truthful; 3) Be relevant; and 4) Be clear. See Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," Syntax and Semantics, eds. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975), pp. 41-58.

The philosophy of language is here confronted with the same dilemma as appears in the study of every symbolic form. The highest, indeed the only, task of all these forms is to unite men. But none of them can bring about this unity without at the same time dividing and separating men. Thus what was intended to secure the harmony of culture becomes the source of the deepest discords and discussions. This is the great antinomy of the religious life. This same dialectic appears in human speech. Without speech there would be no community of men. Yet there is no more serious obstacle to such community than the diversity of speech.⁹⁴

Clearly, a view of intimacy that eschews the antinomy is in danger of assuming a tyrannical position. This is perhaps most obvious in the case that would side solely with some kind of mystical and totalizing unity—the kind I have described as that which lacks conflict and synthesizes identity. But focus solely on diversity—though often meant to occasion a politics of recognition—is equally dangerous.

By and large, such a focus is the case in today's critical climate where, despite increasing interdisciplinary activity and the "blurring" of critical genres,⁹⁵ there is a profound suspicion of unity—at times, one might say, even a downright hostility. Particularly in the (still) popular critical orientations that operate under

⁹⁴ Ernst Cassirer, An Essay On Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 129-30.

⁹⁵ See Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought," Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 19-35.

the banner of poststructuralism, unity is seen if not as nostalgia or impossibility, then at least as (in Blake's phrase) the "cloak of folly." For example, in her union of poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, and Marxism, Julia Kristeva has rather uncharitably dubbed the unity of love "a narcissistic economy," finding in it only egocentricity and the will-to-possess.⁹⁶ The deconstructionists have been perhaps the most hostile group to the notion of unity, yet in practice deconstruction must presuppose and posit a fixed unity as a point of departure. Moreover, *différance*, the main principle of deconstruction, is but a fancy version of organic unity. As Richard Schusterman has pointed out in a critique of Derrida, "The deconstructive idea that everything is a product of its interrelations and differences from other things, that nothing has an independent or intrinsic nature, rests at bottom on the idea that all things are indeed ineluctably interconnected."⁹⁷ Less hostile but still suspicious of unity are the adherents of the "Language-game" theory of postmodernism who suggest that humans inhabit an ever-changing and incommensurable diversity of domains of discourse.⁹⁸ Typically, such habitation would prevent any notion of unity. Extending the implications of such a notion into the question of identity, selfhood, or

⁹⁶ Julia Kristeva, Tales of Love, tr. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 267-8.

⁹⁷ Richard Schusterman, Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 79-80.

⁹⁸ The obvious source of this development from Wittgenstein is Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, tr. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Relevant here also is Deleuze and Guattari's notions of the "rhizome" and of "nomadology;" see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,

community, many so-called postmodernists have had, then, great difficulty in generating both personal and communitarian ethics. Because they would have us inhabit a motley variety of language-games and roles, we supposedly can never quite know who we are, who our neighbors are, or the ground and ambiance of our sharing. And while these critical positions have sought to break up isolationist ideologies, they have been responsible for creating new ones to a large degree.

Outside of conflict, I would agree that there may be no final unchanging ground on which we can steady ourselves and our communities, yet I would add that this situation only means that the opportunity and responsibility for humans to make and shape such things remains open. The unity of a self or of a community depends upon the unity of the narratives of self and community made through our fictions, as well as through certain fundamental, organizational metaphors. Admittedly, these are fragile and difficult achievements—achievements that require continual renewal. But the unity I intend for intimacy is, of course, a fictive and postulated unity—or, as Kant might have said, a diversity contemplated or treated as a unity. It is only the cloak of folly (as Blake intended) when it becomes zealously embalmed into a permanent and unchanging given, isolated from the current of life, and is imposed and enforced

as moral allegory.⁹⁹ My view of intimacy seeks, therefore, to emphasize the antinomial nature of community and keep alive a continually renewed energy of conflict.

I would now like to tighten the focus on the term intimacy. First, I will begin by giving to it an image. I mentioned in my introduction that the conception of intimacy that I want to exercise takes its rudimentary design from Ovid's tale of Baucis and Philemon, the poor but generous lovers who were transformed side-by-side into linden and oak trees as a reward for their hospitality to a beggar-disguised Jupiter. As they grew, their love continued and took shape in the entwined foliage of their boughs. What I want to emphasize about the intimacy (and community) exemplified by Baucis and Philemon is its fundamental component of mutual interdependence. Their unity is not an actual merging (which would entail loss or synthesis of identity) but, rather, a harmonious interaction of separate and distinct individuals which, like the unity of a family, is meant to suggest a whole of connections, oppositions, and harmonies, dissonances—in short, an interconnectedness. As Irving Singer reads Ovid, he notes that in the image of Baucis and Philemon, "[W]e may see the oneness that is love. There is no suggestion of a merging. The unity of the lovers resides in the pattern of their intermeshing. No absorption or loss of identity has occurred, no supplanting of uniqueness, but rather an intimate sharing of different selves

⁹⁹ For a discussion of Blake's notion of unity, see Hazard Adams, "Must a Poem Be a Perfect Unity," Antithetical Essays in Literary Criticism and Liberal Education (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), pp. 52-59.

and a beneficial interdependency between them."¹⁰⁰ This is an intimacy I have described with respect to the copulation of metaphor (and will further explicate in the conflict and play chapters in particular), and might be seen as an example of what Simone de Beauvoir has called "genuine love," or "The mutual recognition of two liberties."¹⁰¹

And it is here that I want to move intimacy out from the phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions noted above which concern themselves primarily with the process of aesthetic reception and the transmission of emotion, consciousness (or in Heidegger's case, Being), and meaning. While I by no means propose to deny such transmissions, I would like to focus instead on how intimacy—whether it be an intimacy established in a work, in its reception, or in its cultural use—alerts us to the ways in which we share in the humanity of others and become aware (as Wayne Booth writes) of the "qualities of the company we keep—and the company that we ourselves provide."¹⁰² With this in mind, I propose to extend my conception of intimacy (and its agents: metaphor, conflict, play, gesture, and style) into what might be called an erotics of art, which is to say that which has to do with love and the energies associated with it. As I intend to demonstrate, the constitution of provisional unity or community in a

¹⁰⁰ Irving Singer, The Pursuit of Love (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 27.

¹⁰¹ Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, tr. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 239.

¹⁰² Wayne Booth, The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. x.

work exemplifies, among other things, the conduct of love: indeed, as Norman O. Brown put it, unity is "Eros in action."¹⁰³

To be sure, love is only one of the criteria by which intimacy can be identified; I call attention to it in particular for two reasons, the first of which is its ubiquity as a human concern. Northrop Frye, for instance, has observed love as one of four fundamental concerns in all world literature, while Wolfgang Iser has found love to be "the most central topic of literary staging."¹⁰⁴ Something similar to it is even observable in animals and wild nature in instances ranging from plants to slime molds.¹⁰⁵ But love is of special interest here for it behaves according to the principle of metaphor. Echoing Shelley's famous formulation, I conceive the action of love broadly as a "carrying-over" of oneself to identify with an other. Again like metaphor, love further entails a simultaneous bestowal of value and identity *and* an assimilation of kinship, which connects, associates, and intimately involves its agents.¹⁰⁶ In this case, love has nothing to do with the Socratic desire for possession of "the good," with the Christian doctrine of endless giving, or with the so-called romantic conception of love as merging or

¹⁰³ Norman O. Brown, Love's Body (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 80.

¹⁰⁴ The four concerns identified by Frye are the concern to love, the concern to make and create, the concern to sustain the self and assimilate the environment, and the concern to escape from slavery and restraint. See Northrop Frye, Words With Power (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990), p. 139; Wolfgang Iser, The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 299.

¹⁰⁵ See Remy de Gourmont, The Natural Philosophy of Love, tr. Ezra Pound (London: Quartet, 1992).

¹⁰⁶ For an in-depth discussion of love as bestowal, see Irving Singer, The Nature of Love, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 3-22.

synthesis. Like language, love is simply a form of life. It is at once the source of solidarity and the impetus that compels us to take account of others and regulate our conduct through something other than the striving of our own egos. As such, love is the axis of the ethical.

What I want to accomplish by invoking love at all is simply the modest suggestion that maybe the fictive—and, in particular, the drama—has something to do with the anthropological concern to love. This suggestion seems to me to be of greater delicacy and relevance than the pervasive suggestion that the fictive is a reflection or manifestation of some external authority: economics, social forces, power relations, or what have you. To see human expression in such terms is to approach it with a fundamentally mimetic orientation—an orientation I attempted to dispel in my introduction. I would recapitulate here that all human expression is a fiction: it does not reflect but, rather, makes. I find it advantageous, therefore, to ask what it makes. The warrant for my invocation of intimacy and love as significant components for a poetics of dramatic art resides in the fact that theater is fundamentally metaphorical in both its formal construction and in its living, active process. This is clearly implied not only in theater's tendency to join multiple languages of art together, but also in the structure of theatrical performance itself, where a provisional intimacy is established between audience members who engage in a shared process of inquiry, deliberation, and affection. As Bert States (in a Heideggerian mood) has put it: "[T]his intimacy consists in the invitation to the audience to share a world

of spirit and feeling that one enters only by first sharing—to speak metaphorically—in the death of the old language . . . and the creation of a new one.”¹⁰⁷ It follows, then, to inquire: what kind of copulation is occurring? What is the nature of such joining together? And, hence, what kinds of sharing and intimacy are being cultivated? Further, if intimate union is the action of love, it may then follow that perhaps theater is a gesture of love. I cannot put forth such an argument by standard logic, but then such a path would not be appropriate to poetry. I would like to find out, however, just what thinking of theater in this way may yield. To that end (and with the help of the principles I have established), I will simply propose what may be an impertinent question and in so doing will endeavor to avoid the moral didacticisms and critical pieties that are no doubt too easily slipped into such a project. The leap I want to take, the impertinent question I want to ask is “How does theater work to cultivate intimacy and in what ways is theater a gesture of the anthropological disposition to love?” Such is my impertinent question; and now I close this establishment of principles to set off for the pertinent answer.



¹⁰⁷ Bert O. States, Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 114.

Poetic Logic

That which is metaphysics insofar as it contemplates things in all forms of their being, is logic insofar as it considers all things in all the forms by which they may be signified. Accordingly, as poetry has been considered . . . as a poetic metaphysics in which the theological poets imagined bodies to be for the most part divine substances, so now that same poetry is considered as poetic logic, by which it signifies them.

– Giambattista Vico

I have titled this section Poetic Logic, a phrase used by Giambattista Vico to define the manner in which all things take the form of their being: in other words, the way in which things are made or the way in which things acquire their particular identities. As I have mentioned above, Vico conceived all tropes as corollaries of poetic logic, which is to say that the identity of all things are formed by certain fundamental metaphors or other tropological constructions.

I have arranged this section according to what I view as four unique examples of theatrical conceiving. Each example is preceded by a particular poetic topic (expressed as "Interchapters") that both stem from that example's predominant tropes and correlate to one of the characteristics of metaphor described above in the chapter on Metaphor.

For instance, in the example of Attic Tragedy, the metaphors used throughout the Antigone exemplify conflict at the same time the nature of participation demanded by those metaphors is one of conflict. In the example of Postmodern Cinema, the metaphors used throughout Jean-Luc Godard's 1 + 1 (Sympathy for the Devil) exemplify the patterns of connection found in play at the

same time they challenge received paradigms of semantic and social coherence through the revolutionary character of innovation. In the example of Romantic Drama,¹⁰⁸ the metaphors used throughout Georg Büchner's Woyzeck exemplify gesture—the outward and dramatic display of inward meaning—at the same time they insist on the identity of the internal world of the title character, and his external, social world. Finally, the example found in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, employs metaphors that organize the fictive world through stylistic coherence, at the same time the metaphors provide the organizational principles that constitute reference to the cultural grammar of what I call (modifying E. M. W. Tillyard) the Baroque World Picture.¹⁰⁹ In each example, I intend to show how the activities of metaphor cultivate intimacy by inviting respondents into the engaged interdependence of a provisional community—established in the work and through the work—to witness, and participate in, the action of copulation.

¹⁰⁸ Büchner's Woyzeck is not typically categorized as a Romantic Drama—just as Shakespeare's plays are not typically categorized as "Baroque"—but I make a case for such classifications in the respective chapters.

¹⁰⁹ See E. M. W. Tillyard The Elizabethan World Picture: A Study of the Idea of Order in the Age of Shakespeare, Donne and Milton (New York: Vintage, 1956).

Interchapter: Conflict

It should be understood that war is the common condition,
that conflict is justice, and that all things come to pass
through the compulsion of strife.

– Heraclitus

It should pass without too much contention to claim that drama and conflict are intimately associated. Though it may vary in degree and in kind, it is one of the most persistent conditions of dramatic experience. In critical discourse on drama, the conventional notion of conflict commonly involves some conception of a dialectic of opposites and was bequeathed to modern dramatic theory and criticism primarily by G. W. F. Hegel, but its affiliation with dramatic art goes back to the earliest extant writings on the theater. Cambridge anthropologist Gilbert Murray has even speculated on conflict as the animating principle of ritual forms—eventually preserved in ancient tragedy—as individuals performed in identification with the contest of light against dark, Summer against Winter, or some other such opposition.¹¹⁰ Though one need not be as categorical as Georg Simmel, who asked, “Can you possibly analyze any social manifestation except in terms of conflict?”¹¹¹ attention to conflict does foreground the dynamism of life and gives distinct articulation to the shape of the human

¹¹⁰ See Gilbert Murray, “Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy,” in Jane Harrison, *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (London: Merlin Press, 1963), pp. 341-363.

¹¹¹ Georg Simmel, “The Conflict in Modern Culture,” *The Conflict in Modern Culture and Other Essays*, tr. K. Peter Etkorn (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968), p. 12.

struggles—with each other, with their environments, and with themselves—that compose it. Indeed, as Victor Turner writes about the “social dramas” of the North Zambian Ndembu culture, “Conflict seems to bring fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence.”¹¹²

As an aspect of poetics, conflict is nearly always relegated to some aspect of a play’s action or plot. This may be its most obvious locus but clearly not its only place, nor even its most useful. The connection of conflict to plot goes back, like so much else, to Aristotle, though, interestingly enough, he is for all practical purposes silent on the topic of conflict—as are his most industrious renaissance and neoclassical canonizers Scaliger, Minturno, Castelvetro, Boileau, Corneille, Sidney, and Dryden. Aristotle circumvents discussion of conflict *per se*, making only oblique reference to it under the name of complication (δραμα) whereby he means to indicate a character’s struggle with some internal force (as in the Oedipus) or external force (as in the Antigone). It wasn’t until Hegel’s fond and extended discussions of the Antigone in Phänomenologie des Geistes (1807) and Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik (1835-38) that conflict took center stage in discourse on the drama.

Though still a function of a play’s action, conflict is for Hegel a category of relation and the rudimentary principle by which all things are irresistibly involved

¹¹² Victor Turner, Drama, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 35.

with each other. It is of noted importance to Hegel's philosophy in general, providing the determining and forward movement of history and consciousness, but always requiring mediation through the dialectical process he designates with the complex term *aufhebung*.¹¹³ Hegel views dramatic conflict in particular as a disruptive process of confrontation, a collision (*kollision* being one of Hegel's key terms) between mutually exclusive ethical claims (made by the dramatic characters), thereby preserving its etymological roots meaning "to strike together." Hegel, too, argues vigorously that dramatic art has the privilege of presenting this situation more completely and profoundly than any other art and his arguments appear to have been quite provocative as they clearly unleashed a floodtide of critical concern for the central importance of conflict to drama. Indeed, the most penetrating theater theorists immediately following Hegel deal with it explicitly and prominently in some form or other. Nietzsche and Freud are perhaps the most renowned of these successors, but other important theorists include Ferdinand Brunetière who (indebted to Schopenhauer) considered conflict a matter of opposing wills and the "law" of the drama; and Gustav Freytag, who found conflict to be drama's principal technique and gave to its temporal trajectory its now famous shape of the

¹¹³ As Hegel exploits the term, *aufhebung* means simultaneously a raising up or elevation; a suspension; and an annulment. For an excellent and thorough discussion of Hegel on conflict, see Michelle Gellrich, *Tragedy and Theory: The Problem of Conflict Since Aristotle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 23-93.

pyramid.¹¹⁴ In addition, this century's most influential theater practitioners found conflict to be central to their art in some form or another. Konstantin Stanislavsky, for example, insisted on an immanent conflict of character objective and obstacle; Bertolt Brecht, whose ironic and conflictual *verfremdungseffekt* (adapted and developed from the concept of *entfremdung*, or alienation, as used by both Hegel and Marx) proposed to enable a "dialectical theater" designed to "unearth society's laws of motion;" and Antonin Artaud, for whom cosmic conflict and chaos became the source of theatrical alchemy.¹¹⁵ Still further, it is a principle central not only to Western performance but to non-Western performance as well. One might even think of it as an anthropological category of performance, finding it exemplified in the conflictual law of *kung-fu* ("circularity"), so important to Chinese Opera performance; in the principle of *tribhangi* ("three arches") which grounds the dances of the Indian *Odissi* performers; in the system of *keras/manis* ("hard/soft"), practiced in the Balinese *Wayang Legong*; and in the principle of *hippari hai* ("to pull in two directions"),

¹¹⁴ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967); Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, tr. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950); Ferdinand Brunetière, "The Law of the Drama," tr. Phillip M. Hayden, *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*, ed. Bernard F. Dukore (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974), pp. 721-726; Gustav Freytag, *Technique of the Drama*, tr. Elias J. MacEwan (Chicago: S. C. Griggs, 1896).

¹¹⁵ See Konstantin S. Stanislavsky, *My Life in Art*, tr. J. J. Robbins (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1948); Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," *Brecht on Theatre*, tr. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), especially § 43-45; Antonin Artaud, "The Alchemical Theater," *The Theater and Its Double*, tr. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

central to both Japanese *Noh* and *Kyogen* performance.¹¹⁶

As an ethical category, the received notion of conflict in Western dramatic theory is nearly always associated with ailment and disorder. Plato initiated this association, arguing that the conflictual or agonistic experiences performed by the tragedians threatened to corrupt the values that he endeavored to stabilize through his philosophy—itsself curiously structured like the agonistic political and civic practice of formal debate. But Plato's anxiety about conflict is evident even today. Conflict is routinely and regrettably seen as something to be resolved, transformed, or made to submit to the controls of reason by following a pattern of some philosophical system. Plays themselves are frequently characterized generically by the way their conflicts are resolved. This is further evident in criticism, where it is common for a critical interpretation to effect resolution by asserting some single meaning of a word, a gesture, or an entire work, too often in a manner that sounds like the rhetoric of a totalitarian regime. Typically a hierarchy of master and slave is imposed on the conflicting parties and one party ends up either negated, subsumed, or omitted outright. To do so not only moves to limit a work's potential, but moreover tries vainly to tame conflict's subversive vitality and complexity. Clearly, I would like to expand the reach of conflict beyond the register of a play's plot and bestow more value upon it as an ethical principle for criticism.

¹¹⁶ For a discussion of opposition as an anthropological category in performance, see Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, tr. Richard Folwer (London: Routledge, 1991).

As a poetic category, then, I view conflict as a condition of a work's fictive complexity. I have in mind a vision of conflict not only made evident in a play's action, but also and simultaneously in its various stage languages which manifest conflict as the interaction between referential and emotive expression, between semantic congruence and incongruence and competing meanings—in short, among identities. In part, the warrant for such a view is attributable to conflict as an ineluctable product of metaphor and metaphor as the most rudimentary constituent of fictions. Like metaphor's copulative "joining together," conflict's tensive "striking together" implies the involvement of one and other in a play of identities. The remaining warrant for this view is attributable to what some have called the "dialogic" condition of all utterance. This is an idea that received its first explicit treatment in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by Wilhelm von Humboldt who argued that "All speaking is founded on dialog. . . . Even in his thoughts man speaks to an "other,"¹¹⁷ but has been given expanded sense in this century, particularly by Mikhail Bakhtin. Like von Humboldt, Bakhtin argues for a dialogic conception of language but also for a base condition of language he calls heteroglossia (*raznorešcie, raznoreščivost*) which he considers as the multiple and conflictual meanings—social, historical, emotional, even physiological—of any utterance. More than ambiguity or polyvalence, Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia is an anarchic and dynamic (and

¹¹⁷ Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Humanist Without Portfolio*, tr. Marianne Cowan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 335.

he contends, democratic) circumstance of expression where these meanings collide. As he writes, "Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance."¹¹⁸ I view the conflict of this intersection as a kind of Heraclitean "harmony in contrariety," or a Coleridgean "multēity in unity"—and, like the title of the essay that bears that phrase, a principle of sound criticism concerning the fine arts.¹¹⁹

It bears remarking, however, that this conflictual unity should not be confounded with organic closure or absolute knowledge that would subsume the tensions. As Murray Krieger has remarked, this kind of fictive conflict (particularly that of metaphor) "subverts our commonsense impulse to read differentially only, by forcing us to see the blendings of entities that language would normally seek to keep separate; and, on the other side, it subverts our poetic impulse to subdue all differences into a oneness, by nudging us into being aware of the dangerous and repressive limits of such enclosure."¹²⁰ My inclination is to see this unity of conflict in the way that Irving Singer has defined the unity of love: as the "responsiveness between violin and piano in a Mozart

¹¹⁸ M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," The Dialogic Imagination, tr. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 272.

¹¹⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On the Principles of Sound Criticism concerning the Fine Arts," Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski, ed. Bernard F. Dukore (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974), p. 583.

sonata or the concerted rhythm of paddlers in a canoe. What each person contributes is systematically distinct, and the outcome is not a merging of their identities so much as a highly coordinated integration of them;¹²¹ Or, as Martin Heidegger writes, “[C]onflict is . . . the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other.”¹²²

This brings me to my view of conflict as an ethical category. My claim is that the status of conflict enacted in a work maps the territory of that work’s ethical awareness. First, I’d like to get away from the notion that conflict requires resolution or annulment. This requires going back to the tradition of conflict exemplified by the pre-Socratic philosophers. Finally, I’d like to suggest how this conception of conflict carries over into social relations and activity as a mode of interaction and basis for tolerance.

For many of the so-called pre-Socratic philosophers, conflict was not, as it later became for Plato, a social ailment and indication of disorder. Particularly for Empedocles and Heraclitus, conflict is a creative principle and fundamental law of universal order and justice—and one that prevails incessantly. For Empedocles, strife (*eris*) exists side by side with love, both of which engage in an agonistic play of interpenetration that is responsible for all creation and

¹²⁰ Murray Krieger, *The Reopening of Closure: Organicism Against Itself* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 63.

¹²¹ Irving Singer, *The Pursuit of Love* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 27.

¹²² Martin Heidegger. “The Origin of the Work of Art,” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 63.

change. On this conflictual play Empedocles writes, albeit somewhat cryptically, "When Strife reached the lowest depth of the vortex, and Love comes to be in the middle of the whirl, in her all these things come together to be one thing only, not suddenly, but coming together at will from different directions. As they mingle, innumerable types of mortal things pour forth."¹²³ Heraclitus viewed conflict as a self-balancing system of nature and, by extension, society, without which all life would terminate. As he asserted, "Homer was wrong in saying, 'Would that strife might perish amongst gods and men.' For if that were to occur, then all things would cease to exist."¹²⁴

Though this is not the place to wager opinion on conflict as a physical principle of the universe, the point I am trying to make in invoking these views is that to resolve or annul conflict is to submit to the hands of tyranny. Indeed without conflict, there is no formal object on which to outline tolerance and possible agreement since, as Charles Altieri notes, "[T]here cannot be agreement that is not the subordination of one community to another—one person's agreement seems another person's *différend*."¹²⁵ The idea, however, is to provide a benevolent form of conflict—or, as one might say with William Blake, a friendly enemy.

¹²³ Jonathan Barnes, tr. and ed., Early Greek Philosophy (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 170. See also, Freidrich Solmsen, "Love and Strife in Empedocles' Cosmology," Phronesis 10 (1965): 109-48.

¹²⁴ Philip Wheelwright, tr. and ed., The Presocratics (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1967), p. 71.

With respect to such a form of conflict it is useful here to invoke William Blake's distinction between contraries and negations. For Blake, a negation is an opposition where one side of the opposed group asserts total dominance over the other and endeavors to subdue or eradicate it completely. Negations can be seen in cultural and historical constructions such as Christianity's separation of body and soul, science's split between subject and object, or criticism's division between aesthetics and politics. In a parody of John Calvin's use of the term and in an effort to connect negation with oppressive authority, Blake calls those who exercise negation the "Elect."¹²⁶

A contrary, on the other hand, opposes an opposition of negation. It does so not to negate it but to civilize it and restore the parties of that opposition to a relationship of tolerance, thereby preventing the cyclical carnivalization where indeterminacy becomes authority, slave becomes master, proletariat becomes ruling class. An opposition of contrariety, then, is a dynamic and creative opposition of provisional equality that opposes all that would become singular and static law, desiccating all life; as Blake's proverb warns: "One law for the Lion and Ox is Oppression."¹²⁷ Again parodying Calvin's use of the term and

¹²⁵ Charles Altieri, Subjective Agency: A Theory of First-Person Expressivity and its Social Implications (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 212.

¹²⁶ See especially Blake's poem "Milton, a Poem in 2 Books," The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1982), pp. 95-144. For discussion of Blake's ideas for a critique of society and culture, ethics, and language, see Hazard Adams, "The World-View of William Blake in Relation to Cultural Policy," Critical Essays on William Blake (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1991), pp. 193-204.

¹²⁷ From Blake's poem "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell;" Also relevant here is Hilary Putnam's estimation that the sure-fire way *not* to solve ethical problems is to solve them *too well*.

striving to connect contrariety with poetry, Blake calls those who provide contrariety to culture the "Reprobate."

In closing, I would like to accentuate the positive aspects of conflict as a poetical and ethical principle and also remind those who would seek to exercise negation of the turbulence they have to control. Further, I want to assert the need for conflict's continued renewal through reprobate and contrary gestures; for "Without Contraries," wrote Blake echoing Heraclitus, "is no progression." But even contraries will in time become fixed and require further such gestures. Such is the charge of art: as Hazard Adams, in a Blakean mood, affirms, "Contraries must be maintained in order to achieve the paradoxical order of conflict—the only kind of order that celebrates life."¹²⁸

See Hilary Putnam, "How Not to Solve Ethical Problems," *Realism with a Human Face*, ed. James Conant (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 179-92.

¹²⁸ Hazard Adams, *Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic* (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1991), p. 291.

Conflict as Intimacy: Copulation in Attic Tragedy

[E]s daimonion teras amphinoó tode.
 (Thinking on this strange portent,
 I think on both sides.)
 -- Sophocles Antigone (376)

I now want to explore various configurations of intimacy in a variety of examples of what I have called 'theatrical conceiving.' To give a good first approximation of what this exploration means would be to say that it involves asking just how certain conceptions of theater use metaphor to invite particular forms of participation, identification, affection, and so on, at the level of language, genre, actor/audience configuration, mise-en-scène, and cultural grammar. I begin with an exploration of Attic tragedy because, like the DNA spiral, it carries a message of inheritance and marks the clearest beginning to a variety of forms of theater that have followed it. Indeed, despite the sound and resounding caveat famously phrased by Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, "There is much that is uncertain here,"¹²⁹ one could turn on Alfred North Whitehead's well-known remark about the history of philosophy and say with some persuasiveness that the entire history of the theater is but a series of footnotes to the Greeks. To be sure, the theater of fifth-century Athens has served—and continues to serve—as a touchstone for philosophers, critics, and poets of the theater. Even in the contemporary theater scene, for example, ancient Greek plays commonly

¹²⁹ Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, Dithyramb, Tragedy, and Comedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 12.

receive significant productions and adaptations—typically by artists who are (somewhat ironically) considered the *avant-garde*.¹³⁰ This is not to recommend, as Karl Marx did in a now ubiquitous trope, that the culture of ancient Greece signifies the “childhood of humanity,” or that the artistic contributions of that culture continue to prevail as “standards and models beyond attainment.”¹³¹ Rather, I intend simply to point out that in addition to establishing drama as both an art form and social institution, the tragedians of fifth-century Athens established a vocabulary by and in relation to which centuries of theater practitioners have conceived their own work and which in our own century, from Brecht to Breuer, remains alive and eloquent.

In order to understand that vocabulary, and the fictions built from it, it is helpful to understand something about the constitutive principles that govern ancient Greek consciousness and culture-making and provide the framework for that vocabulary’s use. Expressing accord with a host of other classical scholars, J. J. Pollitt offers Order and Chaos as the ineluctable first principles of the ancients’ cosmology and cultural vocabulary.¹³² Clearly, these are rich and pervasive principles—ones that have been constituted by and given figure in the

¹³⁰ To name a few of the most prominent: Lee Breuer’s *The Gospel at Colonus* (adapted from Sophocles’s *Oedipus at Colonus*), Julie Taymor’s *Oedipus Rex* (actually a production of the Cocteau/Stravinsky oratorio adaptation of the Sophocles play), Peter Sellars’s *Ajax*, and Ariane Mnouchkine’s *Les Atrides* (adapted from the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus).

¹³¹ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, tr. N. I. Stone (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1904), p. 312.

¹³² See J. J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

earliest myths. Hesiod, for example, nominated them in his Theogony as the foundational principles in the creation of the universe. In the classical pantheon, they were personified as Apollo and Dionysus—figures that would (thanks to Nietzsche) come to be known as the progenitors of tragedy.¹³³

But Order and Chaos are not first principles. They are results from even more elemental principles—principles with even greater reach into the cultural creations of ancient Greece. I refer here to Eros and Eris, or Love and Strife.¹³⁴ What I would like to suggest is that it is these two principles that serve as the basic conceptual materials of the ancient Greek cosmology and cultural vocabulary, animating the basic metaphors that organize everything from the creation of the city to the creation of theater as an art form.

Eros is the creative force, the motive to unity. From it come things like order, human love, and community. Perhaps the clearest and most memorable figuring of Eros comes from Aristophanes's speech in Plato's Symposium, where a drinking party among friends serves as the basis for a discourse on love. In it, Aristophanes comically dramatizes the account of both homo- and hetero-sexual human pairs striving for each other to restore an original unity. (Freud would later, and with utmost seriousness, make the same claim.¹³⁵) But it would be a

¹³³ I refer here specifically to Friedrich Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music.

¹³⁴ Life and Strife are found also—and so with slight semantic differences—as *Philotes* and *Neikos*. Still, as expressions of union and separation, concord and discord, and so on.

¹³⁵ See Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, tr. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961).

mistake to confine the ancient conception of Eros to the desire of bodies or some prelapsarian ideal, for it extends forward creatively to the life of the soul and intellect, and to the life of society. Indeed in ancient thought—from Empedocles to Lucretius—Eros intersects with all human striving toward “the good,” whether it be in the form of erotic love, friendship, health, civil law, or education. As Werner Jaeger has suggested with respect to ancient Greek culture, “Eros interpreted as love for the good is at the same time the urge of human nature toward real self-fulfillment and self-completion, and is therefore the impulse toward education and culture in the truest sense.”¹³⁶ This is what Plato meant, too, in his description of pedagogy as “the ascent to capture Eros,” using the metaphor of the staircase as the vehicle for human intellectual and spiritual progress.¹³⁷ Aristotle, carrying over the intellectual and spiritual into the material, further declared love (in the form of *philia*, or love as friendship) as the center of humane political philosophy, explicitly positing love as the nucleus of social health and arguing that a suffering society recovers only through a healthy association of individuals who share ideals in friendship.¹³⁸ This view of Eros, which began in the writings of Hesiod and Empedocles and carried through into

¹³⁶ Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture vol. 2, tr. Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 190.

¹³⁷ See Plato's Lysis (Book II) . Similar tropes occur in The Symposium and in Phaedrus (especially in Socrates long speech beginning at 243e).

¹³⁸ This is a theme that runs throughout both Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (particularly books I and X) and Politics.

the early Roman philosophy of Ovid and Lucretius, was also central to the fifth-century tragedians, as I will show momentarily.

Eris, on the other hand, is the destructive force, the motive to separation. From it come things like chaos, war, and death. Like Eros, Eris was also viewed as a fundamental principle of the physical universe and it, too, carried over into intellectual and social forms. Strife appears in ancient mythology again and again as any force beyond human control (hence, the variety of gods) that must be humanly endured. But there was a human generated strife, too. This was a strife directed at pollutions, impediments, and infringements by human agents upon cultural boundaries for the purposes of maintaining both personal and social health. Violence, as René Girard has shown, was one of the chief means of exercising this form of strife to purify various types of pollution by symbolically saddling them to a scapegoat who then suffers sacrifice.¹³⁹ Attic tragedy captures this forcefully, particularly in The Bacchae of Euripides and in The Eumenides of Aeschylus, where the destructive Erinyes are necessary to the welfare of the city.

Typically, one finds this type of strife denoted by the term *katharsis*. In the writings of the pre-Socratics, *katharsis* was used primarily to describe a particular quality in natural elements: winnowed grain, debris-free space, clear water, and the like. Plato frequently used the term (along with his now famous

¹³⁹ See René Girard, The Scapegoat, tr. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Violence and the Sacred, Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

term *pharmakon*), as did Aristotle (particularly in his Nichomachean Ethics) to describe a process related to clarity or purification, usually referring specifically to the removal of a particular moral obstacle. Aristophanes used it in The Wasps to refer to clear, unambiguous speech, purged of obscurity. And in medical terminology, *katharsis* was designated as the process of purging impediments from the body. Of course, as far as the drama is concerned, Aristotle is the best known user of the term—though he only used it with such reference once: “[t]ragedy achieves, through the representation of pitiable and fearful incidents, the catharsis of such pitiable and fearful incidents.”¹⁴⁰

Eros and Eris may indeed be the double-nucleus of ancient cultural grammar—a grammar which, as I will show, provides coherence for the vocabulary of attic tragedy—but perhaps more significant and consequential is the dialectic of intimacy between these two figures of fusion and fission and the progeny that issue from their copulation. Here I refer to the related ancient principles of *sophrosyné*, *symmetria*, *eurhythmia*, and *harmonia*. These mediating principles inform the foremost achievements of ancient culture and, specifically, the remarkable character of their theater. These principles are, at base, appeals for balance and measure, akin to what I have described in my critical orientation as a Blakean contrary. But whereas for Blake “The road of

¹⁴⁰ Aristotle, The Poetics, tr. Leon Golden (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1981), p. 11.

excess leads to the palace of wisdom,"¹⁴¹ for the ancients, the road to wisdom was navigated by attending to the well-known Delphic pronouncement: "Nothing in excess."

Sophrosyné was the virtue of right-proportion otherwise known as temperance. Through the use of *sophrosyné*, both natural and cultural structures achieved their optimum living order. It transformed opponents into components, allowing a working union of samenesses, differences, parts, and wholes. One can find it praised in Greek discourse from Hesiod to Solon, from Attic tragedy to Hellenic philosophy, as one of the highest values in human life. In such discourse, this virtue was presented as the key to happiness and good life and was, of course, divinely sanctioned. In fact, the doctrine of *sophrosyné* was legislated by the moral command of Delphic Apollo, "Know thyself," which implied not simple self-understanding but recognition of, and conduct according to, the proportions and limits of human power.¹⁴² It found its formal embodiment in tragedy, particularly in the plays of Sophocles. And though, thematically, tragedy is a confrontation with extremity, it shows over and over again that a lack of temperance in human ambition or desire courts chaos and disaster.

Symmetria was, like *sophrosyné*, a form of balance. It is the cognate of what we today call symmetry; for the Greeks, however, it was a concept of much

¹⁴¹ William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1982), p. 35.

¹⁴² For an analysis of this doctrine, see Werner Jaeger, Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture vol. 1, tr. Gilbert Highet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 167f.

greater delicacy and complexity. The Greeks conceived *symmetria* as a commensurability of clearly definable parts and not simply as a mirror opposition as we think of symmetry today. *Symmetria* was conceived chiefly as a formal principle in design. Vitruvius, for example, read the principle back into classical building, naming it one of the six basic tenets of Greek architecture (which took its Protagorean cues from the human body). The chief exponent of *symmetria* was Polykleitos, the sculptor from Argos, who thought of it as a gesture to the good or the perfect (*to eu*).¹⁴³ Polykleitos' main influence was Pythagoras, the mathematician and first musical harmonist, whose famous theorem was in itself an expression of *symmetria*: witness that in a right-angled triangle, the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the square of the two other sides. Such began a mathematics that Pythagoras would claim penetrated to the basic harmony of nature, composing what he called the "music of the spheres." Like Pythagoras, the Greeks commonly viewed the totality of the human condition in spatial terms—and those terms invariably coincided with moral coordinates. For example, beyond its use as a formal principle of design, *symmetria* extended most notably to the ethical sphere where it found figure in the law of the talion—*lex talionis*—better known in its Biblical form as "an eye for an eye," and in the

¹⁴³ See Polykleitos, the Doryphoros, and Tradition, ed. Warren G. Moon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

principle Mary Whitlock Blundell has called "Helping friends, harming enemies."¹⁴⁴

Eurhythmia, or "good pattern," was a spatio-temporal equivalent of *symmetria*. Like *symmetria*, *eurhythmia* sought to strike a balance between any single dominating extreme. It sought right-proportion in time, asserting sameness then difference, part then whole: for everything, in other words, a season. Typically, *eurhythmia* is found in conjunction with the semantic group that surrounds *mimesis* (*mimos*, *mimeisthai*, and *mimema*), which is to say in conjunction with discourse on the arts of music, dancing, painting, sculpture, and drama.¹⁴⁵ Like *symmetria*, *eurhythmia* was considered one of the basic tenets of Greeks architecture—the Parthenon being the supreme example with its 'commensurable parts' allowing the 'good-patterned' play of light and shadow. In his Laws, Plato describes the political value of citizens adept at both singing and dancing well, for they foster *eurhythmia* and promote a corporeal identification with the political necessity of *areté*, an excellence "which makes [men] passionately desire to become perfect citizens, knowing both how to rule and how to be ruled."¹⁴⁶ The term is also found in conjunction with the semantic

¹⁴⁴ See Mary Whitlock Blundell, Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

¹⁴⁵ See Hermann Koller, Die Mimesis in der Antike (Bern: Schrekenberg, 1954).

¹⁴⁶ Plato, The Collected Dialogues, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 1243. I should add here, with due respect, that although Plato's diction often seems to exclude women from civil equality, he does make some important strides as an early feminist. I'll point to a single example: in The Republic, where he offers women equality to men and liberation from their traditional place in society, Socrates rebukes

group that surrounds words for play (*paideia* and *país*). To the Greeks, *paideia* was the education by principle and practice that initiated a citizen into the ways of the community—a process that Werner Jaeger describes as the “process whereby a community preserves and transmits its physical and intellectual character.”¹⁴⁷ As I will argue below, tragic “plays” are examples of *paideia* which, in their spatial and temporal forms, demonstrate *eurhythmia*.

The goal of the mediating principles discussed above was the achievement of *harmonia*, or “fitting together.” *Harmonia* was the consummation of a just combination—in other words, an equitable balance and measure—of two or more qualities or quantities. As such, it was an ancient trope for both intimacy and justice, identified in both nature and culture. Pythagoras, for instance, first called the universe a *kosmos* (order), because in all its manifestations he found it embodied an harmonious “fitting-together” of opposites.¹⁴⁸ Hesiod appropriately figured *Harmonia* as the child born from the intimate fitting-together of *Aphrodite* (*Eros*/love) and *Ares* (*Eris*/war). And, to move from the sublime to the merely practical, Homer used it in the fifth book of *The Odyssey* to describe the process of creating the ‘just-fitted’ (*harmoniesin areren*) planks of a seaworthy ship. But *harmonia*, like justice, described not just any fitting-together. Like a Pythagorean right triangle, it described a particular

Glaucón for using only male participles when referring to civic leaders as it might give the wrong impression that women could never hold such positions (Republic 540c).

¹⁴⁷ Werner Jaeger, *Paideia* vol. 1 (see note 12), p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ See Matila Ghyka, *The Geometry of Art and Life* (New York: Dover, 1977).

kind of fitting together: namely, a fit of equity, balance, and measure among participating objects or parties.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, the fitting-together of *harmonia* was one of contrary and continuing tensions and not one of synthesis. Like the “harmony in contrariety” of the bow and string Heraclitus described, the special fit of ancient Greek *harmonia* was a loving strife.

And it is here that the notion of *harmonia* takes a curious turn. As it turns out, the particular loving strife of *harmonia* turns out to be, indeed, a form of Eros itself. Like Eros, *harmonia* aims at unification. But whereas Eros is creative, *harmonia* is transformative, achieving its tensive unity through a continued struggle of mediated opposition. Such a form of Eros is explicated among the various encomia of Plato’s Symposium by the doctor Eryximachus, who maintains that the health of all things—human bodies, societies, the Earth—is based on the dynamic and harmonious mixture of opposites. Sickness, he remarks, is the disturbance of that *harmonia* through stasis or wrong proportion. He corroborates his theory with examples from nature and closes, appropriately, by invoking Heraclitus’s “harmony in contrariety,” nominating it as the most potent metaphor for love.

Attic tragedy is remarkable in that it exemplifies this Heraclitean *harmonia* in its very form and moving. Indeed the shape of Attic tragedy, and the shape of the intimacy engendered by it, is the shape of *harmonia* itself: an ellipse, with its

¹⁴⁹ Also relevant is Pythagoras’s discovery of musical *harmonia*: the “fitting-together” of any tone produced by a single vibrating string and its concomitant “harmonies” in the overtone series

two centers—love and strife—engaged in a right-proportioned, symmetrical, and good-patterned tension. However, it is in no way a mere formal presentation or graphing of equilibrium between Eros and Eris. Instead, it is the embodiment of their conflict, framed and identified through the employment of a unique theatrical vocabulary. It is a conflict that the Greeks constantly presented to themselves in a variety of cultural forms, but especially through the vocabulary of their theater.

One of the most lively and eloquent utterances from the ancient Greek cultural vocabulary is the Antigone of Sophocles. In addition to being a representative example of Attic tragedy, its metaphors offer perhaps the clearest presentation of the conflict between Eros and Eris and the most capacious invitation to identify with the intimacy of *harmonia*. The play is of particular significance as a theatrical touchstone, but it has also become a kind of palimpsest of multi-disciplinary activity. Indeed, long after its particular historical context had been transformed and the social conditions necessary to its production had all but vanished, the themes and conflicts of the Antigone have been used over and over again, resonating throughout Western philosophy, art, and literature. It has been valorized for its revolutionary passion by Goethe, showcased in the idealist discourse of Hegel, a metaphor for poetry in Yeats and Hölderlin, and adapted for contemporary stages by Brecht, Anouilh, and Beck

(which, incidentally, divide according to a clear *eurhythmia*). This musical example is perhaps more fitting with respect to my remark about *harmonia* as contrary tensions rather than synthesis.

and Malina's Living Theater to mention only a few examples.¹⁵⁰ Still, despite the play's unequivocal immediacy and familiarity, it does present some fundamental critical problems. In the remainder of this chapter I will attempt to address those problems and fit together the various strands of Greek culture-making that I have been discussing above to enable such an interpretation of the Antigone, and the idea of theater and intimacy that it embodies.

On the one hand, the play's immediacy and familiarity puts critical analysis in danger of re-casting received notions about the play and its dramaturgy without proper attention to its more ambiguous and remote aspects. Momentarily, I will attempt to dispel those notions, particularly the pervasive critical perspective instituted by Hegel and still alive today. On the other hand, attention to the ambiguous and remote aspects of the play can be the stone upon which critical analysis stumbles. This problem, in particular, highlights what becomes perhaps the most significant practical problem for criticism: the problem of translation. Clearly, to read a translation of the Antigone is to read not Sophocles, but to read the translator. Indeed, one might rightly argue that a critic cannot expect to cross the "drawbridge" of translation (to use Coleridge's metaphor) without intimately knowing a language that has been, for all practical purposes, unavailable to anyone after Alexandria. With respect to understanding attic tragedy, philological authority offers no guarantee of

¹⁵⁰ For a very detailed account of the cultural pervasiveness of the play, see George Steiner, Antigones (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

understanding. Further, knowing the language itself does not imply knowing about the poetry of ancient theater. Indeed for all their knowledge and evidence, classical scholars as diverse as Jane Harrison, Charles Segal, Margarete Bieber, Bernard Knox, and Martha Nussbaum veer dramatically in their readings of attic tragedy, demonstrating that the whole idea of "knowing" is really quite equivocal when it comes to ancient Greek. Clearly, something roomier than even the cleanest philological gloss is necessary for understanding such a complex entity. What I propose to provide, then, is a kind of comparative anthropology—one that attends not only to the Greek text, but also to the network of metaphors that join together diverse domains of ancient experience. It is my belief that the play's value and meaning come to light at these junctures and, as in metaphor, "carry-over" into contemporary understanding and concern.

The Antigone is singular among attic tragedies because it shows something unique about the ubiquity of love and strife, and about the unavoidable nature of their conflict in social life. Though Freud displaced modern critical thought on tragedy by condensing attention on the Oedipus Tyrannus, the Antigone has received enormous critical attention, particularly under the influence of Hegel, who found the play to be "the most excellent and satisfying work of art."¹⁵¹ Hegel's is perhaps the most influential of historical

¹⁵¹ Hegel On Tragedy, eds. and trans. Anne and Henry Paolucci (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1964) 74. Also, for excellent critical thought on the play and its heritage, see George Steiner's Antigones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Martha Nussbaum's The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

interpretations of the Antigone; certainly, his interpretation is one of the most penetrating ever written. It was Hegel who cemented the critical tradition of viewing the play in terms of its oppositions: individual (or family) and state, written and unwritten law, male and female, Hades and Olympus, and so on. His oppositions have validity and on certain levels have proved their mettle, but only at the price of an ultimate misunderstanding. The play's oppositions are indeed the source of the play's progressive action, yet most critics in the tradition set by Hegel force either a synthesis of opposites, or a single, hierarchical point of view. What I would like to suggest is that, like the cultural grammar discussed above, the play's oppositions follow a Heraclitean, and not a Hegelian, path.

Unlike Heraclitus, who conceived of conflict as justice, Hegel affirms the annulment of conflict as an acceptable aim for ethics. Writing specifically about the conflict between Antigone and Creon, Hegel remarks:

It is, in short, the harmony of these spheres [the family and the city], and the concordant action within the bounds of their realized content, which constitute the reality of moral life. . . . The true course of dramatic development consists in the annulment of contradictions viewed as such, in the reconciliation of the forces of human action, which alternately strive to negate each other in their conflict.¹⁵²

¹⁵² G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Art, vol. IV, trans. F. P. B. Osmaston (London: G. Ball and Sons, 1920), pp. 68, 71.

Despite the fact that he learned much about conflict from Heraclitus, Hegel's dialectical logic of conflict impoverishes the ethical vision gestured at by the play and accounts for too few of the play's particulars—especially the chorus.

Hegel's conception of harmony and its concomitant annulment of contradictions is clearly foreign not only to the Sophoclean text, but also to the constitutive principles governing ancient culture as discussed above. The ethical vision promoted by a Hegelian reading does, in fact, what he accuses the "forces of human action" of doing: Hegel's critical constitution of the text negates the plurality of values inherent in the individuals that make up the spheres of both family and city. Though my analysis is not intended as a censure of Hegel, such a perspective is, as I hope to show, at complete variance with the play and its cultural grammar when taken as a whole. Indeed, the play demonstrates how the move to simplify or annul the complexities and contradictions of conflict—hence rendering void the proper balance of Eros and Eris—leads to utter catastrophe.

The ethical vision cultivated by Sophocles is Heraclitean in nature, which is to say it views conflict as justice and harmony as a loving strife. Indeed, it is in the intimate fitting-together of Eros and Eris—not in Hegelian negation, hierarchy, or synthesis, but in eternally-lived conflict—that defines the Heraclitean conception of *harmonia*, the basis of order (*kosmos*). Likewise, it is precisely in the continuation of a lived tension or harmony of opposites—not in a Hegelian resolution, sublation, or synthesis of opposites—that the Antigone of

Sophocles finds order and coherence. Turning again to Heraclitus, it can be said of the Antigone that “It is in being at variance with itself that it coheres with itself: a harmony in contrariety, as of a bow or a lyre.”¹⁵³ In the Antigone, Heraclitean *harmonia* finds its fullest figure in the choral line, “Looking on this strange portent, I think on both sides.”¹⁵⁴ This line, spoken as Antigone enters the stage as a prisoner, bears the full import of her conflict with Creon and locates the chorus concretely as an important force of complementarity, opposing negation or synthesis. The line also serves as the play’s stylistic touchstone: the figure of understanding exemplified in it, as well as the mode of reception required by it, emphasizes a mindful sensitivity to the play’s complexity and heterogeneity—a thinking on both sides. In the following analysis I propose to be such a mindful reader, attending to both the clear and the obscure details of the play. I take the choral line quoted above as a synecdoche for my interpretation of the play as a whole and its Heraclitean attitude toward harmony, conflict, and intimacy.

Dialogue and Agôn.

Up until the invention of tragedy, the use of language in art was monologic. Both major linguistic forms preceding the drama—the Homeric Epic and the Pindarian

¹⁵³ Heraclitus, fragment no. 117, in Philip Wheelwright, tr. and ed., The Presocratics (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1967), p. 71.

¹⁵⁴ Line 376 in A. C. Pearson’s Oxford Classical (Greek) text edition of 1924: “es daimonion teras amphinó tode;” translation by Martha C. Nussbaum in The Fragility of Goodness (p. 69). Subsequent line citations are taken from Richard Emil Braun’s translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), and Dudley Fitts’ and Robert Fitzgerald’s translation (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1969), and will appear parenthetically following quotations.

Ode (perhaps, even, the Dithyramb)—were conceived primarily as single-voiced forms, descriptive in tone. Dramatic dialogue, conversely, is argumentative in tone—particularly in the case of Sophocles. Steeped in the tradition of Aristotelian mimesis, classical theater scholar Rush Rehm has recently offered that dramatic dialogue was inspired by Athenian political debate, which it resembles, arguing that such inspiration stands as evidence of the political nature of drama.¹⁵⁵ But such an argument overlooks the fact that ancient drama, at least what we know of it from its extant examples, broke new ground by conceiving of dramatic action and conflict in terms of the agonistic character that lies within language itself. As George Steiner has remarked, “The roots of dialogue . . . are to be found in the discovery that living beings using the ‘same language’ can mean entirely different, indeed irreconcilable things.”¹⁵⁶ With the invention of drama, conflict was not merely described (as it was in the Epic or the Ode), but exemplified in the form of dialogue. In particular, the form of dialogue known as the *agôn* (contest) became the formal vehicle for dramatizing conflict in tragedy. To be sure, an astute Bakhtinian could point out that even epic narrative and lyrical odes were always already dialogic, if only for the basic fact that all language is conflictual, polyvalent, and social—and, therefore, political.¹⁵⁷ My point, however, is that the drama was the first to give concrete form to this idea by incorporating dialogue, in the context of conflict, as a

¹⁵⁵ Rush Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 64.

¹⁵⁶ George Steiner, *Antigones* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 234.

distinguishing characteristic and constitutive formal element of its fiction. As such, I view the drama's quintessential use of dialogue as evidence of an expression and experience of intimacy—recalling, once again, Heidegger's notion of conflict as "the intimacy with which opponents belong to each other."¹⁵⁸

In the case of the Antigone, the most conspicuous opponents who belong to each other are, of course, Antigone and Creon. The agôn exemplified in the dialogue of each of these characters identifies them as on opposing sides of a conflict. Critical interpretations typically side with either one or the other: by and large, Antigone is viewed as the protagonist, Creon as the antagonist. She is clearly more attractive at first glance, for she exhibits non-violence and vulnerability in the face of power and, indeed, emphasizes *philia*. In line 523, for example, she responds to Creon's claim that enemies and friends are separate entities by remarking that she was "born to love both enemies and friends."¹⁵⁹ (Ironically, her name, in Greek, means "born to oppose.") She finally, of course, loses her life by command of Creon. Creon, in this critical stance, is typically censured as a loveless and godless tyrant. He not only calls for Antigone's death, but continually rebukes his family members and allows the violation of the city's religious shrines. Summing up this position, Goethe remarked to

¹⁵⁷ See my section on "Conflict" above.

¹⁵⁸ Martin Heidegger. "The Origin of the Work of Art," Poetry, Language, Thought, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 63.

¹⁵⁹ I have been guided through the Greek text with the help of James C. Hogan's A Commentary on the Plays of Sophocles (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), pp. 126-177.

Eckermann:

Creon acts not from political virtue but from hatred for the dead man. . . .
 A mode of conduct that runs counter to virtue in general should never be called political virtue in the first place. When Creon forbids the burial of Polyneices and not only allows the rotting corpse to contaminate the air but also does not stop dogs and birds of prey from dragging around torn pieces of the dead man and in this way defiling the altars, such conduct, which slights both gods and mortals, is not a political virtue but rather a political crime. Creon antagonizes everyone in the play.¹⁶⁰

As Bernhard Zimmerman has pointed out, Goethe's reading was likely consistent with fifth-century Athenian religious feeling: failure to bury the dead led the so-called curse of the Buzygae, a prominent family of priests.¹⁶¹

On the other hand, one can find evidence sympathetic to Creon's position. Indeed, a look to Thucydides suggests that Creon was filled with the commonplace ideas of his day. In his History of the Peloponnesian Wars,

Thucydides attributes the following words to Pericles:

My own opinion is that when the whole state is on the right course it is a better thing for each separate individual than when private interests are satisfied but the state as a whole is going downhill. However well off a man may be in his private life, he will still be involved in the general ruin if

¹⁶⁰ In conversation with Eckermann, March 28, 1827. Quoted in Bernhard Zimmermann, Greek Tragedy: An Introduction, tr. Thomas Marier (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991), p. 66.

his country is destroyed; whereas, so long as the state itself is secure, individuals have a much greater chance of recovering from their private misfortunes.¹⁶²

Aristotle, too, found justification in this position, offering in his Politics that “the polis is prior in the order of nature to the family and the individual.”¹⁶³

But this kind of reading turns one character into a representative of Eros, the other of Eris, and that would be incorrect. Both, in fact, participate equally in both Eros and Eris, and both fail to achieve *harmonia* in their own positions and between each other in their conflict. Their dialogue constitutes the central *agôn* of the play, but it fails to provide a harmonious balance in its speech-acts. As I will show, *harmonia* is brought about through the agency of the chorus and is refined significantly by Ismene, Haemon, and particularly by Tiresias. Arriving at an understanding of this *agôn* can be best enabled by comparing its central conflict—as expressed in the shared speech of the play’s dialogue—to the ancient practice of weaving.

Weaving and Harmonia.

In the second book of his ten books on architecture, Vitruvius accounts how people were first drawn together by fire where they then learned to share

¹⁶¹ Bernhard Zimmermann, Greek Tragedy: An Introduction, tr. Thomas Marier (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991), pp. 66-7.

¹⁶² Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian Wars, vol. 2, tr. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1881), p. 60.

¹⁶³ Aristotle, Politics, tr. T.A. Sinclair and T. J. Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 12.

speech. Community is born (*tiktein*), however, when these people began to make things (*techne*) together and to build (*tektein*). As Vitruvius writes, "And first, with upright forked props and twigs put between, they wove their walls."¹⁶⁴ Ultimately this effort will culminate in the making of architecture and the *polis*, but according to Vitruvius, the first *techne* were upright looms. The word used for plying the loom or weaving was *hyphainein*, which meant "to bring to light." Weaving, it appears, brings a particular order to light through the warp and woof of interlaced filaments and threads fit together on the same plane by right angles. As such, weaving relied on the "fitting-together" of *harmonia*. The strength of the weave depended on its tightness, on the closeness of the *strophe* and *antistrophe* of the weave, so to speak. In order to hold together, weaving demands, like dialogue, a prevailing by turns; it requires a contest (*agôn*) of both warp and woof where no one is privileged.

The *agôn* between Antigone and Creon brings to light a faulty weaving, the fabric of justice exposed as weak.¹⁶⁵ For Creon, justice is on behalf of the city; he circumscribes conflict through a forced *monarchia*, or single rule. Accordingly, he uses tropes that constitute the world as straight, fixed, and singular. Likewise, he uses tropes that constitute things alien to that world as crooked, fluid, and duplicitous. For example, to distinguish his position from Antigone's, he describes her as a "thieving mind scheming crooked plans."

¹⁶⁴ Vitruvius, II.1.3., Vitruvius On Architecture, ed. and trans. Frank Granger (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 1931).

¹⁶⁵ See Braun, lines 538-646.

(Braun 599-600) Structurally, Antigone's defense of the unwritten laws merely recapitulate Creon's warp, only in a different register. Her rhetorical movement, in fact, constitutes the trope of *chiasmus*, or changing places: as Heraclitus noted, "The way up and the way down are the same." (108) Antigone, too, projects a singular and simplified world which is as limited to the rule of her family as Creon's world is limited to his city. Although her choices are governed by love (namely, *philia*)—and so in this respect clearly more sympathetic than Creon—she shows no ability to think on both sides and so upholds, in her own way, a stubborn *monarchia*. But insofar as the play investigates justice, it is a plea for *isonomia*, or equal law and reciprocity. Like the fabric of a good woven cloth, the fabric of justice must bear the conflict of the warp and woof of a tight right-angled weave.

Dancing and Phronesis.

Hegel oversimplified the components of the play's conflict as the written law of Creon versus the unwritten law of Antigone, a clash between the State and the individual. Though there is certainly much truth in Hegel's formulation of the conflict (not to mention deeper oppositions such as woman and man, youth and age), the play is clearly an anthropological inquiry into determining significant components of moral life through practical reason, or *phronesis*. In the Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle discusses *phronesis* as a kind of active knowing, connecting knowledge and performance. As a concrete figuring of action, *phronesis* is a *techne* in the sense that it is made and makes order (*kosmos*)

visible. This is a principle that resonates with the Laws of Plato, which state that an educated citizen must sing and dance well to understand political order. Indeed, education and understanding were intimately connected with dancing (and play), as was knowledge and wisdom. In his Oxyrhynchine fragment, for example, Pindar describes Hellas as “the land of lovely dancing,” describing how *episteme* and *sophia* (knowledge and wisdom) are acquired through experience—even the feet of his dancers are called *epistamenoisi*, or “knowing feet.”¹⁶⁸

Homer used the word *choros* in both The Iliad and The Odyssey to refer to dancing. From this, the “chorus,” or group of character/dancers in ancient drama take their name. The choral odes are generally made up of turns (*strophe*) and opposing-turns (*antistrophe*), usually in iambic metered verse. Though these are not unique to the Antigone, I’d like to suggest that they are a gesture of ancient Greek theatrical conceiving: a formal figuration which has an identity of opposition as well as an oppositional relationship to the *stichomythia* (story-by-lines, or dialogue) which is spoken by the other characters in the play.

What I’m attempting to link up here are notions of choral acts as the practice of *phronesis*: concrete performance figurations of an anti-synthesizing approach to conflict. To think along these lines would then point to the chorus as the exemplary figure in the play, the wise body who praises love (*eros*,

¹⁶⁸ Discussed in Indra Kagis McEwen, Socrates’ Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), p. 104.

agape, and *philia*) and recommends a balance of the values explored in the play. Nowhere, for example, do the choral lyrics suggest that a synthesis can or should be consummated, for that would entail a negation. Yet, neither do they side with either Antigone or Creon. As I reported above, they “think on both sides” and this thinking takes on form in their dance. Like Heraclitus’s cycles of nature—“It throws apart and then brings back together again; it advances and then retires” (31)—the rhythmic, choral spatial exchanges of running, circling, passing, and turning use dance figures to make visible the gesture of perpetual strife.

Shipbuilding and Eurhythmia.

The fifth book of The Odyssey describes how Odysseus, with the help of Calypso, built his boat:

Twenty trees in all did he fell, and trimmed them with the axe; then he cunningly [*epistamenos*] smoothed them all and made them straight to the line [*epistathmen*]. Meanwhile Calypso, the beautiful goddess, brought him augers; and he bored all the pieces and fitted them together [*harmoniesin areren*], and with pegs and morticings did he hammer it together.¹⁶⁷

In discussing the boat’s joints, Homer invokes both the adjective *areros* (well-adjusted or perfectly fit) and *harmonia*, both of which share etymological and

¹⁶⁷ Homer, The Odyssey, 5.243-248. Translated by Indra Kagis McEwen and quoted in Socrates’ Ancestor, p. 49.

experiential connections. Using archaeological evidence, Lionel Casson, in his "Ancient Shipbuilding: New Light on an Old Source," documents a method of shipbuilding which highly resembles Homer's account.¹⁶⁸ He describes the importance of right-angled distribution of planks and oar banks which appear on both sides of the boat. Though building a sea-worthy ship seems to bear a striking resemblance to weaving a good cloth in its requisite use of *harmonia*, it demands, like dancing, the human employment of *eurhythmia* (good rhythm—which, incidentally, is one of the six basic tenets of architecture, according to Vitruvius). Imagine, for example, a boat with banks of oars down each side. Further imagine a haphazard rowing style—or a style where only one side managed the oars. The result, I presume, is a mental image of a boat going in circles or moving willy-nilly. What I would like to suggest is that the cooperative effort of good rhythm was essential for the purposive navigation and operation of a sea vessel.

It becomes very interesting, then, to discover the ways in which images of ships and the sea are figured in the Antigone. In the prologue, for example, when Ismene remarks that Antigone's words are disturbing, Antigone affirms, "Dark and troublous, like a stormy sea. Fear not for me. Steer straight your own fate." (Fitts 104-105) Ismene later declares herself to have assisted Antigone in the burial saying, "I did the deed, even though she rows by my side," (Fitts 657-

¹⁶⁸ Lionel Casson, "Ancient Shipbuilding: New Light on an Old Source," Transactions of the American Philological Association 194 (1963): 28-33.

658) proclaiming herself “not ashamed to make [her] voyage with [Antigone].” (Fitts 661-662) Both of these passages metaphorically treat life as a sea expedition that must be navigated well—a process commensurable with the technology of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. Creon, on the other hand, views the city as a ship. “Gentlemen: I have the honor to inform you that our Ship of State, which recent storms have threatened to destroy, has come safely to harbor at last,” (Fitts 201-203) he says, and “We must remember that friends made at the risk of wrecking our Ship are not real friends at all.” (Fitts 227-229) However, Creon’s son Haemon counterbalances his father’s rhetoric by reminding him that there may be forces greater than the force of his will, and by extension, civil law:

I beg you, do not be unchangeable: do not believe that you alone can be right. . . . In flood time you can see how some trees bend, and because they bend, even their twigs are safe while stubborn trees are torn up roots and all. And the same thing happens in sailing: make your sheet fast, never slacken—and over you go, head over heels and under: and there’s your voyage. (Fitts 861-867)

What I want to emphasize here are the striking coherences between the formal qualities of human fictions and the relation of these qualities to the ethical aim in culture-making. By emphasizing the importance of both good rhythm spatially (in the construction of boats, for example), and temporally (in the operation and navigation of boats, for example), my intention is to underscore

once again the practice of *phronesis* as the concrete, performative figuration of an anti-synthesizing approach to conflict.

Architecture and Kosmos.

E. H. Gombrich introduces his book *A Sense of Order* by aligning his belief in Karl Popper's observed need for human regularity, with a sense of the relevance of order-seeking as a kind of biological survival tactic. Accordingly, Gombrich moves on to write over four hundred pages of analysis on a psychology of decorative art: overlapping acanthus leaves in Corinthian capitals, the recurring, symmetrical patterning on the borders of Egyptian vases, Incan coins, Indian mandalas, Islamic mosque filigree, Turkish rug designs, and so on.¹⁶⁹ The relation of decoration to order goes back to Homer, for whom to decorate meant to bring to order, as well as to regulate (the Latin *ornare* also means both to ornament and to put in order). Homer's word was *kosmos*.

Though *kosmos* was observable in physical nature (Vitruvius, among others, consistently emphasized the order of the human body), it was made visible through *techne*, which is to say forged through acts of poetry or fiction, i.e. things made. I'd like to suggest, then, that the principle emblems of the *polis* and political order were community buildings: namely, the temple and the theater. As Vitruvius observed, community was formed when people began to build together. I'd like to further emphasize that it was through the order made

¹⁶⁹ E. H. Gombrich, *A Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979).

visible by architecture that humans could meditate on *kosmos*, *eurhythmia*, *harmonia*, and conceive of such a thing as practical wisdom. Martin Heidegger, of course, noted this in his famous linking of building, dwelling, and thinking;¹⁷⁰ but I would add that it is through such order that human life achieves coherence (though the anomie of chaos, I would argue, does need to raise its head in perfect Heraclitean opposition from time to time). This point may relate additionally to the biological need that animated the Gombrich inquiry mentioned above. It is not surprising, then, that *kosmos*, split into both *taxis* (order) and *diathesis* (arrangement), is the primary architectural element for Vitruvius. As he observed regarding ancient Greek temples, everything from the columns (which were proportioned like the human body) to the two side *ptera* (wings) resembled a human body in its organization and distribution (*Vitruvian economia*).

The body invoked constantly throughout the *Antigone* is the *anthropos*. Perhaps the most famous passage from the play is, in fact, the so-called "Ode of Man." This passage alternately praises and scorns human power by turns. The image is itself the embodiment of opposition: "Many marvels walk through the world, terrible, wonderful, but none more than humanity." (Braun 415-417) The figuration of *anthropos* in this ode maintains its ambivalence through to the final antistrophe: "With learning and with ingenuity over the horizon of faith, humanity crawls now to failure, now to worth." (Braun 446-449)

¹⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 145-161.

It may be helpful now to restate the uncanny logic of the previous paragraphs: if architecture, as the emblem of the *polis* and model of *kosmos*, was a figure of *anthropos*, the human embodiment of opposition, then what must be stressed as significant about the *polis* is its composition from the principle of conflict. Because the city is composed as a complex of opposing elements—individuals and families, each with their own disparate values—conflicting concerns must not be reduced to a single value. The form of right action in such a *polis* must be, then, an action that provides creative opposition. Creative opposition must be one which, according to Hazard Adams, “does not negate the prevailing power and what *it* negates, but civilizes it through a Heraclitean oppositional supplementation and change.”¹⁷¹ Just like the poetic power of *entasis*—the architectural technique for optical compensation used in column building—where what is false is made to appear true, this opposition is a tropological strategy of taking metaphor literally. However, as Murray Krieger has remarked, “We are not to take the metaphor for life,” but to “see life more acutely for the metaphor.”¹⁷²

Polis and Theoria

Seeing life more acutely, as the *Antigone* shows, does not necessarily have to do with the eyes at all. This is made clear by introducing the person of vision,

¹⁷¹ Hazard Adams, “Canons: Literary Criteria/Power Criteria,” *Antithetical Essays in Literary Criticism and Liberal Education* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), p. 172.

¹⁷² Murray Krieger, *Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 243.

blind Tiresias, just before the play's close. The kind of *theoria* (seeing) that Tiresias has made his *techne* resides in the domain of intuition. But as the Krieger quote above suggests, the work of metaphor also accomplishes a similar chore. Indeed, as Aristotle wrote in his Poetics, metaphor "sets the scene before our eyes" and "implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars."¹⁷³

"The polis and the well-built temples that made it appear shared a common identity. Craft and community were indissoluble."¹⁷⁴

To be sure, Tiresias, like the chorus preceding him only more explicit, recognizes with clarity the elusive many-sidedness of *anthropos* and the detrimental inflexibility of Creon. Not one to mince words, Tiresias abruptly addresses Creon: "The state is sick. You and your principles are to blame. . . . Stubbornness is stupidity. It is criminal. Give yourself leeway. Yield." (Braun 1170-1186) His final words to Creon are that he ought to teach his mind "better principles." (Braun 1267)

Ostensibly, after the prophesied deaths of Haemon and Creon's wife Eurydice (wide justice), Creon begins to exhibit some of the more "wonderful" qualities of *anthropos*, as opposed to his previously exhibited "terrible" qualities—both of which were figured in song by the chorus. The actual word used to modify the *anthropos* in the choral ode is *deinon*, meaning awe and

¹⁷³ Aristotle, Poetics, trans. Leon Golden (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1981), p. 41.

¹⁷⁴ Indra Kagis McEwen, Socrates' Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), p. 130.

disharmony, something both terrifying and wondrous. As such, it bears experiential connections to *thauma* (wonder), which is also closely related to *theoria*—examples being *theaomai* (to gaze in wonder), and *thaumazein* (to wonder at). As Aristotle remarked in the Metaphysics, “It is owing to their wonder that [men] both now begin and at first began to philosophize.”¹⁷⁵ To which one might hasten to add “and theorize.”

My purpose in drawing out these family resemblances is to index the heuristic power of thinking metaphorically about the play and its relations to wonder and conflict, particularly as these constitute a vision of the *polis*. Clearly, the play is filled with images of eyes and seeing: the narrowly constructed visions of Creon and Antigone which do not admit discord; the broad vision of the chorus which admits both concord and discord, exemplifying an attitude toward practical perception and Heraclitean harmony; and of course the mystic vision of Tiresias. But apart from the play’s intrinsic call to vision, the form of drama is itself such a call. Because the play is performed—before the viewing *politicos*—it is an instrument for the cultivation of political life through an ethical experience which accents the value of conflict and community. As such, it is a *techne* of the *polis*. The fact that it is made in another *techne*, the architectural theater, or “seeing place” (the *tekth* root of *architekton* meaning both build and weave), testifies to that status. Accordingly, the *polis* itself becomes a mandala

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle, Metaphysics, in The New Aristotle Reader, ed. J. L. Ackrill (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 258.

for the exercise of *theoria*. Like an ornate Persian carpet, the polis can be thought of, as Indra McEwen suggests, as a surface constantly “woven by the activity of its inhabitants.”¹⁷⁶ Further, I would submit that the activity of theater (and the Dionysian festival as a whole) was, in part, a making of the city as well. And, as the play closes with the dancing of the choral *exodus*, we are reminded that we are watching human fictions—poetry, dancing, music—at a community spectacle. This reminder suggests, as Martha Nussbaum has so eloquently written, “that the spectacle of this tragedy is itself an orderly mystery, ambitiously yielding, healing without cure, whose very harmony (as we respond to it in common) is not simplicity but the tension of distinct and separate beauties.”¹⁷⁷

Metaphor, Love, and Conflict

It bears remarking that, unlike the majority of ancient tragedies, no Gods appear as characters in the *Antigone*. Two gods, however, are invoked: Dionysus and Eros. Dionysus is invoked in the *Hyporchema* near the end of the play. His name called upon as the protector of the city of Thebes. The scene is night and the chorus refers to him as the leader of the stars. Any particular power delegated to Dionysus is left unsaid. Eros, on the other hand, is invoked multiple times in active voice, as a dynamic power. In particular, Eros is invoked in the central choral ode where (in a very Heraclitean mood) the chorus

¹⁷⁶ Socrates' Ancestor, p. 81.

¹⁷⁷ The Fragility of Goodness, p. 82.

conflates love with conflict: "Your power is equal, your place beside the great gods and eternal mandates; for Love conquers without war, and destroys with glad games." (Braun 955-957) There is a clear, iterative, placement of love throughout the play, whether by the name of *Eros*, *Philia*, or *Harmonia*. Even in invoking Dionysus, the chorus nominates him as the cousin of *Harmonia*. As the chorus wisely suggests in closing the spectacle, love offers a principle of Heraclitean opposition contrary to negation and exemplifies the value of metaphor: taken literally, love is a "carrying-over" (meta-phora) of one's self to identify with an other, holding opposing identities in the conflict and harmony of the copula.

Interchapter 2: Play

The creation of something new is not
accomplished by the intellect but by the
play instinct acting from inner necessity.
The creative mind plays with the object it loves.

-- Carl Jung

He who binds to himself a joy
Doth the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in Eternity's sun rise.

-- William Blake

Play is one of the most pervasive notions animating contemporary critical thought. Ever since Jacques Derrida delivered his notorious "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" at Johns Hopkins University in 1966, play (and its family variants: *différance*, slippage, indeterminacy, and so on) has taken its place as perhaps the central *façon de parler* of postmodernism. In literary theory, this fashioning of play (dare I say) refers, grossly, to the movement of endless semiosis and is grounded in a differential conception of language. With theory's deconstructive turn, play—whether directly or indirectly—has been charged with a variety of contemporary malaises ranging from Foucault's "disappearance of man" and Derrida's "fatality" of representation to Baudrillard's "culture of simulation" and Deleuze and Guattari's mass engineering of schizophrenia, as well as the disenfranchisement of things like meaning, reference, and identity.¹⁷⁸ Ironically, there appears to be no end to the

¹⁷⁸ See in particular Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1970); Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure

critics who continually (and heroically) make attempts to foster an understanding of why there can be no understanding. And identity appears to be present with a vengeance given the tremendous citing of Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard and other so-called "poststructuralists," their tragic discourse continually recapitulated and recognizable as the master narrative of the last couple decades.

Play, however, has a long (and healthier) history in the Western philosophical tradition.¹⁷⁹ From Plato's conflation of play and education (*paideia*) in his Laws, to the ethical play-drive (*Spieltrieb*) proposed by Friedrich Schiller in his Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, play is a radical mode of creation and discovery and abettor to learning and freedom. In our own century, from Jean Piaget's pioneering work on the importance of play in the onto-genetic development of humans to Johan Huizinga's positing of play as the progenitor of culture, play is in fact a fundamental principle of being and basic component of human nature.¹⁸⁰ And while the above mentioned thinkers make enormous

of Representation," Writing and Difference, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1978), pp. 232-250; Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," Selected Writings, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 166-184; and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, tr. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) and A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, tr. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). I should point out that Deleuze and Guattari view schizophrenia positively as a creative and necessary means for survival under late-capitalism.

¹⁷⁹ Though it focuses primarily on twentieth-century notions of the term, a good source for gaining a perspective on the philosophical history of play, see Mihai I. Spirosu, Dionysus Reborn: Play and the Aesthetic Dimension in Modern Philosophical and Scientific Discourse (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

¹⁸⁰ To add cultural range of this claim, allow me here to cite recent critical works that emphasize, explicitly, the attributes of play as I will describe them as found in various African and Asian

claims for the value of play, its sum and substance is ultimately beyond logical, biological, or physiological analysis.

The particular conception of play that I will investigate here grows out of this healthier tradition. Chief among its features is the idea that play serves no utilitarian purpose imposed externally; rather, play exhibits what Kant has referred to as "internal purposiveness" or "purposiveness without purpose" (*Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*).¹⁸¹ As such, and with respect to art and aesthetic experience, play is poised in contradistinction to the Platonic doctrine of mimetic accuracy or any other doctrine that demands external purpose. As Piaget renders it, play is "a free assimilation, without accommodation to spatial condition or to the significance of objects."¹⁸² This is not to say that it is not rule-governed; however, it legislates its own rules that may violate standard classifications or defamiliarize customary procedures and conditions. This is to say, then, that the rules of play, like metaphor, are not regulative but, rather, constitutive: the rules of play do not govern antecedent forms of behavior, but create and define new forms altogether in the activity of play itself. Exemplifying

cultures: Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982); Mihai I. Spinosu, *God of Many Names: Play Poetry and Power In Hellenic Thought from Homer to Aristotle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹⁸¹ This is found in Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful" from *The Critique of Judgement*. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, tr. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), pp. 37-81.

¹⁸² Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood*, tr. C. Gattegno and F. M. Hodgson (New York: Norton, 1962), p. 86.

this usage of play as internal purposiveness one might, for example, think of the play of light or the play of waves; in each case, as Hans-Georg Gadamer notes:

[W]hat is intended is to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end. . . . The play is the occurrence of the movement as such. Thus we can speak of the play of colors and do not mean that only one color plays against another, but that there is one process or sight displaying a changing variety of colors.¹⁸³

I would like to extend, however, the notion of play as a phenomenological category, as it is with Gadamer, and move toward a notion of play as an anthropological and, finally, as an ecological category. By ecological I mean to identify the internal purposiveness and movement of play as architect to a work's pattern of connections and couplings, a pattern which alerts us to the intimacy between the various fictive constituents and to the ways in which these constituents interact with each other, losing and establishing relations with each other and with their environments. Extending this notion further, one may even speak of the inter-play between a work and its audience, and the multiplex and changing connections of a work to culture at large. This seems to me of particular significance for the congeries of fictions that make up theatrical experience, play marking the connections and interactions of linguistic, acoustic, optic, and haptic fictions, and their performance in a decidedly public context.

¹⁸³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1991), p. 103.

And while this ecology of connections manifests what I have called pattern, I do not mean to identify play with structuralist notions of pattern—at least not the differential structuralist tradition of, say, Saussure and Lévi-Strauss (though I do not altogether reject the usefulness of structuralist processes like selection and combination, synchrony and diachrony, and so forth, as consequences of play). Pattern as I intend it constitutes not a dead and immutable structure but the unity of a living and dynamic form; its congruities and oppositions, consonances and dissonances, signify the interconnectedness of play's involved constituents. "The structure meant," as Cleanth Brooks put it famously, "is a structure of meanings, evaluations, and interpretations; and the principle of unity that informs it seems to be one of balancing and harmonizing connotations, attitudes, and meanings."¹⁸⁴ I should append, however, that such unity is not without conflict and that such harmonizing is a Heraclitean "harmony in contrariety" as discussed in the chapter on conflict above. I would further add that with living form lies feeling, and that the pattern of play projects not mere ornament but an aspect of a work's expressive power—and, hence, human agency and concern.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Cleanth Brooks, "The Heresy of Paraphrase," The Well Wrought Urn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1949), p. 178.

¹⁸⁵ Following in the footsteps of Huizinga, anthropologist Roger Caillois has identified some of play's most persistent patternings which he casts in the form of four basic games: *agôn*, *alea*, *mimicry*, and *ilinx*. According to Caillois, *agôn* (contest) marks the collision and competition of adversarial opponents; it is, so to speak, a formalization of the commonplace notion of conflict from chess to war. *Alea* (chance), proceeds according to decisions independent of the agents involved in such play. Whereas *agôn* relies (among other things) on experience and skill, *alea* proceeds by way of indeterminacy. *Mimicry* for Caillois is not simple imitation but an activity of becoming other—a transmogrification of identity. It is the creation and acceptance, however

As an anthropological category, play marks not so much a structure at all but, rather, the enactment of an anti-structure. By anti-structure I do not mean a reversal or rejection of structural exigencies but an emancipation from the encumbrance of some socio-cultural norm. As in the semantic play of metaphor, the concept of Play is in fact an experimentation with the repertoire of these norms—the norms which otherwise confine one within the constraints of social roles and memberships such as age, race, ethnicity, class, gender, and so on—and may be evidence of the anthropological imperative to revolt against oppression and restraint. Art gives expression to this imperative and its forms give figure to the human capacity for freedom—as Gadamer has asserted, the forms of art “are forms of our freedom.”¹⁸⁶

The most cogent statement linking play and freedom is Friedrich Schiller's Ueber die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen (1795). In brief, the argument made in Schiller's letters is that in order for human agents to reach the “ethical condition”—and the attendant condition of freedom—they must first pass through the “aesthetic condition,” made possible through the play of art. Extending Kant, who confined freedom to moral action regulated by a rational conception of duty, Schiller asserted the idea that play and art occupy a liminal and transitional

temporarily, of a whole set of conventions and characteristics otherwise wholly alien. Finally, llinx (vertigo) is a manufacturing of vertigo and total destruction of stability. See Roger Caillois, Man, Play, and Games, tr. Meyer Barash (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp. 12-26.

¹⁸⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Play of Art,” The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays, tr. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 130. Relevant here is Bakhtin's notion of “carnival” and “carnivalization;” see M. M. Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, tr. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

locality between the domains of sensuous phenomena and abstract rationality and, through their mediating function, educate individuals to recognize and assume the responsibility for their freedom.

Schiller grounds his view of the necessity of aesthetic education on a theory of human nature that posits three basic human impulses. The first of these impulses he nominates as the *Stofftrieb*, or sense-drive. The sense-drive is a sensuous or material drive and proceeds from sensuous and physical existence. It constantly presses for change and the satisfaction of material needs. Next, Schiller nominates the *Formtrieb*, or formal-drive. The formal-drive proceeds from rationality and aims at timelessness and is responsible for laws. Schiller imagines an age when these drives were not separate and considers the division of these two drives a wound inflicted on humanity by the process of civilization and the rise of State authority:

It was culture itself that inflicted this wound upon modern humanity. As soon as enlarged experience and more precise speculation made necessary a sharper division of the sciences on the one hand, and on the other, the more intricate machinery of States made necessary a more rigorous dissociation of ranks and occupations, the essential bond of human nature was torn apart, and a ruinous conflict set its harmonious powers at variance. The intuitive and the speculative understanding took up hostile attitudes upon their respective fields, whose boundaries they now began to guard with jealousy and distrust, and by confining our

activity to a single sphere we have handed ourselves over to a master who is not infrequently inclined to end up by suppressing the rest of our capacities. While in one place a luxuriant imagination ravages the hard-earned fruits of the intellect, in another the spirit of abstraction stifles the fire at which the heart might have warmed itself and the fancy been rekindled.¹⁸⁷

Schiller conceives the conflict of these drives in terms of a negation and envisions the task of culture to do justice to both drives by mediating their antagonism. To answer this charge, Schiller nominates the *Spieltrieb*, or play-drive as a contrary and harmonizing third impulse. He connects the play-drive with the internal purposiveness of art, its capacity for creating multiple cultural patternings and endless avenues of self-cultivation, and its achievement of beauty. As Schiller summarizes:

[T]he object of the sense impulse, expressed in a general concept, may be called *life* in the widest sense of the word; a concept which expresses all material being and all that is immediately present in the senses. The object of the form impulse, expressed generally, may be called *shape*, both in the figurative and in the literal sense; a concept which includes all formal qualities of things and all their relations to the intellectual faculties.

The object of the play impulse, conceived in a general notion, can

¹⁸⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *On The Aesthetic Education of Man*, tr. Reginald Snell (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 39.

therefore be called *living shape*, a concept which serves to denote all aesthetic qualities of phenomena and—in a word—what we call *Beauty* in the widest sense of the term.¹⁸⁸

In Schiller's cosmos, the aesthetic education offered by art ultimately heals division in its achievement of beauty—and “it is through Beauty that we arrive at Freedom.”¹⁸⁹

Schiller, however, neglects to include in his cosmos the notion of critical discrimination. Such a faculty is necessary if one is to tell the difference between an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical and a Nuremberg rally. Indeed, as Richard Schusterman has pointed out with respect to Schiller's theory, “Aesthetic education is possible *only* if it involves criticism.”¹⁹⁰ (My emphasis.) Clearly, the best course for ethics proceeds not from a strict application of rules but through thoughtful deliberation provided by the play of creative imagination; and, as I have suggested, play is a means through which the arrogance and negating power of absolute certainty is subverted.

I will now conclude my thoughts on play and its primacy for a poetics. Here I would again invoke Schiller and point to his positioning of play in a space of liminality, mediating between the opposition of sense and form. I use the word liminality (from the Latin *limen*, meaning threshold) with reference to Arnold

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27; p. 140.

¹⁹⁰ Richard Schusterman, Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 163.

Van Gennep's renowned study of cultural celebrations, Rites de Passage, and in an effort to weave in the theatrical spectator or auditor and the activity of theater-going itself. In his Rites de Passage, Van Gennep identifies and distinguishes three stages of the symbolic action of ritual: separation, transition, and incorporation.¹⁹¹ He links liminality to the stage of transition, a phase which mediates between established cultural order and revised cultural order. The liminal activity, then, marks the lineaments of that revision. If one considers theater going itself as a ritual whereby we confront ourselves with ourselves, theatrical space marks the separation (in Van Gennep's terms) from the routine and consolidated order of the culture and its concomitant classifications of those selves. The theatrical event, then, enacts the play of transition—opening the panorama of the possible—and the final curtain (or its equivalent) marks the revised reintegration into non-theatrical life. What this means is that the spectator or auditor belongs to the activity of play itself, participating in it even as she employs it to look (and finally act) beyond it. Indeed, anthropologist Victor Turner has asserted that liminal activities such as play, art, myth, ritual, and philosophy provide "a set of templates, models, or paradigms which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality (or, at least, of social experience) and man's relationship to society, nature, and culture. But they are more than (mere cognitive) classifications, since they incite men to action as well as

¹⁹¹ See Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, tr. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

thought."¹⁹² And so, play is finally a creative activity and experience through which we conceive and achieve something new. As Johan Huizinga contends, culture itself continually "arises in the form of play."¹⁹³ And play, as Roman Jakobson avers in an essay on fun, "teaches us anew how to touch, grasp, and evaluate the world."¹⁹⁴

Jean-Luc Godard's film One Plus One (released in the United States as Sympathy for the Devil), is an example of the poetic logic of play, demanding of its respondents an form of intimacy achieved through a continuous promiscuous coupling of fragments. Like Macbeth's witches' hell-broth, Godard's film takes the fragment as its chief poetic device. It makes play its mode of theatrical conceiving, turning its fragments through various patterns of connections in a free assimilation aimed at defamiliarizing customary norms, but also at creating new roads for emancipation from those norms.

¹⁹² Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology," From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: PAJ, 1982), p. 52.

¹⁹³ Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon, 1955), p. 46.

¹⁹⁴ Roman Jakobson, "Open Letter to Jiri Voskovec and Jan Werich on the Epistemology and Semantics of Fun," tr. Michael L. Quinn in "Jakobson and the Liberated Theater," Stanford Slavic Studies 1 (1988): 153-162.

Play as Intimacy: Copulation in Postmodern Cinema

Fillet of a fenny snake,
 In the cauldron boil and bake;
 Eye of newt and toe of frog,
 Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
 Adder's fork and blind- worm's sting,
 Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
 For a charm of powerful trouble,
 Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

-- William Shakespeare, Macbeth

Movies are a world of fragments.

-- Jean-Luc Godard

Just as play is one of the most pervasive notions animating contemporary critical thought, play, too, is one of the most widespread poetic principles found in contemporary fictions. Particularly in what is commonly referred to as postmodern fictions, play is a dominant mode of expression. Though the term postmodern is now used somewhat loosely—more for journalistic convenience than linguistic necessity—I use it here to refer to work in the post World War II years with a tendency toward the fragment, quotation, multi-coding/discontinuous pluralism, indeterminacy, the quotidian, and irony—especially ironic intercourse with history. I by no means intend to suggest, by putting a timeframe around so-called postmodern expression, that the claims I make for it are relegated to any temporal limits. I believe, with Umberto Eco, that “postmodernism is not a trend to be defined chronologically, but, rather, an ideal

category . . . a way of operating. We could say that every period has its own postmodernism, just as every period would have its own mannerism.”¹⁹⁵

As a mode of expression, or way of operating (poetically), play exemplifies intimacy through what Giambattista Vico would have called “promiscuous” coupling.¹⁹⁶ Whereas in conflict, intimacy is achieved through the contrariety of opposites that belong to each other, play achieves intimacy through promiscuous episodes of contact and connection. And whereas the foremost predicate of conflict could be conceived of as justice (or harmony), the foremost predicate of play could be conceived of as freedom. As I discussed above, Friedrich Schiller explicitly linked play and freedom. So too did Jean Piaget in his explorations of play, wherein he considers play a form of “objective modification” of expression without influence of external constraints from the subject’s environment, and a fundamental component of human ontogenetic development.¹⁹⁷

Not surprisingly, a great deal of the predicates of postmodern works are, in some fashion or other, forms of freedom. Think here of the ironic play of

¹⁹⁵ Umberto Eco, Postscript to The Name of the Rose, tr. William Weaver (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984), p. 66. For a brilliant extended argument of this claim, see Marshall Brown “The Classic is the Baroque: On the Principle of Wölfflin’s Art History,” Critical Inquiry 9 (December 1982): 379-404.

¹⁹⁶ Vico uses the term promiscuity very positively, as a progenitor of culture, nation—everything, in fact. See Giambattista Vico, The New Science, tr. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Especially see ¶16ff. (p. 11) and ¶688 (pp. 260-1).

¹⁹⁷ See Jean Piaget, Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood, tr. C. Gattengno and F. M. Hodgson (New York: Norton, 1951), p. 274.

woman and cyborg in Donna Haraway's conception of feminism, reinventing and claiming a new identity for women as a form of freedom from all restricted and oppressive received identities.¹⁹⁸ Think also of the well-known conception of postmodernism offered by Jean-François Lyotard as a freedom from the idea of master narratives, or the overwhelming amount of work done in all disciplines that employ Lyotard's idea to free minds (and bodies) from master conceptions of all manner of personal and political constraints. In pragmatic terms, play is one action of fiction and serves the same purpose in helping us to rethink what is or imagine what might be. As Mihalyi Csikzentmihalyi puts it, "play reveals to us the possibility of changing our goals and, therefore, the restructuring of what our culture states to be reality."¹⁹⁹ So play has, then, a radicality, a gesture toward freedom that is forged through the intimacies it creates. I am not claiming that this is something new, by any means, only something that is foregrounded in most so-called postmodern works as I have defined them. Indeed, as Northrop Frye has pointed out, the concern to escape from slavery and restraint is one of the four primary concerns in the history of world mythology.²⁰⁰ One of the best examples of the fictive conflation of play and freedom is Jean-Luc Godard's film One Plus One (known in its general release as Sympathy for the Devil). Before

¹⁹⁸ See Donna J. Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁹⁹ Mihalyi Csikzentmihalyi, "Flow: Studies of Enjoyment," University of Chicago, PHS Grant Report (1974), p. 75.

²⁰⁰ See the prefatory note in Part Two of Northrop Frye's Words With Power (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1990), p. 139.

moving into an explication of Godard's film, however, I would like to explore some of the predominant constitutive principles associated with postmodern consciousness and culture-making as a framework for understanding the postmodern poetic vocabulary.

Fragment. In postmodern discourses, there is a primary tendency toward expression at what can be thought of as an atomic level. By an atomic level, I mean discourse at the level of the sign as opposed to the level of the sentence, a concern with and valorization of the fragment as opposed to any posited whole. One of the explanations frequently offered for this tendency is that, cognitively or otherwise, focus on the fragment provides a strategy for dealing with the proliferation of information—as some have put it, it provides a way of surviving under the social condition of capitalism.²⁰¹ In a media-saturated culture where life is accompanied by an growing landscape composed from brief visual and sound-bites—twelve-minute television snippets, thirty-second commercials, and three-minute pop songs—as well as an accelerated pace at which this information and the technologies that move it impinge upon that landscape's inhabitants, it is not surprising that the fragment is the key form of expressive currency.

²⁰¹ For discussions of these ideas, see Frederic Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham: Duke University press, 1991); and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, tr. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

As a philosophical idea, the idea of the fragment as a particularly postmodern interest is poised, in intent, in contradistinction to the romantic and modern concerns toward unity, wholeness, and artistic purity. As I mentioned above, there is a suspicion of unity, wholeness, or purity artistic or otherwise, in most postmodern thought. The politics of the fragment are part and parcel of that overall postmodern suspicion of unity but further, of the overall postmodern charitability toward difference and minority. The poetics of the fragment, then, are a tactical solution for emphasizing difference and minority in culture-making: rather than making more master narratives or totalizing discourses, postmodern culture-makers might consider their various narratives and discourses as, to alter a phrase used by Pablo Picasso about his own art, “sums of destructions.”²⁰²

Film and video have become the purveyors of the fragment *par excellence* insofar as techniques and trends of optical and sonic editing have canonized the fragmentary nature of composition in those medias. As Walter Benjamin noted in his “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” “The film is the art form that is in keeping with the increased threat to his life which modern man has to face. . . . The film corresponds to profound changes in the perceptive

²⁰² Pablo Picasso in conversation with Christian Zervos, 1935. See Herschel B. Chipp, ed., Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 267.

apparatus—changes that are experienced on an individual scale by the man in the street in big-city traffic, on a historical scale by every present-day citizen.”²⁰³

Quotation. The concept of quotation in postmodern culture proceeds from what I see as two distinct interests. The first is the postmodern interest in the fragment as I have just described it. As an interest stemming from the fragment, quotation serves to emphasize atomicity and suspicion of unified wholes: quotations are excerpted from some absent whole to which they refer, but within the context of another work, their fragmentary character is emphasized. Multiple quotations reference multiple points of origin, and play occurs as we as readers or respondents are moved through a range of those varied references. And the range of the use of quotations in postmodern work ranges widely.

For example, in a musical composition like Mauricio Kagel’s “Ludwig Van,” direct quotations from the works of Beethoven are strung together and layered to form the entire composition. Still, the fragmentary nature is foregrounded as the ear picks up sonic signs from the Ninth Symphony, layered with an fragments from an early String Quartet, followed by fragments of the Third Symphony, layered with the familiar bagatelle “Für Elise,” and so on. At the other end of the spectrum, one can find things like the George Lucas film Star Wars, which is kind of a Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations of the cinema, using visual quotes from other films like Leni Reifenstahl’s Triumph of the Will and

²⁰³ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Illuminations, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 250.

John Ford's The Searchers, World War II bomber pilot films like Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo and Flying Tigers, and fantasy films like Forbidden Planet and The Wizard of Oz, all couched within a new work. The practice even encroaches in criticism: for example, Jacques Lacan has written a seminar on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter," in which he quotes Poe to create a parable on the psychoanalytic process. In turn, Jacques Derrida wrote "The Purveyor of Truth" which quotes Lacan quoting Poe. Finally, Barbara Johnson composed "The Frame of Reference," which quotes Derrida quoting Lacan quoting Poe.

The second interest in quotation stems from the postmodern affinity for history as opposed to the modernist valorization of "The New." As I remarked above, however, postmodernism is not truly a chronological phenomenon, but a particular mode of expression that simply adopted a name for journalistic convenience. Clearly, the modernist emphasis on originality and innovation reached a point at which there was nowhere to go but further out: John Cage's silences, Robert Rauschenberg's erased drawings and performance artist Rudolf Schwarzkogler's cutting off his own penis are some high points at the end of that road. The postmodern reply to modernism is that it is impossible to speak innocently and that there is no such thing as acting naturally—that we have all suffered the anxiety of influence too much and we have been profoundly shaped by what has come before us. In postmodern works, the past is recognized and recontextualized, specifically, through the use of quotation.

Multi-Coding/Discontinuous Pluralism. With the emphasis on fragments and quotation, which, presumably, originate from a variety of sources, histories, and with various layers of reference, postmodernist works tend toward what I am calling multi-coding²⁰⁴, or the semiotic construction of discontinuous pluralism. Using an example from dramatic literature, one might cite Heiner Müller's Hamletmachine as perhaps one of the most succinct and paradigmatic postmodern plays. In Hamletmachine, history is presented as an intertextual web of quotations from a multiplicity of times and places. Naturally, Shakespeare's Hamlet looms largest in this web (demonstrating, again, the postmodernist affinity for history and the anxiety of influence), but commercial advertisements and other fragments of history are pastiched in what could be called, to use Walter Benjamin's phrase, a "vista of debris."²⁰⁵ Even the characters are coded according to multiplicity: there are multiple Hamlets, multiple Ophelias, each referring to different spatio-temporalities. Further, new characters are conjoined in the dramatic landscape with the Shakespearean characters: Marx, Lenin, and Mao participate in the action and speak in three different languages simultaneously. Space and time, in the play, are constructed as discontinuous, not obeying Euclidean or Newtonian conceptions, but, instead, obeying the playfully discontinuous quantum conceptions offered by

²⁰⁴ This term is an expansion of Charles Jencks's definition of postmodern as "double-coding: the combination of Modern techniques with something else." See Charles Jencks, What Is Postmodernism? (London: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 14.

²⁰⁵ See passage IX from Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Illuminations, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), pp. 257-8.

the likes of Werner Heisenberg, Niels Bohr, Erwin Schrödinger and Albert Einstein.

To use an example from postmodern architecture, one might think of Michael Graves's Portland Building or Stuttgart's Naue Stättgalerie, which playfully mix visual quotes from Bauhaus glass, concrete, and steel structures, with Egyptian cornices, medieval porticos, and pop art color, creating a monstrous form of architecture. Architect Robert Venturi defines this history-intimate, multi-referenced form in his Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, as "hybrid rather than pure, compromising rather than clean, perverse as well as impersonal, boring as well as interesting, accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear" and in favor of "messy vitality over obvious unity."²⁰⁸ Again, the political goal of this style hammers away at teleological and totalizing discourses like logic, linearity, and determinacy—all of which presume to sum up the world in a unified theory—in favor of playfulness.

Indeterminacy. As part of the effort to abolish master narratives and other totalizing discourses, one strategy for culture-makers has been to relinquish authority and to welcome chance and indeterminacy. One constituent of postmodern fictions is the inclusion of elements that were not determined by the maker but, rather, included as a result of the play of providence or accident.

Artists, for example, have created works using aleatory procedures such as throwing dice and the like. Composer John Cage created music almost exclusively in this manner, often making musical decisions based on consulting and executing I Ching procedures. Another way of allowing indeterminacy to supplant determinism has been to provide skeletal scenarios in which anything might happen. One of the best examples of this practice is the performance genre known as the Happening, where a loose structure is provided—such as a time limit and a location—in which participants perform (even unknowingly) in unplanned ways as part of the event. One of the most notorious examples of this form of indeterminacy comes, again, from John Cage. In Cage's piece from 1952 commonly called 4'33", pianist David Tudor sits at a piano for four minutes and thirty-three seconds in "silence," playing nothing. The piece consists, then, of the sound of the audience shuffling and laughing, and the sounds of the environment generally.

Indeterminacy is not new, but it is sympathetic to the aims of most postmodernists. Indeterminacy as an artist's strategy has its roots in the experiments of the Dadaists and in the "Ready Mades"—found objects displayed in a museum context as art—made popular by Marcel Duchamp.²⁰⁷ With the idea of taking the master's hand out of the picture and opening up work to

²⁰⁶ Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988), p. 16.

²⁰⁷ Incidentally, John Cage is known for his remark, "If you want to learn to write music, study Duchamp." When he was in residence at Oberlin College in 1982, I asked him if he were to restate that famous remark, how would he do so: he replied, "Study Vico."

fragments possibly originating from a variety of sources and histories, indeterminacy gestures at freedom.

The Quotidian. As an extension of the use of indeterminacy, a great deal of postmodern works utilize casual references to the everyday and to pop culture, rather than the unique, the heroic, or culture of the masterpiece. Once Modernism had come to the stage where it demanded celebrity paychecks for artworks—where a single painting, for example, could command twice the dollar amount of the gross national product of several African states, there was a marked turn to the ordinary and the conceptual (as opposed to the material) as a method of avant-garde resistance. The hegemony of capitalism was thwarted, in essence, by turning away from the demonstration of expertise, to artistic choices that—at least in appearance—could be made by the proverbial “man in the street.” To wit, one could point to John Cage creating music from everyday environmental sounds, organized and chosen by chance, which took away the “master” artist’s hand. Likewise in dance, where the compositions of choreographers like Merce Cunningham, Lucinda Childs, Twyla Tharp, Laura Dean, Yvonne Rainer and Tom Johnson (to name a few) became famous for using quotidian/pedestrian movements like walking, pushing a broom or waving a hand to build their works—getting away from the highly specialized and abstract movement of modern dance as typified by Martha Graham, Isadora Duncan, and Mary Wigman, Doris Humphrey, and Ruth St. Dennis. Further, one can think of the influence of Andy Warhol, whose Campbell’s Soup cans, Borox

Soap boxes, and the like, created a new avenue of “pop” art that, like the works of dada artists, was averse to the masterpiece.

In criticism, Roland Barthes, who applied serious semiotic analysis to everyday things like margarine, wrestling, “The New Citroën,” “The Face of Garbo,” and drinking a “too cold beer”, has developed this tendency charmingly.²⁰⁸ The quotidian is important, too, in the work of Michel de Certeau, who uses the metaphor of the street walker who sees the quotidian particulars of the world, in contradistinction to the omnipotent World Trade Center gazer, who sees the grand, master picture—pointing out that it is, in fact, the street walker that wields the power to move here and there in a tactical refutation of some grand master plan.²⁰⁹

Irony. Finally, the principle of irony needs to be noted as perhaps the predominant trope in a so-called postmodern poetics. Again, the use of irony is not new, nor is it specifically tied to contemporary postmodern work.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Especially, see Roland Barthes, Mythologies, tr. Annette Lavers (New York: Noonday Press, 1990).

²⁰⁹ See Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, tr. Stephen Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Especially, see Chapter VII, pages 91-110.

²¹⁰ Indeed, irony has been a recurring philosophical principle throughout history. Preceding postmodernism, New Criticism, for example, was a literary critical movement which took irony as the binding principle of poetry; the Nineteenth-Century, too, had significant emphasis on irony: see the works of Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger, Friedrich and A. W. Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, and Søren Kierkegaard, whose work The Concept of Irony, (tr. Lee M. Capel, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), documents ironic philosophical milestones throughout history. See, too, Gary J. Handwerk, Irony and Ethics in Narrative: From Schlegel to Lacan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) for an excellent and thorough account of the use of irony in philosophy and literature. For dramatic art specifically, see G. G. Sedgewick, Of Irony, Especially in Drama (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1935), and Bert O. States, Irony and Drama: A Poetics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971).

According to Vico, irony is simply the latter stage of any cultural institution, preeminent, he says, in periods of reflection. Irony comes from the Greek *eiron* or the Latin *dubitatio*, meaning doubt. Simply put, irony is a trope whose rhetorical use and meaning signifies doubt through the tension of opposition and conflicting meaning.

But like most postmodern principles, irony is a strategy for resisting dominant modes of behavior and being. It works, through its “doubting” nature, to call everything into question. One of the most prominent uses of irony’s questioning character has been put to task by postmodern feminists, who use irony to call into paternal authority into doubt. As Donna Haraway has written from a feminist perspective, “Irony is about contradiction that don’t resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessarily true. Irony is about humor and serious play. It is also a rhetorical strategy and a political method.”²¹¹ But irony would be sorely underutilized if only focused on feminist issues: most minority groups and minoritarian theories have employed it as their chief rhetorical and political strategy. Irony is the playful tactic par excellence for resisting domination and for gesturing toward freedom—whether it be in the negating theories (called by Nicholas Zurbrugg the “B-effect”²¹²) of Brecht,

²¹¹ Donna J. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 149.

²¹² See Nicholas Zurbrugg, *The Parameters of Postmodernism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993).

Beckett, Baudrillard, Barthes, or Bourdieu, or in the positive theories of Cage, Cunningham and Duchamp. With either stripe, irony insists on revolution.

One Plus One

Jean-Luc Godard's film One Plus One (released in the United States as Sympathy for the Devil), is an impressive and little-known example of poetic revolution. Additionally, it is a clear example of the intimacies generated by play, and by the several tenets of postmodernism discussed above. In its playfulness, it demands of its respondents an expedition through a continuous promiscuous coupling of fragments. Like the witches' hell-broth in Shakespeare's Macbeth, Godard's film takes the fragment as its chief poetic device. It makes play its chief mode of theatrical conceiving, turning its fragments through various patterns of connections in a free assimilation aimed at defamiliarizing customary norms, but also at creating new roads for emancipation from those norms.

Of the numerous fragments that compose the hell-broth of Jean-Luc Godard's film, the most generous ingredient is a series of nine cinematic essays devoted to a recording session of The Rolling Stones as they rehearse and record their song "Sympathy for the Devil." In these sessions, ostensibly documentary, Godard's camera noses about the studio as Jagger and Company rehearse, repeat, vary, and discard passages of the song, smoke cigarettes, and kibitz. The takes are exceedingly long (supposedly determined by the film

length offered by Kodak, according to Godard²¹³) and wide, giving the impression of the camera's gaze as the disinterested ethnographer standing around with his Studer-Revox, recording the events of the natives as they unfold. The effect lends an authenticity to the events (much like that of "home movies"), creating a sense of closeness to what appears to be the "real" Rolling Stones (as opposed to their media and performance personas), and so suggests an objective apprehension of indeterminate history in the making.

Within the framework of the Rolling Stones recording sessions, Godard intercuts the Stones essays with five other main sequences: two in an automobile junkyard inhabited by Black militants who read from Eldridge Cleaver and Le Roi Jones; one in a SoHo pornography shop inhabited by a man reading from Hitler's Mein Kampf; one in an idyllic, sylvan glade inhabited by a young woman named Eve Democracy and a group of film-makers who film and interview her; and finally, the film's ultimate scene which depicts a film being made on a beach full of armed, noisy revolutionaries. All nine essays are in turn intercut with sequences of a woman (presumably Eve Democracy) running around London spray-painting metaphor-rich graffiti on cars and buildings: "SoVietCong," "CineMarx," "Mao/Art," "FreuDemocracy," and so on. Further, the film's audio track is overdubbed, seemingly randomly, with the voice of a man reading from a pornographic political novelette.

²¹³ Jean Collet, Jean-Luc Godard: An Investigation into his Films and Philosophy, tr. Ciba Vaughn (New York: Crown, 1970), p. 86.

Each essay is preceded by a still shot of a hand-painted title placard, presumably announcing the title of each section. What is particularly remarkable about the hand-painted placards is that certain letters are clearly foregrounded through the use of different colors, font-size, and arrangement. The result of this foregrounding is that a second title is produced, or a hidden word is revealed. In either case, the given title is pregnant with another word or reference. Even more remarkable (and, I will argue, more meaningful) is that there are recurring words, each of which is significant to what I take to be the primary import of the film as a whole. To enable a sense of what I am referring to, I insert a table below: the top row represents the hand-painted titles, bolding, italicizing, and underlining the foregrounded letters; the second row represents the embedded or revealed word:²¹⁴

<u>R</u>olling <u>S</u>tones	<u>O</u>utside <u>B</u>lack <u>N</u>ovel	<u>S</u>ight <u>a</u>nd <u>S</u>ound	<u>A</u>ll <u>A</u>bout <u>E</u>ye	<u>H</u>i <u>S</u>cience <u>F</u>iction	<u>T</u>he <u>H</u>eat <u>o</u>f the <u>O</u>ccident	<u>I</u>nside <u>B</u>lack <u>S</u>yntax	<u>C</u>hanges <u>I</u>n <u>S</u>ociety	<u>U</u>nder <u>t</u>he <u>S</u>tones <u>t</u>he <u>B</u>each
One	Love	SDS	Love	Hi Fi / One	Acid	It	One	One

In the remainder of this chapter I follow the film's poetics of play and the concomitant patterns of connections made as a result of that play.

"Please Allow Me To Introduce Myself": The Poetics of Délire

²¹⁴ It should be noted, too, that there is no attempt in the graphic representation of the titles to command a formal "left-to-right" or "top-to-bottom" linear reading.

Ostensibly, One Plus One begins as a documentary of the composition and recording of the song "Sympathy For The Devil." The film is introduced with a hand-painted placard reading "Rolling Stones," and the first images we see are the five members of the group sitting around a recording studio playing instruments. Mick Jagger is clearly leading the band, with acoustic guitar in hand, in a very slow and measured tune that begins with him singing, "Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste." It is clear from the experimental stops, starts, and calls for changes, that we are watching a documentary of the genesis on a song—a history in the making.

The camera, as mentioned above, tries to take in as much of the studio as possible so that what is captured on film represents "everything," down to the most boring detail.²¹⁵ There is almost no sense that the filmmaker is exercising focus of lens to tell a particular story. This documentary-like device is something that Godard has gained some notoriety for, and is clearly related to the tendency toward the quotidian and indeterminate. With respect to this everyday, improvised action caught on film, film scholar Julia Lesage has noted:

Over and over again, Godard uses his films to explore philosophically, stylistically, and politically the relation between documentary and artifice in cinema, and in particular he often tries to elucidate the ideology of newsreel-style filming . . . He frequently imitates TV-Newscast visual

²¹⁵ I am reminded here of Paul Valéry's definition of play as "l'ennui peut délier ce que l'entrain avait lié," or "boredom sweeps us away into playfulness." Tel Quel, II (Paris, 1943), p. 21.

compositions, films on the street, or captures “spontaneous” gestures of his actors “candid-camera” style.²¹⁶

Indeed, there are extremely long takes where the *mise-en-scene* includes so many apparently spontaneous things to watch—people smoking, people staring into space, band-members noodling (none of them particularly commanding)—that there seems to be no “artifice,” nothing but disinterested observation. But this apparently objective historiography is soon ironized and the documentary framework is called into doubt.

Unexpectedly, the synchronous audio/visual relationship is disrupted; Godard keeps the visual track of the band in the studio, but replaces the audio track with the voice of a man reading from a pseudo-pornographic political novelette: “Danang Airfield seventy-nine: ‘You’re my kind of girl, Pepita,’ said Pope Paul, the so-called apostle of non-violence who still had his hand in the Ambassador’s wife’s panties” During the newly introduced voice-over, the visual track cuts to a woman writing graffiti—“Hilton/Stalin”—on the window of a hotel room. The visual track then cuts back to the studio, still keeping the novelette reading as the audio track. Then, as abruptly as it was introduced, the asynchronous audio/visual relationship ends and the audio track returns to the sounds of the band rehearsing.

²¹⁶ Julia Lesage, Jean-Luc Godard. A Guide to References and Resources (Boston: Hall, 1979); p. 18.

Within this relatively brief period of the film (no more than two minutes), we as respondents to the film are sent into a kind of semiotic vertigo through the promiscuous coupling of seemingly unrelated audio and visual fragments.²¹⁷ This poetic approach continues through all of the remaining essays. Even when the seemingly historical documentary approach is clearly turned over to a purely “artificial” approach, as in the second essay, “Outside Black Novel,” where Black Militants read from (among other things) Eldridge Cleaver’s Soul On Ice and calmly murder three white women, the structural logic of the syntagmatic film-track is continuously complicated by the apparently random oscillation between synchronous and a-synchronous image-sound relationships.

This play of image-sound relationships makes it difficult if not impossible for respondents of the film to absorb a coherent narrative, confounding any discursive relation of sign to determinate meaning. Further, the inter-relationships of the essays bear no clear connection to each other, let alone to the central *topos*: the Rolling Stones. There is, indeed, a certain sense of nonsense produced by the film. But to rest at a reception of the film as nonsense would be to stop short. Like the constitutive, non-normative, rules of play, the poetic language employed here by Godard is akin to that of Shakespeare’s lunatic and lover, giving shape to the forms of things unknown.

²¹⁷ Incidentally, *vertigo* (in Greek, *llynx*) is one of the four primary modes of play, according to Roger Caillois. See Roger Caillois, Man, Play, and Games, tr. Meyer Barash (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

In this, Godard's cinematic expression resembles a form of discourse Jean-Jacques Lecercle has called *délire* (delirium):

Délire as I shall now use the word is a form of discourse, which questions our most common conceptions of *language* (whether expressed by linguists or by philosophers), where the old philosophical question of the emergence of sense out of *nonsense* receives a new formulation, where the material side of language, its origins in the human body and *desire*, are no longer eclipsed by its abstract aspect (as an instrument of communication and expression). Language, nonsense, desire: *délire* accounts for the relations between these three terms.²¹⁸

In Godard's cinematic grammar, the language of film is liberated from any systematic structural rules. Indeed, it makes some sense to interpret the poetic promiscuous coupling of fragments in delirious play to be a gesture at liberation—as I mentioned in the preceding inter-chapter, the foremost predicate of play is freedom.

**“Pleased To Meet You, Won’t You Guess My Name?”:
Revolution and Monstrosity**

In his book Tropics of Discourse, Hayden White explores methods of historical inquiry and representation that would permit historians “to conceive of the possibility of using impressionistic, expressionistic, surrealistic, and

²¹⁸ Jean-Jacques Lecercle, Philosophy Through the Looking Glass: Language, Nonsense, Desire (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p. 6.

(perhaps) even actionist modes of representation for dramatizing the significance of data.²¹⁹ White foregrounds the poetic, interpretive quality of historiography and draws heavily from Vico, particularly in his appropriation of Vico's theory of tropes and poetic logic. Indeed, in his Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of Nineteenth-Century Europe, White analyzes historiography in its various tropologically pre-figured modes: the metaphoric, the metonymic, the synecdochic, and the ironic.²²⁰

For White, a history is a narrative matrix of modes of emplotment, argument/explanation, and ideological implication—prefigured through one of the four “master” tropes. Accordingly, his taxonomy is highly structured into other groupings of four. In addition to Vico's four master tropes, White analyzes modes of emplotment in terms given by Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism: Romance, Tragic, Comic, and Satiric. His analyses of modes of argument/explanation are borrowed from Stephen Pepper: Formist, Mechanist, Organicist, and Contextualist. And his analysis of ideological implication is derived from Karl Mannheim: Anarchist, Radical, Conservative, and Liberal. While White's system is conceived, like Frye's, as anagogical, a slight pressing of its formal structure reveals it as perhaps too limited to account for encounters

²¹⁹ Hayden White, “The Burden of History,” Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 47.

²²⁰ Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of Nineteenth-Century Europe, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). It should be noted, too, that Kenneth Burke uses the same Viconian tropes to schematize literary signification. See Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

with the mutant poetic constructions of the so-called “postmodern”—particularly the poetic constructions of Godard’s One Plus One.

There is certainly a thread one can follow to find Godard’s film a history: that of the evolution of the song “Sympathy For The Devil.” The terms of its historical inquiry and representation are highly ironic, foregrounding all acts of “making” history and “arranging” the “record.” In the face of such prominent self-consciousness, a tropological analysis such as White’s might attempt to figure One Plus One as a history in the mode of irony. And while irony is a clear component of Godard’s poetics, his history is not merely or simply ironic. Indeed, while there are large doses of irony in the construction of the mise-en-scene, Godard consistently transgresses irony, troping his own tropes (what Quintillian referred to as the trope, *Metalepsis*²²¹ and combining figures in a rhetorical *conglobatio*, or “heaping together.” Clearly, it is histories like Godard’s that call attention to the limitations of White’s otherwise useful schema. It is my opinion, however, that another look to Vico might provide a way out of the limitations of White’s fourfold categories. I refer here to Vico’s discussion of poetic monsters, which I will discuss below in greater detail.

What I would like to claim, to add to the mix, as it were, is that monstrosity is itself a trope—one, too, that simultaneously represents both creation and destruction—and one that accounts for promiscuous couplings such as

²²¹ Quintillian see Lee A. Sonnino, A Handbook of Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).

Godard's. The hybrid character of monstrosity destabilizes order and ruptures hierarchy while at the same time providing a unity of multiple indices of identities. It is a unity that preserves difference, and may be the foremost trope of revolution and liberation. I would recommend, then, a view of Godard's record as a history (to paraphrase White) in the mode of monstrosity, though it is also through other combined tropes that the monstrous body is figured. In my view, this figuration is more than merely a formal device for organization. As I intend to show, the poetic import of monstrosity is inexplicably bound up and in sympathy with the dramatic import that comprises Godard's world of fragments. Before returning to the film, however, allow me to offer some justification for my use of monstrosity as a trope.

In Jacques Derrida's essay, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Derrida expresses a concern with the differential aspect of language as it pertains to posited totalizing notions like closure, center, and origin. In the coda of that essay, Derrida remarks that "there is a sort of question, call it historical, of which we are only glimpsing today the conception, the formation, the gestation, the labor."²²² These words are employed, he admits, "with a glance toward the business of childbearing," in order to describe the approaching "species of the non-species, the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity."²²³ And while Derrida never invokes Vico directly,

²²² Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Writing and Difference (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968).

²²³ Ibid.

the closing words of his essay alludes coyly to a passage from Vico's New Science:

Poetic monsters and metamorphoses arose from a necessity of this first human nature, its inability to abstract forms or properties from subjects. By their logic they had to put subjects together in order to put their forms together, or to destroy a subject in order to separate its primary form from the contrary form which had been imposed upon it. Such a putting together of ideas created the poetic monsters. In Roman law . . . children born of prostitutes are called monsters because they have the nature of men together with the bestial characteristics of having been born of vagabond or uncertain unions.²²⁴

For Vico, the development of human consciousness follows a movement through the "corsi," or courses of the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. Ironic consciousness is characterized by decadence and dissolution, and is followed by the "recorso," a turning back or decline to mythical, poetic, and metaphorical thinking. In turn, civilizations are formed according to the tropological development of human consciousness. There seems to be some suggestion in Vico that monstrosity is a characteristic of the period of the ricorso (which bears a striking resemblance, in fact, to the characteristics I have used to characterize postmodernism). Though Vico does not outright acknowledge it as one of the master tropes, he invokes the figure of

²²⁴ Vico, New Science, p. 132.

monstrosity as a result made possible by the extreme self-consciousness of the decadent period of irony.

It is not surprising that Derrida's glimpse of the coming monstrosity was written in 1966, in the midst of a global cultural upheaval. A year earlier, Leslie Fiedler, one of the radical voices of American counter-culture, would invoke a similar figure and prognosis anticipating the postmodern. In his essay, "The New Mutants," Fiedler declared a turn in civilization that was "post-humanist, post-male, post-white, post heroic . . ." ²²⁵ Generally, signs of civil dissolution, in a kind of Viconian ricorso, were multiplying: the Vietnam war, racial unrest, the Paris uprising of May 1968, the murder of a young black man at the Rolling Stones 1969 concert in Altamont (controversially said to have occurred during the song "Sympathy for the Devil"), and, later, the murders of students at Kent State University and Jackson State University, both in May of 1970. While the Sixties had been a time of ferocious creative energy, the momentum of modernism appears to have reached its entropic bifurcation point by the end of that decade: a point of transition from chaos and instability, and the point of a paradigm shift from the so-called modern into the so-called postmodern: the new mutant and, presumably, the monstrous.

One Plus One was filmed in London during the summer of 1968, immediately following the student riots in Paris. In July, The Beatles were recording the song "Revolution" in Abbey Road Studios. Across town in Olympic

Studios, The Rolling Stones were recording the song "Sympathy for the Devil." Like "Revolution," "Sympathy for the Devil" documents images of social unrest, cultural upheaval, and destruction. But whereas the Beatles' tune created a vision that was essentially optimistic ("Don't you know it's gonna be alright!"), the Stones tune created a picture of ongoing social tension, urging sympathy with the man who has "been around for a long, long year" and whose job is apparently never finished. From Jesus to Kennedy, "Sympathy for the Devil" documents a history of the "puzzling game" of eternal creation and destruction: revolution.

One Plus One is characterized by the play of these contradictory forces of creation and destruction. For Godard, like Hegel, contradiction is the source and movement of all life. And, because all things are inherently contradictory in and of themselves, contradiction is an expression of truth. To formally present that truth, Godard dramatizes the monstrous play between a variety of contradictions: visual and aural, reality and abstraction, fiction (in its common usage) and documentary. As Godard has remarked:

Beauty and truth have two opposite poles: documentary and fiction. You can start with either one. My starting point is documentary to which I try to give the truth of fiction. That's why I've always worked with professional actors.²²⁶

²²⁵ Leslie Fiedler, "The New Mutants," The Fiedler Reader (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), pp. 183-210.

²²⁶ Richard Roud, Jean-Luc Godard (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 8.

For Godard, "Truth is in all things, even, partly, in error," or as one of the characters from his Vivre sa Vie states, "Error is necessary to truth."²²⁷ Certainly these contradictions account for copious irony throughout the film but, as I've stated above, irony is continuously being transgressed. If irony is the rhetorical turn of *dubitatio* or "doubt," Godard's tropological transgressions continuously throw doubt into doubt by mixing so-called fiction and documentary variously between the visual and the aural, the real and the abstract—and their simultaneous combinations. These contradictory combinations present revolution as a *mise-en-abyme* (itself a monstrous trope): a hall-of-mirrors that simultaneously reflects multiple realities and virtualities. I now turn to passages from the film to demonstrate how these themes of creation and destruction, like the love and strife discussed in the previous chapter, are exemplified through the trope of monstrosity, the characteristic trope of revolution.

In the film's first segment, entitled "The Rolling Stones," Godard establishes a documentary reality of The Rolling Stones creating the rock and roll song "Sympathy for the Devil" in the recording studio. As discussed above, at the start of the film's opening segment, both the visual and the aural demonstration are apparent and unproblematized: there is a straightforward audio-for-visual synchronization. Soon, an asynchronous audio track of a man reading from what sounds like a mildly pornographic novel is overlaid atop the existing audio-visual track. There is no locus for this sonic introduction,

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

rendering the given reality abstract: now the fictive character of the film is foregrounded in ironic juxtaposition. Then the primary audio track, the audio track of the Rolling Stones in the studio, drops out to produce two simultaneous spatio-temporalities—the reality and/or abstraction of either being thrown into question. Next, Godard cuts visually to a hotel room with a woman spray-painting graffiti on the window while the previous audio track of the man reading continues. The contiguity of the audio track becomes the reality of a now abstract visual track. Finally, Godard cuts back to the studio, restoring a synchronous audio-visual track and “documentary” ground. The play between the visual and aural fragments of the studio, the novel, and the hotel graffiti join together into the single monstrous body of the essay.

The second segment of the film is entitled “Outside Black Novel.” In it, Godard films a group of Black male militants in an automobile graveyard. The men are reciting passages from Eldridge Cleaver’s Soul On Ice and LeRoi Jones’s “Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker” into tape recorders as machine guns are being distributed to them.²²⁸ Next, the audio track focuses on the recitation of a single man reading from Cleaver and three white women are brought into the automobile graveyard in an old, red Peugeot. As the man recites the “I love white women” passage from Soul On Ice, “ the three white women are machine-gunned to death. The act of creation in the opening Rolling Stones segment is now countered by destruction. Into this segment, Godard

²²⁸ Nowhere in the film does Godard acknowledge or recognize Cleaver or Jones.

intercuts, again, the graffiti artist and also another audio track of the man reading from the pornographic novel. The matrix of visual and aural relations in conjunction with real/abstract and fictive/documentary relations break the pattern initiated by the film's first segment.

Themes from the second segment are recapitulated later in the film in a segment entitled "Inside Black Syntax." In this segment, the junked cars now bear the spray-painted names of Black leaders: Patrice (Lumumba), Malcolm X, Stokely (Carmicheal), and so on. It is ironic that the dead shells of once mobile vehicles would now bear the names of those supposedly mobilizing the revolt of the Black men occupying the graveyard. In this segment, there is a very pointed call to revolution. One of the segment's opening sentences is "The Revolution has begun." Continuing that theme, the nature of the revolution becomes explicit: there will be no peace until Black people are free. In an act of Brechtian *Verfremdungseffect*, a man who is being interviewed and taped by two Black women looks directly into the camera and remarks, "We must be aware of the friend who in the end is the enemy," and "We are speaking two completely different languages." Still, this position is ironized and that irony is soon transgressed in two ways. First, Godard continues to layer and shift perspectives through changing image-sound relationships. Here, too, the Black radical discourse is layered with the pornographic political novel, as well as snatches of the Stones' song. Secondly and moreover, by this point of the film it is difficult to establish a stable position of reception from which to pose ironic

contradiction—there is no pattern of firm ground upon which to find logical coherence and the rules of logical viewing have been destroyed through play.

The film's central segment, occupying the mid-point of the film—is entitled “All About Eve,” referencing the Joseph Mankiewicz film through outright quotation, but also introducing, finally, the woman who has been running about London spray-painting graffiti. In this segment, the unreality of the scene is foregrounded as we see a woman who calls herself Eve Democracy in the woods, making telephone calls to a variety of Black political celebrities from a phone in the tall grass. In this segment, the tone moves away from destruction and turns again to that of creation: in this case, the creation of a revolutionary philosophy. Here, Eve declares lines such as “The Devil is just God in exile,” “It is impossible for America to get out of Vietnam” because “they want to fight,” and “The only way to become an intellectual revolutionary is to give up being intellectual.” Godard employs the trope of *mise-en-abyme* here, too, as a film crew follows Eve throughout the trees and brush. At one level, if we as audience participate with belief in the fiction, we are witnessing a documentary. If we are witnessing a documentary, however, we cannot believe the fiction—and we find ourselves in the Liar's Paradox of Epimenedes of Crete.²²⁹ However, the various intercuts—the Stones on the audio track, then mixed, then replaced with an

²²⁹ There is a famous explication of the Epimenidean paradox written by Jean-Paul Sartre in his introduction to the Evergreen edition of Jean Genet's play The Maids (Les Bonnes) that I find useful: “Epimenides says that all Cretans are liars. But he is a Cretan. Therefore he lies. Therefore Cretans are not liars. Therefore, he speaks the truth. Therefore, Cretans are liars. Therefore, he lies, etc.” See Jean Genet, The Maids and Deathwatch, tr. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 7.

especially graphic sexual audio track—make the liar's paradox one of the many figurations within the *mise-en-scène*. The play of monstrous layering becomes more frequent and ferocious as the film progresses.

In the film's final segment, entitled "Under the Stones the Beach," indices of all previous segments come into play in the most abrupt manner: the interplay of the Stones, the pornographic novel (now expanding its range of reference to include Elvis, Tarzan, and Doris Day), the white women (now with guns), and the film crew (possibly Godard's, if not both his and *Eve Democracy's*) come together in a fugue-like *stretto*: the various themes in counterpoint now layered and played simultaneously—like building Frankenstein out of the fragments of other bodies, Godard achieves a kind of cinematic monster or strange brew of fragments. For its part, this segment presents themes of both creation and destruction. The most salient thread of creation is represented by the audio track of the familiar, commercially released version of "Sympathy for the Devil." Creation is evident, too, through the presentation of the making of a film about noisy revolutionaries on the beach—which represents the visual track of this segment. The most abundant cast of characters in this film-within-a-film are white women, dressed in white and carrying machine guns. These women are metonymically connected to the women in the "Outside Black Novel" and "Inside Black Syntax" scenes. Their presence indexes the destruction of those scenes and, evidently, they are pursuing destruction via some kind of violent revolution. In this film-within-a-film, one actor finally lies down "dead" on a hydraulic lift—

which holds both the black flag of anarchy and the red flag of communism. The final image of the film is that of the raising up of the dead body on the lift. Interestingly, between the actor's body and the two flags sits a Panavision movie camera.

“But What’s Puzzling You Is The Nature Of My Game”: Addition

When One Plus One was released in America, the producers changed the film's title to Sympathy for the Devil. In addition to the change in name, the producers also changed the cut of the film's final scene of the revolutionaries on the beach. As edited and intended by Godard, the film's final scene introduced only enough of the completed version of the song “Sympathy for the Devil” to be recognized at the start of the segment, but Godard refrained from presenting the song in its “finished” creation. The producers of the film added the entire song in its completed form to the audio track of the film's final reel. Godard disagreed, arguing that the act of creation should be left incomplete—unfinished, like the work of the song's protagonist and the film's revolutionaries.

Now I would like to concentrate on the implications that arise from the principle of play found in the film, its connection to the notion of freedom, the intimacies that result from the film's promiscuous coupling of fragments, and the film's import or meaning, as I interpret it within the framework provided above. As I have stated, the presentation of revolution in One Plus One is characterized by the play of the contradictory forces of creation and destruction. While Godard ostensibly presents both forces equivalently, the film's destructive forces

never equal its constructive, creative power—even when the completed version of “Sympathy for the Devil” is omitted. The key here is addition.

The metaphor of addition is central to the film’s poetic and ideological implications and attitude toward revolution. The most salient example is the recurring motif of the Rolling Stones recording sound-on-sound sonic fragments in a multi-track recording throughout the film: guitar added to voice added to drums added to second guitar added to bass added to organ added to other voices, and so on. Indeed, the process of addition through multi-tracking is a metaphor for a kind of monstrous intimacy, as the imagination allows the fragments from a variety of bodies, from a variety of races, cultures, ethnicities, ages, and so on, to come together. The ideology of this monstrous intimacy presents a promise: a promise which is realized by letting voices come together without marking limits—no one repressing an other—and allowing the freedom of difference to be perceived and experienced. Like a bricoleur’s found items, Godard’s fragments piece together a revolution through the process of addition—hence the title, One Plus One.

Central to all of this, however, is a concern for finding a way of putting many things together. Consider, for example, the construction of the graffiti throughout the film: Hilton/Stalin, SoVietCong, CineMarx, FreuDemocracy, FBI + CIA = TWA + PANAM (an oblique reference to a shot in Godard’s 1966 film, *Deux ou Trois Choses que je sais d'elle*), Mao/Art, Marx/Sex, and so on—all additive, constructive creations. Further, each segment is introduced with a

painted placard indicating the title for each of the film's nine segments, but also introduces an additional sign/word/reference: the title "aLI abOut eVE" produces an acrostic-like "LOVE;" the title "Sight anD Sound" produces the acronym "SDS" (Students for a Democratic Society—the political activist student group of the Sixties), and so on. Ultimately, the formation of community is suggested by the equation "one plus one": as one of the graffiti jags in the sixth segment suggests, "1 + 1 makes 2": the beginning of community begins with the addition of the second person.

Though the speed and juxtaposition of both the sonic and the visual images throughout the film do not allow one to inspect an image the way, say, a painting would allow, the film demands a semiotic interpretive discipline that accepts what I have called promiscuous and fleeting experiences as meaningful. The film age (let alone the television age) cultivates promiscuous reception by its sheer volume of images per second. What is required in this case is not a dedicated, high-fidelity monogamous lover (or interpreter), but a flexible and mobile Don Giovanni, willing and able to move from one interpretive connection to the next and absorb what each piece has to offer. The reception required by the style employed here by Godard demands a promiscuous leaping from one image to another, joining the receptor, and his or her personal interpretive encyclopedias, with its fleeting fragments.

What I would like to suggest is that, through this poetics, through this manner of making, Godard is advocating an *ethics* as opposed to a *politics*: a

personal habit of action in the service of life and, in this case, community. With Godard, as with Schiller, aesthetics and ethics are related: both betray a way of personal action and behavior, and not as the summary expression of some abstract crowd. In other words (and this will become clearer in the next interchapter on Gesture), the way one acts is the way one means: as Godard is fond of saying: "The dolly shot is a moral statement."²³⁰

In One Plus One, Godard does not distinguish between major and minor events in a clear or obvious manner, and so it is difficult to determine if he advocates any ethical (or political) position at all. His long, single takes suggest an equivalence of all his subjects. Still, his radical figurations and monstrous bricolage foreground the creative act of his own cinematic intimacies and, in this sense, fall into sympathy with the ethical and copulative perspective put forth by Nietzsche in his meditation entitled, "The Use and Abuse of History":

History is the work of the dramatist: to think one thing with another, and weave the elements into a single whole, with the presumption that the unity of the plan must be put into the objects if it is not already expressed there. So man veils and subdues his past, and expressed his impulse to art.²³¹

²³⁰ Louis D. Gianetti, Godard and Others (London, Tantivy Press, 1975), p. 60.

²³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History," tr. Adrian Collins (New York: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 37-8.

Godard's impulse to art, through cinema, is an impulse to unity, to connection with an other and, ironically, as a way (*a la* Schiller) to freedom. Appropriately, Godard sees the cinema itself as a kind of trope, a trope to refigure life:

The camera is not only a reproducing apparatus; the cinema is not an art which films life: the cinema is something between art and life. Unlike painting and literature, the cinema both gives to life and takes away from it, and I try to render this concept in my films. Literature and painting both exist as art from the very start; the cinema doesn't.²³²

But, unlike Schiller, Godard's impulse toward an aesthetic ethics is not romantic. Godard never hides the fact that his history is a history at twenty-four frames per second: a world of broken pasts, of fragments applied critically in a creative construction. Again, Nietzsche is appropriate in providing guidance:

Man must have the strength to break up the past, and apply it, too, in order to live. He must bring the past to the bar of judgment, interrogate it remorselessly, and finally condemn it.²³³

Godard ultimately condemns the past by creating such an oracular document of his present for the future. The oracular language of the film is a plangent call to an ethical, aesthetic revolution. As the film's final shot makes clear, this monstrous stew is a plea for connection through the play of art. As the shot of the hydraulic lift that raises the actor in the final scene's film-within-a-film

²³² Roud, pp. 12-3.

²³³ Nietzsche, pp. 21-22.

amplifies, it is the path of art that provides the antithetical ground outside the typical political positioning that enables the preferred achievement of intimacy. The film's final shot offers up for our evaluation the question of whether the answer to revolutionary fray is to be found in no law (exemplified by the black flag of anarchy), in group law (exemplified by the red flag of communism), or by the conflictual and playful anti-law of art (exemplified by the Panavision camera).

Anarchy, Communism, or Cinema? Obviously, Godard's energies went to the latter.

Interchapter 3: Gesture

E io a lui: "l'mi son un che quando
Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo
Ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando."

I said to him: "I am the one who, when Love breathes
in me, takes note. And in whatever way
he dictates within, that way I signify."

--Dante, *Purgatorio*, Canto XXIV

In the previous section I made the claim that play marks not a dead and immutable structure but, in Schiller's sense, a living and dynamic form; further, I remarked that with living form lies feeling, and that the pattern of play projects not mere ornament but an aspect of a work's expressive power—and, hence, human agency and concern. I would now like to develop the weight of that claim by exploring the principle of gesture. I take as my starting point R. P. Blackmur's notion of gesture as "the outward and dramatic play of inward and imaged meaning."²³⁴ I conceive Blackmur's gesture as the dynamic form of feeling—the body of meaning and concern—that, like Dante's Love, finds figure in the expressive act. As such, gesture is not only immanent in language but also (to borrow Shelley's phrase) in all "kindred expressions of the poetical faculty," which is to say in all the languages of art and civil life.

Blackmur's notion of gesture in language is akin to what Kenneth Burke has notably referred to in his predication of language as symbolic action; but

²³⁴ R. P. Blackmur, "Language as Gesture," Language as Gesture: Essays in Poetry (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1959), p. 6.

whereas Burke is concerned with the process of language becoming symbolic, Blackmur is concerned with how the actions of language are invested with "poetical actuality."²³⁵ It was, of course, Freud (who informs a great deal of Burke, in fact) that put forth the idea that the whole of human behavior is itself a language and therefore meaningful. But Blackmur takes the idea of language's meaningfulness not in a mere psychological or cognitive sense, but also in a dramatic and affective sense. To wit, Blackmur's statement runs accordingly:

Gesture, in language, is the outward and dramatic play of inward and imaged meaning. It is that play of meaningfulness among words which cannot be defined in the formulas in the dictionary, but which is defined in their use together; gesture is that meaningfulness which is moving, in every sense of that word: what moves the words and what moves us.²³⁶

One of the most cogent examples used to demonstrate language's gestural and affective character comes from a game devised by art historian and theorist Ernst Gombrich at the suggestion of Roman Jakobson. This game, as Gombrich elaborates,

consists of creating the simplest imaginable medium in which relationships can still be expressed, a language of two words only—let us call them 'ping' and 'pong.' If these were all we had to name an elephant and a cat, which would be ping and which would be pong? I think the

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 3; See also Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

²³⁶ Blackmur, p. 6.

answer is clear. Or hot soup and ice cream. To me, at least, ice cream is ping and soup pong. Or Rembrandt and Watteau? Surely in that case Rembrandt would be pong and Watteau ping.²³⁷

What Gombrich is getting at in his delightfully elegant game is the gestural character of languages (verbal, visual, sensual) and their power to affect synesthetic equivalences and sensory revitalizations of experience. Further, Gombrich suggests that in order to make any such assignments at all, one must appeal to the gesture of the word or image however one conceives it.

But, as both Blackmur and Gombrich contend, the meaningfulness of gesture is not limited to verbal language. In fact, gesture itself is commonly understood not in its linguistic sense but in its physical sense, as the performance of some physical action or *gesticulation*: a smile (“There’s daggers in men’s smiles”), a hand movement, and so on. However as Susanne Langer has pointed out, these physical actions achieve the status of gesture (in Blackmur’s sense) only insofar as they carry meaning, otherwise they remain mere neuro-muscular behaviors.²³⁸ But one may additionally identify the gesture of a musical phrase or composition—as in, say, the ebullient determination of the opening measures of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 in C Minor; the gentle urbanity of J. S. Bach’s *Air* from the Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D Major; or the

²³⁷ Ernst Gombrich, Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 370-71.

²³⁸ Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (New York: Mentor, 1951), p. 134. See also Langer’s Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953).

gesture of an architectural structure—as in the playfully breathing sails of the Sydney Opera House which seems on the verge of diving out into Sydney Harbor, or the coercive rhythm of Albert Speer's (Nazi) Party Congress housing development in Aachen, Germany with its jackboot-regularity. One may even detect the gesture of a particular use of color—as in the overwhelming, feverish anxiety of red in Matisse's The Red Studio, or the bleak melancholy of Corbet's use of rusty black in Burial at Omans. One could go still further as to consider the difference between a game of badminton and a game of rugby as a difference in gesture, noting the contrasting qualities of performance exhibited and the attitude that animates the playing itself—in other words, its stylistic features. Of course, these specific relationships are not universally binding; like all meaning, they depend upon a cultural lexicon and grammar for their coherence which, as I have shown above, depends upon the organizational schema of certain fundamental metaphors.

As far as a poetics is concerned, one of the most vital capacities of gesture (and I will develop this notion further in my discussion of style below) is that it provides a contrary to the putative negating opposition between content and form, intuition and expression. As Blackmur puts it, gesture is "what happens when form becomes identical with its subject."²³⁰ In Blackmur's conception, neither form nor content (insofar as we can negotiate, heuristically, that haunting and confusing couple) obliterates the other, nor does gesture

²³⁰ Blackmur, p. 6.

produce their synthesis. Neither is gesture simply a translation—moving “imaged meaning” from an “inner” domain into the “outward” domain of “dramatic play,” or carrying content over into form as in the Nietzschean conception of metaphor.²⁴⁰ Instead, gesture contains them both as the lively result of their interdependence and copulation. As Hans-Georg Gadamer conceives it, “What a gesture expresses is ‘there’ in the gesture itself. A gesture is something wholly corporeal and wholly spiritual at one and the same time. The gesture reveals no inner meaning behind itself. The whole being of the gesture lies in what it says.”²⁴¹ Here it is worth noting the etymological connection between gesture and the German word *gestalt*, which means form or shape and specifically refers to the integrated structures or patterns that constitute experience, yet whose specific properties cannot either be derived from the elements of the whole, nor reduced to the sum of its parts. Though most notably associated with the psychological studies initiated by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Köhler, this idea was put forward in the study of aesthetics proper by Benedetto Croce, who conceived of the unity of intuition and expression—arguing that intuition is *already* an expression. As Croce conceives this unity with respect to verbal language, “The quality of the expression is not deducible from the nature

²⁴⁰ With characteristic hyperbole, Nietzsche writes: “A nerve stimulus, first transformed into a percept! First metaphor! The percept again copied into a sound! Second metaphor! And each time he leaps completely out of one sphere right into the midst of an entirely different one.” Friedrich Nietzsche, “Truth and Falsity in an Ultramoral Sense,” *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 635. It is relevant noting, too, that the Latin term for the trope of metaphor—for Quintilian and Cicero—was *translatio*.

of the concept. There does not exist a true (logical) sense of words. The true sense of words is that which is conferred upon them on each occasion by the person forming the concept."²⁴² This argument is particularly important in directing questions of a work's intention away from authorial or historical determinations which, while not wholly irrelevant, tend to turn the work into mere document. But insofar as art is experience, Croce's promotion of this unity declares intention in the work itself as presence. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (recalling Desdemona's lines to Othello, "I understand a fury in your words/But not the words") acknowledges this when he judges: "I do not see anger or a threatening attitude as a psychic fact hidden behind the gesture, I read anger in it. The gesture does not make me think of anger, it is anger itself."²⁴³ Perhaps Yeats expressed this condition of gesture best in the famous final lines of his poem "Among School Children": "O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,/Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?/O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,/How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

²⁴¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Image and Gesture," The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays, tr. Nicholas Walker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 79.

²⁴² Benedetto Croce, Aesthetic, tr. Douglas Ainslee (New York: Noonday, 1922), p. 42. As Joyce Cary has pointed out, however, "the most vivid and continuous experience of all artists is the gap between their intuition and its expression, and all great artists, all great writers, seek continually to overcome it." See Joyce Cary, Art and Reality: Ways of the Creative Process (New York: Anchor, 1958), p. 101.

²⁴³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression and Speech," Phenomenology of Perception, tr. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 184.

What I would like to suggest is that gesture is the means by which we know them as each other. Thus, it is this condition of gesture that has brought dance its characteristic distinction among the arts. As Frank Kermode has pointed out:

The particular prestige of dancing over the past seventy or eighty years has, I think, much to do with the notion that it somehow represents art in an undissociated and unspecialized form—a notion made explicit by Yeats and hinted at by Valéry. The notion is essentially primitivist; it depends upon the assumption that mind and body, form and matter, image and discourse have undergone a process of dissociation, which it is the business of art momentarily to mend. Consequently dancing is credited with a sacred priority over the other arts. . . . There is no fundamental disagreement that dance is the most primitive, non-discursive art, offering a pre-scientific image of life, an intuitive truth. Thus it was the emblem of the Romantic image. Dance belongs to a period before the self and the world were divided.²⁴⁴

Indeed, encounter with gesture, as with dance and all theatrical performance, is an encounter with something living that engages the whole person; and this holistic engagement is significant, indeed “necessary,” as John Dewey conceives it, “if the object in question is to serve the whole creature in his unified

²⁴⁴ Frank Kermode, “Poet and Dancer Before Diaghilev,” *What is Dance?*, eds. Roger Cohen and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 146–48.

vitality.”²⁴⁵ Moreover, it can be said about both dance and gesture that neither can be adequately described as a product of their environment so much as a sensuous response to it. Vico (followed by both Herder and Rousseau) claimed in fact that all language began as a sensuous response to the environment and that a language of (physical) gesture was indeed prior to a language of words.²⁴⁶ Recently, the gestural and sensuous aspect of language has been negated by the overwhelming debility of structural and post-structural theories despite the work of people like Sir Richard Paget, R. G. Collingwood (who considered dance the “mother of all languages”), Marshall Berman, Mark Johnson, Robin May Schott, and David Abram, who have labored to emphasize the bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason.²⁴⁷

Clearly, I am also laboring to re-introduce the sensuous and affective wholeness of expression through emphasis on the lively expression immanent in gesture: an expression that engages us to that which is alive and advocates our

²⁴⁵ John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1934), p. 117. This point has been given additional emphasis in the field of mental health by Arthur Janov who, extending Freud, recognized that dissociation in experience tends to produce devastating effects on mental and physical health and proposed a highly physically-oriented therapy to rectify such effects. See Arthur Janov, The Primal Scream (London: Abacus, 1973).

²⁴⁶ See Giambattista Vico, The New Science, tr. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); and On the Origin of Language: Two Essays by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder, tr. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

²⁴⁷ See Sir Richard Paget, The Nature of Human Speech (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927); R. G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 244; Marshall Berman, The Reenchantment of the World (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Mark Johnson, The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Robin May Schott, Cognition and Eros: A Critique of the Kantian Paradigm (Boston: Beacon, 1988); and David Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World (New York: Pantheon, 1996).

retreat from things gone dead. For it is the gestures we encounter and the gestures we contribute that constitute our dynamic and intimate intercourse with the world.

Gesture as Intimacy: Inside-Out in Expressivist Drama

One of the most pervasive tropes in theatrical conceiving is built from a central idea in so-called Romantic philosophy and follows the example of gesture above: the inside is the outside. Whereas in mimetic poetic orientations, orientations that define the work in terms of its relationship between the it and the empirical world, expressivist poetic orientations define the work in terms of its relationship with the inner life of feelings, emotions, and other psychic states of the author or other fictive voice, such as a *dramatis personae*. As William Wordsworth put it famously in the Preface to his Lyrical Ballads, poetry “is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” thereby placing emphasis is on the individual poet/maker’s inner feelings not in some intellectual or objective view of the world. Fictions, in this milieu, are gestures of the poet/maker’s (or some character proxy’s) thoughts and feelings: to quote Blackmur again, “the outward and dramatic display of inward and imaged meaning.” Salient examples of this tendency in theater include the dramatic genres of Expressionism and Surrealism—where the external and formal expressions have metaphorical coherence with some internal, subjective world. In either case, the theatrical expression works to bring respondents into an individual closeness with a particular subjectivity.

As I stated above, this expressivist, gestural mode of fictions grows from the fertile foundation of Romantic philosophy—particularly that of the German tradition that began with Kant and Herder (who in fact borrowed some of their “romantic” ideas from Diderot and Rousseau) through Goethe and Schiller, the Schlegels, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, to name some of the most well-known. Appropriately enough for an expressivist orientation, Romantic philosophy placed extreme importance on the individual. Recalling William Blake’s line from Jerusalem, “I must create a system or be enslav’d by another man’s,” Friedrich Schlegel summarized the Romantic cult of the individual: “Only he can be an artist who has a religion of his own, an original view of the infinite.”²⁴⁸ Indeed, the German word *Erlebnis*, or individual experience, stands as one of the key terms in German Romantic philosophy and literary criticism. While there are many themes expressed throughout Romantic philosophy, I would like to focus now on four touchstones that I view as critical for providing a cultural grammar within which to talk about the expressivist gestures in Georg Büchner’s play Woyzeck.

Solitude. Solitude springs specifically from the significance placed on the individual and on individual subjectivity, but it is an attenuated attitude within that individual subjectivity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau may have made the most emblematic contribution to the emphasis on solitude as the prototypical relation

²⁴⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, Sämtliche Werke, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert, Vol. 1 (Munich: Lohner, 1960), p. 226. (My translation).

between the individual and the world when he chose to cross the Alps on foot and document his impressions in his biographical Confessions. As Rousseau states at the opening of the work, "I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator. My purpose is to display to my kind a portrait in every way true to nature, and the man I will portray will be myself."²⁴⁹ Solitude, then, would translate into Romantic works of art as diverse as Goethe's novel, The Sorrows of Young Werther (which I will discuss in more detail below), and particularly in the paintings of Phillip Otto Runge and Caspar David Friedrich, whose painting entitled "The Wanderer above the Mists" from 1818 stands as perhaps the supreme icon of Romantic solitude with its solitary figure perched atop a precipice, looking out over a sublime, misty canyon. The isolation implied by solitude acts to emphasize the solitary subject's inner thoughts and feelings. Removed from discourse with some other, the subject is forced to discourse with the self and the concomitant thoughts, emotions, and sensations found there.

Further, there is a particular mood that grows out of the concept of solitude: namely, agony. Agony had a special place in the work of the Romantics—and, as I will discuss below, has resonance with the touchstone of the "dual-life." Frequently, the Romantic agony was a result of forced solitude,

²⁴⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, tr. Allan Bloom (New York: Modern Library, 1969), p. 1.

brought on by the rejection of a beloved.²⁵⁰ Romanticism as a term derives, in fact, from the Old French *romanz*, referring specifically to vernacular “romance” languages that developed from Latin. It applied specifically to medieval tales of Chivalry, and their notions of gallantry and devotion to women—usually filled with intense emotional experiences like love, rejection, and solitude. Friedrich Schlegel popularized the term (*romantisch*) to describe these qualities present in late-eighteen and early-nineteen century works of art. And while agony was a predominant sensation—brought on through solitude or by the self-consciousness of dual-life, sensation in general was a significant touchstone in the expressivist canon.

Sensation. It was Diderot who, in a shift from Enlightenment thinking that privileged reason into the feeling and passion-privileged thinking of Romanticism, claimed, “It is the passions, and only the great passions, that can raise the soul to great things.”²⁵¹ Indeed, the passions began to take center stage in both poetic and in political domains. This concern with the passions was in part an effect of the emphasis on the individual and subjective experience in contradistinction to the totalizing human reason rampant in Enlightenment discourses. In Romantic philosophy and literary criticism there is a clear sense that, in order to establish reason, the imagination and the emotions must be repressed. Friedrich Schiller saw this tendency toward repressing the

²⁵⁰ For detailed discussion of this tendency, see Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, tr. Angus Davidson (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1963).

²⁵¹ Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. 5 (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 18. (My translation.)

imagination as the primary culprit in the divided civilized psyche and advocated (as mentioned above in the interchapter on Play) a return to the play instinct. Indeed, the whole notion of *Ursprünglichkeit* (the child-like archetypal state of naive and playful originality) was central to German Romanticism, particularly as it placed emphasis on feeling and the imagination.

For the Romantics, sensation and feeling were the great condensers of the imagination, transforming inward and imaged meaning into correlatives of the senses and emotions. As a result, fictions began to transform what had been a previous concern with formal design and clarity (correlatives of reason), into things like ambiguity, color, light, and fluid form. One can look at paintings by artists like Van Gogh or J. M. W. Turner to get a sense of how landscapes could be transformed through emotion into storms of color and light, or Edvard Munch's "The Scream" to get a sense of how the human figure could be transformed—where optical means derived from the application of paint to canvas, conveyed not photographic reality, but the imaginative reality of the painter's subjective vision. Goya and Delacroix, too, put emphasis on mood: in Goya, particularly through the abundance of the color black and his often nightmarish subject matter, and in Delacroix with his emphasis on passionate action—especially in his revolutionary painting and Romantic touchstone, "Liberty Leading the People." In the music of Beethoven, too, one can find sonic

gestures to incite emotions like heroic struggle and joy.²⁵² This tendency toward sensation is responsible for the development of what was called synaesthesia, the fusion of separate art forms to produce super-sensory experiences. To this end, collaborations between the various art forms became the ultimate in expression in works like The Times of Day, a collaboration by painter Phillip Otto Runge, poet Ludwig Tieck, and composer Ludwig Berger. This tendency would culminate in the operas of Richard Wagner and his idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or the total work of art. It was not uncommon, either, to find artists experimenting with drugs, opium in particular, in order to experience new and previously unfelt sensations. Writers Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Edgar Allen Poe are among the most famous of these experimenters. But even the native imagination, unfettered by drugs was the wellspring of sensory expression as in this example from Goethe's *Faust*, where Mephistopheles' description of *Walpürgisnacht* is teeming with sensory associations:

The night with the mist is black;
 Hark! How the forests grind and crack!
 Frightened, the owlets are scattered:
 Hearken! The pillars are shattered,
 The evergreen palaces shaking!

²⁵² I am specifically reminded here of Beethoven's Third Symphony, known as the "Eroica," or "Heroic" symphony, which was written as a tribute to the revolutionary sensationalism of Napoleon Bonaparte. Also, his Ninth Symphony's final movement is a setting to Schiller's "Ode An Die Freude," or "Ode to Joy."

Boughs are groaning and breaking . . .

The crowd and push, they roar and clatter!

They whirl and whistle, pull and chatter!

They shine, and spit, and stink, and burn!²⁵³

One of the most interesting contributions to this tendency toward sensation is Mary Shelly's Frankenstein. Shelley's novel, written in 1818, is ripe with transgressions of rationality in favor of expanding the limits of sexuality and identity in its sensationalist account of monstrosity. Ironically, twenty-six years earlier in 1792, Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, wrote one of the seminal feminist treatises, "A Vindication on the Rights of Women," which argued against the male-constructed image of "Woman" as an "irrational creature of feeling and intuition."²⁵⁴

Nature. Wild nature was one of the most constant and enduring obsessions of the Romantic mind. Rousseau was one of the first to broadcast a philosophy of nature in contradiction to the well-ordered Enlightenment view of the self, the universe, and their relation. It was Rousseau who envisioned the so-called "Noble Savage," which was the moniker for the human being who was unencumbered by the social slavery of modern society and its compulsions toward wealth and power. In his Émile from 1762, Rousseau promoted, too, a

²⁵³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust, tr. Bayard Taylor (New York: Washington Square, 1967), pp. 145-8.

²⁵⁴ See Mary Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication on the Rights of Women," Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), pp. 395-399.

form of education that would take place in natural surroundings, supposedly to develop individuals in their “innocent” and natural state. A utopian theorist by the name of Charles Fourier developed this idea further in The Social Destiny of Man, with his notion of *phalanstère* or agricultural communes, putting whole societies in touch with nature and fostering the whole idea of self-reliance (an idea which was carried through in the works of many American Romanticists: James Fennimore Cooper in The Last of the Mohicans, Herman Melville in Moby Dick, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau, famous for his Walden Pond experiment).

It was Friedrich Schelling, however, that was responsible for developing a full Romantic philosophy of nature. The *Naturphilosophie* developed by Schelling, and practiced by Goethe and others, claimed that underlying all things was a fundamental unity. Goethe postulated that nature could be understood in all its manifestations by discerning what he called *Urphänomen*, or primal phenomena, a primal image uncovered through creative intuition.²⁵⁵ In *Naturphilosophie*, it was, in fact, through imaginative involvement that humans come to understand themselves and their universe. According to Schelling, the human shares with nature the urge to create and art, therefore, was a means toward understanding

²⁵⁵ The *Urpflanze* or primal plant responsible for all plants was one such *Urphänomen*. Interestingly enough, Goethe began at this stage to consider himself a “Classicist,” even though in his “classical” book on color theory, *Zur Farbenlehre*, he made “Romantic-like” conclusions such as “In nature, the effects of colour—like others, such as those of magnetism and electricity—rest on a reciprocal relationship, a polarity, or whatever one may choose to call the manifestations of duality and even of plurality within a well-defined unity.” See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Theory of Colors, tr. Bertha Mueller (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 42.

nature and the natural. Schiller echoed Schelling in his argument that the natural state of the human is the aesthetic state, the playful creative state impelled through art.

In art, natural themes and gestures toward "the natural" were prevalent, but artistic form experienced a transformation based on the nature as well. Recalling Vico, Johann Gottfried von Herder advocated what he called "organic form," placing emphasis not on prescribed structures but on structures specific to the life of the work. He himself used this idea to develop a theory of culture and of the origins of language, claiming that historical developments do not follow a linear progression (as in the concept of history promulgated in Enlightenment discourses), but follow discontinuous paths, uniquely made from specific sets of circumstances. In his famous "Preface to Cromwell," dramatist Victor Hugo developed the notion of organic form with respect to playwriting, throwing out the idea of the neo-classical unities of time, place, and action as absurd and unnatural. He also favored stage representations of "the grotesque," insofar as both the terrible and the beautiful exist alongside each other as a natural part of life. This idea would get attenuated further in the later developments of Naturalism. As Zola put it, naturalism is a "return to nature and to man, direct observation, exact anatomy, the acceptance and depicting of what is."²⁵⁶

²⁵⁶ Emile Zola, "Naturalism on the Stage," The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, tr. Belle M. Sherman (New York: Cassell, 1893), pp. 80-81.

Dual-life. One of the staples of the Gothic novel—something fascinating to the Romantic sensibility—was the idea of the *Doppelleben*, or “dual-life.” Sometimes this fascination took shape in expressions of dual personalities of characters found in poems, novels, and plays. Madness as a personality trait was one of the most common. When taking into account the general Romantic feeling about the true self being severed from pure nature, madness was used as a form of revolt from the constraints of civil reality. A less extreme form of the *Doppelleben* was indicated by the popular sensation of agony. As I stated above, agony was often a result of solitude, but a predominant form of agony was the result of a person’s self-consciousness as to this dual-life. In one sense, there was a prevailing feeling that individuals are severed from the world of wild nature, forced to live in obedience to the rule of man. The recognition of this situation was cause for agony, but there were other variations. Goethe’s popular novel The Sorrows of Young Werther portrayed the main character as a passionate and agonized romantic, suffering from unease with both the world (*Weltschmerz*) and himself (*Ichschmerz*). This combination would turn up, too, as pessimism in the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. Perhaps most fundamental, however, the dual-life exemplified a form of ironic knowledge that while one could imagine a transcendent union with Nature, or the Infinite, one was nevertheless fated to putrefaction. Lurking beneath the façade of transcendence, then, was always apocalypse.

I would now like to make a start in reading Georg Büchner's Woyzeck (1837) and follow its gestures within the context provided above. Though I read it as an example of expressivist drama, Woyzeck is so rich in its construction that it can be read strongly in numbers of ways. It is nearly always mentioned as the first modern tragedy and precursor to Naturalism, Expressionism, and the Theater of the Absurd. Marxist critic Georg Lukács considered it a masterpiece of Socialist Realism and believed the play enacted the theory of dialectical materialism later developed by Karl Marx, and that it clearly illustrated the unsustainable position of the proletariat in capitalist society.²⁵⁷ Antonin Artaud, when formulating his ideas for a theatre of cruelty ("First Manifesto") suggested a production of Woyzeck as an instrument of using theatrical means to work upon the emotions and psyches of an audience: "it is through the skin that metaphysics must be made to re-enter our minds,"²⁵⁸ as he put it. Though Artaud's intent was to stage works without regard for the text, he saw in Woyzeck an opportunity to express the spirit of reaction against the prevailing principles of the drama and as an "example of what can be drawn from a formal text in terms of the stage."²⁵⁹ Woyzeck, too, was a large influence on Brecht, and the episodic structure of his Epic Theater.

²⁵⁷ See Georg Lukács, "Der faschistisch verfälschte und der wirkliche Georg Büchner," Georg Büchner, ed. W. Martens (Darmstadt: n. p., 1965).

²⁵⁸ Antonin Artaud, The Theater and its Double, tr. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press), p. 99.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

One of the most challenging aspects of approaching the play is deciding what combination of scenes (in other words, what version) represents Büchner's play. Büchner wrote essentially four different versions of the play, though it is not clear as to their dates or even as to the sequence of their episodes internally. The physical manner in which Büchner "sketched" out this drama—based on the true story of Johann Christian Woyzeck who stabbed to death his sometime paramour Johanna Christiane Woost on June 2, 1821—was unusual and not clearly sequential. Text reconstruction scholars have termed the first two versions of the play "The Folio Set" (known as H1 and H2). These versions consist of five folio-sized 'booklets', each made by folding half a standard sheet of paper into two leaves or four pages. Most scholars agree that Büchner most likely bought his paper supplies in this format, that is, as pre-folded folio-sized booklets.²⁶⁰ Generally, scholars agree that these five booklets belong together and that Büchner wrote successively on all four pages of a booklet before going on to the next one as the booklets are not interleaved. It is widely agreed that these manuscripts contains two quite separate scene-groups: one with twenty-one scenes, one with nine, both of which focus heavily on infidelity and the murder. Finally, it is generally agreed that, amongst the extant manuscripts, the set with twenty-one scenes represents Büchner's earliest work on the play.

²⁶⁰ All research on the various texts of the play have been collected by John Reddick. See his Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

The third version of the play has been termed "The Single Quarto Sheet." This version contains two scenes involving Woyzeck and the Doctor that were not present in either of the "Folio" versions. This version, however, is widely believed to have been written in between H1 and H2, and is known by H3. This version places more emphasis on economic and social conditions, though the order of scenes in this version is still unresolved.

The fourth version of the play has been termed "The Quarto-Sized Set." In this version there are six separate sheets of paper in all, each folded to yield a quarto-sized 'booklet' of two leaves or four pages. It is widely agreed that the booklets were originally interleaved in pairs, each pair constituting a 'double-booklet' of four leaves (eight pages), and that Büchner wrote successively on all eight pages before moving on to the next such double-booklet. (Büchner made the double-booklets himself by taking a standard four-page folio-sized booklet—as used for H1/H2—folding it in half, and then cutting along the top edge; the matching cut-marks are easily distinguishable on some of the facsimiles.) Scholars believe that this version was written after H2. It contains seventeen scenes and has a more pronounced emphasis on Woyzeck's poverty and dubious mental health.

Still, scholarship suggests that Woyzeck was left incomplete at Büchner's death in 1837. The various scenes that make up the play in all of its incarnations have been left to editors, directors, and dramaturges to include,

exclude, and arrange.²⁶¹ In all, the fragmented scene structure of twenty-nine scenes—ranging in length from one line (Scene xxi) to over one hundred lines (Scene ix)—is relative to the torn, fragmented reality perceived by the play's protagonist, Franz Woyzeck. Moreover, the fragmented scene structure gestures at the fragmented consciousness of Woyzeck himself. Like the play, I have divided the remainder of this chapter into small units. These units incorporate data from heterogeneous sources in a kind of *bricolage*. A significant portion of that data comes from the philosophical texts of Arthur Schopenhauer, particularly from The World as Will and Idea. By coupling Schopenhauer with Woyzeck, I hope to enable a greater intimacy with the gestures that I take Büchner to be making in the play. The World as Will and Idea was written in 1818, five years after the birth of Büchner. The writings of both men betray a decidedly pessimistic world-view. In Schopenhauer's case, pessimism is rooted in the notion that "the course of life down which we must unceasingly run may be compared to a path of red-hot coals," where "the enlightened one perceives the futility of it all and seeks to withdraw from the course."²⁶² I believe that both Büchner and Schopenhauer use their respective texts to gesture at the wisdom of such life denial. Both Büchner's and

²⁶¹ Volker Schachenmayer has explored the intricacies of dealing with Büchner's manuscripts in his "Edited to the Point of Performativity: Strategies for Engaging the *Woyzeck Faksimilieausgabe*." Unpublished paper, first presented at the 1995 ATHE conference in San Francisco.

²⁶² Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea Volume 1, tr. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1950), p. 37.

Schopenhauer's pessimistic views of human existence are based partly on objective data. Both men point over and over again to physical pain, disease, insanity, the debilities of old age, war, poverty, and oppression: all causes for human suffering. For Schopenhauer, the world is nothing but Will. For him, the will is the Kantian *ding-an-sich* or "thing-in-itself—in philosophical language, the *noumenon*. Recalling Buddhist doctrine (it is widely accepted that Schopenhauer's philosophical insights were highly influenced by Eastern philosophy), Schopenhauer claims that to will is to suffer, and that the solution to that suffering can only be the cessation of the will, to resign from the will to live. This resignation, however, does not include suicide. As Schopenhauer notes, "Far from being a denial, suicide is an emphatic assertion of the will. For it is in fleeing from the pleasures, not the sufferings of life, that this denial consists."²⁶³

Now, turning to Woyzeck, I propose to undertake an exploration of the gestures contained in various and salient metaphorical constructions in the play, and show how these gestures serve as the basis for understanding the intimacy offered by the play. I do not articulate these gestures in terms of determinist paths, or closed accountable structures, but, rather, to citational paths, opening Woyzeck into other texts, gestures, and practices to create what Roland Barthes calls a "structuration" or a "volume of traces in displacement."²⁶⁴ For the

²⁶³ Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, Volume 2, tr. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 55.

²⁶⁴ Roland Barthes, The Semiotic Challenge, tr. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), p. 262.

following exploration, I have primarily used the edition arranged and translated by Carl Richard Mueller out of preference for the cogent diction and the English rendering of dialogue that I feel most closely conveys the gestures I believe Büchner to be making in the original German—consistently through various translations that I have read. In the following paragraphs, I hope to convey how the play's external gestures bring respondents into a fictive intimacy with the internal feelings of its main character—in other words, to show how the outside is the inside.

Sensations: Kinetics

The first collection of gestures of any significance that I will explore are what I will call kinetic gestures, or gestures which bespeak varying degrees and kinds of dynamism. The Oxford English Dictionary defines kinetics as “the branch of dynamics which investigates relations between the motion of bodies and the forces acting on them.” Woyzeck begins abruptly with a kinesthetic gesture, but before moving on to the first specific kinetic gesture of the play, I would like to introduce a passage on drama from Schopenhauer's World as Will and Idea in relation to the above definition of kinetics:

The common end of the drama and the epic, to exhibit, in significant characters placed in significant situations, the extraordinary actions brought about by both, will be most completely attained by the poet if he first introduces the characters to us in a state of peace, in which merely their general color becomes visible, and allows a motive to enter which

produces an action, out of which a new and stronger action motive arises, which again calls forth a more significant action, which, in its turn, begets new and even stronger motives, whereby, then, the most passionate excitement takes the place of the original peace, and in this, now, the important actions occur in which the qualities of the characters which have hitherto slumbered are brought clearly to light, together with the course of the world.²⁶⁵

Although Woyzeck does not start out in a state of peace, he clearly moves, scene by scene, to a state of passionate excitement, together with the state and course of the world, as he knows it. Each scene introduces a motive which results in an action which leads to another motive, culminating in the murder of Marie: Woyzeck's murderous nature having slumbered to the point when he is brought together with the course of the world which is out of order.

The play begins with Woyzeck displaying an agitated mental and physical state. His movements, as inscribed in the play-text, are fast and frantic. The first line of the play is, in fact, "Not so fast, Woyzeck, not so fast," spoken by the doctor who is receiving a shave from Franz. In nearly every scene, Büchner requires Woyzeck to run on and off the stage; it's as if the forces of the world are pursuing him. By the final scene, Woyzeck is at such a tempo and pitch that even his speech (his physical mouth) moves so fast that he talks only in fragments: "What? What are you saying? Louder! Louder! Stab the goat-bitch

dead? Stab her? Must I? Dead! Dead!" Each verbal burst from him erupts like a blast of his last life breath escaping from the body. When Woyzeck rests at last, it is only after committing his most passionately excited act: the stabbing of Marie. Only after this act does he achieve a Schopenhauerian resignation of both his musculature and will. As the Doctor remarks in Scene xii, "The *musculus constrictor vesicae* is controlled by the will." In other words, only after Woyzeck could resign his will could he resign the kinetic force of his physical being.

Sensations: Temperature

A related collection of gestures are what I will call gestures of temperature, which is to say gesture which give form to the metaphorical extensions associated with heat and cold. To provide some background, background with which Büchner was, in fact, intimately familiar, I will turn momentarily to a brief excursus on the science of thermodynamics.

In the 1820s, the French physicist Nicolas Carnot pioneered the science known as thermodynamics. Thermodynamics explains the transformation of heat into motive energy. Entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, asserts that the faster a thing moves, the hotter its temperature; the hotter a thing's temperature, the shorter its life. Thermodynamics also argues that evolutionary developments take place as a result of entropy: the entropic process leads to

²⁶⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume 2, tr. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 308.

what Ilya Prigogine has called a "bifurcation point," or transition point from one paradigm to another.²⁶⁶

In Woyzeck, references to temperature are frequent. Temperature is gestured at both symbolically and indexically. Symbolically, there are nine references relating directly to temperature in Woyzeck's speech from Scene xxiv, just prior to the fatal stabbing of Marie. Indexically, Woyzeck is dismissed as having a fever. Both he and Marie shiver. The references to temperature increase with the increasing motive action of the play. And, as in the laws of thermodynamics, as the play moves faster, the references get hotter (and, as I will describe later, "redder") up through Scene xxiv, the murder scene, at which point entropy and the bifurcation point occur. When Woyzeck can burn no hotter, or moves no faster, he stops. One could say in contemporary parlance that he is finally "burned out." It is at this bifurcation point that Woyzeck's evolutionary development (the resignation of the will) and the transformation of temperature occurs. The final image of the play is the dead body of Marie: a corpse, blue and cold.

Sensations: Red

²⁶⁶ See Ilya Prigogine, Order Out of Chaos, tr. Isabelle Stengers (New York: Bantam, 1988). It is interesting to note, here, that mathematician and semiologist René Thom conceives of the process of signification on the basis of a thermodynamic model. He argues that the signifying process of the unstable sign leads to a "catastrophe," the point at which meaning is generated. See René Thom, "From the Icon to the Symbol" Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology, ed. Robert E. Innis (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press,), pp. 275-291.

One of the most potent metaphorical extensions of sensation gestured at throughout the play is the color red. The color red signifies throughout *Woyzeck* on many semiotic levels: to use the Peircean schema, red signifies iconically, indexically, and symbolically. In addition, the levels of signification move structurally in relation to the overall action of the play. The first references to the color red are early in the play. The early references signify iconically insofar as they stand for what is present on the stage: Marie's red lips and red dress, for example—both of which are also referred to in dialogue. But as the play moves into connotative ground, ground which, at once, signifies a series of secondary meanings (*Woyzeck*'s "blood-filled head" and blood in general), the signification becomes indexical: any trace of red is metonymically connected to the blood of the play's climactic scene. Finally, the play moves to a deeply connotative level where all signification becomes symbolic: the entire universe is turning red as a symbol for the ultimate resignation which, in Marie's case, is connected to death and loss of life-blood; or in *Woyzeck*'s case, he becomes covered in Marie's red blood at the moment of his ultimate resignation of his will. *Woyzeck* even observes a red moon. All such metaphorical extensions of the color red gesture at the central motive of the play: non-life. If that final motive of the play can be realized, then it can be said that the process of achieving that realization is a "rotting" of life (pun only partially intended: the German word for "red" being "rot"): an entropic, irreversible process (described above in the

discourse on temperature). Indeed, the gradual loss of life from the play accounts for the gradual accumulation of red upon the stage.

Red is also a symbol of immobility and resignation of movement. Consider here the long-time cultural convention of using red on public signs to signify stopping or forbidden behavior. The inundation of red upon the stage signals a stopping, too: of life, as in the case of Marie, and of will, as in the case of Franz. Further extensions in the same metaphorical family include the significance of red as an index of heat—recall here the “path of life” as described by Schopenhauer as a path of “red hot coals.” Further still, red has symbolic significance to sexual activity. Consider here the color of the tongue, the lips, the swollen, flared labia and the erect penis, engorged with blood—all with their sexual significance. Woyzeck foregrounds the color red denotatively and connotatively in its signification of and gesture toward blood, immobility, heat, and sex.

Nature: Folk Songs

In his introduction to Georg Büchner: The Complete Plays and Prose, translator Carl Richard Mueller warns prospective directors of Woyzeck against using the music from Alban Berg’s operatic version of the play, Wozzeck. To do so, he speculates, would be “ignorant of the true nature of [Büchner’s] work.”²⁶⁷ He continues:

²⁶⁷ Georg Büchner: The Complete Plays and Prose, ed. and tr. Carl Richard Mueller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), p. xxxiii.

Büchner, from his earliest times, was nurtured on the folk music of his native Germany, and Woyzeck is in every way a manifestation of that early love of folk music instilled in the young Büchner by his mother. . . . To see Woyzeck correctly, then, is to see it as a dramatic folk song. It should be a clue to the type of music that the play demands.

The point that I believe is important here is not, however, the case that a director should use folk music incidentally in productions of the play. More important is the realization that the play shares its narrative structure with the folk song: simple verses, or scenes, each complete in its own incidence and cadence. While traditional folk song verses are of even length, the scenes in Woyzeck are uneven and unpredictable—analogous to the episodes of Woyzeck's life. Woyzeck, however, shares a deeper similarity with the folk song in its treatment of a protagonist from the lower classes of society. Even the level of language in Woyzeck reflects the consciousness of Franz Woyzeck, the character, just as language in the folk song idiom reflects the language of the common and "natural" folk.

As an aspect of the concern with nature and the natural, Romantic philosophy and expressivist fictions sympathetic with such philosophy discarded the educated and civilized offerings of culture in favor of the specific and naïve expressions of *Der Volk* (the folk or common people). Part of this favor is grounded in an empathy with the results from the speculative anthropology done by Herder in his exploration of native peoples and their unique contributions to

language and other forms of expression in contradistinction to the evolved forms of expression that came with learned society. That favor is tempered with the Romantic notion that the heart is the center of human nature as opposed to the head: therefore, naïve poetic expression takes precedence over the calculated and structured forms of expression from the canon.

Büchner includes folk songs in over one-third of his scenes for the play. At all times, the songs diagetically denote and symbolically connote the futility of the world in which *Woyzeck* exists. Consider the play's first song, sung by *Woyzeck's* soldier comrade, *Andres*, in the second scene of the play:

Two little rabbits sat on a lawn,
 Eating, oh eating the green, green grass.
 Eating, oh eating the green, green grass,
 Till all the grass was gone.

Woyzeck later sings the same song to himself. Consider, too, a similar passage in the fourth scene, sung by an old man at the fair:

There's nothing on this earth that will last.
 Our lives are as fields of grass.
 Soon all is past;
 Soon all is past.

Even the world connoted in the play's folk songs is a futile world, a world that must be repeatedly endured over and over again—just as the repetition in the song verses—until all existence ceases. Schopenhauer reflects the same

sentiment in his essay, "The Vanity of Existence":

We look upon the present as something to be put up with while it lasts. . . .
 . Life represents itself chiefly as a repetition of tasks, tasks in subsisting
 at all. If accomplished, life is a burden, and so comes the next task of
 warding off the burden. . . . Human life must be some kind of mistake . . .
 this is direct proof that existence has no real value and that life is
 emptiness.²⁶⁸

Both the recurrence of the songs, and their paralinguistic nature (being that they are sung in the midst of spoken dialogue), serves to foreground the pessimism and sense of futility embodied in them.

Nature: Animals

One of the play's strange gestures, but analogous to the predominant tendency toward dehumanizing gestures, is its animal metaphors, or outright references to animals and animal behavior. The power of the play's animal metaphors results from an overall collapse of the distinction between the human and non-human. "What is man," asks Woyzeck, "but dirt, sand, and dung?" Later, he remarks, "What is nature? Dirt, sand, and dung!" There is no distinction made between man and nature: everything is the same, alienated from its discriminating nature. And, the more Woyzeck loses contact with his discriminating nature, the easier it becomes for his poetic transformation into an

²⁶⁸ Arthur Schopenhauer, The Pessimist's Handbook: Collected Essays, ed. and tr. Thomas Bailey Saunders and Ernest Belfort Bas (London: M. W. Dunne, 1964), p. 38.

animal. For all poetic purposes, Woyzeck has been turned into an animal. He is the “dog” of the army, and the “jack-ass” of his relationship with Marie. Further, Woyzeck is the “guinea pig” of the scientist, eating: only peas as part of a scientific experiment, all out of economic necessity: as Woyzeck boasts, “Every week for my scientific career I get half a guilder.” In a review of Werner Herzog’s film version of Büchner’s play, Waltraud Mitgutsch quotes psychologist Walter Jens to explain this phenomenon as predicated on alienation: “Socially conditioned alienation manifests itself in artificial, unnatural, and animal-like reactions.”²⁶⁹ Woyzeck’s “animal-like” actions finally move him to murder Marie. He has already admitted, “Man is selfish, he beats, shoots, and stabs his own kind.”

There are forty-four references to animals in Woyzeck. Woyzeck himself is referred to as a “stupid animal” and, as stated earlier, a “dog.” But not only are human beings animals, animals, in a kind of tropological chiasmus, are human beings—and everything is finally reduced to direct, sand, and dung. For example, the Proprietor in Scene Five brings a horse to the attention of Marie and Franz, stating:

This is no dumb animal. This is a person! A human being! But still and animal. A beast. [Stage direction: The nag urinates.] That’s right, put society to shame. As you can see, this animal is in a state of nature. . . .

²⁶⁹ Waltraud Mitgutsch, “Faces of Dehumanization: Werner Herzog’s Reading of Büchner’s Woyzeck,” Literature/Film Quarterly 9 (1981): 157.

What we have been told by this is: Man must be natural. You are created of direct, sand, and dung.

Like the nag, Woyzeck is caught urinating on a public wall and on a street, "like a dog," says the Doctor. Analogously, just as Büchner conflates animals and humans in Woyzeck, so does Schopenhauer in his essay "On Human Nature":

We regard man as a species of animal. If any desire or passion is aroused in us, we, and in the same way the lower animals, are for the moment filled with this desire; we are all anger, all lust, all fear; and in such moments neither the better consciousness can speak, not the understanding consider the consequences Men, therefore, are irrational, if, like the lower animals, they allow themselves to be determined by the moment.

Woyzeck finally becomes an animal, in this sense, when he is determined by the moment he is all anger, all lust, all fear: the moment he kills Marie. In the end, even Woyzeck's language has transformed irrationally. He even, in his final words, invokes the animal: "Hip hop. Hip hop, horsey." As Franz has become an animal, he invokes the animal that has become a human being.

What is especially critical about the presence of animal references to this expressivist drama is the connection between animals and non-civilized society. Animals are a metaphor for pre-civilized life: the life that was connected not to developed law, but life that was connected to natural, non-civilized play and being. The invocation of animals gesture at both the element of the human that

is pre-socialized and pre-rational, to the element of the human and of human comprehension that is not tainted by received custom. Such a gesture highlights the relevance of beings and their activities from a non-natural existence to a natural one.

Interestingly enough, one of the most popular theories of human nature circulating in Europe at the time Büchner wrote Woyzeck was that of the scientist Franz Mesmer, namesake of the endeavor known as Mesmerism—or, more commonly, hypnotism. Mesmer gained popularity with his theory of “Animal Magnetism” that stated that humans, in their pre-civilized state of animal, could exercise a unique power to transmit universal forces to other beings.²⁷⁰ His theorizations grew out of the *Naturphilosophie* of Schelling and Goethe that presumed all living beings hold some kind of connection to a universal unity. Freud, in fact, continued much of Mesmer’s theory and practice in his particular development of psychoanalysis and its emphasis on “returning” to some “natural” state of being. Mesmer’s theorizations, too, bolstered the Romantic notion that the natural state of man is equal to that of the common animal—a being without recourse to some linear progression of worldly discoveries and rules and their concomitant entreaty to rational consciousness. Instead, the MAN IS ANIMAL metaphor carried the Romantic idea that humans

²⁷⁰ See Franz Mesmer, The Discovery of Animal Magnetism, tr. Joseph Bouleaur (New York: Holmes, 1997), and Frank A. Pettie, Mesmer and Animal Magnetism: A Chapter in the History of Medicine (New York: Edmunston, 1998).

were intimately connected to a unified form of life potentially untouched by the shattering effect of civilization.

Dual-Life: *Dementia Praecox*

Flavoring the gesture of inside-out, is the exemplification of what was called, in Büchner's day, *dementia praecox* (renamed "schizophrenia" in 1911 by Dr. Eugene Bleuler). *Dementia* as a trope or gesture within the play signifies the shattering of consciousness and its attendant division of inner and outer states of being. By the dramatic means at Büchner's disposal, Woyzeck exemplifies *dementia* in its scene structure and in the gestures made by the title character. For example, in Scene Seven, Woyzeck confides in the Doctor:

Doctor, sir, did you ever see anything with double nature? Like when the sun stops at noon, and it's like the world is going up in fire? That's when I hear a terrible voice saying things to me. . . . It's in the toadstools, Doctor, sir, that's where it is. Did you ever see the shapes of the toadstools when they grow out of the earth? If only somebody could read what they say.

In the nineteenth-century, psychiatrists were confident that *dementia praecox* could be diagnosed on the basis of what they referred to as the four "A"s: Ambivalence, Autism, (loose) Associations, and Altered Affect.²⁷¹ The verbal and visual gestures in the play exemplify these four symptoms of *dementia*. The play's penultimate and ultimate scenes demonstrate, visually,

²⁷¹ Richard Restak, The Brain (Toronto: Bantam, 1984), p. 274.

altered affect in polar opposition, ranging from Woyzeck's "hysterical" search for the murder weapon, to the "tender" (Büchner's stage directions demand "*hysterisch*" and "*zart*") scene with his son, Christian, and Karl, the village idiot. Woyzeck, as well, speaks with loose associations in his conversations. His conversation with the Doctor about the toadstools (quoted above), is in response to the Doctor's request for urine. In fact, from the play's very first scene, the Captain comments on the loose associations of Franz's responses: "What's that you said? What kind of strange answer is that? You're confusing me with your answers."

Woyzeck also exhibits autism, an introversion that intensifies as psychic energies are focused on an increasingly disturbing internal experience. The communicative level between Woyzeck and the other characters in the play becomes such an abyss in the course of the play that Franz ends in complete isolation. Büchner potently dramatizes this in Woyzeck's scene with Christian and Karl. The autism involved in this scene is constituted by the use of three isolated languages: Franz's "Hip, hop, horsey" refrains, Christian's crying, and the repetitive non-sequiturs of Karl, "He fell into the water! He fell into the water!" The only moment of autism more abrupt is the play's ultimate scene where Franz, the isolated "silent, breathing body," (as the stage directions read) exists proxemically to the silent, non-breathing body of Marie. Woyzeck is face-to-face with Marie, in the presence of absence, isolated, without the possibility of interaction. The final scene is nothing if not total resignation.

The evidence of altered affect in the character of Woyzeck is, at the same time, evidence of his ambivalence, insofar as he kills what he loves. But if the play's final moment is viewed in light of the symptoms of dementia, there is no more ambivalent moment in the play than the closing words of the Policeman, spoken in a morgue:

What a murder! A good, genuine, beautiful murder! As beautiful a murder as you could hope for! It's been a long time since we've had one like this!

To predicate murder as "good" and "beautiful" is not just symptomatic of ambivalence (Woyzeck's mimetic ambivalence and the Policeman's diagetic ambivalence), but it is symptomatic of the truth in Woyzeck's cry from Scene Eleven: "The world is out of order!"

Schopenhauer's view of a healthy mind consists in perfect recollection, explaining madness as "the broken thread of memory."²⁷² If Schopenhauer's "broken thread of memory" is viewed, however, in light of his move toward resignation of the will, than madness can be seen as the will entirely withdrawn from the governance and guidance of the intellect—which, in turn, explains imperfect recollection. If Woyzeck achieves a Schopenhauerian resignation of the will, then he can be considered mad, out of order. But his world has proved

²⁷² Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, Volume 3, tr. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 103.

to be out of order, too. In this state of dementia, Woyzeck achieves a romantic synthesis of both outer and inner realms of existence.

Dual-Life: Fatal Objects

The play is also replete with gestures that indexically signify the impending murder. The recurring sign of the knife, which ultimately serves as the fatal object in the murder of Marie, is an agent whose gestures transform throughout the play. Indeed, the play opens with Woyzeck shaving the Captain in a barber's chair. The mimetic signification of the shaving razor is metonymically relative to the final, fatal object used to murder Marie. The play's second scene continues to foreground fatal objects: the scene opens with Franz and Andres cutting twigs with a blade—again metonymically relative to the final object of murder. Additionally, there is an uncomfortable, but undeniably mimetic connection between the fatal stabbing and the sexual act. A component of the stabbing gesture is the symbolic enactment of Woyzeck's phallus entering Marie's vulva, complete with the emission of bodily fluid. Diagetically, fatal objects are conjured throughout the entire play. In seven different scenes prior to the murder, Woyzeck alone invokes the word "knife." Marie invokes the word "knife" in three scenes prior to the scene of her murder, saying as much as "I'd rather have a knife in my body than your hands touching me," as she remarks to Franz in Scene Ten.

For Schopenhauer, phenomena (the world, for example) is an act of the noumenon (the will). In keeping with the Schopenhauerian reading of the play,

the denotative significance of Marie's statement can be construed as an act of willing her own death. Of course, that can't be an acceptable argument without also noting that Woyzeck's act is also an act of will. His act, however, leads to a Schopenhauerian resignation of the will. Marie's statement, on the other hand, is an ultimate assertion of her will, as assertion which suggests, according to Schopenhauer, a fleeing from the sufferings of life.

Woyzeck, then, stands in binary opposition to Marie: man/woman, denial of will/assertion of will, murderer/murdered. The physical action that marks the climax of the play is a synecdoche, a single action that gestures at a larger, more comprehensive action: the action of non-action. In Marie's case it is the non-action of death; in Franz's case it is the non-action of resignation to will. Because the knife plays an integral role in this action, it is structurally sound to foreground the significance of all such gestures.

Additionally, the invocation of death—either as murder or as suicide—gestures at the Romantic notion of conflict and romantic agony in the experience of dual-life. In this particular case, the murder is more a passionate, *Wertheresque*, expression of terminating a hypocritical duality as seen by the protagonist. As witness to the exercise of the fatal object, we as respondents to the drama are invited to move into a closer proximity with the mind of a jealous and demented figure and to experience how the external and outer lineaments of the dramatic expression gesture at the internal and inner particulars of Franz.

Inside-Out

In Büchner's Woyzeck, the inner feelings of the title character are exemplified in the external, material gestures of the fiction. In the overwhelming majority of those gestures, a fragmented sense of consciousness gets communicated. That sense is appropriate to the nature of the character, and is again confirmed in the formal, stylistic gestures of the writing. Nevertheless, a comprehensible completeness paradoxically prevails. The paradox of Büchner is found in the fact that his disjointed pieces unfailingly merge into a coherent sum. As John Reddick has remarked, Büchner's "disjunction mode with its insistence on fragments and particles is always the products of a radiant wholeness. Again and again, in every area of his existence—his politics, his science, his aesthetics, his art—we find an ardent sense of wholeness, but a wholeness that is almost always poignantly elusive: it was but is no longer; or *will* be but isn't yet; or—most poignant of all—it *is* in the present, but can be perceived or possessed only partially or transiently."²⁷³ Büchner is thus compelled to be a maker of mosaics.

But the more jagged the fragments in these mosaics, the more strident they are in their invocation of the whole. Such is the pattern that is perfectly epitomized in the earliest pages of his doctoral dissertation: the last paragraph of his 1836 doctoral dissertation proclaims the philosophy of wholeness, "*gesammte Organization*," or nature's single organic complex. This hypothesized complex was patterned according to a *Grundgesetz* or single, all-

²⁷³ John Reddick, Georg Büchner: The Shattered Whole (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 8-9.

informing natural law. For Büchner, this law was considered an *Urgesetz*, or fundamental law-of laws, akin to the foundational natural laws perpetrated by Goethe in his version of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. In such a case, the parts of the mosaic are each synecdoches of the wonderful and terrible whole of existence.

In *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer notes that "in tragedy, the terrible side of life is presented to us, the wail of humanity, the reign of terror and chance."²⁷⁴ He goes even further by stating that, in tragedy,

We see that those powers which destroy our happiness and life are such that their path to us is also open to us at every moment; we see the greatest sufferings being brought about by entanglements that our fate might also partake of, and through the actions that perhaps we also are capable of performing, and so could not complain of injustice; then shuddering, we feel ourselves already in the midst of hell.²⁷⁵

If we are to believe Schopenhauer, than doubtless Woyzeck is a tragedy for the whole play is a wail of humanity brought about by social and economic circumstances (in part) that are all too prevalent even today.

So perhaps we, too, are in the midst of hell. But, if "the scenes of life are

²⁷⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, Volume 2, tr. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 403.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 403-404.

like the pictures in a rough mosaic,²⁷⁶ as Schopenhauer writes in his essay "On the Wisdom of Life," then perhaps, in the multitude of possible glimpses that make up the single sight of that mosaic, hell will be seen to be only one slight possibility.

²⁷⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, The Pessimist's Handbook: Collected Essays, ed. and tr. Thomas Bailey Saunders and Ernest Belfort Bas (London: M. W. Dunne, 1964), p. 1.

Interchapter 4: Style

Ethics and aesthetics are one.

-- Ludwig Wittgenstein

Linguistic study—which must, in order to avoid becoming chimerical, always begin with the totally dry, pedantic, in fact mechanical analysis of the corporeal, constructible elements of language—thus leads to the depths of humanity.

-- Wilhelm von Humboldt

I have appropriated early Wittgenstein's terse assertion on the unity of ethics and aesthetics because I have been venturing to make an ethical statement through aesthetic means. Likewise, I have recalled von Humboldt's statement to suggest that the stylistic study of dramatic art is fundamentally connected to the depths of humanity—if the reader can allow such a totalizing concept as humanity, that is. These assertions are felicitous for introducing the following reflections on and claims for the principle of style because they join together and give pointed expression to something that I have been endeavoring to suggest over the last several pages: namely, that there is a profound connection between the ways in which humans give shape to value and concern through the forms of language and other arts and the ways in which they give shape to their lives. Not surprisingly, copious thinkers as diverse as Oscar Wilde and Richard Rorty have thus advocated the cultivation of a good life in terms artistic creation: life not by way of a rigid employment of external law, but through a creative and flexible exercise of the imagination. It is because of this connection, then, that

shape (as Beckett has suggested) matters.²⁷⁷ Though mine is not Wittgenstein's argument, I concur that both ethics and aesthetics are indeed woven fine—and that their nexus is style. Style is not, therefore, a mere rhetorical overlay, but an act and fundamental condition of expression—one which conveys our most profound humanity.

Like gesture, style repudiates the commonplace division of manner and matter, form and content. Indeed, I conceive these meditations on style as an attenuation of those made on gesture: not only because it is through style that we identify the features of gesture, but also because every attribute of style itself contains gesture. I commence my own, further, predications for style by expressing accord with Meyer Shapiro's broad and renowned definition of style: "By style is meant the constant form—and sometimes the constant elements, qualities, and expression—in the art of an individual or a group. The term is also applied to the whole activity of an individual or society, as in speaking of a "life-style" or the "style of a civilization."²⁷⁸ It is, in other words, what enables one to suppose a bush from a bear, to discern the difference between the guitar playing of Django Rinehart and Jimi Hendrix, or sense the identities of liberty and

²⁷⁷ Here I obviously veer from Coleridge's well-known estimation of shape in "On Poesy or Art" as "the death of imprisonment of a thing," intending instead more of what he had in mind by form, or a thing's "self-witnessing and self-effected sphere of agency." See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Complete Works*, vol. 4, ed. W. G. T. Shedd (New York: Random House, 1933), p. 384. In conversation with Harold Hobson, Samuel Beckett has remarked, "There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine. I wish I could remember the Latin. It is even finer in Latin than in English. 'Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned.' That sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters." See *International Theatre Annual*, No. 1 (London: John Calder, 1956), p. 154.

²⁷⁸ Meyer Shapiro, "Style," *A Modern Book of Esthetics*, Ed. Melvin Rader (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960), pp. 336-346.

tyranny. Though I will opt to forego Shapiro's too restrictive qualifying term "constant," I too take style as an aspect of identification, made manifest in the material figures of action (what Barthes has called the "grain of the voice"²⁷⁹) in a work or a culture.

Though I have been using the term style in connection with expression (as I have with gesture), I should clarify my position as distinct from the so-called expressivist critical orientation which would view the work predominantly, if not entirely, as an expression of the artist's will, ego, or what have you. I use the term style as a metonymic derivation from *stylus*, an instrument for inscribing. As such, style is what connects the instrument and its agent with the work itself and with the act of shaping expression—indeed, I consider the materials and technologies involved in acts of fiction commensurate with the ways in which they are employed and thus use "style" to describe this particular connection. From Nelson Goodman (who builds upon Shapiro), I take style to be, in part, "features of the symbolic functioning of a work that are characteristic of author, period, place, or school,"²⁸⁰ which is to say recognizable and meaningful within a particular cultural grammar—itself recognizable and meaningful according to lineaments of a particular style. I do not however, posit any particular unit of

²⁷⁹ Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," *Image/Music/Text*, tr. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), pp. 179-189.

²⁸⁰ Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), p. 35.

style—as in, for example, Berel Lang's notion of the “styleme”²⁸¹—but amplify Goodman's “features” by appealing to E. H. Gombrich's capacious definition of style as “any distinctive, and therefore recognizable, way in which an act is performed or an artifact made or ought to be performed or made.”²⁸² I like Gombrich's stress on the “ways” or *how* of performance and *poesis* and find it especially apt for emphasizing the connection between style as a manner of acting and as a manner of being.

My approach to style, however, swerves from Goodman's radical nominalism and Gombrich's psychologizing, finding closer kin with art historian Heinrich Wölfflin's morphology of living forms. For Wölfflin, form is an act, a dynamic process of formation and transformation. His stylistic and critical categories, both anthropological and affective, stress the mutual dependence of form and feeling and suggest that the aesthetic or stylistic facts or features present in a work embody human value and concern.²⁸³ For example, elements of open form (say, broken line or asymmetry) on one end of a continuum might have affective equivalence as freedom; elements of multiplicity (as in, say, the simultaneity of varying textures or shapes) might have affective equivalence as

²⁸¹ See The Concept of Style, Ed. Berel Lang (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 174-182.

²⁸² Ernst Gombrich, “Style,” in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences vol. 15, ed. David L. Sill, (New York: Macmillan, 1968-79), p. 352.

²⁸³ See Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art, trans. M.D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950). His categories—points on a continuum, not binary oppositions—are: linear/painterly, plane/recession, closed/open, multiplicity/unity, clearness/unclearness.

tension, and so on, cohering as family resemblances within certain schemas of metaphor. Stylistic facts, then, are not empty brushstrokes, noises, or rhythms; they are, as Norwood Hanson might say, “theory laden,”²⁸⁴ which is to say that they afford certain views and are endowed with particular significances; (Nelson Goodman has thus predicated style as exemplification, or “possession plus reference.”²⁸⁵) With respect to such a view of style, Martha Nussbaum elaborates:

A view of life is *told*. The telling itself—the selection of genre, formal structures, sentences, vocabulary, of the whole manner of addressing the reader’s sense of life—all of this expresses a sense of life and of value, a sense of what matters and what does not, of what learning and communicating are, of life’s relations and connections. Life is never simply *presented* by a text; it is always *represented* as something. This “as” can, and must, be seen not only in the paraphrasable content, but also in the style, which itself expresses choices and selections, and sets up, in the reader, certain activities and transactions rather than others.²⁸⁶

Certainly as readers or respondents we anticipate some kind of significance in the books we read, in the performances we experience, and so forth, whether it be primarily intellectual, emotional, sensuous, or utilitarian.

²⁸⁴ Norwood Hanson, Patterns of Discovery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 102.

²⁸⁵ Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), p. 53.

²⁸⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, Love’s Knowledge (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.

Even in approaching, say, the blank canvases of Robert Rauschenberg or the chance-generated noises and silences in the music of John Cage, we carry what Han Hörmann has called the “expectation of meaningfulness.”²⁸⁷ And, if insignificance or meaninglessness can be posited at all, they are clearly engendered by style and the terms of their adequacies and inadequacies are indeed set by it. It is for these reasons that I have chosen style as a principle for poetics. Surely, attention to style exercises our ability to perceive the richness of life—its nuances and vulgarities, its stillnesses and its savageries—and reminds us that our ways of expression and our ways of living are intimately connected.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Han Hörmann, To Mean, To Understand: Problems of Psychological Semantics, tr. Boguslaw A. Jankowski (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1981).

²⁸⁸ This is, incidentally, the first principle of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. See David Crystal, The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 15.

Style as Intimacy: All The Stage Is A World (The Shakespearean Baroque)

By and large, when the style of a fiction is invoked, it is used inclusively to take into account the poetics of “how” the fiction was made. Accordingly, style subsumes a work’s gestures, its patterns of play, and the measure of its conflictual tensions—both through the semantic impertinence of its visual and verbal metaphors, through language generally, and through outright character action. Style encapsulates the world of the fiction and, as I suggested in the brief interchapter above, style is therefore the vehicle to the tenor of that fiction’s view of the world and ethical position from a poetic standpoint. In this final chapter I will explore the ways in which the poetic logic of style works within the fiction of Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Throughout this chapter, I will be characterizing Shakespeare’s play within the stylistic and cultural grammar of “the Baroque.” Typically, the Baroque is conceived as a period style, referring to the extravagant and ornate expressions found in seventeenth-century art forms and not, as Shakespeare is more typically categorized, in Renaissance or Elizabethan art forms—though his work is contemporaneous with other works that are commonly considered “baroque,” such as the early operas of Jacopo Peri and the late operas of Claudio Monteverdi, for example. While I do not agree that the poetic identities most often associated with baroque style are limited to the seventeenth-century—like the idea of the Postmodern, as discussed in the chapter on Godard’s One Plus One, I view every period as having its baroque tendencies—I do believe there are strong

coherences and connections between the style of A Midsummer Night's Dream and the stylistic and philosophical categories associated with the so-called baroque period.²⁸⁹

As seventeenth-century scholar Giulio Carlo Argan has remarked, "It is well-known that the baroque aesthetic aimed at producing illusion and exciting wonder, and clearly it achieved the second by means of the first."²⁹⁰ In addition to being an exemplification of the poetics of love, Shakespeare's play is a theory and dramatization of the production of illusion and wonder. Further, as a corollary to the political imperative of expansion demonstrated during the so-called Baroque period (particularly in commerce and the sciences), A Midsummer Night's Dream demonstrates a typically baroque aesthetic imperative of expansion. As I will show, the style of A Midsummer Night's Dream cultivates what I call an "ecology" of intimacy: an ever-expanding identification and union of the universe of the stage with the multiplicity of the universe outside the stage. Accordingly, Shakespeare's play joins together a heterogeneous mixture of artistic forms, levels of language, and characters into a *bel composto*²⁹¹ (beautiful whole). Before moving into an explication of

²⁸⁹ For a detailed account of this perspective on the baroque, see Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art, trans. M.D. Hottinger (New York: Dover, 1950). Also, for a remarkable twist (the origin of "baroque" is supposedly a Portuguese pearl categorization meaning "twisted") on Wölfflin, see Marshall Brown, "The Classic is the Baroque: On the Principle of Wölfflin's Art History," Critical Inquiry 9 (December 1982): 369.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁹¹ "Bel composto" or "beautiful whole" was a phrase used by Filippo Baldinucci used to testify to his belief that baroque architect/sculptor/poet Gian Lorenzo Bernini had a special way of joining

Shakespeare's play, however, I would like to explore some of the predominant constitutive principles associated with baroque consciousness and culture-making as a framework for understanding the baroque poetic vocabulary that I see in use in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Copia. Perhaps the most fundamental principle of baroque style is the principle of *copia* or abundance. As a stylistic tendency, the baroque principle of *copia* can be observed as early as the Corinthian capital found in ancient Greek column architecture—a move away from the modest ornament of the Ionic order, and an even more radical departure from the simplicity and conciseness of the Doric order. More than just ornamental lines, the Corinthian column capital added a greater abundance of curved line, augmented further through the addition of flourishing acanthus leaves and other shapes. In language, baroque style finds its earliest codified development in the work of Cicero, but grew throughout the middle ages—as rhetoric became the subject *de rigueur* in schools—in the works of Quintilian and in works like the apocryphal Rhetorica ad Herennium. One of the most popular and imitated texts on linguistic *copia* was written by Erasmus and entitled, in fact, De Copia. From Cicero to Erasmus, these works were compendiums of figures of speech, documenting, from *Acervatio* (the use of as many different conjunctions as possible) to *Zeugma* (the use of a single word in relation to two other words, though only

the arts together. See Giovanni Careni, Bemini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion, tr. Linda Lappin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

correctly related to one), the copious range of expression that could be employed through language. A similar development in music occurs much later, but in what is now commonly called “baroque” music: that of Late Monteverdi, the Bachs, Telemann, and Vivaldi, to name a few. During this period, a number of musical figures are invented and used abundantly: some of the most common include mordents, trills, turns, appoggiaturas, acciaccaturas, nachlags, vorschlags, échappées, and cambiatas—all intended to add melodic wealth to the musical vocabulary.

Copia exemplifies the desire to expand, to create and move into new territories, and to incorporate and accumulate those territories into ever-enlarging wholes. I view copia as akin to human activities such as the idea of travel (expeditions to discover new experiences, scientific explorations into the universe), invention (telescopes for expanding the human apprehension of the world into the far reaches of the universe, and microscopes for the opposite), and love (carrying oneself over to identify with something other). As such, I identify copia with intimacy in that in that it seeks connection with the diversity of the world beyond the single, the provincial, the parochial, and the pure.

Connection. In an analysis of the architectural work of Bernini, Giovanni Careri has observed Bernini’s greatest architectural achievements (the Fonesca and Albertoni chapels, the altar of San’t Andrea Al Quirinale) are stylistically, “like what has been achieved in cinema—what Eisentstein would have called ‘montage of attractions’: a calculated sequence that mobilizes heterogeneous

elements as much by their substance as by the conditions under which they appeal to the senses or understanding, making them work together in an expressive synthesis that is intended to act on the viewer, manipulating him, moving him, agitating him."²⁹² As I invoked above, Bernini's works were described in their day as *bel composto*, or beautiful wholes, in the sense that they achieved beautiful effects by connecting diverse things together: sculpture into architectural space, architecture into urban space, and so on. Such connecting of diverse objects (what Lévi-Strauss would later discuss at length as *bricolage*²⁹³) was considered to be the "proper office of the poet," according to Leonardo da Vinci, who deemed that the poet was "none other than a gatherer of things stolen with which he creates his own *composto*."²⁹⁴

Connection seems inevitable, no matter what the lineaments and particulars of a given style might be, but there is, in the baroque mode, a tendency to foreground and exploit connection, to call attention to the joinings as opposed to the focus of isolation. Comedy as a stylistic choice is frequently identified as a genre in the sense that it is *about* connection (in contradistinction to the dissolution of tragedy, for example), especially the joinings of people in social structures such as love relationships, marriages, and the like. Gilles

²⁹² Giovanni Careri, Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion, tr. Linda Lappin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. viii.

²⁹³ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). See especially the first chapter, "The Science of the Concrete," pp. 1-33.

Deleuze (taking off from Leibniz), has identified the connecting vehicle of “the fold” as a baroque stylistic principle, which connects various spaces through the modulation of surfaces. For Deleuze, the moving body of imagery created by the fold “gestures at infinity.”²⁹⁵ As I see it, the gesture at infinity is a gesture toward procreation and proliferation of all forms that speaks to the anthropological disposition toward copulation. It coheres agreeably that a stylistic tendency toward connection would resonate deeply with a stylistic tendency that favors metaphor and the other tropes. As I see it, the baroque fascination with figures of speech reveals a love of connecting objects with predicates in copious ways for abundance of expression.

Mutability. If a predominant stylistic tendency of Classic style can be identified as stability, the Baroque stylistic equivalent can be identified as mutability. Even during an historical period when baroque tendencies flourished, such as the seventeenth-century Europe—when the activities associated with the scientific revolution were laboring to identify principles of permanence to capture nature and fix the world into mathematical formulas—there was a prevailing, typically baroque, cultural preference for change and transformation, particularly in the realm of the arts and popular entertainments.

²⁹⁴ Leonardo da Vinci, “Conclusione del Porta, del pittore e del musico,” Chapter 28 of *Trattato della pittura*, in *Scritti*, ed. Jacopo Recupero (Rome: Editrice italiana di cultura, 1966), p. 41. Translated by Zakiya Hanafi, Critical Theory Seminar, University of Washington, 1993.

²⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, tr. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 3. It should also be noted that Mario Praz identified “The Curve” as the ultimate baroque stylistic feature, also claiming that the curves gestures at infinity and sublimity. See Mario Praz, *Mnemosyne* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

Even though the ancient philosophy and practice of alchemy was on the wane—from the execution of practicing alchemist Giordano Bruno to the popularization of satirizing alchemy, as in Ben Jonson's play from 1611, The Alchemist—there was still a widespread public assumption of alchemical principles that still offered explanation of the physical and non-physical worlds in a way that science had yet to eliminate. Alchemy is the model for the processes of the natural world that is fundamentally about change and transformation, or mutability, which, in turn, assumes a fundamental unity among all life. Common elaborations of this theme include the popular alchemical model of turning base metal into gold, but also the change generally measured in transformations among the major elements of earth, water, fire, and air, as well as the cyclic transformation of the seasons and the transformation of day into night into day.

During the late sixteenth-century, one of the largest contributors to the popularization of the concept of mutability as an element of style was the top intellectual in Rome: polymath and professor at the Jesuit Collegio, Athanasius Kircher.²⁹⁶ Kircher was a celebrity throughout Europe for, among other things, his catoptric machines, which were machines that demonstrated various processes of physical metamorphosis that worked by way of tricks of light and mirrors. Kircher's machines capitalized on, and possibly fostered, the love of transformation by "producing illusions and exciting wonder," to use Argan's

²⁹⁶ For a thorough account of Kircher's life and work, see Joscely Godwin, Athanasius Kircher: A Renaissance Man and the Quest for Lost Knowledge (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979).

phrase again. One of the most typical and popular transformations was to turn a human into an animal, like a living Ovid tale, or to turn common objects into faces through elaborate mechanisms of reflection. Not only did Kircher exhibit his machines throughout Europe, inspiring many imitators (most notably France's Jean Debreuil and England's Inigo Jones), but his writings were widely published, too. One of Kircher's most famous books is the Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae, in which he discusses these "Magia Catoprica" and the "seu transformatione catoptrica," (science of metamorphosis). The book is composed of nine chapters on various metamorphoses that document the various transformations of his machines, and emphasizes, philosophically, the total interchangeability of humans, animals, spirits, objects, and so on. While that aspect of his book was debated intensely in religious, as well as demonic and natural magic discourses, Kircher insisted that, "nothing appears to be more in accordance with Nature."²⁹⁷

The concept of mutability, in its baroque formulation, is taken as a category of nature with stylistic correspondences. It is related to copia and connection in the sense that it denotes change and transformation rather than stability and singleness. Mutability is unique, however, in that it stimulates and

²⁹⁷ Athanasius Kircher, Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae (Rome, 1646), p. 901. Translated for this author by Zakiya Hanafi.

encourages perhaps the most compelling baroque attraction: the fascination with the Marvelous or Curious Perspective.²⁹⁸

The Marvelous or Curious Perspective. In 1558, Englishman Richard Haydocke published a book entitled A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintings, Caruing, and Building. Haydocke's work was a handbook on the techniques of creating pictorial, sculptural, and architectural curiosities. His book capitalized on the contemporary vogue for optical tricks and marvels. Renaissance perspective, as promulgated since the mid-fifteenth-century by writings like Alberti's Della Pictura, was being challenged popularly with a vengeance by a new, "curious perspective."²⁹⁹ The curious perspective was, essentially, any picture or invention that appeared marvelous by its sheer startling strangeness and its multiple, sometimes conflicting, meanings or effects. Its effect would create wonder or amazement, a state of mind that conveys that sign and referent, name and identity, appearance and essence, have become entirely confounded or disjoined. One of the most popular examples of this curious perspective was a series of three-dimensional portraits created by Guiseppe Arcimboldo. During the 1570's, Arcimboldo created his famous "allegorical portraits," which were models of human heads made from

²⁹⁸ See Zakiya Hanafi, The Monster in the Machine: Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), and Ernest B. Gilman, The Curious Perspective: Literary and Pictorial Wit in the Seventeenth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

²⁹⁹ The phrase "curious perspective" was first used by Jean François Nicéron in his treatise on the techniques of visual trickery, Perspective curieuse (Paris, 1638). As one can see from

fruits and vegetables. Like Kircher's catoptric machines, Arcimboldo's portraits toured Europe and excited the wonder of its audiences with its *trompe l'oeil* effects and anamorphic doubleness. As a testament to the vogue for the marvelous, one could find several books, like Haydocke's, explaining and cataloguing the various techniques used to create marvelous optical effects. The best known authors were Italian and French—Jacomo da Vignola, Daniello Barbaro, and Pietro Accolti publishing in Italian, and Samuel Marolois, Jean Debreuil, and Jean François Nicéron publishing in French³⁰⁰—but there were similar handbooks by Dutch and German authors, as well.³⁰¹

As an example from architecture, the marvelous or curious perspective was exploited most prominently by Bernini. In the baldachin he built for Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rome, and which resides under Michelangelo's famous dome, Bernini created one of the most marvelous of all baroque constructions. In scale, Bernini's baldachin is enormous (compared with existing, contemporary church processional baldachins). Moreover, it transforms what are normally slender pilasters into colossal, twisted bronze columns—completely altering the sense to which a typical churchgoer's eye is accustomed. Indeed, the

comparing the date of Nicéron's book to Haydocke's book from 1558, the "curious perspective" had cultural currency for nearly a century.

³⁰⁰ See Jacomo de Vignola, La due regole della prospettiva pratica (Egnatio Dante: Rome, 1583), Daniello Barbaro, Practica della prospettiva (Venice, 1584), and Pietro Accolti, Lo inganno de gl'occhi (Florence, 1625). Samuel Marolois, La perspective (Paris, 1614), Jean François Nicéron, Perspective curieuse (Paris, 1638), and Jean Debreuil, Perspective pratique (three volumes: Paris, 1640, 1647, and 1649).

³⁰¹ See Hendrick Hondius, Onderswijsinge in de perspective conste (The Hague, 1623), and Albrecht Andreae, Zwei Bücher Perspective (Nuremberg, 1671).

manipulation of conventions for the purposes of achieving ingenious effects was the stock-in-trade of baroque artists. In fact, it can be argued that the effect of the marvelous or wondrous was itself the work or achievement. As Stephen Orgel says of the masques of Inigo Jones (invoking both mutability and the marvelous), "The scenic machine is the setting for a play, and it may provide its own momentary interludes of wonder as the drama pauses. But the scenic machine is the action of a masque, its metamorphoses, miracles, apotheoses."³⁰² The same could be said of the Italian *intermezzi* and French *ballets de cour*, which were popular entertainments, like the masque, that utilized astonishing visual effects in conjunction with music, dance, and narrative—and the occasional ship battle or giant lobster attack.³⁰³

These visual marvels had their equivalent in the domain of language. Clearly, there had been a long tradition since Simonides, known best in Horace's formulation as *ut pictura poesis*: as a painting, so a poem. This tradition cultivated the carrying-over of features of one art form to another for the

³⁰² Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court, Vol.1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 9.

³⁰³ I refer here to two separate events: first, an entertainment designed by Bernardo Buontalenti for the marriage of Cosmo de' Medici to Maria Madelena of Austria in 1608 on the Arno River. See Oscar G. Brockett, History of the Theatre, Fourth Edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982), pp. 169-170; second, the *ballet de cour* entitled La délivrance de Renaud, by Jean-Baptiste Lully, performed in 1617, and featuring King Louis XIII. See Henry Prunieres, Le ballet de cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, suivi du Ballet de la délivrance de Renaud (Paris: Laurens, 1914).

purposes of achieving novelty, ingenuity, or wit.³⁰⁴ As I mentioned in the passage on copia above, language was a fruitful source for creating marvels, particularly with the development of copious varieties of metaphor and other tropes. As baroque scholar Eugenio Donato has observed, “The metaphor in the Baroque period becomes much more than simply a rhetorical figure; it becomes a significant form.”³⁰⁵ Indeed, metaphor is the form of the curious perspective itself—extending into the domains of optical machines, baldachins, and theatrical spectacles—by breaking conventional rules of semantics and producing marvelous effects on the imagination by demanding the mind to hold conflicting images or meanings together. I would argue that metaphor is the nexus of all of the four ideas I have described above with respect to baroque style: copia insofar as metaphor, as Heraclitus said, is the word that increases itself; connection insofar as metaphor indeed connects two (or more) things for the purposes of creating cognitive offspring; mutability insofar as metaphor transforms the received meanings of its components; and the curious perspective insofar as metaphor breaks conventions and creates unusual relationships to marvelous effect. It is not surprising, then, that the baroque conception of metaphor valorizes its power so much—to the point that its wittiest and most ingenious purveyors were commonly considered divinely gifted. As

³⁰⁴ A good source for understanding the *ut pictura poesis* tradition is Jean Hagstrum's *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

³⁰⁵ Eugenio Donato, “Tesauro’s Poetics: Through the Looking Glass,” *MLN* 78 (1963): 29.

Emanuele Tesauro, the baroque master of metaphor, put it in his treatise on metaphor, Il cannocchiale aristotelico (The Aristotelian Telescope):

For, just as God brings forth that which is out of that which is not, so wit makes something out of nothing: it makes the lion become a man, and the eagle a city. It places a woman on top of a fish and invents a siren as the symbol of adultery. It joins the bust of a goat to the hindquarters of a serpent and forms the chimera as a hieroglyphic of madness. Whence some of the ancient philosophers called wit a particle of the divine mind, and others a gift given by God to those he holds most dear.³⁰⁶

Regardless of its connection to divinity, metaphor clearly produces the experience of the marvelous, and promises new ways to experience and to know.

Five Worlds In One

A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of Shakespeare's most famous and frequently performed plays.³⁰⁷ As such, it is one the most strongly critiqued and interpreted of his works. C. L. Barber, in his study of dramatic form in relation to social custom entitled Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, reads the play ebulliently as a dramatic recreation of the pageants associated with the May Day games

³⁰⁶ Emanuele Tesauro, Il cannocchiale aristotelico, (Torino, 1670), p. 61. Translated by Ernest B. Gilman.

³⁰⁷ The edition of the play used for the purposes here is the Arden Shakespeare edition, edited by Harold F. Brooks (London: Routledge, 1979).

and the celebration of summer.³⁰⁸ Jan Kott, whose interpretation inspired one of the most infamous twentieth-century productions of the play, reads the play as a nightmare: full of dark eroticism, terror, and bestiality.³⁰⁹ Northrop Frye, the most anagogical of all critics, reads the play as a combination of (at least) Barber and Kott, as well as bringing the play into resonance with both past and future authors: namely, Saint Paul and Sigmund Freud.³¹⁰ The turbulent and brooding Harold Bloom simply finds that “Nothing by Shakespeare before A Midsummer Night's Dream is its equal, and in some respects nothing by him afterward surpasses it. It is his first undoubted masterwork, without flaw, and one of his dozen or so plays of overwhelming originality and power.”³¹¹

As Bloom recognizes, A Midsummer Night's Dream is an outstanding example of dramatic art—and I would place the emphasis on the word art to signify that this play stands out among plays for the brilliance of its craft and the ways in which it constructs its characters and their worlds. While Bloom notes the play's originality—for there is no clear, single source as in Shakespeare's history plays that use Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland from 1577—there are clear borrowings from Ovid's Metamorphoses and

³⁰⁸ C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

³⁰⁹ Jan Kott, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, tr. Boleslaw Taborski (New York: W. W. Norton, 1964). The performance I refer to is Peter Brook's 1970 production with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

³¹⁰ Northrop Frye, On Shakespeare (Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1986).

³¹¹ Harold Bloom, Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human (New York: Riverhead, 1998), p. 148. Incidentally, Bloom calls the Brook production from 1970 one of the worst productions he has ever witnessed.

Chaucer's Canterbury Tales—particularly The Knight's Tale. There is the possible borrowing, too, from Shakespeare's own play (written in the same year, 1595), Romeo and Juliet—though it is not clear whether he patterned the comedy after the tragedy or vice versa, though they are almost mirror images of each other in many ways. Scholarship almost always notes that the play was written as an epithalamium, or wedding song or poem, for some noble couple's wedding. No firm evidence of this has been registered although, clearly, the play frames its action with words about marriage, and ends with the action of multiple marriages. That being the case, Edmund Spenser's play, Epithalamium—also from 1595—if often cited as another possible source for A Midsummer Night's Dream, though there are few significant similarities and the marriage theme seems only coincidental at best. What is significant about Shakespeare's play, however, is not why Shakespeare wrote it, nor for whose wedding it was written, but that as a play whose central action is about connecting with love mates, the style employed by Shakespeare exemplifies the action of love. Shakespeare's words embody the play's actions, creating a profoundly intimate connection between the ways in which the characters that speak the words give shape to value and concern through the forms of their language, and the ways in which they give shape to their (theatrical) lives. The play's style, then, reminds us that our ways of expression and our ways of living are intimately connected.

The plot and the verbal style of A Midsummer Night's Dream are copious. There are five sets of characters in the play, each set belonging to its own material or emotional world. The play opens with a dialogue between the Athenian Duke, Theseus, and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. They are in Athens and are preparing for their own wedding. Introduced next are two pairs of young lovers, Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena. They too are in Athens and discussing marriage, though they soon take to the woods where their relationships mutate again and again. The third set of characters are a group of six artisans: Quince (a carpenter), Snug (a joiner), Flute (a bellows-mender), Snout (a tinker), Starveling (a tailor), and Bottom (a weaver). These artisans are preparing a play for consideration of performance at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. The fourth set of characters are the magical wood fairies led by Oberon and Titania. The final group of characters are the theatrical characters of the play based on the story of Pyramus and Thisbe that eventually gets performed by the artisans at the royal wedding. Each character group has its own verbal style, though they are related by analogy and orchestrated carefully by Shakespeare. All of their stories concern love and its obstacles, to some degree, and though their various stylistic worlds identify them within the orbit of some material (theatrical) world, Shakespeare connects them into a coherent ecology of intimacy.

Oxymoron: Sharp Athenian Law

The first world is the world of reason and order: the royal court of Theseus, Duke of Athens. This strict and ordered world is established, stylistically, through the strict and ordered meter of the characters: iambic pentameter, poetic lines of five metric feet of two syllables each, with the first syllable unstressed or weak, and the second syllable stressed or strong. There is nothing special about this particular meter in the plays of Shakespeare. Indeed, all of his plays are predominantly written in this type of blank verse. There are, of course, exceptions: it is often the case that the noble characters of the plays speak in blank verse (typically iambic pentameter), while the lower-class characters speak in prose. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, however, Shakespeare expands the worlds of character and so accordingly expands the poetic verbal styles. In the case of this opening scene in A Midsummer Night's Dream, this linguistic style of strict order is in perfect coherence with the values and concerns of the dominant characters. Further, it stands as a foundation from which the other worlds and characters throw into relief, vary from, and finally transform. The order of this scene allows the discord of opposites that seek connection and concord: law and love, duty and desire, reason and passion, masculine and feminine.

Within this metrical framework, the idea of love is predicated, metaphorically speaking, upon objects from the world of reason and masculine dominance. Consider the play's opening speech by Theseus:

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
 Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
 Another moon: but, O, methinks how slow
 This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,
 Like to a step-dame or a dowager
 Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Theseus's attitude toward his impending marriage to Hippolyta and his
 expression of desire in terms of economics contrasts with that of Hippolyta:

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
 Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
 And then the moon, like to a silver bow
 New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
 Of our solemnities.

Their speeches each end on words that position their values with respect to their
 relationship.

As one will note, the final line in Hippolyta's opening speech is
 interrupted: in other words, she does not get to complete the entire five feet of
 her line. Instead, Theseus finishes the last two feet. This is a well-known
 technique in dramatic blank verse called an enjambment, a device where a
 thought is carried over to another line. There are interesting and important uses
 of the enjambment throughout A Midsummer Night's Dream, which I will speak

about in time. Here, however, it expresses a male dominance that, as part of the world of reason ruled by Theseus, continues in his language of dominance:

Go, Philostrate,
 Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
 Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;
 Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
 The pale companion is not for our pomp.

[Exit PHILOSTRATE]

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
 And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
 But I will wed thee in another key,
 With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling.

According to legend, Theseus and his armies battled and defeated the Amazons, taking the Amazon queen as his concubine—hence the verbal painting of wooing with a sword. Here, love is something that, like a battle, is won, leaving injuries to the defeated. What is especially telling about the way Shakespeare depicts this passage, is that he leaves Hippolyta silent afterwards. The effect of leaving Theseus with the last words on the subject emphasizes his rule of dominance. This emphasis continues later in the same scene when Lysander, Hermia, and Demetrius enter.

Hermia is in love with Lysander, who returns Hermia's love. These two desire to get married. Demetrius, however, is also in love with Hermia. The

obstacle to Lysander and Hermia's conjoining is not Demetrius, however, but Egeus, Hermia's father, who demands that his daughter marry his favorite, Demetrius. Duke Theseus is in support of Egeus and his plan for the arranged marriage. What is more, the rule of Theseus represents what Lysander later refers to as the "sharp Athenian law": either death or exile in eternal chastity for not following the authority of the father. As Theseus says to Hermia in the course of their argument over whom Hermia will wed:

Either to die the death or to abjure
 For ever the society of men.
 Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
 Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
 Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
 You can endure the livery of a nun,
 For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
 To live a barren sister all your life,
 Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.

In the course of the play, the "sharp Athenian law" is challenged and, finally, transformed. In fact, by the end of the play—which returns to Athens and the court of Theseus—the phrase "sharp Athenian law" becomes an oxymoron: a combination of contradictory or incongruous words, deriving from the Greek *oxys*, or sharp, and *moros*, or foolish. By the end of the play, the sharp Athenian law is, indeed, sharply foolish, having been transformed: Athenian law is now

“sweet” not “sharp,” and Theseus and Egeus have modulated into favoring Lysander as a husband for Hermia. Theseus himself even speaks in oxymoron during the play’s final scene. As he reads and responds to the playbill composed by the artisan thespians, Shakespeare makes Theseus master of the oxymoron:

‘A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
 And his love Thisbe, very tragical mirth’?
 Merry and tragical? Tedious and brief?
 That is hot ice, and wondrous strange snow!
 How shall we find the concord of this discord?

The concord of this discord ends up that love is, in fact, granted a richer status, above reason. As Theseus remarks in one of the play’s most famous passages, “Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,/Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend/More than cool reason ever comprehends.” Though he still speaks with the strict meter of iambic pentameter, it is clear by the predications he makes upon love that his world has changed.

Couplets and Conjunctions

The second world presented by Shakespeare is the world of the young lovers. Their world is about connection: connection is what they seek, connection is what they do, copiously. Since they are connected to the nobility, they speak in the same blank verse, iambic pentameter that is spoken by Theseus and Hippolyta—though not entirely. As I will point out, as they get

deeper and deeper into the wood, caught up in the urgency of their passions, they drop the blank verse and begin speaking in rhymed couplets: a stylistic metaphor for love's joinings. The transformation of their language is the expression of their intimacy, but it is also an example of something that Shakespeare seems to suggest with the overall design of the action as it transitions from the rational world of Athens to the irrational and passionate world of the wood. Like Freud suggested a little over three hundred years later, Shakespeare suggests that when we labor to be fully rational, we end up repressing feelings that will break out in strange ways. Speech is one of the ways in which the lovers demonstrate that strangeness.

The idea to go into the wood is divined by Lysander, after learning that Theseus forbids him to wed Hermia:

A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager,
Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only son.
There gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in the wood, a league without the town,

Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
 To do observance to a morn of May,
 There will I stay for thee.

The escape pact pivots on an enjambment that joins the two lovers in their plans. The central stressed syllable in fact, is on the word "thee": in other words, lying between the two lovers' call and response they have "the other." Hermia indeed agrees to meet Lysander, and even though there is an urgency between them to meet, she carries in her response for a display of verbal copia:

My good Lysander!
 I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
 By his best arrow with the golden head,
 By the simplicity of Venus' doves
 By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
 And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen
 When the false Trojan under sail was seen;
 By all the vows that ever men have broke
 (In number more than ever women spoke),
 In that same place thou hast appointed me,
 To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

When the scene changes to the wood in Act II, the first of the four young lovers to show are Demetrius and Helena. Demetrius has entered the wood to follow Hermia, and Helena has entered the wood to follow her love, Demetrius.

Shakespeare does not return to Lysander and Hermia until the second scene of Act II. Already, the two lovers have changed their world and, concomitantly, have transformed their language:

LYSANDER:

Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;

And speak troth, I have forgot our way:

We'll rest, Hermia, if you think it good,

And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA:

Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;

For I upon this bank will rest my head.

LYSANDER:

One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;

One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

This first passage of lover's dialogue in the woods begins with a rhymed quatrain, predominantly still in iambic pentameter, though the middle two lines use trochaic form—poetic feet with stress on the first syllable—rather than iambic form. The second line, too, is only nine syllables. The effect of Lysander's transition into the magical world of the wood is somewhat disorienting—as it should be, and as he alludes to being lost. Immediately following, however, Hermia begins to use rhymed couplets, a form the lovers in the wood will use until they wake from their final sleep in Act IV, upon which they return to

speaking strict iambic pentameter. The use of couplets exemplifies the structure and activity love: creating a single unit based on two separate objects that share a common bond. In the poetic sense, they share a sonic bond through rhyme. There is also the effect of verbal lovemaking, with the rhymed couplets being traded, stroke for stroke between lovers.

Following the form of the couplets, a great deal of the words themselves used by the lovers speak about “one” turning into “two,” or coupling words invoking singleness with words invoking doubleness. The first example of that usage is found in Lysander’s second remark in the wood (quoted above): “One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;/One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.” It is not only in exchanges of *Eros* or romantic love, however, that the idea of turning one to two is used. It is also used in *philia*, or friendship love, as in this passage where Helena speaks to Hermia:

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
 As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
 But in an union in partition;
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;

So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart,
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.

Soon, Helena, too, will begin speaking in rhymed couplets, as she gets farther into the wood and under the spell of the fairies. Ultimately, all four of the young lovers will transform their speech into rhymed couplets. Further, the object of affection for each of them changes—over and over again. Employing a device from Roman comedy, Shakespeare conjoins each of the four young lovers in copious combinations in a confusing frenzy. Of course, the audience understands that the promiscuous coupling and mutability of the couples is a joke played by the fairies (namely, Puck), but the interchangeability of the lovers gives dramatic expression to a remark made by Helena (spoken, appropriately in rhymed couplet), that confirms the rule of the curious perspective: “Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,/Therefore is wing’d Cupid painted blind.”

Artisan Alternatives

The third world created and presented by Shakespeare is the world of the artisans. The group of six artisans are neither lovers, nor royals, nor fairies, though they co-exist with all the others and interact with them directly over the course of the play. Like all the other worlds offered by the play, the constituents of this world speak in their own way. The artisans speak entirely in prose, except when they are rehearsing or performing their play. As is typical with

other Shakespearean characters of the working or lower classes, prose is used to exemplify common persons through common speech. They stand out, too, in their names: whereas the other major characters have names of specifically Greek origin, the artisans' names are typically English: Peter Quince, Nick Bottom, Francis Flute, Tom Snout, "Snug," and Robin Starveling.

In a sense, though they are constituent of their own unique world, the artisans are corollaries of the fairies. Whereas the fairies have their magic, the artisans have their art. Individually, the artisans have their own arts: as stated above, Quince is a carpenter, Snug a joiner, Flute a bellows-mender, Snout a tinker, Starveling a tailor, and Bottom a weaver. Collectively, however, they are theater artists. Peter Quince is the playwright and director, the others are actors, and Nick Bottom is the leading man. As I mentioned above, the only time that the artisans speak anything but prose, is when they are in their theatrical roles, rehearsing or performing. While I will talk about their performance at length in another section below, it is worth pointing out here something that Shakespeare is able to achieve by creating an alternate speech form for the artisans: namely, that when you transform your character, you transform your speech—and that special forms of speech have certain significances. In the passage quoted below, Bottom begins with some prose to convey to the troupe that he is worthy of taking on the leading role in their play, and then he launches into an alliterated and rhymed enactment of Ercles (Heracles):

That will ask some tears in the true performing of

it: if I do it, let the audience look to their
 eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some
 measure. To the rest: yet my chief humour is for a
 tyrant: I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to
 tear a cat in to make all split:

The raging rocks
 And shivering shocks
 Shall break all locks
 Of prison gates;
 And Phibbus' car
 Shall shine from far
 And make and mar
 The foolish fates.

The artisans confirm that specialized use of language is used to identify certain characters and certain worlds from others—like Shakespeare does himself throughout A Midsummer Night's Dream. Shakespeare goes further in building up a theory of theater in this play, too, by allowing the artisans to describe the art of their craft (anticipating the *Verfremdungseffekt* of Brecht), specifically focusing on the fictive nature of the theater, and the fact that certain expressive devices of art have the capacity to create feel affects upon its respondents. Again, Bottom:

I have a device to make all well.

Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver; this will put them out of fear.

What Bottom presents here is an important feature of the argument about the power of style to have real meaning. Bottom assumes and believes that seeing, as Wittgenstein has shown with his example of the duck/rabbit image, is always “seeing-as.”³¹² In other words, what one perceives in the world is to a large extent a function of how we perceive it—which is, in turn, a result of the ways in which it is expressed to us.

Not Only, But Also: Love’s Coordinating and Correlative Conjunctions

The majority of A Midsummer Night’s Dream takes place in the wood. As constituted here by Shakespeare, the wood is the world of the fairies and it is the world of the passions and of madness. Not surprisingly, slang in Shakespeare’s England used the word “wood” to mean mad. The Globe audiences, then, would have understood Demetrius’ frustrated cry in Act II, “Thou told’st me they were stol’n unto this wood;/And here am I, and wood within this wood” as a pun meaning, “Here I am, mad in this wood.” Of course, madness is also a well-

³¹² See Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: MacMillan, 1968), pp. 193f.

known affect of the moon—the night-time orb that recurs again and again in the dialogue of the play: hence the word, lunatic, “luna” being the Latin word for moon. The wood is the fourth world created by Shakespeare and during the lovers’ time there, the moon is waxing full. The fairies who reign over the wood are, like the inhabitants of the other worlds in the play, created with their own linguistic style. Their world and style is perhaps the most interesting world and style in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Not only does their language explore the most copious meters and poetic patterns, but it also, like the magical and transforming forms of the fairies themselves, changes like the position of the moon. And so, like the curious perspective, it offers an invitation to the marvelous.

Act II opens with a nine-syllable line by the chief mischief maker, Puck. The line is also trochaic and, after the first two scenes of Act I in strict iambic pentameter, portends the lunatic and marvelous language to come in the following acts of the play. Puck’s opening line, “How now, spirit! Wither wander you?” is answered by one of the fairies in an amazing display of poetic copia:

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon’s sphere;

And I serve the Fairy Queen,
 To rob her orbs upon the green.
 The cowslips tall her pensioners be,
 In their gold coats spots you see;
 Those be rubies, fairy flavours,
 In those freckles live their savors.
 I must go seek some dew-drops here,
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
 Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone;
 Our Queen and all her elves come here anon.

Not only are there multiple and variable alliterations, rhymes, and repetitions, but the meters change continuously. The first four lines represent a rhymed quatrain in cretic dimeter: two poetic feet of three syllables each, with the strong emphasis on the first and third strong syllable. From there, the fairy moves to trochaic tetrameter, then to iambic tetrameter, and finally (when the Queen is invoked) to iambic pentameter—all in the space of sixteen lines. Shakespeare, too, adds another poetic touch to dramatize, stylistically, the madness related to the moon: in the line of apparent trochaic tetrameter, "I do wonder everywhere,/Swifter than the moon's sphere," a syllable following the word "moon" is missing. Clearly, the word sphere is a strong syllable; the only way to handle that meter as an actor would be to elongate the pronunciation of the (also

stressed) word “moon,” creating, like a musical hemiola, a foregrounded breach in the meter.

Another important feature of the world of the fairies is the normative condition of nature, in contradistinction to the normative man-made law of Athens. In the wood, the order and process of the nature and the natural world ground everything. Many of the fairy characters are named, in fact, after objects in nature: Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed. Love itself is predicated in terms of the natural. Consider here one of the opening speeches by Titania, Queen of the Fairies. In the following passage she speaks to the jealousies of her husband Oberon, King of the fairies, and of the discord that his suspicion and lack of trust has created in the natural world:

And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on a hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land,
Hath every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.

The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The nine-men's-morris is fill'd up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are indistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter cheer:
No night is now with hymn or carol blest.
Therefore the moon, governess of floods,
Pale in anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And thorough this distemperature we see
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose;
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown,
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set; the spring, the summer,
The childling autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.

And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

The message is that when love is out of whack, the world is out of whack. One can almost experience in the trashing of consonants and vowels, the natural disasters described by Titania as Shakespeare conjures the manner of being from the manner of expression.

Titania, too, plays a significant role in what is perhaps the most famous scene in the play, that between her and Bottom, who has been temporarily transformed into an ass. In another gesture at the curious perspective however, Bottom's transformation into a centaur—the half rational, half bestial creature of mythology—is reversed: rather than being an animal from the waist down, he is animal from the waist up. During his transformation, Titania is made by the power of Puck to fall, momentarily, in love with the ass-headed Bottom. Love, however, has very limited bounds. As the ass, Bottom describes the situation between him and Titania, and between the four lovers that are gamboling elsewhere in the wood: "To say the truth, reason and/love keep little company together now-a-days." Once Oberon's jest with Titania is over, their previously discordant relationship appears to be made concord: they even begin speaking, like the lovers in the wood, in rhymed couplets.

As the activity in the fairy world ends, Shakespeare takes another riff, too, on the curious perspective in the speech he crafts for Bottom as Bottom awakes,

sans Titania, finding his old head back on his own shoulders. In this oft-quoted speech, Bottom offers up his hermeneutics on the past evening and, in the process, offers a skewed variation on the words of Saint Paul of the Corinthians:

I have had a most rare
 vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to
 say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go
 about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there
 is no man that can tell what. Methought I was—and
 methought I had—but man is but a patched fool, if
 if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye
 of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not
 seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue
 to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream
 was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of
 this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream,
 because it hath no bottom; . . .

The invocation of hearing eyes, seeing ears, and tasting hands are spot on expressions of the curious perspective: the things of dreams, the things of madmen, and the things of the fairy wood.

Both/And: The Play Within The Play

The fifth and final world of the play is the theatrical world of the play within a play—the one presented by the artisans at the multiple wedding ceremony held back in Athens after the evening in the fairy wood has ended. For the purposes of playing, the artisans transform their normal prose speech for bad blank verse, as well as other types of verse. From the start of Act V, Philostrate (who has had a sneak preview of the performance) recommends that Theseus and Hippolyta refuse to see the artisans' play because it is so "tedious." Theseus, however, requests that the play be performed nonetheless. Accordingly, Quince, as the Prologue, enters the stage as speaks:

If we offend, it is with our good will.
 That you should think, we come not to offend,
 But with good will. To show our simple skill,
 That is the true beginning of our end.
 Consider then we come but in despite.
 We do not come as minding to content you,
 Our true intent is. All for your delight
 We are not here. That you should here repent you,
 The actors are at hand and by their show
 You shall know all that you are like to know.

The response from the royal audience confirms the clumsiness of Quince's punctuation. Theseus comments that, "This fellow both not stand upon points," referring to Quince's use and misuse of the period, and that, accordingly, "His

speech, was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered.”

Lysander notes, too, that “He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows not the stop.” The artisans’ rhetorical ineptitude serves a number of purposes and operates on a number of levels. On one hand, the maladroit diction makes the performance all the more comic. It highlights, too, the claim that style creates meaning—or obscures it, as the case may be. But the attention brought to the style of the speech, through its awkwardness, demonstrates something that Brecht would later pursue, and that is that bad acting affords insight into the workings of drama.³¹³

After the critical commentary on Quince’s opening, Quince continues his prologue with an entire summary of the action that is to follow. In a long and, again, awkward speech, Quince summarizes the events of the play and at the same time introduces the various characters, stating what parts they will play. Quince’s speech helps achieve a curious perspective in the reception of the play, much like I described in the section on “Fictions” in my “Establishment of Principles” section at the beginning of this work. Quince’s speech helps show that the introduced players are both the artisans and the characters of the play. This feature of theatrical style is a style of capaciousness and copia—a style that emphasizes multiplicity as would a style emphasizing another coordinating conjunction like, say, either/or.

³¹³ Bertolt Brecht, “On Experimental Theatre,” Brecht On Theatre, ed. and tr. John Willet (new York : Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 130-135.

Another stylistic feature of the play within a play conjures, again, the curious perspective—that being the decision to use human actors to play talking objects (a wall, moonshine) and talking animals (lion). Not only do the artisans take the roles of these talking objects and animals, but their speech, too, helps the audience cultivate and maintain the split reference of metaphor—what W. Bedell Stanford termed “stereoscopic vision,” a faculty that consists in “the ability to entertain two different points of view at the same time.”³¹⁴ Consider this speech from Snug in the role of the lion:

You ladies, you whose gentle hearts do fear
 The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on the floor,
 May now, perchance, both quake and tremble here,
 When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
 Then know that I as Snug the joiner am
 A lion fell, not else no lion's dam;
 For if I should as lion come in strife
 Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

Here, Snug offers the truth of fiction and reminds us how pursuing literal truth in drama is ill suited to the operations of the theater. While the effect of having talking walls, lions, and moons, provokes Hippolyta to claim “This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard,” Theseus responds with an important comment and

³¹⁴ W. Bedell Stanford, Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 105.

reminder about the authority of the audience: "The best in this kind are but shadows; and the/worst are no worse, if imagination amend them." The artisans' drama reinforces the point that successful theater has nothing to do with passing off an actor playing an animal or wall as an imitation of reality, and so nothing to do with "cool reason"—but, instead, with the power of our imagination.

Conglobatio: An Ecology of Intimacy

All five stylistic worlds are joined together in the last act of the play. The lovers have returned to the royal court in Athens from their night in the wood for a joint wedding with Theseus and Hippolyta. The artisans are in attendance (as themselves and as actors) to perform their play, and the fairies join in at the end. The union of the stylistic worlds in the play has its corollary in the action of the conclusion of the play, which emphasizes union. The final act, too, joins together the various strands of low comedy, narrative romance, folk and fairy tale, with a reference to tragic romance in the play within a play. Brought together as well are the copious ontologies of waking and sleeping, reality and illusion, human and non-human.³¹⁵ The structure of the play culminates with the interpenetration of these worlds, and their union signifies a universe held together by the glue of love. I see the culmination of the play, then, as an

³¹⁵ It is interesting here to note that similar perspectives govern other baroque works after Shakespeare: namely, Calderon's La Vida es Sueño (1635), Corneille's L'illusion Comique (1636), and the oft-cited *mise-en-abyme* of Diego Valesquez's painting, Las Meninas (1637).

exemplification of the trope of *conglobatio*, the trope that "Bringeth in many definitions of one thing yet not such definitions as do declare the substance of a thing by the kind and the difference, which the art of reasoning doth prescribe, but by others of another kind all heaped together."³¹⁶ *Conglobatio* is a baroque trope *par excellence* in that it represents the copious accumulation of identities, connected to each other in a unified whole.³¹⁷ In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare connects these contrary worlds to maintain an ecological soundness—through an ecology of intimacy—in a way that never flattens out or homogenizes the identities of the various worlds, but maintains a concord of discord, as Theseus would put it, much in the manner described by Heraclitus and Empedocles (which I invoked in my interchapter on "Conflict" above). Shakespeare's ecology of intimacy resonates agreeably, in fact, with the pre-Socratic notion of harmony, as does Shakespeare's contemporary Louis Le Roy who, in his *Vicissitudo Rerum: An Elegiacall Poem of the interchangeable courses and varieties of things in this world*, put it like this:

In like manner is the Earth, and every other thing in the world, tempered and conserved by things of dislike and contrary qualitie. It is not then

³¹⁶ See Lee A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 58. The example used reads: "An history is the testimony of times, the light of verity, the maintenance of memory, the schoolmistress of life, and messenger of antiquity. Man is the example of imbecility, the image of inconstancy, the spoil of time, the bondman of misery, the vessel of insatiable desire, and the confident castle of sudden ruin. Pleasures are the enemies of chastity, guides to poverty, daughters of dishonesty, and sweet baits of extreme misery."

³¹⁷ According to Jean Rousset, it is the copious "interpenetration of forms within dynamically unified ensembles" that characterizes the essence of the baroque. See Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France* (Paris: Corti, 1953), p. 117. (My translation.)

without cause, that nature is so desirous of contraries, making them all, all decency, and beautie; not of things which are of like nature. This kind of tempering is the cause, that such things as before were divers and different, do accord and agree together, to establish, intertain, and embellish one another, the contrarietie becoming unitie, and the discord concord; the enmitie amitie; and contention covenant. Wherefore Heraclitus said, that discord, and concord, were the father and mother of all things. And Homer, that whosoever spake evill of contentions, did blame nature. Empedocles maintained not of discord by itselfe, but that with concord, it was the beginning of all things; meaning by discord, the varietie of things that are assembled, and by concord, the union of them. But the union of them in this assemblie ought to exceede the contrarietie. Otherwise the thing should be dissolved, the principles dividing themselves. So we see in the Heavens contrarie movings to preserve the world: Venus placed in the midst neere unto Mars, to asswage his fierceness, which of his own nature is corruptive.³¹⁸

The invocation of worlds, universe, and ecologies with respect to Shakespeare's play may like a rhetorical strategy, but it has its material roots in a notion of cosmic design that was indeed widespread to Shakespeare and his audiences. As such, it is not surprising that, just a few years after the writing of A Midsummer Night's Dream, the construction and opening of Shakespeare's

theater—the world of his plays—would be nominated The Globe. The theater in fact had an underlying cosmic design: its construction was conceived as a quadratum (a partnership of circle and square), which oriented the theater toward the sunrise, which, in turn, was meant to correspond with the structure and movement of the heavenly bodies.³¹⁸ As T. McAlindon has prompted:

It should be recalled that from 1599—when the Globe was opened—Shakespeare's audience was literally surrounded by cosmic emblems. On the so-called 'heavens' or extended canopy above the stage were depicted the sun and moon and other planets, whose unceasing influence was held to be responsible for all change in the sublunary world. And apart from this 'brave o'erhanging firmament' (to which, no doubt, the actors pointed or looked at appropriate moments), there was the name and shape of the theatre itself. The Globe audience would have been encouraged by that name to see in the rectangular projecting stage surrounded by a circular wall the familiar images of the circularized square (an emblem of the timeless and the infinite 'rendered finite and timely . . . by transformation into the square of the elemental tetrad'). The tetrad was a schema devised to explain the fourfold system of nature, the

³¹⁸ Louis Le Roy, Vicissitudo Rerum: An Elegiacall Poem of the interchangeable courses and varieties of things in this world, tr. Robert Ashley (London: Harmondsworth, 1594), p.5.

³¹⁹ See John Orrell, The Quest for Shakespeare's Globe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 139-57. Also see Frances Yates, Theatre of the World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), and Kent T. van den Berg, Playhouse and Cosmos: Shakespearean Theater as Metaphor (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985).

structure of contrary elements whose balanced interchange constitutes a perfect unity, reconciling change and permanence, motion and stability.³²⁰

The tetrad McAlindon refers to is the grouping of earth, water, fire, and air, all of which were held to be mutable and subject to cycles of transformation—which represented the fundamental harmony of the universe. Like Dante and Saint John before him, Shakespeare makes the claim with A Midsummer Night's Dream that it is love that powers those transformations, as well as the force that moves the earth and the heavens in a way that, as Hippolyta states in the play's final act, "grows to something of great constancy;/But howsoever, strange and admirable."

³²⁰ T. McAlindon, Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 3-4.

Conclusion: Dionysus and Eros

We all agree that your theory is crazy.
But is it crazy enough?

– Niels Bohr

There is an old Athenian proverb, frequently attributed to Pericles, which goes something like this: “The Theater has nothing to do with Dionysus.”³²¹ In most histories of dramatic art, Dionysus, the god of wine, is undisputedly attributed as the patron god of the theater. Clearly, with what scholarship has discovered with respect to ancient Athens and its rural Dionysia, its civic celebrations and dithyramb competitions, there is abundant evidence that the theater did have at least *something* to do with Dionysus. There is evidence, too, in the actual physical theater building: the *thymele* or altar seat of honor located in the tiered steps of the auditorium was for the priest of Dionysus. Then there are the legends of Dionysus the shape-shifter and confounder of boundaries, too, which recall arguments about the nature of theater and its confounding of the boundaries between illusion and reality. With that said, I do not want to take issue with the traditional legitimacy of Dionysus’s connection with the theater. What I do want to do is to make the modest suggestion that it may be useful to extend that tradition, taking advantage of the Periclean proverb, to suggest that

³²¹ See Nothing To Do With Dionysos?: Athenian Drama in its Social Context, Eds. John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

it is Eros, god of love, in partner with Dionysus, who should be nominated as a patron god of the theater.

The personal and shared experiences of theater that I have attempted to communicate in the preceding pages asserts that dramatic art is about creative generation, about coupling, and about experiencing the linking of our selves to another “living” thing or other “living” things. I use the word living in quotation marks to indicate that the things which we might link ourselves to in theatrical experiences are not only the materially living proceedings on the stage, but also the metaphorical things generated by the various forms used to create theatrical experience. Here, I would cite one of Paul Ricoeur’s affectionate thoughts on metaphor: according to Ricoeur, metaphor, as an agent of lively expression, “expresses existence as alive.”³²² But it is not the condition of living that is pertinent to my argument so much as it is the condition of linking that is pertinent. Theater, as a fundamentally metaphorical enterprise, and metaphor as a fundamentally copulative enterprise, suggests that an experience of theater is at least in some sense about the experience of copulation—and so, an experience of intimacy of one kind or another: hence, the nomination of Eros as a patron deity of the theater.

I see this conclusion not as the culmination of a grand theory, but as a hortatory call for the enlargement of our capacity to see, feel, hear, think, and act

³²² Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language, tr. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 43.

with respect to the theater and dramatic art. What I am endeavoring to create here is a critical perspective that looks, as Clifford Geertz has put it, “less for the thing that connects planets and pendulums and more for the sort that connects chrysanthemums and swords,”³²³ which is to say less for logical proofs and more the ways that things co-mingle in the mind and experience. I am looking to find a way of knowing what happens in an experience of theater that also resonates with other forms of intimacy, and how that knowing can be shared. I use the word “know” here, specifically, with reference to the biblical use of the term—which connected both knowledge and intimacy: “And Adam knew Eve,” states the first book of Moses. Clearly, full knowledge of anything must indeed include the connections, both physical and non-physical, that we make with others and with the world around us. As Morris Berman has noted, Eros is, indeed, “a fully articulated way of knowing the world.”³²⁴ Some have even hypothesized that erotic knowledge is an agent in advancing what would otherwise be known as cognitive knowledge. As Rémy de Gourmont theorized in his study of the natural philosophy of love, “There might be, perhaps, a certain correlation between complete and profound copulation and the development of the brain.”³²⁵

³²³ Clifford Geertz, “Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought,” Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology (New York: Basic, 1983), p. 19.

³²⁴ Morris Berman, The Reenchantment of the World (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 157.

³²⁵ Rémy de Gourmont, The Natural Philosophy of Love, Tr. Ezra Pound (London: Quartet, 1992), p. 52.

Poets, Cosmopolites, and Lovers

I imagine the subheading above as a revision of the phrase used by Shakespeare's Theseus in A Midsummer Night's Dream, "Lovers, lunatics, and poets." Theseus claims that this trio "Are of imagination all compact." My trio, poets, cosmopolites, and lovers, are of copulation all compact. In all cases, driven by Eros, they are masters of metaphor—masters of apprehending and creating new ways to join disparate things into new wholes. With respect to poets, I think here of T. S. Eliot's famous description of the poet:

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, and fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two things have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.³²⁶

While disparate, the things joined together into new wholes need not be remote from each other. They can be familiar, too: there are no limitations. Still, there are advantages to remoteness. For one thing, the more remote the coupling, the more it throws into relief the identities of its components. Further, remoteness, as Marshall Brown writes, "[C]alls our attention to the fact that all our processes of understanding involve a movement out of one system into another.

³²⁶ T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1932), p. 247.

Explanation is always an abstraction or, what amounts to the same thing, a metaphor."³²⁷

Remoteness, too, is the animating feature of the cosmopolite. When we make couplings, or witness couplings that we carry over to our own experience to identify with, remoteness reminds us that the world is larger than our small, parochial immediate or received environment. Using remote metaphors as templates for becoming world citizens (so to speak), enlarges our capacities to see, feel, hear, think, and act. Speaking specifically about this value of cosmopolitanism, Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan offers:

[A]lthough it isolates us from our immediate group it can link us both seriously and playfully to the cosmos—to strangers in other places and times; and it enables us to accept a human condition that we have always been tempted by fear and anxiety to deny, namely, the impermanence of our state wherever we are, our ultimate homelessness. A cosmopolite is one who considers the gain greater than the loss. Having seen something of splendid places, he or she will not want to return, permanently, to the ambiguous safeness of the hearth.³²⁸

The pursuit of cosmopolitanism through art has the effect of breaking down the restrictions normatively ascribed to elements of identity. As such, it has a

³²⁷ Marshall Brown, "Mozart and After: The Revolution in Musical Consciousness," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (Summer 1981): 705-8.

³²⁸ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Cosmos and Heath: A Cosomopolite's View* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 188.

liberating effect, achieving what anthropologist Victor Turner has termed *communitas*, or "The liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate group such as family, lineage, clan, tribe, nation, etc., or of affiliation with some pervasive social category such as class, caste, sex, or age division."³²⁹ By breaking free from the tether of those categories, occasioned by the action of linking ourselves with something other, we are open to charitable involvements—though not necessarily or sufficiently—rather than unhelpful or damaging involvements. In such a situation, we can strive, as Bruce Wilshire has observed, "to feel our way to mimetic involvements which are not exclusionary, and which do not project in a paranoid way sinister and destructive aspects of the involvements onto other groups and persons," and where we can then "aim for a community of compassion in which each recognizes the tragic aspects of the other."³³⁰

The community of compassion is, finally, the community of the lover—the one who, to paraphrase Shelley, carries himself over to identify with the beautiful, the tragic, the comic, of someone or something not his own.

Membership in that community simultaneously signifies both a dissemination of

³²⁹ Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology," in From Ritual To Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play (New York: PAJ, 1992), p. 44.

³³⁰ Bruce Wilshire, Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 296.

the self and a pregnancy of the self . In describing this situation with respect to the experience of art, John Dewey speaks with the diction of the lover when he remarks that our experience of the world through art,

signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events. When the art of another culture enters into attitudes that determine our experience, genuine continuity is affected. Our own existence does not thereby lose its individuality but it takes unto itself and weds elements that expand its significance. A community and contiguity that do not exist physically are created.³³¹

Theater (or, according to Nelson Goodman, all art and forms of communication), sustains selves and communities by ensuring that none of us are islands through symbolic connection.³³² From the point of view of values, it makes sense to consider what kinds of connections are being made. Will it be one of subject to object? Or one that expresses love, as in what Martin Buber termed an "I-Thou" relationship: one where the other ceases to be simply an object, but something with which "I become bound up in relation to it."³³³ My goal, as a booster for Eros, is to connect in the latter manner. Similarly, my goal in moving from mimesis to metaphor and from Dionysus to Eros, is to achieve that multi-tiered perspective of the poet, the cosmopolite, and the lover: all who speak, trippingly

³³¹ John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1934), p. 360.

³³² Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), p. 257.

³³³ Martin Buber, I And Thou, tr. Rev. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 7.

on the tongue, proclaiming, as Shakespeare's Lear cries to Gloucester in Act IV of King Lear, "Let copulation thrive"!

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Vita

Robert Morris Black

Education:

Doctor of Philosophy, June 2002, University of Washington. Dissertation: "Dionysus and Eros: The Shape of Intimacy in Theatrical Conceiving." Dissertation Committee: Barry Witham (Chair), Sarah Bryant-Bertail, Tina Redd, Leroy Searle. School of Drama faculty: Sarah Bryant-Bertail, Michael L. Quinn, Stephen Weeks, Barry Witham, Jack R. Wolcott. Special Seminars with Erika Fischer-Lichte (Intercultural Semiotics), Marvin Carlson (Semiotics), Tracy C. Davis (Historiography), James Clifford (Cultural Anthropology), Susan McCleary (Music and Mimesis), W. J. T. Mitchell (Visual Representation), Naomi Schor (Feminist Theory), Hans-Ulrecht Gumbrecht (Medieval Theater), Hazard Adams, Leroy Searle, Marshall Brown (Critical Theory). Drama Representative to Graduate Student Senate.

Master of Arts, December 1990, Kent State University. Thesis: "The Semiotics of Transfiguration: Adapting Godard's *A bout de souffle* for the stage." Advisor: Barry Daniels. Special studies with Gayle Ormiston (Semiotics and Hermeneutics), Terry Miller (Ethnomusicology and Musicology), Michael Nash (Directing Theory), Rosemarie K. Bank (Historiography).

Bachelor of Fine Arts, August 1983, Kent State University. Additional coursework at Oberlin College. Special study with John Cage (in residence at Oberlin College 1982). Fine and Professional Arts Representative for University Artist Lecture Series. Member of Theatre Roundtable and Alpha Psi Omega Honorary.

Teaching Experience:

University of Washington: Introduction to Drama. Teaching Assistant, September 1992 - August 1994. Lead Teaching Assistant beginning June 1993. Survey of world dramatic literature, history, and practice.

Kent State University: The Art of the Theatre. Teaching Assistant, September 1989 – December 1990. Survey of world dramatic literature, history, and practice.

Kent State University (Experimental College): The Concept of the Avant-Garde. Instructor, January 1983 – June 1983. Emphasis on Modernist literature, plastic and performing arts in psychological, sociological, aesthetic, and political contexts.

Publications:

"Heraclitus In Antigone." Text and Presentation: Journal of the Comparative Drama Conference. Eds. William J. Free and Lisa Kozlowski. Vol. XVI (1995).

Conference Papers Presented:

Panel Member: "Reflections on Pedagogy." Paper: "Opposition and True Friendship: The Shape of Conflict in Liberal Education." Association for Theater in Higher Education, San Francisco, August 1995.

"Contemporary Catharsis/Postmodern Paideia: Style in Julie Taymor's *Oedipus*." International Federation for Theatre Research, Montréal, May 1995.

"Heraclitus In Antigone." Comparative Drama Conference, Gainesville, March 1995.

Panel Member: "Metaphor and Theatrical Conceiving." Paper: "Delivering Renaud: Tropological Coherence in the Baroque *Ballet de cour*." ATHE, Chicago, August 1994.

Panel Member: "Musicalizing the Text." Paper: "Viva Las Vegas!: A Short History of Technology and Text." ATHE, Chicago 1994.

"Abducting Woyzeck: The Director as Semiotician." Comparative Drama Conference, Gainesville, March 1993.

Panel Member: "Reconstructing Past Performances." Paper: "Cherokee Strip: Reconstructing *Oklahoma!*" Northwest Drama Conference, Monmouth, February 1993.

"Signifyin' Thang: Rap Music as Postmodern Historiography." Popular Cultural Association National Conference, Louisville, March 1992.

Honors and Awards:

Faculty Award for Outstanding Directing (*Breathless*). Kent State University, May 1990.

Alpha Psi Omega Award: Outstanding Original Music (*Tongues/Savage Love*). Kent State University, May 1990.

Alpha Psi Omega Award: Outstanding Acting (*Equus*). Kent State University, May 1983.

Internships:

Porthouse Theater Company, Blossom Festival Center, Ohio. Summers 1981, 1982. Acting Internship included training in voice (Berry, Linklater) and movement (Alexander, Feldenkrais).

Directing:

- *Breathless* (Stage and Video), Kent State University 1990.
- *Hamletmachine*, Kent State University 1990.
- *Memphis Egypt*, Kent State University 1989.
- *Desire Caught By The Tail*, San Diego Sixth Avenue Playhouse, 1987.
- *The Four Little Girls*, San Diego Sixth Avenue Playhouse, 1987.
- *Talley's Folley*, San Diego Rancho Santa Fe Playhouse, 1985.
- *The Miser*, San Diego Rancho Santa Fe Playhouse, 1985.
- *Kaspar*, California State University, Fullerton, 1984.
- *The Unknown General*, California State University, Fullerton, 1984.
- *A Man's A Man*, Los Angeles, Odyssey Theatre, 1984.
- *The Tempest*, Los Angeles, Odyssey Theatre, 1983.
- *The Library Is On Fire*, Kent State University, 1983.
- *The Way Of The World*, Kent State University, 1982.
- *Lysistrata*, Oberlin College, 1982.
- *No Exit*, Oberlin College, 1982.
- *Pinter Review Sketches*, Kent State University, 1981.
- *A Circular Play*, Kent State University, 1980.
- *The Bald Soprano*, Cleveland, North Royalton Playhouse, 1979.

Design/Music Composition:

- Tongues/Savage Love (Music), Kent State University, 1990.
- Desire Caught By The Tail (Design/Music), San Diego Sixth Avenue Playhouse, 1987.
- The Four Little Girls (Design/Music), San Diego Sixth Avenue Playhouse, 1987.
- The Tempest (Music), Los Angeles, Odyssey Theatre, 1983.
- Wings (Music), Kent State University, 1983.
- Lysistrata (Music), Oberlin College, 1982.
- The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (Music, Lyric Settings), Porthouse Theater, 1982.
- The Goodperson of Setzuan (Music, Lyric Settings), Kent State University, 1980.
- The Miser (Music), Kent State University, 1979.
- The Emperor Jones (Music), Kent State University, 1979.

Adaptations:

- Fragments Of A Discourse On Love. Adapted from Roland Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*.
- Breathless. Adapted from Jean-Luc Godard's *A bout de souffle*.
- Memphis, Egypt. Adapted from the Osiris Legend and the films of Elvis Presley.
- The Library Is On Fire. Adapted from the meditations of Lao-Tzu, Søren Kierkegaard, F. T. Marinetti, and the poetry of René Char.

Related Experience:

- Marketing Manager. Theater Kent, Kent State University, September 1989 – June 1990. Researched, coordinated, and implemented performing arts season publicity. Composed press releases and designed posters and other promotional multi-media. Supervised team of six.
- Artistic Coordinator: Anheuser-Busch Entertainment Corporation, February 1988 – September 1989. Research, developed, and coordinated production of Industrial musical/dance productions and special events. Supervised production rehearsals and recording studio sessions. Composed music for the Busch Gardens Australian Exhibit. Collaborated with writers, musicians, choreographers, and designers. Also worked extensively with video.
- Producer/Artistic Director: Boxing Day Productions, July 1983 – January 1988. Founder of theatrical production company. Managed fundraising

(limited partnership and non-profit), directed, designed, and composed music for productions.

- **Assistant to the Producer. Rosebud Pictures, September 1985 – August 1987. Coordinated shooting schedule with First A.D., logged financial disbursements, assisted Script Supervisor in continuity and literary matters, arranged "Dailies" transport, assisted craft service, and extra cast personnel through production of films and commercials.**