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CONSTITUTING THEATRICALITY : THE SOCIAL
NEGOTIATION OF DRAMATIC PERFORMANCE

by

MARGARET MARY COCKBURN

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, in the
Department of Sociology and Social
Policy, University of Durham



1981

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents Peggy and Laurie Cockburn; the one provided me with what I needed to commence the opus and the other continued to provide every sort of support I needed to finish it. My debt of gratitude to them both is immeasurable.

Constituting Theatricality : the social
negotiation of dramatic performance

Margaret Mary Cockburn

ABSTRACT

This thesis promotes a consideration of theatre as an essentially social skill rather than a dramatic one. It argues that theatre is dependent for its very existence on the social context and the available representational grammars which are firmly grounded in that context. It examines the theatrical experience through field work and a number of interviews with those involved in that experience. It considers the author and the basis and extent of his authority; the director and his perceived part in the production process; the history of criticism and the critics' current role; the actor and his relationship with the audience for whom he plays, and the ways in which the particular style of participation in performance is negotiated both at an acceptedly "theatrical" occasion and a situation where the definition of performance is pushed to its limits. It proposes that the study of theatricality, much hindered by the persistent and now clichéd metaphor of life as theatre, is the study of sociality itself. The institution of theatricality is a set of patterned norms for representing social experience and this makes its study peculiarly pertinent to a sociological approach. It suggests that dramatic performance is the use of general interpretive modes for a particular reason, that being precisely to highlight that society consists of just such ways of being together.

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
<u>The Drama Studied Using the Drama to Look at Life and the Theatricality of Life</u>	18
Popular Culture Approach to Theatre	18
The Sociology of Knowledge and Theatre	28
The Social Context of Production Explored	32
A Poetics of Performance	36
<u>Using the Drama to Look at Life</u>	42
Theatrocracy and Dramaturgy	42
The Dramatic Metaphor and Cliche	44
Dramatism	47
The Brechtian V-Effect and Surrealism as Sociological Methods	48
<u>Theatricality of Life</u>	54
The City as Dramatic Character	54
Theatricality and Secular Law: Charismatic Leadership	56
CHAPTER TWO	
<u>Historic Forms of the Dramatic</u>	61
Medieval Theatre	68
Elizabethan Theatre	74
Victorian Theatre	78
Contemporary Theatre	83
CHAPTER THREE	
<u>Styles of Playing</u>	86
Style as Reification	88
Style as Identity	89
Style as Grammar	91
Polymorphic Theatre	98
Mimetic Theatre	100
Intrusive Theatre	102

CHAPTER FOUR	<u>Perspective and Method</u>	108
	Methodological Assumptions	108
	Establishing Contacts	122
	Collecting Data	125
CHAPTER FIVE	<u>Authorship and Authority</u>	133
	Talking to an Author	133
	Styles of Authoring	135
	Writing a play means capturing a character: a Lesson in listenership	138
	Authorship as Limited Authority	148
	The Play and its Audiences	153
CHAPTER SIX	<u>The Director</u>	160
	The Advent of the Director	160
	The Company	167
	The Director and the Drama	168
	The Director and the Audience	171
	The Director in Rehearsal	177
	Acting as Art not Craft	183
CHAPTER SEVEN	<u>Negotiating the Style of Participation in Performance</u>	195
	The Theatre Building	200
	History of the Play	207
	Rehearsals	209
	Considering the Audience	217
	Stressing the Performance Aspect, Techniques of inclusivity and distance	221
	Self-distance and Identity	223
	Proclaiming the Performance	226
CHAPTER EIGHT	<u>Critics and Accounting for Theatrical Performance</u>	233
	Critic as Judge	233
	Critic as Creative Artist	243
	Criticism is a Cerebral Activity	245
	Criticism as Topic	247
	The History of Criticism	249
	Criticism as News	256
	The Review	262

CHAPTER NINE	<u>Intrusive Theatre and Constituting the Limits of Performance</u>	273
	The Show	276
	Collecting Conspirators	277
	Confused Reactions	283
	Constituting a Context	286
	Recognising a Performance	293
	Cracking a Joke	299
	The Map Joke	303
CONCLUSION		316
APPENDICES	<u>Live Theatre</u>	323
	<u>Young Vic</u>	359
	<u>Michael Billington</u>	393
	<u>Tube Theatre</u>	417
	<u>Tyneside Theatre Company</u>	426
	<u>Holly de Jeong, Actress</u>	454
	<u>Viv Daniels, Actor and Director</u>	468
BIBLIOGRAPHY		

INTRODUCTION

To mention 'fiction' is to conjure up the image of a realm of experience which is diametrically opposed to that of our 'real' lives. Fictional performances, be they films, stage-plays, novels, poems, paintings or sculptures, are generally talked about as if they could be relegated to a domain wholly cut off from our everyday lives.

I intend to promote an alternative view of fictional experience which places it, not in an arena discretely opposed to 'real' experience, but on a continuum with that experience. Fictions are, after all, communications just as doctors' instructions and neighbourly chats are. What delineates fictive experience from non-fictive experience is the style of attention we give to a particular experience which involves distinctive assumptions, expectations and responses.

Fiction may then be seen as constituted through particular modes of participation in the social world but is eminently of that world not apart from it. That what is "real" appears to be unproblematically obvious is likewise the outcome of individuals' practical procedures: the real and the fictive are continuously constituted realms not absolute givens. There will of course be ambiguous cases but in each and every instance participants decide for all practical purposes how an event is to be taken.

The cues for decoding, ways of attending and store of possible expressions will alter with each historically particular society. The social milieu, the social organisation of the means of production and the media of communication available (celluloid, printed page, oral narrative etc.), will signal particular ways of attending to experience and the pattern and mode of constitution will consequently change.



This thesis explores a field of fictive experience, both participatory and performative, which has been termed 'drama' or 'theatre'. Theatrical performance is never a solitary endeavour but involves interaction between actor and audience. Having set that interaction as minimally necessary the constantly negotiated and constituted nature of theatre forbids any attempt at further definitions. Elements commonly associated with the theatrical enterprise - texts, authors, stages - are elements that have, and presumably will, change with time and social location. To attempt a static definition in these terms undermines the socially constructed nature of theatre and sends the would-be enumerator on a ceaseless quest.

Theatre's participatory nature makes it a paramount example of fictive experience as a social construct and, as such, suggests that a sociological study of the field may have particular purchase. That it is a social construct, a result of individuals communicating in specific ways, means that such a study will be relevant not only to theatrical matters but, in so far as the methods and abilities used to successfully carry off a theatrical enterprise are those relied upon in constituting other social occasions, it will have consequences for any analysis that takes social interaction as its topic.

While theatre would seem to be particularly amenable to sociological study and theatre as a metaphor doubtless exercises a powerful attraction on the sociological mind, George Gurvitch's claim of several decades ago (Gurvitch, 1956) that "the sociology of the theatre is still in its infancy" so far as any comprehensive approach to Thespian activities is concerned remains equally valid today. It has become a commonplace that 'all the world's a stage' whilst consideration of what the 'stage' is let alone the 'world' would seem to exert less appeal.

Approaches to the theatre are patently not limited to the sociologist-historians, literary critics, philosophers and practitioners amongst others, have all said much on the matter. I shall attempt to clarify the field somewhat by looking briefly at a few of these approaches while paying particular attention to how they differ from the approach I propose. That is to suspend judgement on the necessary elements of the theatrical enterprise and treats it as a constituted realm.

The overview I offer (chapter I) is based on a scheme which stems from the way theatre has been treated under these various approaches namely: looking at theatre as a topic in itself, using the theatre as a means to look at life and taking life to be itself tantamount to a theatrical enterprise.

I then (chapter II) look at the history of the institutionalisation of theatre offering such a history as one way of talking about the dramatic undertaking. This leads me to a consideration of styles of theatrical enterprise and a discussion of style itself, a term which is to be used as a major analytic organiser of the thesis. (chapter III)

In chapter IV I outline my own perspective and methods of study and the five subsequent chapters offer analyses of particular Thespians and theatrical occasions based on this perspective: i.e. I looked at an author, a director, an example of "polymorphic" theatre, a critic and an example of "intrusive" theatre, (see pp. 97-105) for explanations of these terms).

Whilst I have structured the sequence of these chapters around what may be commonsensically taken as the order of events involved in producing a play, and this structure reflects the chronology of the field work I carried

out, any suggestion that it reflects the temporal string of events moving from private to public acts is a delusory one. Were the thesis to be organised to reflect a sequence of more or less important considerations in the theatrical enterprise then its order would, indeed, be reversed and the prime position given to that chapter which deals most directly with interpretative resources available to the audience for whom the drama is prepared.

This work takes as given the existence of a universal "dramatic impulse" not in the sense that it searches for the differences between realistic and fantastic representation, for instance, but in so far as it is concerned to elucidate some of the social resources which make representation possible at all. The thesis bases itself on a constant concern with divulging the grounds for representational adequacy with which those involved in the theatre - as practitioners or audience - work. Such grounds are part of the very fabric of the social life of the community whose members recognise any theatrical enterprise and it is indicative that the chapter on authorship, which is generally taken as the least public stage of the drama, is actually concerned throughout with the consideration of the audience for whom the play is being authored. Authorship, although it may devolve on the head of a single person, is still an eminently social task and seeks its authority through a constant consideration of the audience.

The chapter on directing also deal with the director's concern for his audience. He works with ideas of himself as chief interpreter but he is deeply aware that styles available to him in directing a play, and by that I mean the very possibility of manipulating a representational grammar rather than taking style to be some sort of aesthetic category (for a

discussion see pp. 86-96 of the present work), are tied to the social context of audience expectations and this makes the process a more negotiable one than may at first be thought.

It is important to point out at that the dramatic impulse I have noted is not limited to the instances of "theatrical" action which I consider here but may be present in other "staged" incidents - in both mobs and football crowds at one end of the spectrum and ceremonial presentations or political rallies at the other. I do not speak for either of these areas but acknowledge that the dramatic impulse does not limit its expression to activities which are commonly defined by members as "theatrical". I am not attempting a definitional job but examining some of the social skills and interpretive procedures relied on to get theatre done.

It will be useful at this stage to define certain terms which are central to the project, in particular: script, text, play, performance, theatre and drama. The definitions offered are not to be taken as rendering the terms mutually exclusive, indeed, considering the list presented above the later terms will embrace and contain earlier ones. Neither are the terms to be taken as necessary stages in any theatrical production; not every type of theatre works through each term.

Using Schechner's diagrammatic representation (1973, p17) for my own ends), the terms may be thought of as represented by concentric, overlapping circles, the size of the circle being taken to indicate the conceptual area covered:-



The Script we shall take as the written matter of the play; the characters on the page which may initiate the theatrical performance. Not all theatres will possess scripts in this sense, they are necessarily limited to literate societies.

The Text is the map for the theatrical performance; it is the instruction for the event. So text will include script (though it may be of a wholly oral nature), but will incorporate also the total form of the play and its narrative structure which is itself semiotic. So the script of a 19th century play was owned by the author and a commodity which could be sold by him. The prompt books, on the other hand, which detailed the physical and mechanical side of mounting a production and which form part of the text of the play and an important source of current conventions on staging were the property of the actors/directors responsible for animating the script. (See Vardac, 1949)

The Play will be used as a term interchangeable with text. The play in common usage is often used to refer to the performance of a text - 'Was it a good play?'; but it is used also to refer to text itself, and we will find it useful to limit its meaning to this latter one.

A Performance is the occasion of the practical manifestation of a particular text; its enactment and display by a specific group of performers for a specific audience. There are times when 'to perform' is used in its lay sense of 'to execute', or 'carry out', but this will be obvious from the context.

The Theatre will indicate the physical building (if there is one), where performance takes place, or the setting for that performance. It also indicates the experience itself - what happens to the actors and the

audience during the performance of a play and the entire constellation of events, many of which pass unnoticed, occurring during, immediately before, and immediately after the performance. Theatre includes, in other words, the 'going to' and the 'dispersing from', a particular event and the practical social experiences these involve.

The Drama is the term with the widest constellation of meanings and is composed of all that has gone before. It is the composition and the presentation of plays (in their broadest sense) and it refers to what has been picked out as an instinct basic to man, that is, the articulation of a language of representation by an actor for an audience. Set, costume, lighting and sound are all elements which may be rendered theatrical but the four elements of text, stage space, actor and audience are the only ones necessary.

Drama resides in the framework of someone (actor), somewhere (stage space), communicating some thing (text) to someone else. There is then, a difference between the theatrical experience (theatre) and the theatrical enterprise (drama), which refers to the conglomeration of activities - by writers, set-designers, carpenters, seamstresses, directors, or producers - which may be involved in mounting a dramatic production as a whole.

Such an enterprise is patently open to study in a wide variety of ways which I do not attempt to tackle here. It is also a subject which lends itself to the skills of a variety of people other than sociologists - historians and students of literature among them. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that the script or text which may be studied by English scholars is not the same as the live performance, the theatrical experience which is quintessentially a relationship between actor and audience. It

is a live, wild, immediate, communicatory experience and, whilst the event may be analytically split into the elements of Script-Actor-Audience, theatre resides in none of these alone but precisely in the relationship between them.

To ignore one or the other is to rip away the social practice which is the theatrical experience and transmute it to some other form, neglectful of the participation and interaction between people which constitutes the event.

"The script on the page is not the drama any more than the clod of earth is a field of corn."

(Styan, 1975, p.viii)

My primary concern is to study fictive experience as a social construct. To look at how interpretative cues are given, recognised and constitute the topic "theatre" itself.

Goffman's term "frame" is a useful one here:

"I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organisation which govern events - at least social ones - and our subjective involvement in them: frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. My phrase "Frame Analysis" is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organisation of experience."

(Goffman, 1975, p.10)

In "Frame Analysis" Goffman shifts from the theatrical metaphor of his earlier days to a cinematic one. Amongst other things this does provide us with a vocabulary which, without descriptive category exhaustions (see Ditton, 1976, p.329) can deal with the fact that what happens on stage "really" happens. We can talk of "Keyings" the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else, "- keyings" of fabrications and other levels of transformation forever.

What Goffman does not do is go outside the conventions of 'traditional' theatre (see especially op.cit., pp. 124-155) or look in detail at a specific occasion of someone accomplishing a successful framing and what authority is necessary for participants corporately to register and carry off an activity as any particular type of frame.

While the broad sense of "frame", as principles of organisation which govern events, is one I intend to hold onto during this thesis, my enterprise does not stop at the statement that framing forms an integral part of any theatrical enterprise. My task is to tease out as fully as possible how framing operates in practically handling an event and constituting it as acceptable amongst that category of occurrences commonly talked of as theatrical ones.

Apart from "frame" there are two further specifically sociological concepts which recur in my discussion - member and account. In attempting to explain these terms some consideration of various other central concepts in the studies of the ethnography of speaking must be undertaken.

Such considerations are by no means peripheral to the present study of theatricality. In so far as those involved in the dramatic enterprise, whether as performers, organisers, or appreciators of a piece of staged drama, are attending to conventions which govern such communicative basics as lucidity and effectiveness, they are concerned precisely with the conventions employed to accomplish effective communication through speech. For these reasons it can be usefully argued that a theatrical public is analogous to a speech community.

Recent work in the ethnography of speech further underlines the analogy, as with Bauman's work (1977) which looks at verbal art as a performance accomplished through collaboration. The dramaturgic aspects of contemporary sociolinguists are not coincidental and constitute an important aspect of the methodological presuppositions of my study of theatricality.

The concept of a speech community is significant in that it is a move to repair the grammatical bias of focusing upon language in a way that can easily ignore the fact that it is used by specific people in specific contexts. As Hymes (1974 p.47) points out: "If taken seriously, it postulates the unit of description as a social rather than a linguistic entity."

A speech community is, then, something held in common by people who share concerns and/or situations and it is a facility necessary for extended practical action.

"To the extent speakers share knowledge of the communicative constraints and options governing a significant number of social situations, they can be said to be members of the same speech community."

(Gumperz and Hymes, 1972, p.16)

As the community itself is constituted through the concerns of practical experience the ways of speaking employed may mix several "languages" and be themselves situationally patterned by differences in status and concern:

"Such a community is an organisation of diversity, insofar as this knowledge and ability (i.e. access to, and command of, resources for speaking) are differentially distributed amongst its members; the production and interpretation of speech are thus variable and complementary, rather than homogeneous and constant throughout the community."

(Bauman and Sherzer, 1974, p.6)

The concept of community used here is not an idealisation of intimacy but refers to a highly pragmatic concern with communicative resources which may be inferred from members' everyday accomplishments in any variety of settings and tasks.

The concept as a tool in sociolinguistics raises a number of problems which need not be studied here but there is one point which touches crucially on my own project. That is, as Hymes (1974) points out, the idea of belonging may obscure what are important differences between membership and participation. It would be quite possible to have grasped a functional knowledge of at least one form of speech and patterns of use by a particular group - professional thespians, for example, but still be labelled as a non-member. Such a distinction may be traded upon by actors or other insiders in exploiting their theatrical competence vis à vis more naive participants such as casual members of an audience.

In general, however, the relevance of speech community to a study of theatricality will be clear. The concept is employed to group those able to display an ability and a competence to participate. Able both through a grasp of means of expression (what is often called a repertoire of codes, both linguistic and paralinguist) and through a grasp of norms of usage such as differences related to variations in settings, status differences between participants, and differences in strategies employed to accomplish specific tasks. In relation to dramatic performance members' competence, that is an ability to utilise resources to participate in institutionalised performance, will be displayed in ways which I hope to make clearer. Such displays, of course, function further to constitute the orderliness of

institutionalised expectations. There is a danger of confusion here because the distinction between competence and performance (which may roughly be taken as a distinction between resources and practice) is so fundamental to studies of speech that performance as verbal art may become hopelessly elided with performance as dramatic art. In fact I think a clear dividing line can be drawn.

Performance in every sense implies that the manner of accomplishment has to be considered by the audience as well as the manifest content.

"Performance sets up, or represents, an interpretative frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood, and that this frame contrasts with one other frame, the literal."

(Bauman, op.cit., p.9)

It is implicit in the very idea of performance that some attention be paid to the relationship between performer and audience and it is, at least in part, through the manipulation of this relationship that the performer displays his artfulness. Bauman implies this perspective when he goes on to say that it is a common mistake to see art as something which is all or nothing; it is more feasibly a continuum of complexity of ways of staging.

He gives as his definition of "cultural performances":

"scheduled events, restricted in setting, clearly bounded, and widely public, involving the most highly formalized performance forms and accomplished performers of the community."

(op.cit., p.28)

I do not in practice want to limit the study of theatricality to the type of cultural performances that Bauman seems to be envisaging here, but to the extent that his work directs us to differences in degree of lamination in performance it may be used as the basis for a suggestion that certain modes of performance will be associated with certain specialised

speech communities. It is in this way that I shall use the term member, to refer to one who can competently use communal resources with the implication that the community in question is more probably a focussed theatrical public than something on the scale of British culture in general.

That those groups who attempt to rupture conventional expectations for theatre audiences and with whom I spent much of my research time find their own work hard to articulate on this score underlines the problematic nature of the concept. In assuming during a tour of working men's clubs, for example, that the audience to whom they play is not a conventionally competent one groups may blur, or expect to be blurred, some formal features of theatricality - the proscenium arch, elaborate costumes and conventional proprieties - and because of this be accused of being patronising or preaching at their audience.

On the other hand the ideological import of disproportionate expenditure on performances of traditional "classics" as instances of British culture is articulated through presuppositions of automatic membership. The warrant for such performances is taken for granted and their accessibility simply assumed for any "normally" competent member of the culture.

The ideological ramifications of concepts of membership within the community between theatrical publics should not come as a surprise, neither are they peculiar to theatricality. Dialects used by certain groups carry status connotations and styles of taste are also used as expressions of social position - as for example through which television channel is preferred. It would seem that the stratifications of taste which Bourdieu has called the transmission of cultural capital through appropriate codes

for deciphering and appropriation (1973) are an important part of the persistence of cultural hierarchies such that stereotypes can often become self-fulfilling prophecies. This leads me to the second concept I want to discuss at this stage and that is the idea of an account. Traditionally the term has been used to refer to the justifications and excuses Lyman and Scott (1968) work within taking accounts as a linguistic device employed whenever an action is subject to valuative inquiry. In this thesis account stands for any members' methods, not necessarily verbal, for rendering visible the orderly and rational properties of everyday life. In other words instances of a distinct style of taste can be used as accounts constituting membership of a community in which that style is legitimate.

More generally, social organisation in any institutionalised sphere is not something discovered by members as a pre-existing structure to be inhabited. It is instead accomplished intersubjectively through language so that structure emerges in the process of interaction, in the interlocking of accounts. The process of emergence has also been noted by Bauman in relation to verbal performance and his remarks are relevant to that class of performances I am calling for the present cultural performances:

"The emergent quality of performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations... Relevant here are the keys to performance, genres, acts, events, and ground rules for the conduct of performance that make up the structured system of conventionalized performance for the community."

(op.cit., p.38)

It is precisely because that which is being staged in cultural performances is not contained within the text or script of the play that members' accounts in legitimating and defending actions provide for the

practical constitution of theatricality. The reflexivity of this process cannot be exhausted by a survey of instances and so one could not list types of theatrical publics to establish communities of taste in contemporary British culture. In elucidating methods for constituting theatricality I have not therefore attempted to representatively cover common styles but have listened closely to the accounts of members at the edges of conventional publics.

To an extent if we take theatre in its broadest sense, to include any dramatic performance for radio, television or cinema, the areas that Gurvitch enumerates as topics which could form the basis of a sociology of theatre - the theatre's public, the performance itself as worked out within a specific social framework, the actors as a social group, the relationship between one type of society and the content of theatrical performances, the social functions of the theatre and the manner in which its functions vary in different societies - albeit rather inconsistently, have been covered in a number of studies. If we limit the drama as I have done to a consideration of "live" theatre, i.e. performances given by an actor/s to an audience, in a face-to-face situation rather than via some technical medium, then the extent of the studies is much contracted.

As already noted Gurvitch himself declares: "the sociology of the theatre is still in its infancy." Several decades later the situation would seem to be little changed with Peterson (1975-76, p.671) noting again the lack of any comprehensive study of culture as a whole. He suggests that although a reading of sociological theory would imply that culture is treated as a central concern, in empirical works "culture" is focal in very few.

"Yet" (Peterson adds) "although the term is seldom used, a goodly number of us labouring in the sociologies of art, science, religion, knowledge law, media and education, sports and popular music, are researching culture and doing so in a common way by focusing on how culture is produced."

(ibid. p.671)

Culture, he suggests, is seldom directly mentioned as a main concern in such studies because the habit is to focus attention on the ways in which culture is related to social structure rather than explore the ways in which it is produced.

He notes three distinct perspectives which govern analyses in the field of cultural studies:

First, the autonomous culture cycle which takes culture and society as autonomous systems which evolve independently, according to quite different rules.

Second the materialist view which assumes that social structure creates culture: "Culture is seen as a more or less accurate mirror of social structure so that the content analysis of cultural products provides a convenient, unobtrusive measure of social structure.

The third is in the idealist position which assumes that culture creates social structure. The could include symbolic interactionists, social linguists and semioticians (See also Hall, 1979, for a discussion of theoretical traditions in the sociology of culture).

These categories describe some of the features of perspectives which I shall also treat critically, but Peterson's solution differs from my own.

He suggests that the production of culture approach turns "attention from the global corpus of habitual culture and focuses instead on the processes by which elements of culture are fabricated to those milieux

where symbol-system production is most self-consciously the centre of activity".

"Culture", he states, explaining the orientating assumption of the genetic perspective which incorporates the commitments of the production perspective, "is the code by which social structures reproduce themselves from day to day and generation to generation. In this view, culture plays the same role in sociology as genetics plays in biology." (1975, p. 678)

The production perspective does avoid some of the problems of a totally static approach but still fails to explore the code itself. It focuses on that code as a given element which may be plucked out of the social fabric and considered in isolation rather than being seen as itself a production.

Peterson considers the code apart from the social practices which continuously beget it and it is here that our approaches fundamentally differ.

If the institutional artefacts of the theatre - the buildings, the proscenium arch etc. - were to be stripped away, we would still be left with the interpretive processes which are considered in the following chapters.

Chapter One

THE DRAMA STUDIED, USING THE DRAMA TO LOOK AT LIFE
AND THE THEATRICALITY OF LIFE

The Drama Studied

Popular Culture Approach to Theatre

To explore the first of the three approaches to theatre I have noted - theatre as a topic in itself - I shall look at what I term the "popular culture" approach to drama, an approach exemplified by a systematic separation of the artistic productions of a society from that society as a whole.

Its analysis of text, performance and audience is guided by this separation and is in direct opposition to my own dictum which insists that artistic activity is an integral part of society and can never be adequately studied if its contextual and processual nature is ignored.

One work which typifies just such a popular culture approach is 'The Sociology of Drama' by Goodlad (1971) and I shall briefly look at this work to explicate some of my objections to the static treatment of, to use again Styan's term, "wild experience".

Goodlad's book opens with a consideration of "Drama - a mirror or model for society".

"The interesting question about popular drama in a community is whether it is merely an expressive aspect of culture - reflecting people's beliefs about their community, or whether it is an instrumental aspect of culture showing people how they should behave, for example".

(1971, p.4)

He takes popular drama as a form of mass communication, considering plays for cinema and TV as well as live theatre, and sets as his aim the provision of answers to such problems as whether 'popular drama may function

instrumentally as a medium through which a community repeatedly instructs its members in correct behaviour' (ibid. p.7); and whether it serves to inform members of a community about social structure and 'the behaviour expected from individual members of the community if social structure is to be preserved'. He is concerned in other words, with drama's part in providing a monitor of morality.

That such questions are the questions posed stems largely from Goodlad's espousal of a functionalist model of society which, much simplified, treats society as an organism composed of various organised systems of human activity, all of which function to maintain the organism's equilibrium. Any activity, then, has a part to play in maintaining the social system and drama is simply one of these.

Leaving aside any general criticism of functionalist theories (viz. e.g. Berger, 1969, and Brown, 1978), with respect to the theatre such an approach consistently refuses to acknowledge the accomplished nature of drama or to appreciate that drama is not, for example, simply a text pointing the way to behave to its readers, but is one mode of experiencing the world. It is a mode of experience which is historically specific, forms part of a particular social context, and exists only in the intersubjective communication of members of a society. Theatre as an institution may have an existence independent of members' practices - buildings stand up and texts are available from libraries - the theatrical experience itself, however, is a unique event possible only by virtue of establishing a relationship between actors and an audience.

Goodlad does consider the role of the audience but he does so in the, by now classic, fashion of mass media students. That is to say he looks at the drama as a stimulus directed at an audience on which it will have some effect.

TV drama, Goodlad's major consideration, does differ from the live theatre experience in so far as there can be no face-to-face interaction between actor and audience. The TV performance exists, in one sense, independently of the audience in a manner in which a theatrical performance can never do. The stimulus-response approach is however, inadequate for even television performances in that it ignores the interpretive processes that the audience undertake in watching the television in a particular situation and with particular people. It presumes an unequivocal message which may be discovered through some form of systematically undertaken content analysis. This very phrase locates the meanings in the text rather than in the work done by the person who is attending a performance based on the text. As Mendelsohn notes with regard to mass entertainment in general:

"people who seek and experience mass entertainment do not do so as isolated, autonomous individuals - as theorists of "mass society" suggest - but, rather as group members, and in social contexts that call for a high degree of interpersonal communication."

(1966, p.74)

An approach which regards 'culture', in whatever form, as effectively the icing on a cake composed of the more weighty ingredients of economic and political structures, for instance, must violate the processual and contextual nature of cultural enterprise. It favours a stance which can stimulate questions only about such matters as the role of culture. Does it, for example, have an expressive or an instrumental function, does it, in other words, reflect or control society and how?

Acknowledging that culture is largely a case of expression through language should alert us to the limitations of such a split. There exist in the world 'brute' facts which we may encounter but such facts are

perceived through language and in the very act of being labelled their nature is constituted. Each culture makes its world through its own linguistic structures and in accounting for something its nature is both described and prescribed. We construct our world through the grammar of our language. Attempting to hold apart a society and its culture must fail. Language is the very means through which we see the world and language, or way of speaking, and culture, or way of life, are in a deep sense coterminous.

Ignoring the constitutive role of the audience is not limited to studies following such a popular culture approach. Remarkably few of the works that deal with theatre extend much importance to the audience and this omission would seem to be general to cultural studies on the whole (other than mass media studies whose dealings with audiences tend to remain on the fairly gross level of statistics and a conceptualisation of "the audience" as a generalised homogenous collectivity.) As Dyer (1979, p.182) states in reference to film studies "the audience is conspicuous by its absence."

Dyer himself recognises the crucial position any concept, stated or tacitly assumed, of the audience plays and is honest enough to point out that he uses terms which make no sense without reference to the film audience yet his own references remain largely unexplored and the concept of audience he relies on remains an unexplicated resource:

"How one conceptualises the audience - and the empirical adequacy of one's conceptualisations - is fundamental to every assumption one can make about how stars, and films work. It is not as if we aren't ignorant enough in other areas (text and various formal or interpretative approaches to media texts) yet these weaknesses are as nothing compared to our ignorance theoretical and empirical, of how films work for, on, with audience - and which preposition you plump for is crucial."

(Dyer, loc.cit.)

There are, of course, exceptions to such neglect though not all works which consider the audience extend to them the pivotal position which I advocate here. Fiske and Hartley (1978) for instance, consider the television audience concluding that:

"Television, according to our analysis of its message, function and mode, communicates a metonymic 'contact with others', in which all Levi-Strauss's lost storytellers, priests, wise men or elders are restricted to cultural visibility and to oral primacy: often indeed in the convincing guise of highly literate specialists, from newsreaders to scientific and artistic experts. This selective communication is what we have termed television's bardic function and it restores much of the personal autonomy to the viewer in the sense that he supplies the conditions, both semiotic and social, under which any specific message becomes meaningful."

(ibid., p.126)

Fiske and Hartley credit him with supplying the conditions which give meaning to the message being relayed via the technical medium of television though they also espouse an over-simplified view of the relationship between television and the audience's world: "Television does not represent the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symbolically, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface." (ibid., p.24) What they do not discuss is how he also provides the grounds for the specific manner in which the representational and dramatic undertaking which is television is accomplished. A particular historical audience will have available particular semiotic codes as a resource for making sense, and displaying the sense of, the medium and its message - as Dyer (op.cit., p.121) lists with reference to the building of character and audience foreknowledge of films - familiarity with the story, its characters, promotional publicity which directs attention to particular aspects of the film, star/genre expectations and published reviews, all provide directions for the way in which the film may be attended to.

That list considers the semiotics of decoding the film once produced but the cultural resources of any particular audience come into play at the stage when the film, television programme or theatrical play is being conceived as a possible enterprise. It is at this stage that the ideology of a society, and I take ideology to be "that set of ideas and representations in which people collectively make sense of the world and the society in which they live" (ibid.,p2) will set the parameters for performability itself.

The theatrical institution, its texts, spaces, professional and amateur companies available, system of finance, and so on, provide certain limits to what may be envisaged as an acceptable theatrical enterprise. The entire social context in which practitioners and the audience alike are situated - including their language both verbal and non-verbal, conventional ways of telling stories - their narrative or otherwise organised structure, notions of character, heroes and heroines, particular expressable social values, attitudes to public and private life, male/female relationships, the family, and so on, will provide the constraints within which an intentionally dramatic project may be undertaken.

Using the distinction I have made between the theatrical enterprise as a whole and the theatrical experience of an occasion (see p. 2) it is possible to include a play specifically designed to be unperformable in amongst the theatrical resources of a society whilst refusing to describe it as a theatrical experience so long as it remains tied to a page as a script or text, indeed any form, which cannot be dynamically performed for an audience.

So the surrealist enterprise of subverting conventional understandings of the traditionally aesthetic and directing their "manifestations" precisely against an audience's literary and artistic preconceptions and presumptions provoked certain of its followers to write plays which defied staging through the inclusion of devices such as absurd technical directions, non-human performers or whatever. Committed individuals such as Jean-Claude Barbe, notes Matthews in his chapter on Surrealist Poetic Expression (1976 pps. 162 & 174): "demonstrated their fidelity to surrealism by writing plays that defied staging, so firmly stressing the precedence of surrealism over theatre in the scale of priorities.... surrealist subversion aimed directly at the idea of drama as a means of communication resting upon a basis of common trust in which playwright and his public share without reservation."

Others who have considered the audience directly in their studies include Berger, 1971, Sanders, 1974, who considers audiences though not specifically theatrical ones, and particularly Righter, 1962, who traces directly the changing relationship between audience, stage and actors. She considers the Mystery plays when the audience played the part of mankind and were thus directly included in the play, and the later Morality plays when they were addressed directly by the Vice from time to time but not otherwise incorporated. It was at this point, she notes, that a split occurred in the participant's relationship to the fictive act and "the audience began to assume the possession of Reality while illusion and and imperfection became the property of the stage." (ibid., p.28)

(1962)

Righter charts the historical progress which resulted in the treatment of the play as a totally self-sufficient entity. Plays were no longer written about a world that was shared by the audience and reflected their

reality but aimed to take them somewhere else. A hundred or so spectators inside someone's front room, for example, became unwieldy and the play established its own world, with its own particular interesting characters while the audience were relegated to a separate sphere strictly demarcated from that of the play.

Ignoring the audience completely or seeing it as having only a passive part to play is insufficient for the concept of drama put forward in this thesis or indeed for any study which claims to consider the theatrical experience. The audience has an indispensable role to play as Styan forcefully notes in his book entitled Drama, Stage and Audience:

"In his *Reflexions sur l'art*, Volery believed that 'a creator is one who makes others create': in art both the artist and the spectator actively cooperate, and the value of the work is dependent on this reciprocity. If in the theatre there is no interaction between stage and audience, the play is dead, bad or non-existent: the audience like the customer, is always right."

(op.cit., p.224)

Again addressing some issues in the specifically "popular culture" treatment of performance Goodlad provides us with a statement of the problems of maintaining perspective and being at the same time analytical in a detailed way; taking a rose to pieces, counting its petals, stamens, and sepals and noting its colour will have accomplished a detailed analysis of a rose but all the qualities that make a rose a rose are destroyed. He continues by listing some well known content analyses (McGranahan, 1947, & Gerbner, 1964), and ends by stating that the major problem is that the analyst can either look at a large amount of material in little detail, or a small amount in great detail, and in assuming that 'drama is dramatic because of its fundamental subject matter - its theme'.

His sensitivity to the possibility of destroying what is being studied by approaching the research in a strictly compartmentalised way does not go deep enough for him to question such assumptions as that which holds popular drama to be 'a case of social fantasy - the psychological constellation in a dramatic work indicates sensitive areas in the personality of those for whom the work has appeal; their needs, assumptions and values are expressed in the drama' (ibid., p430). Or that which is quite happy to analyse performances by applying a long list of variables to them as an indicator of what they 'say' to an audience.

Content analysis deals with the performance precisely before the audience has done anything at all with it, and in this lies its most vitiating element.

Drama is not dramatic because of its theme, its text, or the fact that it is 'performed' - the Royal Court studio mounts productions which pay less attention to properties, audience participation or position, and use less text than events at the Old Bailey. What distinguishes drama and art is a manner of display and use.

To treat drama as some sort of epi-phenomenal guide to an underlying collective conscience is to ignore the fact that meanings are not inherent in a text but are expressed through its use. The questions that then become relevant are not in the order of 'what does drama do?', so much as 'how is drama done?'. The considerations become ones of how it is sensible to use the term drama at all and what interpretative work is undertaken to get a performance recognised as just what it is and no other thing.

Stylisticians also treat the text as inherently meaningful and see the part of the reader as that of getting out of an already ordered text, filled with significances, the meanings that it possesses prior to, and independently of his activities.

S. Fish (1973, p.148), recognises that this separation between the description and the interpretation of observable facts is "more than a procedural distinction but underlies what is ultimately a different notion of what it is to be human". This difference is between regarding 'human beings as passive and disinterested comprehenders of a knowledge external to them (that is, of an 'objective' knowledge), and regarding human beings as at every stage creating the experiential spaces into which a personal knowledge flows'. What it ignores is the interpretive activity by virtue of which meanings occur, the fact that descriptive and interpretive acts are one and the same thing..

It is worth noting here that refusing to acknowledge a distinction between description and interpretation must incorporate a refusal to distinguish between style and meaning, a distinction which again rests on the treatment of text in a static fashion so that something may be unproblematically designated context (the what) and held apart from the process (the how) of the activity.

Treating the play as a literary text and the audience as imbibers of its unproblematic meaning is the basis for approaching drama in the fashion of Goodlad, as functioning to "effect" an audience in some way.

It is just such an approach which makes it sensible to talk of stimulus and response, information theory, and catharsis-drama as useful discharger of depressed emotion (viz. e.g. T. Scheff, 1976).

The Sociology of Knowledge and Theatre

Another way of studying drama has been to look at the functional relationship between the content of the play and the actual social system. This effectively enters the field of the sociology of knowledge. Yet this way of posing the question will be limited for the same reasons that treating theatre merely as text is limited. Plays written for one society at a particular time will continue to be meaningful and successful when played in completely different contexts. Shakespeare is patently not limited to The Globe.

This is so because a play has meaning as it is used by an audience, who bring their interpretative powers to bear on the play and construct meaning through it.

Duvignaud (1965, esp. pp.7-25) places importance on the sort of theatrical space that is designated by particular societies and his book is devoted in part to providing a solution to the problem of the relationship between types of stage setting and the audience's theatrical experience. (It is indicative that there is still no English translation of "Sociologie du theatre", this field has been virtually 'wholly the concern of French scholars' (Burns, 1972, p.5)).

"It is of some importance whether an actor finds he has to perform the part he is enacting in a semi-circular Greek theatre, an Italian picture stage or the platform of the Mystery plays on which the places represented were supposed to be there all the time. The significance lies not only in the fact that the treatment of each particular sort of space presupposes different kinds of setting, which make different psychological impacts on the spectators, but also in that in a sense it fixes in advance the extent of purposefulness and energy it will be possible to confer on the imaginary character".

(Duvignaud, op.cit., p.93)

It is obviously important that the history of the stage is a story of the changing proximity between actor and audience. Physical distance imposes certain styles of playing which themselves are a central part of how aesthetic distance is established. At its simplest Greek drama, using as it did vast theatres which meant that the actor's face would be an indistinguishable blob to the majority of the spectators, was enacted using masks, cothurni (effectively platform-soled shoes), and expensive gestures-appurtenances inimical to the naturalist drama that we know today.

It seems, however, overly deterministic to suppose that 'a particular space, previously defined for this purpose by the society or group of societies' set the limits within which individual dramatist have to make do as best they can and the external conditions straightforwardly control the form and style of the drama.

"It was not", says Kitto (1956, p.218), "scarcity of actors that prevented Aeschylus from making Cassandra, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra discuss their prospects of having a comfortable domestic life together".

Styles of playing do harden into conventions and audience expectations (see Happé;1967) which may well limit the success of certain authors, for example, who are in some sense 'ahead of their time'. That it is a question of 'their time' and certain resources available and acceptable ways of doing drama at that particular historical period, with all that involves, is a significant phrase.

Greek theatre was an enterprise which involved the entire polis. Massive amphi-theatres were capable of accommodating all the citizens of the state (the Theatre of Dionysus seated upwards of 14,000), and at first entrance was free but even when fees were charged then the appropriate amount

was given to the poor so they would not be excluded from what was virtually compulsory attendance. The theatre was, indeed, sponsored by the state and formed part of the annual calendar of religious ceremonies at Athens.

Greek theatre, then, was a truly popular theatre in that it was a body fully representative of the great mass of the Athenian people and closely associated with religious feeling and observance and a dramatisation which concerned the entire community. As such, the theatre was concerned to make sense of the lives of the audience not through stressing individual traits but through dealing with large scale philosophical and religious concepts which subordinated individuality to epic characterisation.

On the other hand, Shakespeare in Elizabethan times paints for us minor characters in all their idiosyncratic detail - the characters and the events that befall them provide our interest and this demands that they be seen in all their fullness. Greek drama looked, not to the events themselves but their significance vis à vis the Gods and the World, and as a result, their characterisations are writ large rather than given in the detail of everyday, ordinary life (see Kitto, op.cit., for extensive comparison).

To be fair to Duvignaud he does several times stress the impossibility of studying the theatre in a vacuum, apart from social life, or in a limited literary sense which would ignore the fact that theatre is one of the performing arts:

"Il est douteux que l'on puisse saisir la création dramatique si l'on n'embrasse pas dans le même examen tous les aspects de la pratique théâtrale qui est essentiellement sociale...

il existe aussi de troublantes ressemblances entre la vie sociale et la pratique du théâtre, entre les actes les plus marquants de la vie collective et la représentation dramatique."

But I would go a good deal further and claim not that there are similarities between life as it is lived and theatre as it displays life, but that dramatic representation is part of life and to begin to speak of it as a separable activity which reflects, rather than a live action which creates, is already to limit the enterprise of its study.

The Social Context of Production Explored

I have said that external social factors do not simply control nor are they simply reflected in the form of the drama but what is central to the very possibility of dramatic representation and the form it assumes is the social milieu which furnishes the language for representation, the physical context in terms of people, spaces and properties, and the relationships, social, political and economic which set the constraints and the possibilities for the theatrical enterprise. So whether artistic expression is financed via a system of court patronage or by means of artists selling their products on the open market, will importantly affect the resources that can be tapped and the interpretations of their use which can be negotiated on the occasion of a dramatic experience.

Treating drama as instigator or reflector of social norms is an approach too narrow to encompass the project outlined in the present work but the deep sense in which dramatic conventions and productive resources are linked makes works which throw light on the historical context of particular theatrical forms invaluable. One such work is by Lowenthal (1961) who undertakes a case study of 18th century England (see especially pp.52-107) and provides a wealth of detail about the activities of artists and critics during this era, an era when "the painful process of the separation of literature into art and commodity came for the first time into the light of full intellectual awareness". (ibid.:xxiii) To deal with the relationship between the media and society Lowenthal espouses what I would term a "literature as bearer of social values" approach. He assumes, for instance:

"Popular commodities serve primarily as indicators of the socio-psychological characteristics of the multitude. By studying the organisation, content and linguistic symbols of the mass media, we learn about the typical forms of behaviour, attitudes, commonly held beliefs, prejudices, and aspirations of large numbers of people".

(ibid., p.xii)

Whilst I would take such a static formulation to task the historical detail which he offers has the advantage of situating the theatre of that time, not as a separate and separable enterprise, but as irreparably linked to developments occurring in every other aspect of life.

So he looks at the movement from Restoration to 'realistic' dramas, for example, in terms of such concerns as the new mass audience and the availability of theatre to larger sections of the public than before. He considers the 'domestication' of theatre that went hand in hand with catering for a middle class audience, the growth of literacy and thereby criticism as a profitable enterprise, the growing demand for novelty in sustaining audience appeal and the increasingly sophisticated 'audio-visual claptrap' on a stage now competing for public attention with magazines and novels; the gradual awareness of the manipulative factors inherent in entertainment and the consequences of artist and audience no longer being literally 'on speaking terms' but separated by both physical distance and medium.

Other socio-historical studies include Walcott (1976) who provides a study of "Greek Drama in its Theatrical and Social Context" and J. Cope (1973) who, through an exploration of the debate about the real and the illusory, whilst emphasising the diabolic relationship between an art work and the world from whence it came, offers a detailed look at Renaissance drama.

The more immediate social context of production forms the basis for studies by Faulkner (1973) and Lyons (1974) both of whom look at performances as collective endeavours. The former outlines how specific definitions of the situation are important for interaction between orchestra and conductor leading to a successful performance. The latter studies how resource constraints (time, location, particular skills) and their relationship to the artistic activity, affect organisation in a small theatre.

Both the papers cited form part of the body of work known as symbolic interactionism (see also Blumer, 1969, Bruyn, 1966 and Denzin, 1970) and whilst much of the vocabulary used in this thesis and many of the concerns will bear a close resemblance to interactionist studies, there is a fundamental difference which needs stressing and which turns on notions of indexicality i.e. the extent to which the meaning of any form of communication is tied to the context of its production.

The symbolic interactionist approach - which in turn differs from the positivistic enterprise in so far as it is concerned with how meaning is given through any community's use of language rather than assuming language unproblematically captures the features of the objective world-out-there - is to immerse the observer in any chosen situation so he becomes familiar with the actors in that situation and through such familiarity can provide an explanation of shared meanings and their use. Such an explanation, however, rests on the unanalysed properties of natural language with the sociologist depending on unexplicated resources through which to make sense of that area of life he has chosen to study. Symbolic interactionists acknowledge that meaning is a product but do not question how it comes to be initially.

In my own work I am concerned to demonstrate that what is said and done, and how it is said and done, actively constitute the context for any expression. Rather than concentrating on theatre as it is commonly taken - a given cultural fact whose properties could be unproblematically charted, I am concerned to treat the theatre as a phenomena which is accomplished through members' accounting practices and exists in the describable form/s it does through members' methods for analysing, accounting, fact finding and so on, which produce the theatre as a possible field of study. I do not study theatre as a substantive topic but make my topic the ways in which members assemble particular scenes so as to provide evidence for one another that they are performances, critical discussions, rehearsals, actor's notes or whatever and sensibly and self-evidently part of events that constitute an acceptable theatrical enterprise in their community. (See ch. iv for a further discussion. For works which deal with some of the differences between symbolic interactionism and other interpretative approaches see Zimmerman, Mehan, Wood and Coser, 1976; Manis and Meltzer 1967; Zimmerman and Weider, 1971 and Filmer, Phillipson, Silverman and Walsh, 1972).

The preceeding section does not begin to offer a comprehensive overview of ways in which the drama has been widely studied. By mentioning some approaches and where the present work would diverge from such approaches I have hoped, however, to clarify my own stance and display the sort of criticisms I would make against any static formulation of theatre which ignores its constantly constituted nature.

A Poetics of Performance

The last approach I shall mention in this section is that of a poetics of performance. It is last mentioned but accords most closely with my own position which, taking poetics to be a branch of semiology which examines how meanings are constructed, recognises it as a most useful way to tackle an exploration of theatrical experience.

Richard Brown in his book "A Poetic for Sociology" (1978) lays out a programme for the development of a "cognitive aesthetic" which provides a critical vocabulary equally able to assess the adequacy of theories or representations stemming from a scientific or artistic orientation in rendering experience intelligible through some symbol system. Though what counts as knowledge may be radically different in each discipline (just as what passes as adequate sociological explanation will vary between positivistic and humanistic schools) that both are disciplined and presuppose various criteria of 'economy, congruence and consistency, elegance, originality and scope' (ibid. p.3) makes it ultimately more fruitful to consider both as grounded in a similar not an opposite rationality.

The criteria already noted by which experience is organised into formal structures of "knowing" may be historically inherited but are subject to transformation and cannot therefore be invested with absolute ontological status. Breaking down the absolute distinctions between science and art, says Brown: "opens the possibility for creating social theory that is at once "objective" and "subjective", at once valid scientifically and significantly humane." (ibid., p.4)

The critical concepts associated with the novel, poetry and drama - such as form or content - "provide a privileged vocabulary for the aesthetic consideration of sociological theory," and it is this vocabulary which provides the base for this "poetic" for sociology:

"In this sense the "poetics" we use is very close to what is meant by "semiotics", as a theory or method for comparing symbol systems and the types of knowledge derivable from them. our view is that knowledge exists as knowledge only in terms of some universe of discourse, some system of meaning, some institutional epistemology. Those various symbol systems cannot be ultimately grounded themselves, yet any theory or method of approach derives its status as knowledge "or "correct procedure" in terms of one or other of them."

(ibid., p.8)

Brown goes on to explore dramatic irony as a method of innovation and principle of discovery for sociology. Irony stimulates through the dramatic revelation of the unexpected relationships between concepts which in turn promotes a distance from those concepts which the sociologists can usefully exploit:

"The point is ... that the sociologist must "estrangle" taken-for-granted reality so that it appears in a new and previously unexpected light; he must be the man who shouts "Theatre!" in the middle of a crowded fire."

(ibid., p.183)

Both plays and sociological theory present typifications of the world and in so far as the authors of such accounts are students of the world they must present second order typifications. Brown points to one essence of sociological typifications as their ability to "ironize the conventionally accepted typifications of everyday life." (1978, p.182)

It is, he says, when sociology fails to be ironic that it becomes banal.

Another approach which comes under the same broad classification of poetics is provided by Schechner (1976) who suggests a poetics to deal specifically with dramatic performance and the theatrical enterprise.

He begins his paper by suggesting that:

"Theatres are maps of cultures where they exist. That theatre is analogic not only in the literary sense - the stories dramas tell, the convention of explicating acting by staging it - but also in the architectonic sense".

(ibid., p.45)

He explains how the proscenium theatre may be seen as a model of capitalism in its classic phase. The building itself is a single structure with access to it strictly controlled. It is highly compartmentalised, as are the events within it - there are specific times for the audience to talk and look at each other and to regard the play. Technical workers have a special entrance different from that which the audience uses - this theatre hides the productive process from the marketing of the goods. There are more and less expensive seats, though all are individual. The stage is strictly separated from the house by proscenium arch and curtain (20th century open staging techniques, he sees as commensurate with the movement from capitalism to corporatism), and the back stage area is carefully concealed from the spectators, view. An extensive area of dressing and storage rooms developed to accommodate the lavish properties and costumes. And, finally, the theatre building is generally situated firmly in an entertainment belt of services which offer satisfaction to consumer appetites (restuarants etc.), and shows are offered out of working hours, in the evenings or public holidays.

Schechner suggests the existence of a universal dramatic structure closely linked to social process:

"Drama is that art whose subject, structure, and action is social process".

He explores the theatre itself as a pattern of gathering, performing and dispersing, insisting that the manner of accomplishing each stage be considered to fully understand theatre as an event.

Styan's "Drama, Stage and Audience" (op.cit.), makes a similar demand in the sense of avowing that "drama study insists that we think of a particular social situation, a here-and-now (or, imperious demand!), a there-and-then recreated in the imagination to be a here-and-now. The criticism of drama must imply a study of stimulus and reaction, but it is a social study concerned with all the vagaries of human social behaviour".

He examines the theatre from the detail of a particular social situation looking at the conditions of performance in which plays (his examples are culled from all periods of Western drama), thrive. In concentrating on the study of drama as it is done in its own medium - the theatre - he extends full weight to the constitutive role of the audience and drama's accomplished nature.

Neither Schechner nor Styan offer specifically sociological studies. The one English sociologist who does deal with theatricality as a topic is Elizabeth Burns (1972), and that she does from the angle of "exploring the double relationship between theatre and social life, 'theatricality' itself, by examining the varieties of theatrical convention that can be observed in the development of drama in the English theatre". (ibid., p.3)

She examines various theatrical traditions, not as a code of rules that demand conformity from actor, audience and dramatist, but as a 'store of possible modes of representing social action which accumulate over the generations Drama in performance is both formed by, and helps to re-form and so conserve or change, the values and norms of the society which supports it as against the alternative realities which lie outside the currency of any particular social reality'. (ibid., p.4)

Burns here recognises the two-way nature of the theatre - social life relationship; recognises that:

"In relation to the theatre, reality and illusion are shifting terms. They do not denote opposites. Everything that happens on the stage can be called real, because it can be seen and heard to happen. It is perceived by the senses and is therefore as real as anything that happens outside the theatre. On the other hand there is an agreement between all those who take part in the performance either as actors, or spectators, that the two kinds of real event inside and outside the theatre are not causally connected. Dislocation is ensured both because nobody really believes the actors to be the people that they represent and because action that significantly alters the state of the situation such as murder, death by other causes, copulation and birth, are always simulated".

(ibid., p.15)

Burns traces the changes in the use of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor and the authenticating and rhetorical conventions utilised to get theatre accomplished. These are conventions that establish what, among all that is presently visible and audible, is relevant to the business in hand. She examines the way in which what is relevant is convincingly so, and the nature of acting, directing and criticising as an occupation.

Burns also places the audience in a central position vis à vis the drama. An audience at any particular historical time will have a specific set of understandings and expectations which constrain, not simply the way a drama is interpreted, but the very ways in which it is possible to

see an occasion as a theatrical one.

"Theatricality is not a mode of behaviour but a mode of recognition".

(ibid., p.232)

Burn's approach is an essentially historical one and is guided by her strong interactionist commitment. Though recognising the social nature of theatre and placing it firmly as a part of every day life yet the specific ways in which, in any actual situation, people display their decision about the status of what is happening are not dealt with. It is precisely such a here-and-now accomplishment that this thesis undertakes.

Using The Drama to Look at Life

Theatrocracy and Dramaturgy

The second area of study that must be mentioned in dealing with approaches to the theatre are those which treat the theatre as directly analogous to life and assume that the stage depicts social interaction in miniature.

So, Lyman and Scott (1976) state:

"Drama, by providing an opportunity for an audience (theoria) to discover the hidden truths (alethia) that it both reifies and universalises, is the primordial 'social science'. Drama enacts man's relationship with man, which is fundamental to every social science".

and again:

"Social reality, then, is realized theatrically, otherwise put, reality is a drama, life is theatre and the social world is inherently dramatic".

(ibid., p.2,3)

Lyman and Scott obliterate the distinction between theatre and life, one simply melts into the other, with actors in everyday life presenting their selves and forming an audience for other such presentations. They act, direct and criticise, in other words in exactly the manner of those involved in stage productions.

Trust, then, becomes something which "arises out of the successful presentation of self, obtaining as it does, a suspension of disbelief in the authenticity of the performer and a willingness to accept the visible persona as congruent with the visible 'face'".

They cite Evrienoff (1927) who first coined the term 'theatrocracy' (rule by theatre) and Goffman (1959) instigator of the dramaturgical model in sociology, as precursors of their stance and in both cases they overreach themselves. Evreinoff said that all activities (politics, banking etc.), "pay daily tribute to theatricality, all comply with the principles ruling on the stage" but he never maintained their utter congruence with what goes on on stage nor collapsed the distinctions between the two.

Features of the theatre, in so far as it is itself a form of face-to-face communication, are bound to recall features of the social world. That is not to say that the theatrical processes of scripting, rehearsing, directing, being watched by an audience and acting, are synonymous in the theatre and in everyday life.

According to Lyman and Scott, Goffman "has moved the theatre of performances out of the head and into public places. He has argued that it is only from the theatre of daily life drama that human beings (social actors) can derive and uncover one anothers' mental life..... In Goffman's dramaturgy, the ultimate aim of the naturalistic dramas played out in the theatre of reality is to uncover the hidden drama, and the real actors, in the secret theatre of the mind." (op.cit., p.107)

Goffman (1969), specifically states that he is using an analogy. Lyman and Scott make the mistake of seeing in Goffman's original use of 'life as theatre' the literal meaning 'life is theatre'.

Goffman himself refutes this and did not see his sociology to be a way into what people 'really' meant by their acts. Launching from the premise of the theatrical metaphor cannot land you in a display of inner mind.

The Dramatic Metaphor and Cliché

The problems inherent in taking a metaphor too literally are well documented in a number of writings on the dramaturgical model as a model for doing sociology (viz Messinger et al, 1962; Toulmin, 1974; Stant 1974 and Ryan 1978), and I do not intend to repeat them here. The many books that have, to a greater or lesser extent, fallen prey to the dependence on the cliché of theatrum mundi for their coherence, prompts, however, some consideration of how metaphor works.

Metaphor as a device works by illustrating one thing in terms of something else. So in talking of electricity as a fluid or the corpuscular theory of light there is a transfer of a term from one system of meaning to another. Such a patent absurdity functions not as a simply decorative use of language but has a cognitive role in that it forces a reconsideration of the terms being joined. According to Brown (1978, p.81)

"The arresting vividness and tensions set off by the conjunction of contraries forces us to make our own interpretation, to see for ourselves."

In so far as we apprehend the world always through some frame of vision and knowledge is irreparably perspectival then, as Brown also notes, "all knowledge is metaphorical." The crucial point on which the illuminating power of the metaphor rests is that it remains as a connotatively rich creation of the imagination and does not become accepted simply as a name or as a description:

"In metaphors a logical or empirical absurdity stands in tension with a fictive truth, yet this counterfactual truth itself depends on a creative confrontation of perspectives that cannot be literalized or disengaged without destroying the insight which metaphor provides. That metaphor retain its consciously "as if" quality is thus a pivotal point, for on it turns the difference between using metaphors and being used by them."

(ibid., p.84)

When one is used by metaphor and the coalition of the metaphoric terms becomes complete and looses all tension then metaphor becomes a tool of obfuscation rather than clarification. It is my claim that "life as theatre" has run the gamut from metaphor to cliché and now no longer stimulates so much as sterilizes.

Dramaturgical imagery is most often applied to social life in an unreflective manner. The problem is that the continued use of two words together gives them of its own accord some sort of truth status. The very fact that they have been united for such a time extends them an aura of respectability and in this process the original ambiguity is lost:

"..this gives sense to jargon, demonstration to absurdities and consistency to nonsense."

(Perman, 1973, p.4)

What is easily ignored is the distinction between the relationship among phenomena that the metaphor draws attention to and the (purely formal) relationships that the metaphor employs in performing that inventive task. The danger is a confusion between that which the metaphor talks about and that of which it is composed. In stressing the relationship between the two words it marries the tendency is for it to become increasingly impossible to look at the things themselves. Looking at life as theatre can carry with it as a consequence the studious refusal to look at theatre itself.

The dramaturgical model itself cannot easily look at the drama as there is a case of descriptive category exhaustion (viz Ditton, 1976, p.330)

"The literal sense of performances coincides with the metaphorical sense in which it is drama. The metaphor exhausts all available common-sense descriptions, and leaves nothing for literal meaning. The result? The analyst has to milk two meanings from one word, either by analytic regression (handling ones relaxation from a performance as a performance), or by tenacity in bracketing techniques coupled with cumbersome phraseology to produce such barbarous neologisms as 'staged play'."

The analogy it relies on becomes so well worn it is simply assumed that the boundaries between life and theatre (to work at all metaphor presumes that there be such boundaries), are unproblematic and self-evident.

In suggesting that sociologists are to behave as an audience, the questions this raises about exactly what constitutes an audience - is it sheer number, or position, or outward characteristic - (viz Foss, 1972), are ignored. Simply using the term "audience" is a glossing procedure which extends us no help whatsoever in ascertaining what being in the position of an audience would be like. It fails to clarify exactly where the sociologist stands in order to draw the analogy himself in the first place, or to carry through the analogy in doing sociological work.

Dramaturgical sociology relies on unexplicated notions of theatricality and it is not until assertions that aver 'whereas life is much like the stage, the stage is not much like life', are made that the possibility for looking at just what the stage is like are at least opened. That this thesis directly examines the theatrical experience as its topic has as one of its aims the teasing out of the methods for accomplishing theatricality which in turn may suggest a renewed approach and a more critical one to the use of the well-worn metaphor of theatrum mundi.

Dramatism

Although a lengthy consideration of dramatism in no sense forms part of this thesis it is important to note this approach and that it differs from Goffman's dramaturgical model in a number of important ways. The terms should not be confused.

Dramatism is a 'method of terministic analysis, designed to show that the most direct route to the study of human relations and motives is via a methodic enquiry into the cluster of terms and functions implicit in the key term 'act''. (Burke, 1966).

It stresses 'act' as an alternative to pure motion, it sees language as symbolic action rather than sign system, and sees action as the term most suitable for embracing the whole vista of human life. There is no metaphor intended in dramatism as there is in the dramaturgical model:

"The proposition things move, persons act, is literal". Dramatism can embrace all life, dramaturgy is simply one way of looking at some parts of life. Goffman's 'act' is dependent on a theatrical analogy, and its force and limitations come from this dependence. Whereas Burke can include his own acts as available to study through dramatism, with Goffman we must simply presume that we would look the same were we to be viewed from the same angle; sociologists are condemned to be audience or directors, never actors.

The 'act' of Burke and Goffman do very different work. Far from dramaturgy and dramatism being synonymous, the latter would accuse the former - in its concentration on static and episodic situations - of being not so much dramatistic as scientific.

The Brechtian V-Effect and Surrealism as Sociological Methods

A number of theatrical practitioners, and I am thinking here particularly of playwrights Ionesco, Beckett, Pirandello and Bertolt Brecht, have dealt directly with the relationship between theatre and life by deliberately exploiting that relationship to display the frailty of our construction of the "real". By manipulating the aesthetic distance between actor and audience and ironically alternating the focus on the actor between player-as-character and player-self-consciously-acting-as-character such authors promote an awareness of the specially constructed nature of the world.

Brecht's interest lay, not in the study of human character in a psychologistic manner but in human relations. "The smallest social unit," he said "is not one human being but two human beings."

He adopted an anti-illusionist approach to the theatre, calling himself a Realist but stressing his dislike of the 'realist' theatre with its 'slice of life' techniques and seeing Realism as 'laying bare society's causal network, showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators, concrete and so as to encourage abstraction". (Brecht, 1975, p.425)

Brecht saw Realism not as an aesthetic option but as a political vision of the world. As the philosopher in the Messingkauf Dialogues remarks:

"It's just that what you called realism doesn't seem to have been realism at all. The term 'realistic' was simply stuck on mere photographic reproductions of reality..... The crux of the matter is that true realism has to do more than just making reality recognizable in the theatre. One has to be able to see through it too."

(Brecht, 1965, p.27)

He flouted the conventions of the 'suspension of disbelief' view of the theatre and held to unashamed stylisation in his productions.

"We do not go to the theatre to experience life but to experience theatre."

He did, however, assume that experiencing theatre, as long as it was not 'culinary theatre', where emotions are provided, gobbled up and enjoyed whilst leaving no lasting trace, would lead the audience to a truer appreciation of life's machinations.

To make sure that the audience at his productions should not engage in such a feast of emotions, Brecht devised the *Verfremdungseffekt*. This was a conscious device for distancing the audience from the action on stage and the actor from the character he was to portray. Also called "distanciation" or "alienation effect" it involved the use of aesthetic distance in such a way as to make the source of audience interest in the play lie not only in the dramatic tension internal to the play itself but in the tension between play and life. As Brown (op.cit., p.119) puts it, such method capitalises on the actor's physical existence as a member of the audience's society at the same time that he is, in essence, a member of a fictitious society and "through ironic distance the playwright can not only "unmask" his actors, but also reveal unsuspected levels of the meaning and methods of their self-presentations."

The *Verfremdungseffekt* was designed to prevent the audience becoming involved in the empathetic emotion of the play and to promote an objective attitude to the staged events.

"The *Verfremdungseffekt* has its positive side. By inhibiting the process of identification between the spectator and the characters, by creating a distance between them and enabling the audience to look at the action in a detached

and critical spirit, familiar things, attitudes and situations appear in a new and strange light, and create through astonishment and wonder, a new kind of understanding of the human situation".

(Esslin, 1959, p.114, see also Willett, 1973, p.91-3)

Brecht assiduously strove against the hypnotism of Naturalist theatre where a sense of creating illusion embraces audience and actor alike, and adopted to this end such theatrical methods as having the actors introduce themselves quite openly. He used film as well as actors in the same production, and actors would address the audience directly and burst into song in the best Musical manner.

In maintaining the critical distance from the characters they were portraying, the actors were also to make a comment on their actions and to show, not so much that they were doing one thing, but that they had rejected the opportunity of doing something else.

"Put it in terms of 'not this, but that', that is the formula."

Epic theatre was to show man as capable of altering his circumstances, not blindly formed by his environment but capable of choice. Epic theatre was "not an attempt to 'theatre down' reality but to render it more intelligible". (see Willett, 1973, esp. pp.37 and 70).

Brechtian alienation provides an analytic stance from which it is possible to begin an exploration of, for example, realist aspiration and start to open up the ideologies of aesthetic work. It could be used also, as a methodological device for sociological exploration. Indeed ethnomethodological bracketing provides many parallels with Brechtian distantiation as it does, also, with the Surrealist movement in the theatre.

Both Epic theatre and Surrealism were highly conscious of the fact that theatre was a social form. They were from their outset more concerned with 'society' than with the edification of a particular art form.

Surrealism sought to free society from its bourgeois conventions and in doing this regain a spontaneous attitude to life. The conventions of the theatre were overturned (it is to be remembered that conventions are not static and expectations about 'what can happen at the theatre' are rapidly incorporated into new theatrical styles) - and in stressing pure performance, in equating form and content so completely, the 'normal' resources of the theatre-dialogue, action, locality and coherent mood were all dispensed with. There was a constant transgression of 'normal' relationships between cause and effect, action and reaction. Some of the plays were as noted earlier (see p.24) so anti'theatre' that they were deliberately unstageable.

Surrealist theatre, then, demanded a continual change in audience perspective, it demanded that the audience suspend conventional judgments, moral or logical, and forced a rethinking both of theatrical stance and attitudes in everyday life:

"The Surrealist movement was an attempt to dislocate, in order to enlarge, normal vision. They tried to discover a strange, disturbing, world behind the everyday one".

(Lee, 1968, p.50)

Ionesco and Artaud are placed within the post-surrealist school and patently believed that aspects of the surrealist poetic could be adequately expressed within - albeit an unconventional approach to - the theatrical mode. It must be noted, however, that within the surrealist

movement proper there was a positive distaste for the "dramatic" both in the sense of a performance which of its very nature required that it "invite the audience in," (see Matthews, 1976, p.176) and ran its course dependent on traditionally literary (and mainly realist) rules, regulations and customs of style and usage and in the sense in which "drama" is generally taken to be a presentation for its own sake with "mere" entertainment as one of its aims.

Ethnomethodology, with its tenet of naively looking at everyday life, to facilitate a reviewing of that life, seems to echo the surrealist concern with uncovering the notions that make up the familiar, by subjecting the familiar to a distinctly unfamiliar use. Ethnomethodology requires a 'bracketing off' of normal expectations, in order to recover the grounds which make possible the practical decision-making based on such expectations. It celebrates the indexicality and reflexivity of accounts stressing that the sense of the account is tied to what is being said and done at the time of its production, and is reflexive as it is itself a process of making sense.

Surrealist theatre emphasised the fact that when context changes then meaning must necessarily change:

"The unexpected use of the familiar disturbs us and obliges us to subject the familiar to a child-like re-examination. This is particularly effective in the theatre where judgement is heavily conditioned by context. The word becomes the property of the user; this implies that when context changes then meaning must change with it".

(Lee, op.cit., p.28)

Emotion and language could move in different directions and surrealism was open to charges of subjectivism on this account.

Similar charges have been levelled against ethnomethodology as a technique. Critics comment that such a concentration on language and a neglect of "hard fact" means that the ethnomethodologist explores a subjective and solipsistic world. Yet the language is not private and the world explored is an intersubjective rather than a subjective one.

Theatricality of Life

We move now to the third approach to the theatre; those studies which explore the theatricality of life.

The City as Dramatic Character

19th century theatre itself acknowledged the dramatic aspects of city life and with a series of technical advances in staging the development of the box-set, gas lighting and various stage mechanisms allowing for forms of realistic presentation formerly unknown, London itself became, in the Victorian theatre, virtually a dramatic character.

Urban life, more crowded and more diverse than before, offered evident dramatic opportunities and, rather than being used simply as a background for plots and intrigues as in 17th and 18th century plays, came to the forefront in a "deliberate artistic and thematic use of the city as a moral symbol and an image of existence"; the age of the urban drama had arrived.

"In order for the dramatization of urban social problems such as poverty, homelessness, and drink, to hold the attention of London working and lower middle class audience - who knew these things well from first hand experience of them - at least a surface realism had to be created.....

At the same time the tendency of the arts, including the theatre, was to move toward a greater fidelity to the surface of life, a tendency that faithfully reflected the ever-increasing materiality and emphasis on the business of daily living. A stage art that concerned itself primarily with reproducing the surface details of life began constructing the immediate physical environment of the lives of London audiences, as well as exterior views of the main sights of the city. In this way the drama was, in a sense, true to life, and in this way its presentation of character and

situation could carry sufficient conviction for the occasion. The fact that the basic content of such drama was in many respects notably unreal, the dreamworld of the popular melodrama or the middle class 'drama' was an added reason for enjoyment rather than the reverse; a taste for the real and an indulgence in the illusory could be satisfied simultaneously. Such a duality lies at the heart of Victorian drama."

(Booth, 1977, p.219)

This drama noted features of a bustling city life which could be transported onto the stage to form part of the entertainment of the legitimate theatre.

Theatricality and secular law: charismatic leadership

Sennet's paper entitled "Charismatic deligitimation" (1975) treats the reverse of this and looks at how 'theatrical' actions may be taken out into the streets and form an important and consequential part of life.

He notes the ability of charismatic leaders to legitimate actions, formally outside the secular law, by theatricalising them and thereby removing them to a sphere of play that provides rules of, and for itself.

Savanorola was a Florentine friar in the middle of the 15th century, Sennet suggests he rose to fame because he provided his audience with a concrete way to act as religious men; he gave them detailed descriptions of the clothes they should wear, for example, and organised exhibitions of piety in the public burning of vanities - furs, books and paintings (Bottecelli offered some of his own works for burning).

Rather than insisting in Lutheran fashion on bringing the entire person to account, Savanorola offered his followers practical and concrete ways of displaying their 'goodness'. He became a great religious leader, not because of his insistence on a morally irreproachable life, but because he systematically confused 'the act' with 'the actual'. He tested, not the inner souls of his followers, but their acting abilities.

"He urged the public to transform Florence into a stage on which, the great pomp they could engage in acts which symbolised their 'goodness'.....The crown came to believe in itself by virtue of its power to engage in spectacle".

(ibid., p.174)

There is no way to retrieve totally what has happened at any specific time, interpretation and styles of expression must inevitably mediate between an event and its description. History (as sociology), is in this sense a narrative of fictitious happenings much as a novel.

The 20th century offers its own example of charismatic leadership in Hitler and the Nazi rule in Germany. As dictator Hitler had ultimate control over the available definitions and description of events - there was strict censorship on art criticism and advertising, for instance - and in describing the world in a particular way he necessarily prescribed for the possible ways in which that world could be seen.

There was a blatant treatment of 'reality' as an aesthetic form freely available to manipulation and fabrication. So the Nuremburg Party Rally of 1934 for example, had elaborately choreographed parades, choirs, illuminations and even a scripted 'spontaneous' ovation to the Fuhrer. Hitler effectively staged his own history:

"The heightened sense of social drama merged Germany in a common proscenium. This insulated men and institutions, freezing them into rigid shapes. Reality became palpable and manipulable. The sense of 'meaning' and 'truth' was altered".

(Kinser and Kleineman, 1969, p.15)

Myths organise meaning and in creating a myth through the merging of the present and historic tense, Hitler provided a publically available rhetoric, an image of a supreme nation of 'vision, heroism, energy and success', through which the nation's corporate and individual life could be organised.

He prompted a self-conscious society which scrutinized its own culture and, in taking up clothing, building and other forms as part of a grammar of meaning, effectively projects itself wholeheartedly into a symbolic drama.

German propaganda provided explanations that made sensible all that was happening in Germany and could be used by the German people to maintain both 'the myth' and the orderliness of their lives.

We have looked at how the drama itself provides a topic of study; how dramatic methods have been adopted to study life; and how the theatricality of life, the relationship between the drama and the world from which it comes, and which it forms, has been recognised and exploited.

What has not been explored, and will provide the main concern of the present thesis, is how theatricality itself is constituted in any particular instance and how it becomes obviously sensible to use the term 'theatre' in certain circumstances to denote an event that involves us in a particular way because 'it's only pretend'.

Recognising the theatricality of life is an initial step in acknowledging that drawing boundaries around 'the theatre' and 'life' may present a very practical problem for members of a particular society. Simply put, what happens in a theatre is in every sense as 'real' as what happens anywhere else, and a fire alarm in the middle of a Revue will have to be heeded with as much alacrity as a fire alarm in a hotel lobby.

What will change between the hotel and the theatre are the expectations of the audience, they know, for example, that in a Footlight's Revue a false alarm may be raised for its amusement value rather than its practical value as a signal for escape. What has changed are the conventions, cues and grammar they have available to them for coming to a practical decision on whether to flee the building or to clap a successful 'gag'.

The proscenium arch theatre may provide a more precise and more readily articulated code of behaviour for its patrons than a Happening or an event staged in the round. One such rule might be expressed: "any activity happening behind the arch is in the realm of illusion and

anything which happens in the auditorium should be treated as having serious consequences." But both instances require sophisticated interactional work to successfully maintain their status as exactly what they are and no other thing.

People actively constitute 'the real' - it is a construct not a discovery - and maintain a sense of the boundedness of fact and fiction. It is in part, in maintaining the notion of a self-evident boundary that theatre itself is constituted.

People obviously do routinely accomplish such a task and do so in an unconscious way. There is not generally a problem of knowing whether you are at the theatre or not.

Goffman in "Frame Analysis" devotes an entire book to looking precisely at how people cope with the question 'what is it that is going on here?'. He suggests they employ frames of reference for activities through which they organise their experience of events and he does provide a number of examples of occasions when misframing and confusion about the nature of the event attended did arise.

That people do, however, most often successfully accomplish the distinction between the theatrical and the non-theatrical as a practical achievement is evident. How they accomplish this is the guiding interest of this thesis.

Chapter Two

HISTORIC FORMS OF THE DRAMATIC

Historic forms of the dramatic

Whatever the theatrical form discussed it can only make sense in relation to the community within which it is produced. That is not to say that particular texts only make sense to the audience for which they were intended - once established and codified as a text a play can be mimicked and performed at any point after its origination - what it is intended to draw attention to is the fact that the theatre is not dependent on dramatic skills for its life but on social ones.

Text as code allows for the transmission of a particular play but its playing always depends for its dynamism on the social world in which it is performed and on the interpretive skills which render its performance possible. In so far as this is the case a purely historical approach to drama cannot record the specific social skills and negotiations to which individuals have recourse and which make dramatic representations possible.

It can, however, detail for us the organisation of previous theatrical institutions and thereby provide some notion of the limits of possible accomplishments within the dramatic experience. (I am thinking here of the type of analysis provided by Toll in his study of the institution of minstrelsy (1974)). It can also provide a representative way of talking about the theatre to which few historians or practitioners would object and therefore one source of current rhetorics concerning the theatrical enterprise.

It will be useful at this stage, therefore, to pick out certain features common to the dramatic enterprise and examine briefly how they were organised in the theatre of several periods. The common features I am here thinking of are some use of actor, audience, and space and within those broad headings are included consideration of such factors as: how texts are produced, who by and who for; the position of actors in a society, whether they were specifically trained or required to undergo certain rituals, and how they supported themselves or were supported; whether performers were masked or naturalistic or whether living actors were replaced by puppets and icons.

The confines of this thesis preclude undertaking a comprehensive look at theatre through the ages and it would be vain to repeat what has been better done elsewhere. (See for example, the historical works by such people as M.C. Bradbrook, P. Hartnoll, R. Southern, A. Nicoll, H. Hunt; and G. Wickham to mention but a very few, during the latter half of this century details of which are given in the bibliography.)

What a brief look at how specific periods have differently structured and approached these common features and perceived their interrelationship does is to direct attention to the socially embedded nature of the theatre and its formative role within particular historical communities.

Such an approach may be called a political history of theatre and can be seen as providing an initial vocabulary for further studies. What it cannot do is capture the excitement, specificity and density which is the hallmark of the drama. The practical constitution of theatricality

which a straight political history would miss may be explained by drawing a distinction between a political history of performance and a political history of composition. The latter would concentrate on the theatrical structures which blossomed in any particular period and the former, which is closer to the present enterprise, would concentrate on the social skills available which made a particular style of representation possible.

It should be obvious that a close reading of the text or attention to the biography of its author could not repair the omissions of a compositional approach. Even in relation to those works where the fame of the writer provokes enormous respect for authorial demands in staging his plays, how that staging is accomplished is renegotiated in each and every instance. National theatres with huge State subsidies are formed partly as living museums to the nation's literati. One duty is to reproduce authentic versions of theatrical classics and great import is attached to the authority of the author.

Yet in the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre or the Comedie Francaise, to keep work alive authority has to be extended to the director who possesses a knowledge of contemporary living. If the National theatres are to be an active part of any culture rather than a mausoleum embodying culture then they must turn for their material to the subject of life as it is lived not literature as it is written.

Which works are picked out as seminal at any particular time also fluctuates. In Victorian times Shakespearian histories were immensely popular and his tragedies less so. At the present time the choice has

been reversed and prominence is given to Hamlet, Othello and Lear, for example. These shifting selections themselves display a context and a setting.

A close reading of the text and an authentic version of how a play might have been performed in, say, medieval times, is therefore crucial as archival material but few such studies can suggest what it might have been to have attended the original staging as an audience.

The scholarly detail of theatre history provides us with the limits of accomplishment - if the general mode of theatre was a travelling band performing on a small cart then there are certain suggestions about staging which cannot be put forward for that era. But while it can give the limits of possibilities it cannot give the grounds of possibility nor regain a knowledge of the mode of language for every day communication or of the representational language (including the grammars of gesture and spatial organisation as well as speech) based on that mode, which made the dramatic enterprise possible.

As my own project is to examine the practical constitution of theatricality it is a project which cannot be done historically, it being impossible to relive the occasions of staging or undertake interviews with practitioners and audiences to events long since forgotten.

I offer the following sketch of some stages in the institutionalisation of the theatre to suggest how the vitality of theatrical forms is tied to the important concerns of the society of which it forms a part. While I maintain that it is necessary first to explore the ethnographical detail

of contemporary theatrical events before a satisfactory historical comparative ethnography can be undertaken, the wealth of source material that theatrical histories provide and which I will merely touch on here, provide a mine of information on which to base just such historical ethnographies.

Before noting particular institutional forms it is worth stressing that in using the term institution I am not implying the existence of some concrete social entity that has its being independent of human activity. The theatrical institution is not a building, a body of actors or dramatists, or a collection of texts, though all these things are part of the historical process of its institutionalisation.

I use institution to denote a conceptual rather than a concrete being, which "manifests itself in certain forms of orderliness in people's behaviour and in the reference they make to it in their accounting." (Harr  , 1977, p.28) An institution is a human construct existing in a rhetoric and set of rules that define and constitute the elements of the institution itself.

Berger and Luckman (1967) propose, in detail, a theory of institutionalisation that stresses the dialectical relationship between man - the producer, and the social world - his product. Man makes the social world but this world has an existence over and above any particular individual and is experienced by him as an external, objective and persistent reality.

Institutions they say arise basically through the process of 'habitualisation'. That is "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and which ipso fact, is apprehended by its performer as that pattern". (ibid., p.71) Institutionalisation occurs whenever there is a "reciprocal typification of habitualised action by types of actors".

These typifications become available as routine expectations and assumptions to members of a particular social group. Such expectations then exert a certain control over individuals who now may perceive the institution confronting them as an established fact in much the same way that facts of the natural world present themselves.

The expectations and their corporeal incumbents - theatre buildings, published plays, for example - will be passed onto future generations whose ideas of theatricality will be given by such history but who are always capable of altering rhetorics, adapting rules, changing conventions and maintaining the institution as an entity in permanent process.

Taking for granted the existence of what may be talked about as a universal dramatic instinct - and according to Schechner (1973, p.5) "The phenomena called either/all drama, theatre, performance, occur among all the world's peoples and date back as far as historians, archaeologists and anthropologists can go ... (the theatre) is coexistent with the human condition." - the history of the theatre may be seen as a history of the ways in which, over time and in specific periods, 'the theatre' has been embodied in certain cultural forms and had available particular styles of playing.

Theatre historians wrangle endlessly over the issue of when the theatre was first spawned as an independent art form, at what date the first truly dramatic event could be said to have happened. Schechner (1976, p.42) moves further back than most the roots "going out to the theatre" in behaviour that men shares in common with other species. He notes the carnival events of chimpanzees as described by the Reynolds (1965) as the prototype of theatrical events in that both share the same qualities of a gathering of bands who neither live with nor are total strangers to each other, a sharing of food, or at least a food source, and finally the use of a place that is not a home for any of the gathered groups.

What unites the majority of definitions of theatre which have been put forward is a vaguely felt notion that whatever is to be theatrical is to be something that is not quite 'real' and has been severed from the immediate practical consequences of the actions performed. But most simply:

"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged."

(Brook, 1968, p.11)

The theatrical experience is taken to involve the setting in motion of a particular set of rules-in-play and the transformation of space into place.

I turn now to consider three theatrical forms, namely the medieval theatre of the Mystery and Guild Cycles, the Elizabethan/Shakespearean theatre and the Victorian theatre. While such a choice is obviously

something of an arbitrary decision I have chosen these periods because each witnessed a particular and important change in the form of theatricality. The medieval age saw the movement of the drama away from its religious beginnings to become an increasingly secular concern, the theatre of Shakespeare was the beginning of a professional theatre based on a specifically authored text and the Victorian era saw the theatre established as a thoroughly professional, popular and commercial enterprise catering for the newly formed urban masses. It was a theatre where the emphasis shifted away from the institutionalisation of performance and text to the paramount importance of the theatre as a place. As the dramas themselves tended towards the use of naturalistic dialogue (the society dramas which succeeded melodrama culminating in the radical break at the end of the century of the naturalist school headed by Ibsen and Shaw) the theatres became increasingly specialised venues to be used on an occasional basis.

The Medieval Theatre

The Medieval theatre of the Mystery and Guild Cycles, had its setting in a place which was already a central feature in the lives of its popular audience - the Church. It was a drama which sprang directly from the heart of religious worship - the Christian liturgy of the Catholic church.

As early as the 10th century certain parts of the liturgy were enacted during the service with the aim of communicating the story of Christ's life more vividly to the congregation. This theatre, often cited as the earliest form of theatre in England, had its basis in religious propaganda.

It was the priests, already endowed with a particular status in society who were the initial actors in this drama. And it was a drama which took its script from the teachings of the clergy and formed part of a holy celebration which, each year, would retell the same story.

These earliest plays, and an increasing number of occasions in the liturgy were found to provide a suitable dramatic platform from the message of the Resurrection to sermons based on events in the Old Testament such as The Deluge or The Slaughter of the Innocents, were semi-ritual in character. But by the 12th century the dramatic force of character, action and spectacle was pushing the liturgical constraints aside and the shows were becoming both more elaborate and increasingly autonomous, with the emphasis moving from education to entertainment.

The first liturgical dramas took place within the church often taking over the entire nave. Fictional localities were simply indicated by a chair or stool and the props were minimal as were the costumes, which for the main part were simply robes as the priests would have worn. But the move towards spectacle meant that the stories were continuously being embellished. Characters such as Mary Magdalene were given extraliturgical dialogue to perform and the banter between such characters as Noah and his wife, or the shepherds and the devils, expanded to include a good deal of extraneous business not altogether fitting for the sacred setting. The drama turned to the secular and everyday for its material as well as using the religious narratives.

This inclusion of rude antics, the increasing amount of time the theatricals were taking up and the perceived incongruity of a priest representing devils, animals and even women, yet required the next morning

to hear confessions, meant that the burgeoning dramatics were moved out of the sanctuary and into the market place.

By the 14th century the desire to spread the gospel to the common man meant that the dialogue was spoken in a colloquial tongue and the Latin dropped. Once out of doors many of the constraints to propriety had been lifted and the drama expanded in a number of ways. As Hunt (1962, p.49) remarks:

"The Cycles became increasingly elaborate, requiring vast numbers of actors, costumes and scenic contrivances. It was clear that the monasteries were not equipped to handle such a theatre, and as it was no longer desirable for them to maintain too close or too obvious a connexion with it, direct responsibility for organisation was handed over to the Civic authorities and more specifically to the great Trade Guilds, since these powerful and wealthy organisations possessed a highly developed sense of social and religious responsibility."

The various guilds took responsibility for particular incidents - the fishermen acted the tale of Jonah and the whale, the carpenters told the story of Noah and the ark and so on. The plays were not totally divorced from the Church which continued to consider them as useful vehicles for education but they were becoming a very popular form of secular entertainment and the momentum of a desire for spectacle increasingly signalled the distinction between fiction and morality.

The actual staging of plays once outside the restrictions of the churches and monasteries was accomplished in a number of ways - there was no single 'theatre' but rather a number of theatres adapted to particular local conditions.

They were, however, methods that directly reflected the ecclesiastical beginnings, with mansions - small raised wooden structures - placed along side each other in memory of the shape of the nave. The area where these mansions stood, where the audience gathered to watch and where the 'stytelers' acted as ushers, was termed the 'platea' or place. This was simply 'an unlocalised area to which a fictional locality could be assigned by the performers themselves: commonly, if a performer stepped down from his mansion and continued his action on the ground-level, then the spot where he stood was taken as part of his mansion; on the other hand, if an actor had to make a fictional journey from one mansion to another, then the ground on which he trod was conceived of as representing, in attenuated form, the tract between two far distance fictional locations'. (See Nicoll, *op.cit.*, p.55). The location was symbolically signified and it did not strictly matter where the mansions stood in relation to one another and eventually, most probably for ease, they came to be placed directly facing the spectators in a row.

The other major form of presentation, and that generally adopted by the guilds, was to mount the mansions on wagons and draw them, as in a carnival procession, through the streets. These Cycles were not 'simple' affairs in that they had sumptuous costumes, certain mechanical effects (much use was made of gun powder, smoke and flames, especially for the devils), elaborate stage directions and highly decorated pageant wagons with mansions often two stories high. The expensive trappings literally displayed the importance of the subject and functioned also as an act of adoration.

The Cycles were presented in spaces providing a variety of relationships between actor and audience. The circle is perhaps the most basic shape simply as, given an incident to watch, spectators quickly define the circumference of the spectacle by surrounding it. But local convenience determined the type of area that contained the spectacle and spectators. Flat open spaces, squares, raised stages or a sequence of mobile platforms were used depending on architectural circumstance and social pressure.

The Cycles provided an eminently popular theatre for the people, taking place in both towns and villages and culling their audience from a wide social strata.

It is worth noting that, concurrent with the Cycles, from the 15th century onwards, there were Moralities, played by professional actors to the very wealthy sections of society - nobles, merchants and Church leaders - in the halls of great houses, at tournaments and for the court.

The sets and properties became increasingly complicated and portrayal more realistic than had been known in the 11th century. Extensive characterisations began to form part of the enactments.

The acting was still mainly symbolic with the audience able to move easily in their imagination from place to place and time to time as the actors signalled.

The stories were provided from their ecclesiastic sources with the scripting of the comic interludes presumably being done by the actors themselves. It was quite common to hire carpenters and esteemed actors from other places to complete the local cast and the secular actors were paid fees and fed by the guilds.

Theatre had moved from its religious beginnings and was becoming increasingly a full-time profession with a large and varied audience.

This early form of English drama exploited the norms of the religious institution of the time using an already established setting for its staging, people who already commanded respect in the community for its actors, and the well-known stories of the liturgy and the Bible for its scripts. In the first plays the behaviour of the audience would have been established by the mores of how to behave in church and the direction of their attention naturally guided to the person of central importance in the celebration of mass. As staging became more complicated the power of spectacle - in elaborate ascents and descents into hell for example, was used to add force to the moral points being made and establish an awe-inspiring event.

As the plays moved out of doors and the simple pragmatics of the most suitable time of year for clement weather meant they were performed as a Cycle of plays round about the festival of Corpus Christi, the drama established its own grammar of action and a style appropriate to its audience and its setting.

It was a style which, with the spreading spirit of Puritanism in the 16th century, was to be persecuted as were the monasteries themselves, for being a sinful form of entertainment. These threats to religious orthodoxy were the overt reason for the persecution but the actions undertaken during the Reformation were perhaps more importantly connected to the differing conceptions of individual responsibility for moral action and fundamental controversies over the nature and extent of proper religious and political authority.

Elizabethan Theatre

I move now to consider the Elizabethan period when the strolling players began to turn to the cities of London, Oxford and Cambridge - which, the countryside having lost most of its organised cultural activities following the dissolution of the Monasteries, now represented the main centres of wealth and learning.

The Catholic drama continued to be performed during Mary's reign but, to please its metropolitan audience, other plays such as adaptations of Latin texts, tragi-comedies, romantic comedies, and comedies such as "Ralph Roister Doister", written by the headmaster of Eton and Winchester, were also performed.

The first wholly professional theatre was started by James Burbage in 1576, who conceived of the idea of building a permanent playhouse to accommodate the strolling players. The Theatre, as it was called, was followed by others - The Globe, The Swan etc., all of which were open air, public theatres. The audience who frequented these theatres was drawn from all walks of life, scholars to prostitutes, and the actors had to entertain the disparate tastes of such individuals at the same time, rather than adapting their plays and their playing according to the limited context in which they were performing. The audience now came to the theatre rather than theatre travelling to the audience.

That plays had to be performed everyday meant that, to financially support a professional cast, the number of plays written expanded enormously. As a regular audience for the theatre grew up so also did critical standards improve.

The audience, then, was enormously varied and beginning to establish for itself theatrical standards. It was also, however, a minimally literate audience. Only between 30 and 50 percent of the males in Shakespeare's London could write their name or more. As M.C. Bradbrook puts it (1964), English was still a tongue rather than a written language and the majority of those for whom Shakespeare wrote could not have communicated in any way other than through a face-to-face oral encounter.

To be non-literate is not necessarily to be dispossessed, indeed the opposite could be true, but it does mean that individuals have a different arrangement of responses to their environment than those who have recourse to a corporate history of literature in its broadest sense. If no such history exists then society can have recourse only to its oral memory of things past and it is in its immediate speech that it tells itself stories about itself.

The very basis of drama is what happens when people talk to each other and in a society where utterance constitutes the basis of social life then the relationship between that society and its drama must be a particularly close one. Hawkes (1973) takes this argument further and posits that because Elizabethan England was an essentially oral society its stage language was very close to the mode of its everyday language:

"In the Elizabethan theatre, a predominantly oral culture, in which 'literature' did not include the drama anyway, enacted its own 'shape' through the medium of words, gestures, sights, sounds, spatial and temporal relationships, which constituted, then as now, the spoken language. Because the drama was a formalised presentation of the culture's own language it faithfully represented the culture and was thus enabled to handle the immense political, moral and social themes (without splitting these apart) that no drama in English has successfully dealt with since. In Leavis's words..people talked so making Shakespeare possible."

The oral nature of Elizabethan society also meant that they were not subject to the "singular, solitary, reduced mode" of comprehension which is promoted by a society where literacy is the most highly prized skill; the student with the highest marks in a contemporary examination on Shakespeare is the one who can write about it and display an extensive knowledge of the written text.

The perceptual mode of an Elizabethan audience was "multi-consciousness", says Hawkes, and this practically manifested itself in the acceptance of a mixing of genres in dramatic productions. They took for granted symbolism and a play's elasticity of place and time.

Architecturally the permanent playhouses were round, octagonal or square structures with thatched roofs covering the sides and open to the sky in the centre. The stage was a large platform jutting out into the middle of the yard so the spectators surrounded it virtually entirely and could see both the action and each other. Part of the stage was roofed and it was from there, through a trapdoor, that various objects could be raised or lowered for mechanical effects. At the end of the stage was a gallery forming an upper stage and sometimes there would appear to have been an inner stage which could be used for interior scenes.

The acting area thus allowed for great flexibility in staging. Actions depended on dramatic effectiveness rather than set ideas of realistic presentation - the actors for example set their locality by their acting rather than using a specific area of the stage. The open stage meant that the action was able to be continuous rather than split into scenes.

The actors' delivery ranged from a highly formal style of rhetoric to the realistic colloquial banter of the comic characters and their costume from typical street wear (which was a good deal more colourful than the everyday garb of the majority today) to spectacular costumes.

The theatre at this time was competing with a number of other forms of entertainment and as Bradbrook (1962, p.97) remarks: "The theatre of the Elizabethans, in its social atmosphere was less like the modern theatre than it was like a funfair. Plays competed with entertainments from bear-baiting to sermons."

The language of the Elizabethan theatre, then, made use of all the complexities of communication that pertained outside the theatre. In this central respect concludes Hawkes: "real life in the theatre, the *image mundi* and the *theatrum mundi*, were one and the audience would have responded to the play with the same degree of multi-consciousness that as human beings they responded to real life." (op.cit., p.223)

Victorian Theatre

Ignoring the several centuries in between, patently not because there were no important changes in theatrical form during that period but mindful that this chapter stands, not as an attempt at a chronology of theatrical development but as an indicator of the concerns of some studies already completed and the suggestion of the sort of platforms from which an historical ethnography of theatre could perhaps commence, I turn now to glance at Victorian theatre which boasts substantial differences from the dramatic era already considered.

Both medieval and Elizabethan theatre shared such characteristics as the audience surrounding the acting area and actors and audience being in close proximity. They shared, too, continuous action, a mixture of realistic and naturalistic delivery, a mixture of symbolism and naturalism in set and scenery (though scenery is used in a sense different to the elaborately detailed backcloths and wings which came after the Italian Renaissance) in properties and the method of setting the time and place for the action.

By the Victorian age much of this has changed. Notably theatres had moved inside, many had gained a proscenium arch which effectively separated the apron area in front of the arch.

As well as this development of the box set there was the technological advance which allowed highly sophisticated stage mechanisms much exploited in the spectacular melodrama so popular in this age. There was too the controlled use of gas-lighting, and by the 1880's electric lights meant that it was possible to present plays which concentrated on providing a realistic fidelity to the surface of life.

That particular sophistications of technology had an important effect on theatrical possibilities cannot be denied, and there are numerous books which chart fully such effects. But I want to move from the historical perspective which studies such improvements in dramatic devices as that very concern tends to concentrate interest on the relationship between the text and the performance whereas throughout this work I am concerned to look at performance and its relationship to the meaning of experience, to study how the social language of any particular time provides the grounding for the representational language which it makes possible.

If the theatre of a period alters it is never simply because a particular sophisticated dramatist, devices, or whatever, comes to the fore but that the sociality of the time which grounds available dramatic rhetorics has itself altered and that society finds specific styles the most apt for displaying moral, social or political problems in the particular form that it does.

The overwhelming change in the potential audience of Victorian England was that the industrial revolution had created a mass of urban poor who had moved into the towns from the countryside and formed concentrations of humanity in specific areas. The advent of the railways also meant that those who had the means could travel into the centre of London for a night of entertainment.

The sheer numbers of those to be entertained meant that more theatres were built - in 1851 London had only around twenty, by 1899 over 65 - and their size trebled. Given such a setting the subtle acting styles of an intimate production were useless and actors accordingly broadened their performance styles.

It was impossible that an industrial class could be formed within the framework of cultural forms which had suited a predominantly agrarian society and melodrama was the new form that was particularly a product of the age. It was too, an age of growing class consciousness and rapid social change and public life itself was the battle-ground for conflict between the developing stratifications in society which meant that the emergent cultural forms were fundamentally political structures.

The style conventionally taken as the characteristic entertainment of the Victorian era was undoubtedly the melodrama. This combined "sensational spectacle, beery burlesque, low music hall farce and sentimental and banal drama" aimed primarily at the self-righteous bourgeoisie and the working man. This new form took as its language the distinction between Right and Wrong, a virtue and vice and based itself on an idealisation of domestic and family life.

One of the clichés of theatrical history is that in a time when the institutions of life were in constant flux the drama took as its theme the unequivocal stating of the homely virtues to bolster its audience's belief in just such a morality. Chastity and the place of the woman in the home and the evils of the "Demon Gin" for example were among favourite themes which provided the material for dramatic scripting.

Besides the theatres which blossomed in the cities formed a welcome harbour for travelling players and singers and the music hall, traditionally hailed as the bridge between a form of class culture and mass entertainment now grew up effectively providing an amalgam of the friendliness and informality of the pub (comings and goings from the street to pub and vice versa were easily effected and unregulated) and the scale and drama of the theatre.

In the earlier half of the century the rowdiness of the urban proletariat had driven polite society out of the theatres or at least into the boxes surrounding the stage. Melodrama was definitely not a polite pastime for the upper class. The advent of the Music Hall, which became the popular resort of the working man, meant that some of the rowdier sectors of the audience left the theatre to pursue other entertainments and the theatres built after the 1860's were smaller, plusher affairs aimed at tempting the leisured classes back into the playhouse.

From the eclecticism of melodrama the theatrical entertainment offered diverged into the two strands of the popular Music Halls and Variety Shows on the one hand and the society dramas which took the bourgeois life style as their themes on the other. It is interesting to note in terms of the place theatricality held in that society it was precisely as the dramas focussed on everyday life, that the theatre building itself became more elaborately and richly decorated and increasingly an entertainment palace set apart from the rest of the daily pursuits.

The theatres of this time were unabashedly involved in a commercial struggle - the most elaborate playhouse which put on the most spectacular shows, with the most famous actors (and it is at this point that the actor/star as precious commodity first takes hold) made the biggest profits.

Indeed the theatrical enterprise as a whole was becoming increasingly a commercially organised affair with power wielded by the organiser and manager rather than the artist and actor. Plays began at certain times and it was no longer possible to enter and leave the playing area freely. As part of this commercial ethic the audience was shifted relentlessly from participator to spectator and the theatrical experience from an

expression of the important issues of the day, in a way that grounded those issues firmly in the everyday experience of those involved, to an endeavour which sought to entertain and offer spectators an illusion which could take them away, however briefly, from the drab lives they lived outside.

Theatre as a social occasion had become strongly discriminated from "normal" settings, taking place in an elaborate and wholly purpose-built place, and the performances had changed from being an extension of everyday experience to something reserved for a particular time and locale. The theatre provided, not as it had done in medieval times, a spectacular staging aimed at better communicating the teachings of God and the church which themselves formed an integral part of everyday life to an extent which it is hard to recapture retrospectively, but a spectacular staging aimed at offering an alternative reality and a few hours of diverting fantasy.

Our own ideas of theatre are still strongly formed by this notion of the drama as provider of entertainment and, when sociologists turn to the dramatic metaphor as explanatory device they are most often exploiting this sort of theatrical mode of a particular age rather than the nature of theatricality as a universal expressive force. Indeed one important strand of this thesis is to regenerate an interest in theatricality as a basic communicatory grammar and to stress that the approach to the drama commonly taken by students of mass media is only one approach to an historically specific use of a society's representational armoury.

Contemporary Theatre

The theatre of the present is characterised by a plethora of styles. As Duvignaud puts it: "Un des traits les plus frappants de la pratique contemporains du theatre est son eclectisme." (1965, p.518) It is a theatre where styles of the past are continuously being rediscovered and re-used.

I have no intention of exploring all these approaches, what is happening at the moment is ideally open to a full ethnographic exploration, such as recent works by Bradby, James and Sharratt (1980) have undertaken, but it is perhaps worth noting some of the moves which have been made to alter the theatre-as-spectacle notions and establish new relationships between actor and audience, text and performance.

I am thinking here particularly of such groups as The Living Theatre of Julian Beck and Judith Malina. Their involvement in the events of spring 1968 in Paris when a popular movement of students and workers revolted against the established order and began to question the accepted relationships between art, politics and life, made sense as an extension of the group's own earlier attempts to redefine such relationships.

Living Theatre dispensed with the traditionally accepted approach to the play, the stage and the audience in an effort to move away from the idea of The Theatre as cultural enclave cut off from the everyday life of its spectators - both in terms of being an occasional and commercial event which people had to pay to see and in terms of its stress on presenting established Art for the cultured elite - and, in the words of one of the actors, to make its "artistic creation life, something everyone can do." (See Willener 1970, p.266 for a discussion on the aims of the Living Theatre).

The group espoused the sort of realism which Brecht spoke of when he said "it's not how real things are but as things really are." They dropped their reliance on authors, changing the stress on content to performance and they went out into the streets searching not for spectators who would pay to watch, but for participants who would actively join in the creation.

Their work was a statement against the notion of art as commodity and of the artist as privileged creator on the grounds that such privilege cuts the artist off from being effective in the world in terms of communicating to the common people. When they were stopped from performing one of their plays in the streets, though the French authorities has no objections to its being performed in the theatre, this was taken as proof that "what is dangerous for the bourgeois system is not so much the political content of the play as the transformation of that content into direct political action." (Action no. 24, September 4 1968, quoted in Willener, op.cit., p.23).

Theatricality in the widest sense of being an active socially inclusive expression of communal themes is here acknowledged as the powerful force it is and a far cry from the theatre as passively consumable entertainment to be judged by objective critical standards.

While the theatre buildings of today have been built to accommodate anything from the apron, thrust to open stages and to hold an audience from less than a hundred to the 1,165 seats of the main auditorium of the English National Theatre on the South Bank, it is estimated that the audience for the "established" theatre (which may be taken as the well-known

London and repertory theatres around the country) is something like two per cent of the population. While the increasing number of fringe theatres (see "The Alternative Theatre Handbook" published by Theatre Quarterly Publications, London, each year for a fairly comprehensive list of such groups) doubtless swells that figure it leaves the live theatre of today something less than a popular experience.

While drama as fictional representation is obviously available to the mass of people through the media other than live shows - radio, television and cinemas for example, and there are of course a myriad of entertainments - processions, football matches, carnivals etc., which involve performances of various kinds, theatre and I have used it to be face-to-face communication employing actors, audience and space to particular dramatic affect, would seem at present to be a predominantly middle-class pursuit of the cultured.

How such forms as television drama work as an expressive medium and what have been the political and social forces which have led to the restricted participation in live theatre obvious today is a study which must be undertaken elsewhere. To further the present work of looking at how theatricality as a mode of sociality is constituted I turn now from a glance at varying styles of playing throughout the ages of theatre in England to examine style itself as a grammar for negotiating the method of being involved in any specific theatrical enterprise.

Chapter Three

STYLES OF PLAYING

STYLES OF PLAYING

The cultural form of the theatre at any historical moment - taking form to include such things as the sort of scripts utilised, the stage design, the technical possibilities, the status of its players and authors, the social groups from which its audience is drawn and the conventions they may draw on - provides the context for the style of the theatrical experience. The style of the event equally acts back upon the forms within which it is encapsulated; cultural form and style exist in a dialectical relationship to one another.

Any person reasonably competent in cultural history could with ease talk of, or understand talk about, such things as Greek tragedy, Restoration comedy, Melodrama, Revenge Plays, or the Theatre of the Absurd. What they are doing is talking of styles of playing, using 'style' as a means for classifying performances on the grounds of some common denominator which can be picked out and pointed at as peculiar to a certain number of theatrical events.

Whilst such talk is unproblematic for culturally competent members of this society any questioning of what precisely could be meant by the word 'style' displays the fact that the term itself is composed of such a concentration of idiom that it says too much to be useful.

Style occupies a position of central importance in discussing how it is that people negotiate the manner of their participation in a performance.

To render the term expedient as an analytic concept for sociology some unravelling of the implicit assumptions involved in using style in one particular way must be done.

Talk of 'style' seems to fall into three categories which we shall term, style as reification; style as identity; and style as grammar.

Style as reification

Style as reification is that usage which sees style as some adventitious resemblance between works which allows a categorisation of art works linked together by means of something which transcends individual differences and may be drawn into an historical complex of generality termed 'genre'.

Style here is an aesthetic category and elementary typology.

In assuming that style is a way of doing which is inimitable (concurring, incidentally, with psychologists who see it as a sort of individual possession), style is often the decisive factor in the job of authenticating old masters. This use of style as part of a critical vocabulary dealing with authentication is irremediably tied to a concern with art as a commercially valuable object.

The fluency of the speaker in manipulating the critical vocabulary also accomplishes the job of marking him off as a member of a cultured elite-again style is bound to social status.

Style in this sense can actually limit the appreciation of the art work considered in that it can lead to the sort of empty erudition which knows the stylistic affiliation of a thousand works and the intrinsic value of no single one.

It may act as an unambiguous cue for interpretation; having recognised 'the style' it is an easy job to mobilise the stereotypical meanings associated with that style. It is possible to be so bound by the conventional meanings called up that the activity of supplying the

Style as identity

Style in this sense moves away from the idea of style as a peculiarly aesthetic term and acknowledges that it can apply to any accomplishment. It becomes now the central assumption on which the whole of dramaturgical sociology depends.

That is to say that in performing actions there is the 'what' is performed, the actual duty or deed accomplished, and also the 'how' it is performed, that is the style in which its accomplishment was undertaken. So, in carrying out a task, be it eating or negotiating a loan with the bank manager, the act will be fulfilled (transferring the food from the plate to the mouth), but it will be fulfilled in a certain way (shovelled or otherwise).

Any theory of action will include consideration of the practical job done and also the style of its doing. It is because there is always more than the practical job done, also the way of doing, that an actor can continuously provide information about himself and accomplish 'character work'. It is this that allows for the presentation of multiple personnae - a central tenet of the dramaturgical approach.

Style in this usage presumes that there is a constant possible second order monitoring of the Self, a constant Self-consciousness which is permanently aware of the impressions 'given off' in doing anything.

There is still a dependence on the traditional dichotomy between process and product, a holding apart of the descriptive and interpretive acts in a way this thesis will question. In considering the audience, however, as constitutive of style it moves towards a truly sociological project.

particularity of detail and richness of implication that is not in the text of the work itself, or in the history of conception, but resides in an individual's experiential biography and imaginative resources, is fettered.

It is the particularity, the uniqueness of a performance which is masked here in favour of the genre.

Saying that a work is 'in' a certain style directs you unrelentingly to consider the object itself as a static form, and prescribes for 'artness' residing in a particular commodity. It cannot lead you to a processual and contextual view of art or to a consideration of the social practices and relations which irreparably form part of the life of the object.

That is to say that it cannot talk of art itself as a style of action and understanding rather than a type of object and must, in taking style as a sort of cosmetic ornament, separate out the thing and its style when the two are inseparable.

Style as grammar

Theatre is an art and what distinguishes an art form from a non-art form is an awareness of the rules implicit in it.

Anything could be called art yet, evidently, this is not practically sufficient to make it so. For an individual to carry off talk about something as 'art' he must gain agreement from other members of a social group and this he does through explicating and promoting an awareness of the rule implicit in the art work.

Order in art is never merely factual but must be obligatory, in the sense that obligatoriness presupposes that it is in the self-conscious claims for forms being artistic forms that they are more than physical forms and become the sensuous embodiment of formal decisions. See Taylor, 1966, p.178.

To be unaware of the rules is to apprehend only matters of fact and not of art.

Taking the category of 'found art' a piece of driftwood, for example, any discussion of it as art would be in terms considering not only its de facto forms, but also its title de jure - the distinction between what is done and what is necessary to be done..

So you would see, not the wood itself, but the fact that it had been deliberately chosen, placed in a gallery, and positioned in a certain way - you would consider, thereby, the intention involved in picking it up and displaying it.

So, with Beckett's 'Breath' (1971) - the curtains open on a completely bare stage and all that is heard is a series of breaths before the curtain closes. Considering such a display as a bona fide theatrical display requires a consideration of what Beckett intended by this work, or at least, that there was an intention in it.

"Style is the grammar that permits us to see in the concrete an intention."

(Raffell, 1974, p.165)

It is possible to see Breath as a style of theatre that takes style itself as its topic. It forces its audience to question what it is that they will consensually agree upon to count as theatre.

Of sculpting, Taylor (1966, p.184), says:

"The sculptor elicits from nature a possibility which nature already includes, but which nature includes indifferently along with that total range of possibilities whereby stone is marred as well as made. The artist discovers form, he does not make it, but it is he, not nature, who constitutes the rule by which his discovery can be acknowledged. What he thus sets free is what art has required of stone, what stone, which is silent, is without capacity to require of itself."

A work has style whether or not that style may be compared and deemed shared with other works. A work has style it is never simply in a style. Style belongs 'more to the dispositions of men than it does to objects; it only derivatively belongs to things and then only as these dispositions have generated them'.

Style is a method of production in a thing, it is invented never found, and, were there to be no works of art, then there would be no style.

That style exists only as a feature of the work displays one rule of aesthetic talk and that is 'concentrate on the thing itself'.

"The beauty of art is that it is what it is - it makes itself - and thus stands as an icon of the intention which calls it into being. Style is art's method of showing that the differences it makes is controlled neither by God nor things, but by itself. Art exhausts itself because it continually reproduces it self, it continually asks of itself that IT and it alone make the difference it is".

(Raffell, op.cit., p.166)

Style as grammar allows us to concentrate, not on the object in a mystificatory way, but on the social relations which in a deep sense, constitute that object as the sort of object that it is. It places the action and the audience in their proper constitutive place, allows concentration on the uniqueness of a performance, rather than its position in a classificatory scheme, and considers art as usage not object.

The constitutive role of the audience is naturally stressed in the theatre more than in other arts. The fact that the performance is made anew each time that it is played to a different audience means that providing cues for the style of participation of that audience must be especially attended to.

Style is the concept which, a propos theatre, offers itself as mediator between the intended audience's actual life and the artists work. It is through consideration of style and appreciation of the conventions available at any particular period to be called upon in displaying a certain style, that the drama may communicate to its audience.

The style of a performance is made through the relationship between the audience for whom it is played, the manner of the staging and playing by the performers, and the intentions of the author in presenting the

script that he did. ('Intention of the author' is to be read, not as asking for the definitive statement of what an author really meant, which it would, in any case, be impossible to fully recover, but some version of what an author could have intended; that there was such intention is the essential point).

The script may act as a constraint on the possible ways of performing a play but it by no means wholly dictates the style - Monty Python playing Shakespeare confirms that.

Style is constituted through such relationships and, at the heart of style resides some notion of aesthetic distance. That is, the extent to which the audience is reminded of the play as fictive experience and the manner in which it is excluded or drawn in to become part of the theatrical event in a particular way.

Burns (1972, p.14-18), isolates three ways in which reality may be set in the theatre, naming them as first:

"....let's pretend this is reality; the second 'this is a plausible alternative reality closely akin and possibly alternative to the one you accept in your particular lives; the third 'let us together make this a reality that overrides any other possible reality'".

Examples of those types are the medieval mumming plays which set the scene by a straightforward:

'Here be I, St. George, an Englishman so stout'...; the realistic theatre of the late 19th century; and the 'new' theatre of such groups as La Mama and Living Theatre, who present rather than re-present actions on stage, and whose on-stage and off-stage lives they attempt to keep the same.

Burns is right in stating that:

"Behaviour is not theatrical because it is of a certain kind but because the observer recognises certain patterns and sequences which are analogous to those with which he is familiar in the theatre".

(op.cit., p.12)

A definition of the situation (viz. McHugh, 1968), is perpetrated through the achievement of a consensus between all the participants in the event. Consensus does not mean that each individual could articulate fully, and in exactly the same manner as any other individual present, what exactly was 'going on'. What it does mean is that an individual can interact without the assumptions on which his actions are founded, and therefore the actions themselves being sanctioned by those co-present, because they are perceived as being based at some point, on conflicting readings of the situation.

As McHugh discusses, 'concord' and 'involvement' in a situation arise not through explicitly expressed constraints, as, for example, with bye laws, but are 'part of an emergent process which takes place during the course of interaction on any occasion'.

Burns' three levels of setting reality concentrate on how the actor sets the nature of the illusions. We wish to take this idea further and, using the notion of style as intention displayed through performance, and the establishment and institutionalisation of aesthetic distance as a crucial part of style, examine the ways in which the style of participation in performance, by all those involved in such an event, is negotiated in particular instances.

We shall be using style in a somewhat different way from Burns, who tends to emphasise style as independent variable. To use Rosenblum's point (1978, p.423).

"I assume that standardized ways of doing things produce a given style. But I believe that shared agreements are not independent of more basic features and structures of social life. Rather, shared agreements arise from basic social structural arrangements on the one hand and shape them on the other. In other words I take the simultaneous reciprocal influence of social structure and institutionalised understanding into account".

Looking at the historical forms of the drama (viz. Chapter 2), and concentrating on English theatre since the Guild Cycle plays of the 13th century, there would seem, in accordance with Burn's scheme, three general types of theatrical enterprise which we shall term polymorphic, mimetic and intrusive theatre.

They are ideal types of the methods of making a theatrical event, methods that are concerned with what may be basically seen as the institutionalisation of Self-consciousness and the accomplishment of social and aesthetic distance. Aesthetic distance, not in the sense in which it is generally seen as functioning in the theatre - as some force which separates the audience from actual contact and involvement with the actor whilst at the same time causing the audience to 'suspend disbelief', but as:

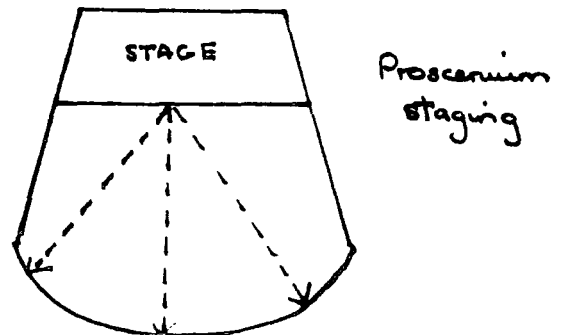
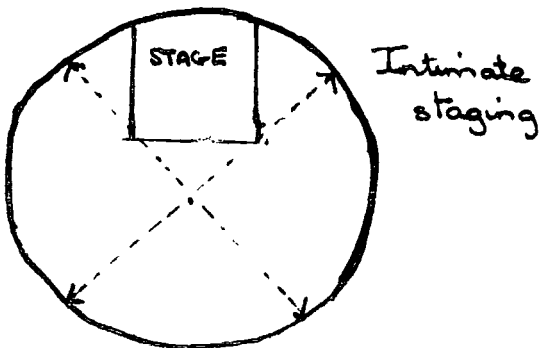
"...the primary structure of performance and arising with the phenomenon of recognition, the double assertion "I am me - I am not you' made by both actor and audience. The relation is one of internal negation. It is therefore aesthetic distance which separates them, but without this separation they would not be who they are, actor or audience; there would be no world of the theatrical. Aesthetic distance creates the unity of the stage world by separating the beings in that world and repersonalising them into aspects of a single being who is alone-together-in-the-theatrical."

(Herr, 1971, p.113)

Polymorphic Theatre is a theatre of variety such as that seen in Elizabethan times with the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson, in the Music Hall (Elizabethan audiences' expectations of the theatrical experience, incidentally, included clowns and music), and Brechtian theatre.

It is characterised by a plethora of settings. The staging area - that area open to use by actors - may be a small platform surrounded on all sides by spectators, or a picture frame stage whose proscenium boundaries may be broken by the actors walking out onto an apron or down the aisles between the seated audience. The actors are thus embedded in the audience in a number of possible ways and the audience itself is expected to handle the switches accordingly.

It is worth noting that an 'intimate' auditorium with spectators close to, and surrounding the acting area is by no means necessarily on a smaller scale than, for instance, the Victorian proscenium arrangement. The Globe, for instance, had an audience of about 2000 according to Styan (1967, p.27).



Speech may be 'realistic' - as spoken in everyday life, it may be highly rhetorical and the actors may burst into song. Similarly, gestures and costumes cover a range of modes and there may be use made of other media, such as film, during the performance. Simultaneity and multi-focus, rather than the linear presentation of materials, characterises this theatre. The script of the performance will be open to change and

adaption as the audience/actor relationship is one that allows for face-to-face and verbal interaction. The play is re-authored at each playing in a way that is impossible in strictly mimetic theatre. There is no attempt to hermetically seal the stage world from the world of the spectator but the sense of theatricality, that those present are engaged in such an undertaking, is constantly stressed. There is no desire to delude the audience, to present them with an illusion of life being lived on stage, but an underlining of the performative nature of the occasion and that that occasion requires the audience's collaboration.

Mimetic Theatre is the type that is most often meant when people nowadays talk of the theatre. It is the 'orthodox' theatre with a specific building set aside for performances and architecturally split into separate areas. The auditorium and the stage are literally and metaphorically split from one another by the ultimate framing device of the proscenium arch.

The historical context of the proscenium arch 'realistic' theatre has been given in an earlier section. The manner in which this constrains the possible styles of playing needs to be mentioned. Firstly all the spectators are forced to have the same view of the stage and the actors. Unlike polymorphic theatre, when perspective changes with audience position and the actor's choice of movement, the proscenium arch theatre presents a uni-dimensional view of the stage action within a picture frame *cynosphere*.

The differences between the actors' mode of representation in polymorphic and mimetic theatre may be elucidated through consideration of differences in modes of signification. The origins of the theatre itself may be seen as explicable in semiotic terms:

"Once signifiers grew distinct from things signified that is, once the symbol was operative in man's consciousness, it became possible for man to set for himself the task of representing a perceived, objective reality. Art and theatre as we understand these terms, grew to be a distinct possibility."

(Olf, 1971, p.104)

To use Pierces' terms specifically of modes of acting (as given in Wollen, 1970 p.122, and see Hawkes, 1977, p.124, for discussion): An Icon 'is a sign which represents its object mainly by similarity to it, the relationship between the signifier and signified is not arbitrary but is

one of signification'. An index is 'a sign by virtue of an existential bond between itself and the object; so a man with bowlegs is a jockey, and a weathercock is a sign (index) of wind direction.'

The actor playing in a proscenium arch theatre is removed from the audience and must play his part by imitating life's actions on stage. He is an iconic actor. The deep embedding of the actor in the audience in some examples of polymorphic theatre - e.g. thrust, means that he must use every part of himself. His back must portray his message as well as his front, to the audience with such a view. He cannot perfectly represent everyday life actions on stage but must communicate indexically.

The proscenium arch theatre promotes an essentially unitary response from the audience whom it attempts to engage emotionally rather than in any other fashion. It works generally to a set script and text and discourages awareness of the theatrical medium itself - even the audience's watching is ignored.

It depends mainly on naturalistic and realistic playing on life-like reconstruction on stage of what could happen elsewhere. There were no such constraints on polymorphic theatre.

Setting and text in this theatre work together to firmly bound the occasion. The play is set up as a self-contained, autonomous, beginning-middle-and-end artwork with a linear narrative structure which is itself meaning-bearing (semiotic), independently of the contents of the story it communicates. The play space may not be invaded by the audience or vice-versa.



Intrusive Theatre is that theatre which is characterised by such undertakings as Agit Prop theatre (in post Revolutionary Russia for example), Environmental Theatre and Happenings. It often precisely attempts to fight institutionalisation of any kind and gains some of its impact from the audience's and the actors' ignorance of 'what will happen next'.

It includes the audience in a radically different way from either polymorphic or mimetic theatre in so far as they are, ideally, extended the ability to participate actively in the event. In other words they may lay claim to the authorship of the performances on a par with the actors or the dramatist (if used) himself.

This means that intrusive theatre must call into question the very boundaries between theatre and politics, art and life, performance event and social event, and stage and auditorium.

There is generally only a minimal script worked out, if at all, and no particular theatrical space set aside except as it is used on that particular occasion.

Literature about Happenings has tended to be in the nature of 'angry reaction'. This may be explained by the fact that whereas mimetic theatre in particular has fairly rigid standards for what could count as an adequately produced representation, in fact, intrusive theatre lacks such a code.:

"The new theatre offers us an aesthetic experience for which we have no corresponding critical vocabulary. Because it is unlike traditional theatre, painting, sculpture, dance and music, the familiar locutions of these arts cannot either describe what's going on or provide criteria with which to evaluate it."

(Schechner, 1969, p.145)

Happenings do have certain similarities in production, they have 'generally had in common a physical crudeness and roughness that frequently trod an uncomfortable borderline between the genuinely primitive and the merely amateurish. This was partly intentional, due to their relationship with action painting and so-called junk sculpture, and partly the inevitable result of extremely limited finances.' (Kirby, 1965, p.11)

Kirby offers us a theoretical base for distinguishing this intrusive theatre which has a 'compartmented' structure from traditional theatre (mimetic and polymorphic) which makes use of an 'information' structure.

To comprehend traditional theatre: "We need information in order to understand the situation, to know who the people are, to know what is happening, or what might happen, we need information to 'follow' the play, to apprehend it at all" (ibid., p.13).

Intrusive theatre with its compartmented structure is based on the arrangement and contiguity of theatrical units that are completely self-contained and hermetic. No information is passed from one discrete theatrical unit - or compartment - to another.

Schechner gives us 'Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre', (1968, p.157) which provides an example of intrusive theatre where "you don't 'do' the play; you 'do with it' - confront it, search among its words and themes, build around and through it...and come out with your own thing." (ibid., p.180)

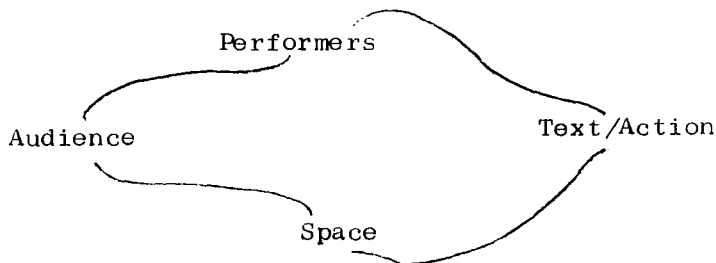
These axioms are:

1. The theatrical event is a set of related transactions (it includes audience, performer, text, sensory stimuli, architectural enclosure - or lack of it - production equipment, technicians, and house personnel when used)).

2. All the space is used for performance, all the space is used for audience.
3. The theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or in a 'found space'.
4. The focus is flexible and variable.
5. All production elements speak in their own language (there is no reason why the performers should be the most important element).
6. The text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of the production. There may be no text at all.

Agit prop theatre and environmental theatre attempt to establish themselves as an alternative reality, to present a viable alternative form of life for their audience. They are not content to remain as a strictly bounded 'cultural' event which the audience comes to, watches and then leaves (viz. Bradby 1978). Such theatre is intrusive theatre on the grounds that it incorporates the audience into the world of the performance and thereby deals with aesthetic distance in a particular way.

What distinguishes these three types of performance is the way in which the relationships between:



are handled.

Polymorphic theatre included the audience but offers it constant reminders of the theatricality of the situation.

Mimetic theatre tends to exclude the audience from the circle of relationships altogether.

Intrusive theatre includes it to the extent that it questions the limits of what counts as performance.

The relationships of the other elements of the circle besides audience will also change with the type of theatre. Taking style as a central organising concept for types of theatre certain areas suggest themselves for detailed consideration. That style is being used as such a central concept means automatically that the forms of the theatre will be considered simultaneously. The form sets the structured opportunities for a particular mode of participation in a performance and must be part of any analysis based on style.

In Chapter 4, I note some features of authorship and authority liable to vary between styles of theatre work and examine in detail how one author provides us with a display of what authoring as a task involves through an account of his work. I consider how he describes his relationship to the play-being-written, the autonomy of the text once authored, how he presents authoring as a moral undertaking inseparable from a deep consideration of the potential audiences for the play-performed, and how this is used as an explanatory factor in talking of the tension between author as entertainer and creative artist.

Chapter 5 deals with the director's part in mounting a theatrical event. The advent of the director was tied to specific modes of dramatic presentation and I look briefly at the history of directing as a profession again using mainly one director's account of how he sees his position in the theatrical team. I look at his description of his perceived relationship to the text, to the potential audience, and to the actors during the rehearsal period. The rehearsal process is examined and those features of a situation which make it recognisably a rehearsal rather than anything else are explored.

Finally, I look at how the director also uses the vocabulary associated with acting as art rather than craft and how the director's intention and audience's perception dialectically construct the style of the play which thereby effectively functions as a celebration of membership in a community able to successfully accomplish dramatic performance.

Chapter 6, concentrates, not on a particular Thespian, but on the mounting of one particular production which I observed from the beginning of rehearsals to the first week of its public performance. The processes of authoring, directing, and rehearsing a production are considered again but the ways in which the particular physical and social context of a specific play structures the opportunities for the style of performance provides the central concern. The play considered is an example of polymorphic theatre. How convention is used as a basis for spontaneous interaction and allows also the self-distance crucial to any playing is one topic considered in the chapter.

Critics through their criticism provide accounts of the theatre readily available to the public at large and chapter 7 considers these accounts, not as substantive reports of a particular occasion, but as constitutive of theatre as topic. The history of criticism is briefly looked at and one review examined in depth as a report of adequately accomplished theatre talk, noting, for example, the criteria formulated for judging the success or otherwise of a theatrical enterprise. How criticism treats theatre as a literary product rather than a performance process and how features of criticism-as-news constrain its format are particularly considered, whilst exploring the interview with a critic and various accounts of Thespians by critics, displays the rhetorics available to both for discussing their relationship.

The final chapter is based on data collected during participant observation of a fringe theatre group operating on the London underground system. Through a consideration of the production of a performance which takes place outside the standard theatre building and is an example of intrusive theatre as it calls into question, for the audience, the boundaries between fact and fiction. I look at how such boundaries are achieved through specific situated work carried out to provide features able to be picked on as warrantable features of a performance of some kind. The previous chapters have been concerned with how people consciously involved in theatrical enterprises of one sort or another accomplish their work. I turn now to look at the sort of features of a situation that are necessary for people in that situation to acknowledge it as staged in some way. I study how a context is provided in which it becomes sensible to say that there is a dramatic performance going on and how the very fictitiousness of a fictive enterprise is constituted through interactional interpretive processes.

Chapter Four

PERSPECTIVE AND METHOD

Perspective and Method

Methodological Assumptions

In contradistinction to those authors who have accepted 'culture' as a self-contained system and focused on the ways it is related to social structure - be they asserting that 'culture' and society are autonomous systems evolving independently, that social structure creates 'culture', or vice versa, (see Peterson, 1975, for an alternative 'Production of Culture' approach), this thesis explores the manner in which a 'cultural' phenomenon-theatre - is practically constituted through social interactional work. It offers an account, not of what theatricality does in a society (functionalism), or for an individual (psychologism), but how sustaining the very idea of fictional experience is a technical job of practical reasoning for members who must establish and display the constitutive conventions involved in Thespian art, to get an event recognised as an instance of a dramatic performance.

Theatre is approached, then, not as an historical institution whose existence may be unproblematically chartered, but as a practical accomplishment of the interactional procedures between individuals. Guided by the pragmatic attitude of everyday life people consensually negotiate boundaries in each instance between what is to count as a fictive display and what is to count as fact and, in maintaining a sense of boundedness they extend to the theatre its very existence.

The aim is to look at theatre not as a pre-established entity but as constitutive procedures and to explore theatre as a topic rather than define it as a field.

This aim both sets the empirical locus for the study and determines the methods of inquiry. That my interest lies in how people actively accomplish a sense of theatricality means that my analyses will be essentially synochronic and take instances from the contemporary stage. That the theatre has an institutional history which will effect an individual's stock of knowledge, conventional expectations of the theatrical, the texts, roles and buildings available, and thus what may be accomplished at any particular historical moment means that its diachronic history is not ignored.

I rely on my member's knowledge of what and where theatre is to place myself in a situation where such constitution is undertaken. As a competent member of society with, furthermore, a biographical history which includes a knowledge of the theatrical enterprise from the point of view of amateur actor, director and author as well as audience, I am able to follow the cues available to any other competent member directing me towards a theatrical occasion (though I may be one of an audience with privileged knowledge of the theatrical status of an event, see Ch. Four). Once in the setting, however, it is possible to 'render strange' that setting and its activities in order to explicate members' artfulness in producing the event as they do.

This is done by partially bracketing the taken for granted assumptions on which the natural attitude is based. There may only be a partial bracketing as Heap (1977, p.180) points out:

"As an essential resource 'what everyone knows' cannot be put out of use even when it is rendered topical".

Schutz (1962 & 1973) provides a full discussion of the natural attitude as the framework within which we interpret our commonsense world (see also A. Gurwitsch, 1962, and Garfinkel, 1967), but for my purpose it is sufficient to note that a bracketing of that framework involves suspending belief in such things as the reciprocity of perspectives, etcetera clauses and normal form typifications, to get at what Garfinkel calls 'the socially-sanctioned-facts - of life-in society that any bona fide member of the society knows'. The natural attitude works with the taken for granted assumption that our fellowmen are confronted with the same world as we are and that we may orient our actions with regard to what we assume to be their view on the basis of the interchangeability of standpoints. In holding this belief in abeyance we may take as a topic of examination how it is that we produce a stable world which we assume will be there tomorrow much as it is today.

The etcetera clause refers to the fact that rather than demand the impossibility of fully explicating all our actions, we let things pass in everyday interaction on the assumption that they will become clear to us as the interaction progresses. As Weider puts it:

"The etcetera clause refers to an unspecified condition of rules-in-use wherein present occurrences which were 'unforeseen in' or 'unpredicted by' some prior formulation of a rule or agreement are none the less brought under the auspices of that rule or agreement and are seen by witnesses to the occurrence as being in compliance with that rule or agreement."

(1974, p.173)

Normal form typifications concern the fact that people respond to the perceived typicality of events. It is impossible to have a complete first hand knowledge of every single thing or person with whom we must work so we base our actions on typifications of those things and people.

We also assume that if we act in typical socially approved ways, which involves our assuming that others conduct themselves similarly, then we will obtain our objectives.

I mention Schutz in connection with the suspension of the natural attitude but the present analysis differs from his enterprise in so far as I do not attempt to locate meaning in the individual consciousness as a metaphysical quest but am concerned to show how meaning is displayed; that the objective features of the social world are a function of "the interpretive procedures by which that world is assembled and accomplished in concrete, ongoing, social situations". (Heap and Roth, 1973)

The aim of this work is not to provide a list of the formal criteria of theatricality or an inventory of the necessary features for demarcating the theatrical from the non-theatrical, but to display how the orderliness of the world is 'a contingent, ongoing accomplishment' and how a sense of theatricality is one of those accomplishments.

That people do construct and recognise theatrical occasions with order and ease is evident. My interest is in how that order is constructed through reliance on 'unstated, seen but unnoticed background expectancies', and the calling up of norms, rules, recipes and rationales as interpretive devices which serve to constitute the nature of the ongoing action and explain it as rule governed.

This desire to record instances of theatrical occasions means that observing a company over time, as would be necessary for researchers interested in, for example, establishing some notion of the 'norms' of Thespian activity, is unimportant except in so far as a researcher may

be helped in gaining access to particular events through establishing a personal relationship with an individual or group.

Whilst any theatrical endeavour could have been studied in this way I specifically chose theatre where marking the boundaries of the fictive enterprise relied largely on face-to-face interactional work rather than on a highly structured physical context as with proscenium arch arrangements. These productions work with a rigid physical separation of actor and audience and the latter group are in the dark and silent. The physical context itself imposes a very particular interactional pattern on participants, one which limits their possible actions in a fashion other theatrical enterprises do not. They cannot easily be observed by a researcher because of the lighting arrangements and their silence during performance precludes the production of situated, verbal, recordable accounts - the researcher would have to concentrate on 'interval talk' for such verbal productions.

Both polymorphic and intrusive theatre also offer more scope for observing participants with ease and, as the very nature of the enterprise is one that tends to breach some of the generally held norms and expectations about what is involved in a 'trip to the theatre', the versions that the actors involved in such enterprises provide of what they are doing is a more self-conscious version of theatricality than might be obtained elsewhere. I have limited my field work to these two types - chapter 9, for example, deals with a theatrical enterprise that to work relies precisely on breaching everyday life expectancies in the same way as the experiments of Garfinkel already mentioned.

The data required for the study then, comprises recording of the accounts produced and the contexts of their production. Implicit in my approach as outlined so far is the irremediably indexical and reflexive nature of accounts. That is to say that an account is always tied to the social occasion of its use for its sense but equally gives that context its sense. I take members accounting practices to be the very foundation of social order.

These properties of accounts have certain consequences for the way in which the study is undertaken. The meaning (verbal and non-verbal) productions of members may not be taken as neutral and objective descriptions of behaviour but are part of that behaviour in that they define, justify, rationalise, ironicise, criticise and otherwise interpret and define that behaviour. Talk is not used here as an empirical existential account of the world. Accounts do not simply refer to an empirical reality but establish that reality and, there being an infinite number of ways in which such reality construction may take place, there are an infinite number of possible accounts of any one situation. Such a position escapes the charge of relativism as, although there are an infinite number of possible statements, talk is an intersubjective undertaking and there will be a limited number of interactionally acceptable ones. Anyone could say anything to himself but to have it accepted as a reasonable saying by any other member would require that it persuasively demonstrated the rules-in-play for verbal productions of a particular speech community.

It follows that the notion of bias in interviews is not one that is interested in seeking to fault an individual's description of an event by checking it against the assumed self-presenting empirical 'facts' of the case. Taking accounts to be members' ways of structuring their, and

others' worlds, the interest would be in how different accounts produce different possible orderings.

It will be noted that this is a radically different enterprise to that outlined by Becker and Geer (1957) in regard to participant observation and interviewing as sociological methods.

"Participation makes it possible to check description against fact and, noting discrepancies, become aware of systematic distortions made by the person under study. Such distortions are less likely to be discovered by interviewing alone".

(ibid., p.139)

The desire for contextual knowledge through observation as stated by Becker and Geer is to enable the researcher to know whether an individual's descriptions are true or false. Becker and Geer work with the assumption that language captures events in the world through descriptive work whereas I take descriptive work as productive of that world, without the distinction between accounts/world that the former position accepts.

This thesis dispenses with judgements predicated on such correspondence theories and, rather than adhering to an absolute true/false dichotomy deals with a consensus notion of truth where accounts may be taken as more or less persuasive rather than more or less true. Narration and scene are not discrete but mutually determinative.

As sociologists we may ask questions of the methods of talking directed to pulling out and explicating the presuppositions on which a specific conversation is based which are not asked in the course of everyday conversation. That such questions are not asked/askable in the

course of natural discourse stems from the fact that there is a divergence of interests between the sociologist's concern for the world and the pragmatic concern which governs the world of everyday interest (Garfinkel, 1967), and because 'having a conversation' imposes constraints of a temporal nature. For instance, a question demands, not only an answer, but an answer following without unreasonable i.e. unaccountable, pause. At least one speaker must speak (viz. Sachs and Schegloff, 1973, on adjacency pair sequences), and any pause is taken as significant. A claim made to the effect that it was a pause merely 'to listen to what was said' would, presumably, leave open a definition of the pauser as, at best, socially incompetent or, at worst, partially deaf and not a suitable candidate for a hearer.

A further concern of the sociologist is the problem of treating his version of members' answers to his questions as his description of the domain to which those questions refer - which is itself a constituted domain. Zimmerman and Pollner answer this by averring that:

"The common sense methods for making features of the social world observable must be subject to investigation as phenomena in their own right rather than alternatively relied upon and criticised through the course of sociological inquiry".

(1970, p87, see also Sachs 1963 for a discussion of the problem.).

In the present work we extend our concern with talk beyond its status as offering a description of, for example, authorship, to include it as an example of doing, and what is done with, description. Cicourel (1973), offers an initial text on the interpretation of dialogue in an ethnographic context and a discussion of interpretive procedures which are relied on in interpreting data and which make the sociologists' accounts a gloss dependent on those unexplicated procedures.

The features of indexicality and reflexivity are pertinent, too, to the status of sociological accounts. Accounts such as this thesis are themselves attempts to make sense of the world and as such must also be open to study. The status of this thesis as effectively an account of accounts is different from any member's account in that it is explicitly cognisant of the reflexive and indexical nature of accounts and presents itself as structured according to accepted sociological practice. It remains a description of a setting which is removed from the context and as such can only have a narrative relationship to the social situation to which it refers. One of our concerns must therefore be the nature of sociology as a narrative enterprise. Sociology makes its sense through telling stories about the world and those stories will be forever unfinished in one sense (there could always be another story told about the phenomena studied), because of the essential incompleteness of analysis; its inability to reproduce the phenomena. There is no remedy for this but as Mehan and Wood remark in discussing the varying enterprises that have gone under the label of ethnomethodology:

"...this need not be a reason for abandoning entirely the attempt to talk about things. Awareness of the essential incompleteness only changes our conception of how thoroughly talk captures phenomena."

(1975, p.174)

I have not thus far classified the approach to this thesis as an ethnomethodological one. This is a deliberate omission as, although there is an obvious and great dependence on writers whose work have already been cited such as Schutz, Garfinkel, Zimmerman and Pollner, ethnomethodology currently covers a number of approaches from the breaching experiments of Garfinkel, to an examination of the internal

structural arrangements of conversation itself (Sacks, 1974) to McHugh's programme of exploring reflexivity as a form of life and his faulting of assumptions that language describes any phenomena beyond itself or that the reports he writes are necessarily about any thing other than themselves (McHugh: 1970, see also McHugh, Raffel, Foss and Blum, 1974). The term ethnomethodology does not provide any particular clarification and I have thought it best to let the work itself display its method rather than relying on a categorisation that is itself muddled to carry the burden. For works that have been elementally formative for my approach in this thesis, though I claim to follow none precisely, the reader is referred to those works cited above and also Følmer et al, (1972) Cicourel (1964, 1968), Heap and Roth (1973), Silverman (1975), Mehan and Wood (1975), Torode (1974).

The criteria for acceptable sociological work, the ways in which the story must be told to pass as an adequate academic enterprise, explicitly revolve around such notions as systematicness, thoroughness and originality. This produces a tension between presenting field work, for example, as it was actually done and presenting it as it would have been nice to have done it. Academic reports are retrospectively ordered presentations of what is often haphazard and disorganised work. The tendency is for writers to remove all professionally discrediting incidents (the sociology of science provides several recorded examples of this "retrospective falsification", see for example Barber and Fox, 1958).

The appendix I offer (see pps323-502) consists of transcripts of interviews I carried out as part of my field work. I have included in them all the sequences - the jokes, introductory chats and so on, that

were necessary to get the conversation started or keep it going rather than offering "tidied up" versions of what actually happened. The field notes I offer are for recording the observer as well as the setting and those observed.

The necessity to manage the interview situation competently as a sensible conversation whilst being aware of the ways in which people can be forced to verbalise ideas which stem from the interviewers' prompts rather than their own methods of organising their talk presents another problem in interviewing. If asked presumably any Thespian would be able to verbalise a full theory of acting to satisfy the interviewer, displaying little more than that people are capable of so doing. Mehan and Wood (op.cit.) describe one instance of an unsuccessful attempt to obtain self-organising descriptions without the structuring of interrogation.

While I have included those interviews relied on most heavily for the preceeding work - interviews such as those with the author Tom Haddaway of Live Theatre, or with Michael Billington the critic, and have included some interviews from all those groups which I mention in the main body of the work, I have omitted others and some of my own notes. This is on the grounds that they relied so heavily for their sense on the context in which they were spoken that their reproduction here to an audience unfamiliar with those contexts would be unhelpful.

I am thinking particularly of those rehearsal sessions when a good deal of communication relied on gesture rather than speech and of those occasions, such as the lunchtime sessions in the pubs in between rehearsals, when the number of people speaking together, and the amount of the talk

which concerned general topics not immediately relevant to the topics raised in the thesis, made the transcripts virtually indecipherable to anyone without an extensive knowledge of both the personal characters of those speaking and their friends so frequently mentioned in these sessions.

I have, however, included a number of interviews where there were more than two people present (those being the most easily understood by a first time reader) both because I believe to some extent where the speakers included a number of theatrical practitioners as well as myself as sociologist, the speaker is, at least partly, constrained to direct his talk to those practitioners and thereby keep within the confines of accepted Thespian talk. There can always be an answer to any question but if that answer is directed entirely to me as naive participant in the theatrical world then the interviewee may use explanations geared more to my interests than his perceptions in a way he would not do if surrounded by his colleagues.

And also because although the transcripts of naturally occurring talk present a picture of the structure of speaking which looks so confused that many initiates to linguistics find it hard to believe it provides a true record of how we speak, the fact that this natural talk provides such a contrast to dialogue scripted for use in dramatic plays is itself an interesting point which could well be explored further.

While scripted dialogue for dramatic purposes is accepted as a realistic portrayal of how we accomplish talk the gulf between that and how we actually do talk to each other is immense. Even in plays written

about those who could be said to be suffering from a certain incompetence at communicating and in which particular attention is paid to representing a realistically stilted conversation (see any of the Pinter plays for example) the difference remains vast.

A recent work by Burton (1980) precisely explores that gulf and some of its implications and I include a number of interviews here if to do nothing other than provide material which could be used in a direct comparison of the way that people talk and the way it is generally accepted for dramatic purposes that we talk.

The thesis itself is a species of 'analytic description' to use Lofland's term. It "accomplishes its analytic aim through the use of concrete, detailed, description of empirical matters". (1971, p.129) In providing a concrete, detailed description of such matters I have obviously structured that which I have observed and to which I have listened, to formulate a sensible, reasonable, persuasive story. This necessarily extends meaningfulness to such things as "a grammar of theatricality" which are mentioned, but this is not to be taken to imply that such a grammar exists in the world, or members' heads independent of its display in practitioners' accounts.

As with Weider's convict code (1974) we abstract a pattern from ongoing reality but this is not to be taken as a taxonomy with intrinsic meaning except as that meaning is realised in the everyday life of its adherents. Torode, in a paper entitled "Sociology as Writing" remarks that:

"The structure of a sociological text is a formal convention imposed after the event on a pattern of unstructured or differently structured material and ideas in the writer's mind.....its obligatory styles are not merely ornamentation but positive barriers to communication which deliberately maintain the superiority of the sociologist, for example, over those he studies."

(1970: vol.7, p.41)

To distinguish the sociological enterprise from any folk project is not a case of claiming superior 'knowledge'; discovering the meaning of customs for which the members themselves have no explanation; or offering prescriptions for how members could somehow do something "better" than they do; but is a case of self-consciously revealing its own working and the manner in which it presents itself as it does and, taking full cognisance of this, offering a description and interpretation of some aspect of the social world.

I offer now a history of the research process noting the ways in which my observations were made and my data produced.

Establishing Contacts

Having decided that my interest would be in theatrical enterprises which allowed a good deal of face-to-face interaction between audience/audience and actor/audience, Fringe theatre, i.e. theatre working outside the large, established commercial theatres, generally small and often peripatetic, seemed an obvious choice for my field work.

I personally knew one such group based in Durham and working specifically with children and was able to observe this company's performances at a number of schools and other venues. The University college dramatic societies also offered scope for field work and I followed one particular venture of a 'Happening' for the week of its performances. These were my first two studies and, mainly because the data collected was rather sketchy and the VTR and tape recordings difficult to transcribe in the case of the young children's theatre, where shrill, short comments were the order of the day, and impossible to decipher in the case of the 'Happening' which involved participants building objects with hammer and nails and playing on an inflatable air bed, neither of these studies is used. One danger of field work is that in aiming to produce a systematic study the pressure is to choose systematic social settings and the idiosyncracies of the social world risk being glossed over. The desire for ordered data tends to direct research to reasonably orderly settings.

There is no easy or complete solution to this problem. Having decided against video-tape recording (see also p.127) however, the flexibility with which I could observe and tape record was greatly enhanced and my ability to make field notes, and transcripts of whatever recordable conversation occurred meant I was less constrained by a desire for such orderliness.

I wrote to the local regional Arts Association, eight university drama departments and several personal contacts in the theatrical world for lists of the fringe companies and their addresses, and then wrote directly to a number of such groups explaining that I was studying for a degree in sociology and was interested in how they, as practitioners, and their audience, 'constructed the reality of a theatrical performance'. I also wrote to the National Theatre, the Young Vic and the University Theatre, Newcastle, which I knew of as an audience member. I had read an article on a Tube Theatre Group in a newspaper and rang the number given to ask the leader, Ken Ellis, if I might follow him around.

I chose four critics from newspapers and wrote, with a similar explanatory letter to that noted above, to ask for an interview.

University contacts suggested Viv Daniels, actor with Joan Crawford's Theatre Workshop, director, and presently at the audio-visual centre of Hull University, as a useful source of information, and I again wrote direct to him asking for an interview. I also wrote to Jonathan Miller whose name I was familiar with to ask if I might sit in on rehearsals for any production he was involved in.

Replies to my letters (except for the fact that none of the University drama departments replied at all) were generally sympathetic, although not always practically useful. Northern Arts provided me with six addresses with three of whom - "Live Theatre", "Stagecoach" and "Manticore Theatre" - I did some field work. Mike Leigh of "Hull Truck" was willing to be observed but was working on a television production for the year and Mr. Miller similarly was amenable but engaged in filming an opera and a

series for the BBC. The National Theatre wrote back saying Peter Hall (the director) was "inundated with requests of this kind and at the moment we are having to say no to everybody.

I'm sorry I cannot send you the news that you would have liked to hear, but I am sure you will realise that with a theatre only one-third open life is not as we would like it to be, nor as it will, hopefully in about a year's time, become."

This seemed to pay tribute to the idea that rehearsal work was ideally an unrestricted endeavour.

The Young Vic, The University Theatre, Ken Ellis of Tube Theatre and Viv Daniels were all willing to see me or let me see them.

I had only one reply from the critics and this was favourable.

Of the transcripts which I have included, I have offered the data, not according to the chronology of its collection but according to its importance as a directly referred to source for the thesis. This means that the first given transcript for Live Theatre, the Young Vic, Tube Theatre or talks with critics are the crucial ones and the later transcripts provide contextual information rather than primary source material.

Collecting Data

I had explained my interests in the letters sent to each company and once there if asked by anybody would try to answer their questions as fully as possible. In fact saying that I was interested in "how people negotiate boundaries between fact and fiction" was generally sufficient.

As a sort of quid pro quo for their willingness to be observed I tried to be as helpful as possible in what they were doing. I made coffee, went 'on the book' (prompted), and even took one actor who was suffering from a complete loss of his voice down to the doctors, acting as his vocal chords for the journey. I was always asked what I thought of a performance and tried to give a constructive answer though I sometimes found this hard as, although I had been at a rehearsal or performance, I had been interested in features other than ones directly relevant to the actors'/audiences' ideas of "success" in performing. The purpose at hand guides those features of a situation to which the researcher pays attention. This is an initial structuring of the stream of events made by the sociologist.

I also felt impelled to respond as an audience by, for example, laughing (though neither I nor anyone else used clapping as a mark of approval during rehearsals), whilst watching rehearsals. I also listened sympathetically to various groups complaints about other groups, (actors of management, actors of each other) though never divulged any of these complaints to their subjects. I attempted to listen but remain 'uninvolved' in the issues being discussed. This is not to be taken as 'uninvolved' in the sense in which some sociologists would use this as a claim for

objectivity, but as any socially competent person would constrain themselves for the sake of tact and confidentiality of knowledge gained in trust.

I was throughout a known observer and made no attempt to be otherwise. I generally walked round with a taperecorder over my shoulder and a notebook in my pocket although I never took notes during conversations as I felt I could concentrate on what was being said a good deal better without the necessity of concentrating on writing down what was being said and that this made 'having a conversation' more relaxed. As is obvious from some interview transcripts, I also played down my status as 'academic' to the same end of relaxed intercourse.

If I did not tape a conversation and I felt something important to my project had been said then I noted it down in a quiet moment and wrote it up at the end of the day when writing up my full field notes from the rough jottings I had made whilst observing. It should be noted that these field notes are inescapably edited versions of the situations they describe and dependent on typical reportage work for their ordering, and my interests for the features selected for recording.

Any interviewing I did conduct was informal and unstructured. I let the questions I asked arise from the conversation and tried, though I was not always successful, not to over-direct what was said. In cases where I was going to have a single interview only with the people/person I did jot down some areas which, from the background reading I had done, or other conversations I had had, I felt it would be useful to cover. I did not actually refer to these notes during the conversations. When I was working over a period with a group I sometimes noted in the evening

questions and problem areas which had suggested themselves during the day - either problems because I had not understood something or areas that seemed to be problematic for the participants. I never, however, read any questions from such notes I had made during interviews. This desire not to overdirect interviews, (though as noted earlier it is impossible not to offer some directions merely in order to keep a conversation going), stemmed from my assumption that, if asked, anyone could provide an answer to a question and present a coherent world view. A view which was not necessarily at any time part of their everyday awareness but merely producible in answer to a question. Recording naturally occurring talk not initiated by me, and recording groups rather than individuals on the assumption that people would thereby be constrained to use a vocabulary and present a public image acceptable to the group, was a further attempt to minimise the extent to which the data produced was produced only for the sake of myself as sociologist.

All my interviews (except where obviously, and statedly, inappropriate, e.g. Ch. 8), were done in the setting of the social world which they described and were therefore connected to, and consequential acts for, that setting.

I had planned to use video tapes as part of my field work and had completed several hours film on Manticore, the Happening and Live Theatre. One of my initial ideas had been to tape a performance or rehearsal and during a replaying of the tape to the actors record their comments on what they had been doing. This would patently have produced a retrospective description of the work but in so far as that itself would have been studiable and, presumably, the vocabulary used in description would also be the vocabulary available to be used in the setting, data on members, sense-assembling methods and their constitutive procedures in the setting would be available on film.

In presenting "Live Theatre" with a showing of just such a tape, despite continued exhortations from me to say: "anything they wanted to about the film," very little was in fact spoken, they watched rather than explicated.

For "Tube Theatre" and the "Young Vic" and much of "Stagecoach" it would have been impossible to do any filming at all on the technical grounds of lighting during performances being inadequate, not being able to get actors and audience in the camera's field of vision and also because, although equipped with a portable video tape recorder it still involved transporting a fair amount of equipment, (I had to carry the television set as well to do replays of the tapes for participants), which cut down on mobility and was costly.

Such technical problems are a part of further problems that may seem purely technical but in fact raise a fundamental issue and that is - the data emanating from any field work records reality but it is not, and never could be, an unmediated recording. The problems I had in filming the "Happening" included the fact that although I used a wide angle lens to record, as far as possible, 'all that was happening', I could not position the camera to include an entire picture of the setting and all the people in it - individuals constantly wandered out of view. Precisely because I was using a wide angle lens the sort of detail I was obtaining of facial movements, for instance, was frustratingly poor. Equally frustrating was the fact that people spent a good deal of time with their backs to the lens and often completely blocked its field of vision.

As a piece of film usefully recording interactional sequences, it was woefully inadequate. To lend it the appearance of a professionally executed piece of filming I could have used such devices as zoom shots

which would have enabled me to pick out particularly interesting sequences. Such common sense selection of instances of interaction would have provided a version of events selectively edited by me and guided by my concerns to record such data as 'people having difficulty handling their part in the Happening and displaying this through routines of embarrassment.' What such a film would have effectively given me was a record of what I wanted to find.

Luc de Heusch (1962) makes a similar point about the selectively constituted nature of filmic reality in a survey of ethnographic and sociological films prepared for UNESCO. While the camera may seem to be the paramount technology for capturing 'what is really happening' in an account freed from the impurities of language: "we must accustom ourselves to the idea that it is the picture of reality and not reality itself." (ibid., p.13 emphasises in original). All films, those guided by a documentary impulse as much as any others, are irreparably socio-dramatic and a construct of particular representational conventions. (For a paper which discusses some such conventions see Worth & Adair "Through Navajo Eyes", 1972).

I decided that as I did not need data that provided a frame by frame record of every interactional sequence, had I been able to get it, that field notes based on observation and recordings would be sufficient for my purposes.

The ease with which verbal data may be collected and stored in comparison to non-verbal data provides another pressure in doing fieldwork and that is to ignore non-verbal accounts. This I have overcome by obtaining observation notes of such behaviour and both chapters 7 and 9 deal very directly with accounts and features of settings that are not verbal.

I found no trouble in getting people to talk to me or in recording spontaneous conversations. The one objection I did have came from an author, who felt tape recordings were an invasion of privacy, and this was answered by promising to show him the transcripts - to which he did not finally object. No-one else voiced any objections after I had given a verbal undertaking to provide them with a copy of any material to be published.

I generally transcribed the recordings as soon as I had left the field and was back at my typewriter. My memory of recent conversations helped in transcribing barely audible speech and fitting a name to the different speakers in a sequence.

The analyses that form the body of this work are linked together on the basis of the topic they treat, namely 'the theatre', and the entire work is informed by a conviction that the way to approach the study of social life is to consider it as a constantly accomplished process, produced as it is through members' situated work of displaying and detecting features of a setting.

I use the term 'theatre' here, and throughout the thesis, as a convenient shorthand which refers to members' constitutive practices and is not to be taken in any way as masking the emergent nature of a domain which is always a 'reality becoming'.

Rather than a straight ethnography this provides what Zimmerman and Pollner term a "methodography", which is to say as opposed to naming an inventory of a setting's distinctive, substantive, features, the research seeks for the practices through which those substantive features are made observable. The setting is envisaged as an 'occasioned corpus':

"From the member's point of view, a setting presents itself as the objective, recalcitrant theater of his actions. From the analyst's point of view, the presented texture of the scene, including its appearance as an objective, recalcitrant order of affairs, is conceived as the accomplishment of members' methods for displaying and detecting the setting's features. For the member the corpus of setting features presents itself as a product, as objective and independent scenic features. For the analyst the corpus is the family of practices employed by members to assemble, recognise and realize the corpus-as-a-product".

(Zimmerman & Pollner, 1970, p.95,
their emphasis)

This means that elements organised by the occasioned corpus will be unique to a 'here and now' setting and not generalisable to other settings. It also means that there will not necessarily be any standard way of getting data:

"....the procedures of the analyst radically depend on the peculiarities of the procedures of the participants".

(H. Schwartz, 1977, p.25)

The somewhat different approaches which the present chapters display are seen as a point of strength rather than weakness. Each deals with a particular aspect of the social world which has been brought into analytic focus as the researcher thought best at the time. The mechanics of this particular 'best' are given in detail for every instance and the reader is left to decide how far a change in approach alters the research endeavour.

From the outset I had thought to structure my work on the field of the theatre around the formal and public designations of individuals and groups involved in the Thespian world i.e. author, director, actor, critic and audience. While chapters 5 to 9 may still be read with this ordering

in mind - the chapter on the "Young Vic" pays particular attention to the actors' activities and that on "Tube Theatre" to the audiences activities - it will be noted that chapters 7 and 9 use social situations as their unit organiser while the other three use individuals.

To use a statement from Goffman that appears in the preface to Relations in Public:

"The (...) papers that form the body of this book deal with a single domain of activity and were written to be published together.....taken together they do not purport to cover systematically, exhaustively, and without repetition what is common to them. I snipe at a target from different positions unevenly spaced, there is no pretence at laying down a barrage. The result is chapters but wayward ones."

(1971:author's note)

Chapter Five

AUTHORSHIP AND AUTHORITY

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Talking to an Author

We begin our analysis of the processes through which a dramatic performance may be accomplished with a consideration of authorship. This is done using an interview with one author - Tom Haddaway - who has written plays for television and is closely linked with the Live Theatre group studied in Chapter six. It is an attempt to 'listen' to what he says about his work in the sense of paying attention to the world being displayed through his talk and taking seriously the claims made in his speech.

Concentrating on the manner in which one author constitutes the business of authorship does not deny other possible ways of doing so. My approach rejects any concern with the sort of numerical, scientific, warrantability which attempts to make stronger a claim by stating that 'all of the two hundred people interviewed said so and so'. Such 'proof' is rejected on the grounds that it would succeed only in exhibiting any member's method of obtaining corroborative evidence and would necessitate ripping out from an individual's account some term or inference about a term and rendering it in some unexplained way a sociological constant. It is to be remembered in the reading of this chapter that I make no claim to address authorship in general (except where such an extension is stated) but am addressing an account of a specific authorial method.

In talking to Tom about authorship we must consider the context in which that talking was done - Tom speaks of his work and simultaneously manages an interview situation. Accounts as we have mentioned are always

situated. This means they are tied to where, and to whom, you are talking, as well as the actual topic.

As a sociologist and theatre-goer with a specific biography I automatically bring my own stock of knowledge and typifications about playwrights and plays to the interview and make sense of what is said in terms of such knowledge.

As a sociologist aware of that process and anxious not to "make" sense of what Tom is saying so much as to allow the way in which Tom makes sense of his own world to be revealed, I attempt to 'listen' to what he says. This demands that the way in which he has picked his words and the way in which he puts those words together is respected as a deliberate and meaningful choice for the way in which he wants to tell the story. This provides an alternative to using his speech as a mere springboard for the formulation of my own way of speaking.

As Torode remarks (1974) this latter use of statements is a selfish one in that it serves to fit the speaker into a preconceived view of the world rather than using his talk as a way of opening up other ways of looking at that world. To get the conversation accomplished at all, patently some reliance must be placed on my prior knowledge and understanding of theatre, conversing, and Tom himself. There may only ever be a partial bracketing of background expectations. What such bracketing accomplishes is the 'phenomenological reduction' noted earlier which allows us to become conscious of the interpretive procedures through which we constitute the world as we do.

Styles of Authoring

Different styles of theatre work with different notions of authorship.

Intrusive theatre, of its very nature, may not limit itself, prior to the occasion of its occurrence, by adherence to an author's fixed text. It may still be said to be "authored", however, in so far as an individual or a group start a communicative work with some idea of the stage space to be used, the props. to be handled and certain moves to be made by the actors/participants. But in aiming to include the audience importantly in the event the audience themselves are extended an invitation to authority over that event.

This may provide some tension in the practical staging of intrusive theatre. If the audience does claim its right to authorship of the event then the actors/instigators must partially, at least, relinquish their authority and the event may become literally uncontrolled and unauthorised. As intrusive theatre often works without an audience - in the sense of individuals who have gathered specifically to be present at a theatrical occasion - the audience may not easily corporately recognise and act upon its authority.

Mimetic theatre, where actors and audience are hermetically sealed from intrusion from the others' world, is more likely to be able to work with a set script and text. Protagonists rest secure in the knowledge that the event may proceed from beginning to end without interference. In this situation the author may rigidly control the event by setting fairly precise limits on what is to be done. Such control may well extend

after the author's demise through the agency of critics, intellectuals, or publics who have some knowledge of the text as originally written and the play as originally presented. They may demand that any replaying be a repeat.

Mimetic theatre would seem to offer the greatest opportunity for the exploitation of theatre as a wholly commercial enterprise. Its ability to adhere to a set text allows a known and tested produce to be marketed in an infinitely repeatable way. An audience comes to this theatre knowing what they are buying in a fashion which would be inimical to intrusive theatre. This tends to promote the author of the play as its sole creator. His standing may be used as a sort of trade name guaranteeing a certain quality for the product.

As Jean Louis-Baudry remarks, to accept that a text is created by a writer and transmitted to a reader who passively receives it, is to espouse a bourgeois ideology, an ideology which denies the process of production of the text itself.

"These twin mystifications permit the writer to appear as a capitalist who creates meaning in his text, which is then circulated and which acquires an exchange value. This is simply a manifestation, in the sphere of culture, of bourgeois ideology's means of mystifying the nature of the productive process by assigning to each commodity produced an exchange value which accedes to the capitalist, instead of recognising that its true value is simply the labour that has been expended in it."

(quoted in Torode, 1970, p.3)

This is not to say that the play itself, as it is produced, necessarily stresses the author's part in it. Realism, for example, as an aesthetic category much favoured in mimetic theatre, works precisely to dissolve

the recognition of the author's contribution to the work in performance, quite the opposite of a play such as 'The Glass Menagerie' of Tennessee Williams, whose narrator discusses on stage how the play was written. Yet it does stress authorship in the marketing of the play.

Polymorphic theatre, as it may include the audience in the play in a variety of ways, also treats an author and his authority in a number of ways. It may dispense with an author as a single writer completely. The *Commedia del Arte* worked with conventionalised characters who had certain stock actions and speeches within the standard plot but, within these conventions, the actor of Arlequin, Scapino, Scarmuccia, or Colombina was free to improvise according to personal preference and audience demand.

It may, on the other hand, take a text as presented by an author and produce it following the script and any production footnotes provided.

The text of a play will dictate to a certain extent how it is to be played. Its narrative structure, use of speech by characters, plot and so on, suggest possible production styles and even though it may be parodied, the fashion of the parody is not free of the original form of writing. This is not to say that style is wholly inherent in the text. Rather it is a social project and as such mediated through a variety of production/performance processes. As Chaney (1977, p.48) says of fictional experience but, which we may borrow here to talk of style:

"The (identity) of a performance is not necessarily inherent in the performance - it is mediated through a fabric of constructive practices."

Writing a Play means Capturing a Character: A lesson in Listenership

I present now part of the transcript of an interview with Tom (the full text may be found in the appendix), to study the manner in which he constitutes his version of authorship and, in concentrating on one question and answer series in depth, to show the extent to which, as an interviewer, I failed to 'listen' to what the author said:

- T. "I always think I'm in the position of a medium and I'm translating a social experience, so that I don't actually create it, so I never think of myself as being in between an audience and a social experience...so I have access to the one thing first and to the story. To the character, basically the character, I think first of all I have to find the character and then I let that character speak in their own terms and so errrrr... pass it on to an audience."
- I. "Well, where do you get your character from? What's the relationship of the"
- T. "Merely by discovery, I think you begin with a character and I think the plot and the story and the theme as you call it is sort of second. I think character comes first. I think if you discover a character first then you've got a play. You've got a play when you've discovered a character."
- I. "Where is it that you discover a character?"
- T. "You might discover a character in your own back yard, you might discover it among your relatives..."

I. "So it's based on an actual person always is it when you write?"

T. "Yes, I think so yea...I think character and character development comes first in a play...it may be different in a short story but in a play I think character is fundamentally the first thing you have and errr....the play is not so much a sort of curiosity piece about what happens to people, but a revelation of character."

I. "And that's the aim of writing it..to show the audience....."

T. "That's what I think all the best plays are...revelation of character...because finally the characters speak in their terms and the writer must be less evident, the hand of the writer should not be sort of apparent ...the characters must appear to be speaking of their own volition, their own force, and if you find a character you should let that character sort of emerge, you know..."

I. "You say that, but how do you monitor how authentic the character's going to appear?"

T. "I don't know other than instinctively, except you can certainly tell when you're not doing it."

Tom begins by setting up the position he sees himself occupying vis à vis the world, the play and the audience. He rejects the possibility of his position being a creative one, but it is a favoured one in that he has access both to the character and the social experience and furthermore, has the ability to translate the experience, through the character, into terms he deems comprehensible to the audience. That he finds the

character stresses that he does not create the character and displays some of the properties of a 'character' with which he works.

To be 'found' means that the character already exists in some world that he, as author, can explore. This turns out to be the everyday world of friends and relatives and it is from here that the author picks out characters - not in terms of interesting events which have befallen them and which must be faithfully, if fictively re-presented, but in terms of the possibilities within the characters - as - given which may be expressed and developed within the situations they create for themselves.

The author legislates for the importance of the play precisely not lying in a suspenseful, curious series of happenings. We do not go to a play to see 'how things turn out' but to see how people turn out; how character is revealed. And it is through this continuous revelation of character that the play is made. The skill of its making lies in the dexterity with which such a revelation is carried out.

That the hand of the author should not be apparent in the speech of the character extends once more a degree of independence to the character. Authorship here then, does not involve building up a character. The character has a measure of autonomy and completeness in this description before the play itself is written. In fact, a character is available to anyone, it is the 'telling' of a character which is not.

It must be stressed that Tom's fashion of talking about an author is only one of the many possible ways available. This particular description of the author's part in constituting character is, of course, an historical literary convention, derived from 19th century naturalism.

Had I taken seriously the author's claim about 'finding' a character, with all that this presumes about the autonomy of the character, his independent existence apart from the author's representing of him in the fictive text, then my final question would have been an un-askable one:

"You say that, but how do you monitor how authentic the character is going to appear?".

In doubting that a character can simply emerge, and taking what Tom has said to be only what he has said and not what he 'really' does when he writes a play, many of my own presuppositions of how a play comes into being and why it is written, are displayed.

To call into question how the author can effectively monitor the authenticity of the character ignores the author's own claim that he simply finds a character who has already a full existence in a world and is, ipso factor, authentic. It is not that the author presents a life-like representation of a fabricated character but a character which the author knows remains to be made known to the audience and so be constructed during the play.

My speech exhibits a world where I assume authors have an aim in writing a play. I assume that they chose a story which will be the vehicle for the expression of that aim; and that they have peopled that story with characters who are constantly checked for the degree of realism with which they are portrayed. I am treating his speech as an answer to the question of how he finds a character, whereas he is talking in the wider terms of the play which is 'made' through the skill with which he as author uses (explores) the character as the medium of development of the play.

I force the author into offering an answer but, it being a question that is not within the terms of his own talking, the answer can only be 'I don't know other than instinctively'.

A play does not remain as written speech tied to the printed page, but is performed by actors for an audience. Both these groups will establish some relationship with the character in the play, using the text in which the author displays the character to do so.

Mead's sense of 'Self' as residing in the capacity of the minded organism to be an object to itself through the mechanism of role-taking, and his distinction between the components of the self, the 'I' - the principle of action and impulse which affords the reconstructive and creative activity of the self and is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others and the 'me' - the organised set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes (see Mead, 1967, p.175) suggests some features of theatrical character which operate to continuously direct the actor (author and director) towards a consideration of the principles of sociability.

In so far as the actor (audience, director and author) are ontologically apart from the character, that character may only possess for them the identity of a 'me'. The actor may imaginatively take the part of the 'I' in the process of constructing the 'me' but inevitably carries off that imaginative feat from the position of another. The collusive task of author, director and actor in presenting a character hinges on their ability to take the attitude of any other implicated in the common activity (which is the theatrical enterprise) - to assume the role of the 'generalised other'. In creating the identity of the 'me' they must be

constantly concerned with that group of attitudes which stand for others in the community. The dramatic character possessing an identity only as a me means that it is denied any autonomous status, it remains an act of fictional mimesis but its very identity as me - that constitutive framework within which others ground the self, makes the enterprise of characterisation a deep study of the forms of social life. Simmel (1971, pp. 127-141) notes precisely that it is in following the artistic impulse that we are most closely drawn to a study of sociability:

"... the impulses and interests which a man experience in himself and which push him out toward other men bring about all the forms of association by which a mere sum of separate individuals are made into a "society". Within this constellation called society, or out of it, there develops a special sociological structure corresponding to those of art and play, which draw their form from these realities but nevertheless leave their reality behind them.....That which I have called artistic impulse draws its form from the complexes of perceivable things and builds this form into a special structure corresponding to the artistic impulse, so also the impulse to sociability distils, as it were, out of the realities of social life the pure essence of association, of the associative process as a value and a satisfaction. It thereby constitutes what we call sociability in the narrower sense, it is no mere accident of language that all sociability, even the purely spontaneous, if it is to have meaning and stability, lays such great value on forms, on good form. For 'good form' is mutual self-definition, interaction of the elements through which a unity is made; and since in sociability the concrete motives bound up with life-goals fall away, so must the pure form, the free playing interacting independence of individuals stand out so much the more strongly and operate with so much the greater effect."

(Simmel, 1971, pp. 128-9)

Tom's account of authorship extends the character autonomy in the important sense that he exists independently of the author's writing about him. For the actor the case is necessarily somewhat different. The character is available to the actor through the text and he must therefore establish a character within the limits of the words he has been allowed to say by the author. Words may always mean more than they actually

say. For example, the way in which a line from the script is said crucially determines the meaning of what is said. It is impossible to separate the form and the content of the saying and this gives the actor the opportunity to add to any character.

It is noticeable that actors talk frequently of 'building a character' (see, for example, Stanislavski's book of that title, 1949), and denote their relationship in this term.

This way of talking about actor and character is used by "Method" (see p.467) actors who are exhorted to become, as nearly as possible, the same being as the characters they are portraying. Other ways of acting will have their own manner of expressing this relationship.

The Brechtian actor, for example, is taught to maintain a visibly obvious distance from the character he portrays to enable him to comment on his actions:

".... they acted in such a way that the audience's interest was always focused on the ensuing development, the further continuation; as it were, on the mechanics of the episodes. On the interplay of cause and effect."

(Brecht, 1965, p.73)

The actor here sees it as "my job to provided a portrait of this man (character) which would make it easier for society, as represented by our own audience, to deal with him."

The Holy actor of Grotowski is different again. He works to have complete mastery over his body so as to reduce to negligible proportions the resistant effect of his own organism on the character he works with. Grotowski's actor "must not illustrate but accomplish an 'act of the soul' by means of his own organism". (Grotowski, 1969, p.213).

The talk here is not of re-presenting, or portraying, but achieving an act on stage.

The audience must also establish its relationship to the character and to do this it has access to the portrayal of the character by the actor. The audience must piece together the character from the lines the actor speaks, the physical peculiarities invested in him by the actor, the situations in which he has been placed by the author and the dramatic structure (e.g. devices of dramatic irony) of the play.

This is a construction which takes place over time. The character is completed and filled in as the play progresses, whereas the actor reads the entire text and builds up his character from the complete play.

We may summarise one form of the possible relationships in diagrammatic terms:

CHARACTER	discovered by	AUTHOR	allows him, in particularly structured way,	SPEECH
ACTOR	given limits of	TEXT	'builds up'	CHARACTER
AUDIENCE	attends to	TEXT	pieces together	CHARACTER

In talking of establishing relationships with the character we are talking of the ways in which audience, actor and author establish an aesthetic distance from the work. Such distance is gained through their awareness of the structured nature of the play.

The author may 'find' a character but obtains a distance from him as he displays him through the narrative structure of the play.

The actor 'builds up' on that initial structure given him by the author, and the audience pieces together a character taking cognisance of the structured ways in which he discharges the actions (including speech) that he does:

"What the artist establishes by deliberate stylistic devices is not really the beholder's attitude - that is a by product - but a relationship between the work and its public (including himself)."

(Langer, 1953, p.319)

Approaching the topic in this way locates the fictitiousness of the characters in the distanced relationship which we establish with them rather the opposite approach which deems that the relationship we have with them is altered because of our perception of them as fictive. (For a further discussion of distance see Bullough, 1912).

Another playwright, Simon Gray, in an interview by J. Watt (The Guardian, December, 1976), echoes Tom's way of talking about his plays. His response to one question also underlines the dilemma of being asked a question that has no part in his own way of describing authorship:

"Plays don't happen to a playwright in terms of ideas. I've no ideas ever, scarcely ever in life, but certainly not in writing. What I do have are people I hope, characters who will, as I sit at my typewriter, talk to each other and begin to establish their own claims. I don't mean to be teasing about this, it's simply that if asked why a character does or says what he does, I never know."

That the author himself does not know why a character says or does something makes sense if we allow that the character is discovered by the author and allowed to play out his own possibilities by speaking in his own way, through, not because of, the author. It is no tease to be unable to provide an answer that depends on an irrelevant question. It is only a problem and a cause of concern if we persist in seeing an

author as a person who possesses, through creating, a character, and would therefore be expected to be able to provide reasons for his creations' activities.

If the author disclaims possession of ~~the~~ character in the play then how does he see his relationship to the play in its entirety? To uncover this we again attempt to 'listen' seriously to what the author says about the play, and, in speaking, makes available 'the play' as a legitimate topic for study.

Authorship as Limited Authority

"But you know you've done it right after you've finished it...when you begin to see things in it that you've never planned to put in. Anyhow, I think when you've written anything you discover afterwards what's in it, and other people tell you what's in it, and at the time of putting it down you never realise that you're doing it, that's why I think that I'm in a position of a medium or middle force."

The author lays no claim to sole proprietary rights over the meaning of the play. One criterion for having written a good play is precisely that there are a multitude of possible meanings within the script as he has written it which people can articulate in attending to it.

The truth of the play is not a truth in a scientifically rigorous way. It is, as Burke (1966) says: "A meaning more probed than proved". It is the exploration of possible meaning which is important.

The author deals with something that means always more than it appears to say and cannot claim ownership of the play in any sense other than that he can see certain possibilities within it and any presentation which limits these possibilities would give grounds for criticism in terms of its having 'muted' the characters.'

An author can set minimal levels of opportunities for comprehension but never set the maximum number of possible readings. This author desires that he be consulted during the presenting of a play by a director, not to limit the way it is handled to his own conception of it, but to ensure that at least his conception of it is allowable within the terms of its direction. The author's talk of the group who will perform his

work is likewise in terms of them being 'good' enough actors to invest in, and bring out, new capacities for understanding the play.

The play once written stands on its own and can be approached by a readership - a readership amongst which the author, having completed the script, is included - and re-authored through the drawing out of meanings hitherto 'undiscovered'.

The author talks of the play as containing the meaning within it, not simply offering the possibility of meaning endowment, yet he acknowledges the necessary presence of an audience for the performance based on the script who is able to perceive the meanings. He acknowledges authorship finally as a joint practice with an audience.

Tom does not present himself as an exceptional man who comments on life but as a man who, in offering the plays that he does, engages in that life to promote communication between people.

This promotion touches also on building a community.

The reasons for speaking and listening in fictive discourse are different from the reasons for attending to natural discourse. Natural discourse allows us to extend "our effect on, and control over, a world that is not naturally or automatically disposed to serve our interests". (Hernstein Smith, 1976, p.3)

Note that this is a claim somewhat different from the common view which sees the purpose of speech for the speaker to be that of simply communicating 'information' to the listener. In fictive discourse we are directed to take the accomplishing of discourse itself as the important factor, rather than the effects which discourse could obtain for us. We consider the doing itself as the important process rather than the 'what' is done.

Theatrical communication, its meanings being governed by a system of conventions, is a symbolic form of communication. To communicate it must create levels of shared meanings for its participants.

"In allowing oneself to be enlisted as an audience the (audience) has entered into a special relationship with its author, one that is governed by assumptions, claims, and responsibilities quite different from those that obtain between the speaker and listener of a natural utterance."

(Hernstein Smith, *ibid*:25)

In accepting the adhering to those rules the necessary style of the occasion is created. Style is the social project which gives a performance its identity and not only links it to a community, but forms that community through an awareness of its ability to accomplish the joint project which is itself the style of the performance.

"The difference between the reality of the audience and the unreality of the stage is the 'aesthetic distance' which sanctions the conventional signals and percepts of the performance. It is this that is the essential source of the play's style."

(Styan, 1975, p.69)

In successfully negotiating that distance, that is to say, in managing the interpretive rules-in-play of a performance, the community of the audience is celebrated.

That the author 'deals with something that means always more than it appears to say' is a function of the fact already mentioned in connection to the indexicality of accounts. Words are tied to the occasion of their utterance for their sense but may be ripped from that initial context and, in this sense, once uttered, obstinately refuse ownership.

One of the distinctions between fictive and natural discourse may be found in the possibility for making them one's own through resituating them in a context of one's own construction.

Natural conversation takes place at a specific time and place, between particular persons, more or less familiar to each other, who assume that a certain set of conventions are mutually operative. The meaning of natural discourse is irreparably tied to the context of its utterance with all the richness of cues for decoding that any specific context offers.

A play text, on the other hand, is generally written with full knowledge that it must exist independently of the particular context in which, or for which, it was produced and must be re-authored through re-contextualisation.

Central to the fictive experience lies this ability of decontextualisation in order to recontextualise.

Whereas natural discourse demands that a speaker means what he says and the listener takes him to mean what he says, fictive discourse may be defined precisely through the suspension of these assumptions.

"It is not that the poet is understood not to mean what he says but that he is not saying it at all."

(Hernstein Smith, 1974-5, p.24)

There are no ethical imperatives to recover the author's intentions in providing the script; the author considers it a success when, through re-rooting the text in a new context, a plethora of different possible interpretations come to light.

This pleasure in "people seeing things I haven't realised were there", resides in the fact that the text has been the occasion of a new understanding of a social situation which, consciously intended by the author or not, he has provided the opportunity for. (This is possibly analogous to the textual pleasure Barthes has explored (1975).) Re-presenting life at all forces a reflection of how we go about that life.

If no new insight is gained then it is not that the audience has failed to see it, but that the author has failed to construct skillfully enough an occasion for their seeing.

Although the author cannot articulate handy reasons for 'why he should write' he works continuously with the notion of a play offering a possibility for an objective view of what goes on in the world. This view is available to him in his privileged position of being able to say "well, I realise what is happening to that person."

He presumes that artists have privileged access to a clear view of the world and that it is through artistic endeavour that insight into that world is shared with an audience.

That he treats authorship as inevitably authorship for an audience leads us next to the ways in which consideration of an audience sets the limits of the play.

The Play and its Audiences

"But if you're writing specifically for a club audience in a working class area, then you've got to relate to their lives and their background, and their work style, and all that other sort of huge universal area of life going on everywhere else in the world has got to be sort of neglected if you've got to....write about shipyards, coalmines, and fishermen and the errr...the basic material you've got is going to be stretched isn't it?

....Good theatre?...I think it's something to do with condensation, you know, it's...all plays are sort of unreality, all plays are plays, are just a fragment of a total reality and you've got to make choices and just select relevant and errr...strong moments and just set them down. It's no good trying to put the whole of life onto the stage because you'd be there for a week you know....and you cut out all the sort of dull and awkward and errr...sort of boring moments, it's very difficult to portray boredom on the stage without actually boring people. Boredom is an integral part of living I think."

Consideration of what a play should do provides Tom's framework for writing; a consideration of who the audience will be limits the possibilities of his play. Tom assumes a fellowship amongst his audience through the sameness of the emotions they experience and knowledge of these provides the necessary basis for playwrighting. The audience is seen to inhabit one small area of the world and a particularised area at that, one whose image is summoned up by the list: 'shipyards, coalmines and fishermen.'

This restricts the number of possibilities open to the author in his writing. Whatever he writes about, and the way in which it is presented, must touch on the world that the audience inhabits in its everyday life. He considers the knowledge which the audience will bring with it to the occasion of the theatre using his own familiarity with

that knowledge which has been gleaned through the living out of particular histories, in this case as working men in the industrial North East.

The author writes for a specific rather than an anonymous audience, directing his language to be meaningful to those involved in (not merely present at), the performance and to thereby self-evidently convince that audience of the play's connection to the social life of which its performance is a part.

"Although the ritual of theatre turns on good play writing, good playwriting begins with an intimate knowledge of the audience, when the playwright himself is a close spectator or life."

(Styan, 1975, p.239)

'Good' fiction captures nuances with which the author is familiar. That an early play Tom wrote, a 'turgid historical drama' based on the Restoration period of English history of which he had no first hand knowledge, was such a disaster, is held up as an example of 'bad' theatre. Not all that is depicted has had to have happened, but there has to be a deep acquaintance with the characters who set the limits of the play;

"It's not as if one lives an experience and then digs a play out of it."

(Simon Gray interview, op.cit.)

Watching a play unfold on stage, by labelling the processes involved, both describes and explains the world, and in this way can provide a vocabulary (understanding) to cope with situations which may occur in the everyday world of the audience. Rehearsal involves 'having done something more than once'; the theatre may be seen, therefore, as a possible rehearsal for life.

"A fictive precedent would be as effective as an actual one in deciding a course of action for us and, therefore, as good a source of concordant expectations enabling us to meet."

(Lewis, Convention 1965, p.39)

The theatre cannot be dismissed as 'merely fiction' and divorced from life, but is linguistic action which acts on the world. Authorship is therefore necessarily a moral undertaking. (See Burke, 1966, for a comprehensive discussion of language as action).

This thesis itself, in explicating this author's talk, will act on the world, by, for example, providing a framework within which to see his plays. This underlines the continuous nature of true discourse, a discourse which began long before this paper was conceived and will continue long after it is forgotten, but which will have become itself partly responsible for, and constitutive of, certain concepts of authorship.

To transform the natural world into the play world involves, says Tom, above all, a condensation into, and an appreciation of, dramatic time. The unreality of plays is partly that they do not allow the full playing out of events on stage. The happenings of a week can legitimately (understandably and accountably, within able-to-be-called-up conventions of establishing aesthetic distance), be reduced to thirty seconds of stage time and the weak, boring or uncertain moments of life may be cut, leaving only a life-like discourse.

"Stage speech inevitably involves degrees of calculation and economy...our daily speech is far too boring and flabby otherwise. I mean, listen to the sentence, with its qualifications, hesitations and meanderings."

(Simon Gray, op.cit.)

The text of the play is consciously composed through a process of selecting and pruning conversations and events which the author deems central to his revelation of characters. This provides for the fact that in attending to a play it is assumed that attention must be given continuously; all that happens is important. (see Goffman, 1976, p.144)

The narrative - and I include always *histoire*, the chain of events and the existents (characters and settings) and the *discourse*, the expression by means of which the content is communicated, when using this term - presuppositions that an author works with, allows him to select those events (speech included), which he feels are sufficient to elicit in the mind of his audience the continuum he desires. The audience fills in the interstices with information from ordinary life experience. As Seymour Chatman notes:

"The power of inference has a special role in narrative structure."

(1975, p.305)

Tom mentions as a problem the necessity for cutting out all the "boring moments of life in its representation on stage". To present boredom is not a question of wasting time, which would succeed only in boring the audience, but of 'using' time in a particular way. Success on the stage from the author's point of view is not measured in the intensity of emotion aroused through participation in watching the play, but through the measure of understanding which the play imparts about life as it can be lived. So boredom, anger, sadness are presented not to make the audience bored, angry or sad but to let them see how such emotions figure in the lives of the characters.

Consideration of the audience does not stop at a consideration of their way of life but also the kind of situation into which they must come to see the play when performed.

Club theatre is differentiated from 'the theatre' proper by the codes of conduct assumed to operate in the latter. An attentive silence during the performance, attendance solely to watch the play, and an audience willingly engaging in 'intellectual gymnastics' being some that are listed.

Clubs have a history of offering entertainment as a secondary diversion only (the drinking, the conviviality of meeting friends, are a club's *raison d'être*) to overcome these situationally built in disadvantages and to present the play as demanding, and warranting, total attention, requires it to have a powerful opening and continuation without neglecting its revelatory powers for the sake of easy entertainment.

Authorship is again acknowledged as forcing a moral obligation by a commitment to providing an honest and important comment on the world. Theatre works with a constant tension caused by its commitment to offer more than an exciting story of the 'what happens next' variety which would allow no time for reflection in its stream of happenings. And the fact that to hold attention at all requires interest of some kind. It is precisely those plays which give in to providing 'sheer entertainment' that are 'bad' theatre.

The successful handling of the pull between "material that has the power of standup comedians but inside which there is some writing", is the task of the serious playwright.

Tom points with the phrase 'some writing', to a version of authorship which calls up literary standards of technical skill - for example, structuring events and making use of dramatic time.

To stipulate that a good playwright does more than entertain is also a question of use of time. Entertaining is a way of getting through time, providing a diversion to pass the time. Good playwrighting demands 'concentration' from the audience and thereby an active involvement in the play rather than a passive consumption.

There are assumed to be a body of techniques, 'theatrical tips', for holding an audience's attention.

Tom was given advice to the effect that "the audience wants to have one over on the actors"(Transcripts p. 332). So in constructing the narrative, rather than keeping a character's secret for a final denouement, the audience is allowed to know the secret whilst some of the characters in the play do not. This engenders suspense in imagining how a character will act at the time of revelation and provides objective distance between the audience and the characters through the imbalance of information.

The curiosity is not to be about what isolated events will happen but how characters react within the events set to happen. Providing the audience with a fore-knowledge of the events, through the device of dramatic irony, promotes the fitting sense of curiosity.

In the interview Tom has provided us with a formulation of the modes of persuasion open to an author in writing a play.

These modes of persuasion echo Kenneth Burke's four master tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. (Burke, 1969, p.503). These have the literal application of what he calls perspective, reduction, representation and dialectic which Styan explains thus:

"If we borrow them for drama, it is because they are all active as soon as performance begins, the one shading into the other. Metaphor gives a perspective view in terms of something else: drama itself is such an image of life. Metonymy conveys some intangible state in terms of the tangible and immediate: thus a stage character reduces a general spiritual condition to a particular problem, whereby an audience is exercised to apply the particular to the general. This is not unlike synecdoche, which offers the part for the whole, just as on the stage a sensory representation demands its wider application and evaluation. Irony grants the spectator his superior insight, and the interaction of the different viewpoints of the play and the audience generates the dialectical activity all playgoing involves. These large concepts are part of the nature of theatre and are built into the structural design of a good play."

(Styan, 1975, p.234)

The true artist is more than an entertainer, he is the question-poser who forces audiences away from the passive world of entertainment to the active, participatory world of 'true' theatre. This much is the articulated aim of the author.

That the audience are depicted as inhabiting another world into which the world of the play must 'reach' to kindle interest in its own destiny, is the separation which the playwright must negate for the time in which his play is in performance. This is the work of an author.

Chapter Six

THE DIRECTOR

The Director

We turn now to a consideration of the part played by a director in mounting a theatrical production.

The Advent of the Director

Theatre histories fix on the name of George II, Duke of Saxe Meiningen, and the company which he formed in 1874, to provide us with the first example of a director.

In fact any theatrical enterprise demands, and always has done, an organiser of some kind. The theatre is a practical undertaking and forces consideration of the physical production elements: lighting, spatial integration of actors, set and sound, for example, which demand a coordinator in some sense:

"It is impossible even to get up a charade at a Christmas party without somebody taking charge and giving directions".

(Marshall, 1957, p.11)

The Duke was novel in having overall responsibility for his productions without being involved in them as either actor or dramatist. In fact, in terms of increasingly naturalistic portrayal, the use of realistic properties and settings and the demand for detailed rehearsal, much of the Duke's work has been preempted by Madam Vestris in the 1830's.

Matthew Mackintosh in "Stage Reminiscences"... by an Old Timer (1866, p.81-82) remembers Madam Vestris' production of The Court Beauties (Planché, 14 March, 1835):

"The first scene was the Mall in Saint James's Park, beautifully reproduced from a print of the period of the play. The effect of the scene was much heightened by making use of a passage, fully one hundred feet in length, which led from the back of the stage to Craven buildings, and by means of which the Mall was represented going away into perspective, with a wonderful appearance of reality. On wires hung between the trees were suspended numerous cages with various kinds of singing birds - whose St. Gile's owners managed to make them sing, too, to perfection. On the rising of the curtain this scene used to call forth the most enthusiastic applause and the demonstration did not diminish when Mr. Hooper, looking the Merry Monarch to the life, came on followed by his attendants all in gorgeous and scrupulously correct costumes of the reign of Charles II and, true to life, the King was accompanied moreover by a number of genuine King Charles spaniels."

(Quoted in Appleton, 1974, p.78)

Kemble and Keen, too, had been insisting on research and historical accuracy in doing Shakespeare in the 20's and 30's respectively and Tom Robertson, in the 1860's, worked as a dramatist and director particularly concerned to capture authentic characterisations and naturalistic dialogue and movements. As Rowell (1978, p.80) puts it:

"Robertson's insistence on precise detail in performance was possible because of the authority with which the Bancrofts invested him in the preparation of his own plays. In the field of spectacular drama Boucicault had already asserted the claim of the author to control the rehearsals of his own play. Now Robertson applied that control to the rehearsal of drawing-room drama, and since, unlike Boucicault he did not appear in his own plays, he was able to give greater attention to ensemble and balance."

All these, however, exercised power by virtue of their pre-eminence as actors/authors and it seems true to say that the Duke was the first independent artistic director and it was his company which succeeded in popularising production methods using 'a director' during their extensive tours.

The advent of the director was, then, tied to the growing attention to realistic detail in theatrical performances. Employing complicated naturalistic sets, props and costumes that were historically accurate, gesture and stance strictly 'in period', and considering each character in a crowd scene rather than concentrating solely on the 'star', demanded that someone be outside the action to orchestrate the effect of each part on the whole. Thus it is claimed the director became a figure in the theatrical world.

The Meiningen company appeared at Drury Lane for a season in 1881 and impressed the audience with their ensemble playing and the naturalism of the actors. Contrary to popular convention at the time they spoke to each other rather than to the audience, on whom they actually dared to turn their backs.

The Duke's success at naturalistic portrayal was not unconnected with the fact that his private wealth allowed for the extensive rehearsal, in costume and using props., of his plays - a situation that was not replicated in the English theatre world.

The idea of rehearsal at all was relatively new in England where the 'star' names, such as Kean travelled to perform with the provincial stock companies and would often never have seen the rest of the cast before playing their part. In the 1830's Macready's desire to "rehearse with the same earnestness as I should act", had nearly caused a strike amongst the company who were used to dealing with rapid 'read-throughs', giving cues only and who resented such a time consuming enterprise as rehearsal.

The late 19th century was a time when specialists in all fields were appearing and, no less in theatre, having an expert in stage-design, sound, lighting, and directing was a necessary step towards professionalisation.

The early directors concentrated mainly on the practical skills of producing rather than interpretation of the play. Hunt (1954, p.121), points out, however, that the industrial revolution brought with it a new liberalism in approach and it was no longer possible to rely on one fixed and accepted vision of life or theatre. A choice of modes of representing life-on-stage had to be made and it was to the director that this task fell. The director assumed thereafter a position as legislator of style and various 'schools' of directing grew up around such figures as Stanislavski, Meyerhold, and Reinhardt.

These schools were by no means tied to realism, indeed all three directors mentioned were experimenting with stylised productions by the early 20th century. That the producer could determine how a production was done and determine this on the basis of personal predilection occasioned tension in the Thespian world, particularly amongst critics who upheld an academic interpretation of the classical plays.

The director who changed his style of production with each play was equally open to criticism on the grounds of plagiarism, but however he chose to work the director was held responsible for the outcome of the production and was now vilified or otherwise as a creative artist of the theatre.

This extension of responsibility to the director was an explicit recognition of the essentially performative nature of the theatre. The compositional elements of script and text, as provided by the dramatist and related by the actors, were no longer taken as the only aspects of a theatrical presentation which importantly created and altered its effect.

This investing of authority in an individual not directly connected with performance as author or performer occurred at much the same time in the field of music with the advent of a conductor who was neither composer or player but hired specifically for his role of securing particular musical effects and holding together an instrumental force. During the 17th century it was often the player of the harpsichord who, by his performance, controlled the tempo and stopped the players scattering. During the 19th century the keyboard instrument tended to go out of use and the control of tempo was left to the first violinist. Beethoven is said to have conducted, (very badly), with a baton but, according to the experts, (see Scholes, 1964):

"The imitation of the modern standard (what we may call 'Virtuoso Conductorship') may probably be attributed to von Bllow who was employed at various German centres from 1864 to 1885 and achieved a high reputation as a conductor of the works of Beethoven and Wagner."

(ibid. p.128)

The director has figured prominently in most theatrical enterprises during the 20th century though there have been attempts by certain groups to work without what they feel is a dictatorial constraint on their artistic activities. Bertolt Brecht refused the name of director and substituted 'rehearsal manager' but the relinquishing of control remained in name only and Brecht was, in fact, one of the most dictatorial of directors. He insisted not only that his plays should be done his way, but provided detailed instruction sheets and demanded that they be minutely followed by anyone else attempting a Brechtian production.

The Freehold Theatre Company in the 1970's likewise attempted to dispense with a director but, as Nancy Meckler of the company remarked:

"We rehearsed a play and there was no director, but what it really amounted to was that one person had an idea and was able to impose it. You couldn't say, in the end, that it had been directed."

(Shank: 1972, p.16)

That many of the moves towards abolishing the director or towards de-authorisation in the sense of authorship being the domain of a single dramatist (see the 'Happenings' discussed earlier, for example), are made at times when there is a lively rhetoric of political democracy underlines the fact that style is never simply an aesthetic decision but is always a political choice dependent on the conventions acceptable at, and the social relations peculiar to, a particular period.

We now turn to a study of one particular director using both interviews by him about his work and recordings made during the actual occasion of his work in rehearsals. These accounts of directing provide us with a description and, ipso facto, an explanation of what directing as a job could look like, and display some features of this job.

The situated accounts of rehearsals are given for the benefit of the actors and involve accomplishing the work of directing itself; the interview is for the benefit of an interviewer and involves displaying an ability to provide answers to questions as a competent director could be expected to. This provides us with an example of the vocabularies available to be used by directors and constitutes through these an obviously sensible director's world.

In listening to both accounts we shall pay particular attention to how the director presents his job as dealing with certain areas of the production process, in particular his relationship with an audience; the

tensions that arise between the director and others involved in the production and how these are handled in rehearsal; and what the features of a particular situation are that make that situation recognisable as a rehearsal.

We shall look also at an interview given by an actress specifically on rehearsals and at how they are may be used by actors in the process of "developing" their characters.

The Company

Live Theatre was a professional company formed in 1974 and based in Newcastle. It consisted of seven full time actors and actresses mainly from the North East and had Tom Haddaway as the group's writer (see Chapter five) Murray Martin, the director and administrator, explained the aims of the company for the broadsheet, Arts North (Dec./Jan. 1976, p.9):

"Having Tom as our writer has been a terrific help. We all have a commitment to a particular group - those who have perhaps never seen a theatre performance in their lives - and we take our productions to working men's clubs, social clubs and pubs. Tom understands and communicates with local people so well that the audiences have really identified with our plays. It has been a slow process breaking into the clubs and overcoming prejudices about theatre but through word of mouth and hard work we now have a number of venues who take every new production and repeats of previous plays. In some cases we adopted the line 'if you don't like it we won't charge you' And it certainly helped get our foot in the door".

This provides a journalistic account of the Company, itself of interest as displaying features that are picked on to categorise something as other than 'conventional' theatrical fare - a disinterest in financial matters, for example.

It also self-confessedly describes Live Theatre as theatre designed especially to appeal to working people. They mount their plays in a variety of venues which constrain the sort of sets they may use, and their audience are often ignorant of the practices of "conventionally" staged performances i.e. those proscenium arch productions played in a particular theatre building and a visit to which has all the middle class cultural overtones of 'going to the theatre'.

Martin's methods are tied to this particular theatre and his practices will be peculiar to it. This is a study of one instance of accomplishing directing but, in so far as this is a grant-receiving company, some of

whose actors have been trained in established drama schools and who have been recognised through their work in clubs and also for television performances, Live Theatre provides the topic for a study of professional directing as an occupation and an example of the rhetorics available to practicing directors in carrying out their work and establishing the style of their production.

The Director and the Drama

Before accepting directorship of a production the potential director must feel some affinity towards the play. If the play is to be commissioned then this is predicated on the basis of a relationship of trust with the author (see earlier quote from Arts North). If the play is already written then it is because the plays deal with a certain subject in a way that stimulates the director with ideas about its possible production.

This is the way Martin chooses to describe his criteria for accepting a play to work on. There are, of course, numerous other possibilities stretching from choosing a play because it forms part of a revered classical tradition and displays the 'cultural competence' of any company making such a choice, to the pragmatics of the occasion which may suggest a particular Shakespearian production because it is a play being studied by local school children and will be assured a substantial audience.

Martin's judgement is based, on the one hand, on the play's perceived pertinence to his audience's world, and, on the other, on his ability to use the drama to sensitise that audience to their own ways of living; its capacity to be used as a revelatory performance.

"I mean often what we're doing is presenting cameos of life which give people insight to problems, about people losing their jobs, or about work situations and in that sense you're trying to make people more sensitive to their situations".

(Transcripts, p.337)

These aims set the limits for this view of the theatre and its work and, thereby, the task facing him in any production. The explicit purpose

of his production is paramount, the style through which this purpose is to be concretely effected is not yet considered. (It is interesting to note that using 'style' when the plural could have been used is a reflection of the fact that an expectation for a play to observe a unity of style seems at present to exercise a comparable sway on the theatrical enterprise as did once the Aristotelian Unities.)

Given a script to deal with the director then has a set period of time in which to vitalise it and present a piece of theatre. The time the director has available varies. In the commercial theatre it is generally in the region of three weeks whereas some fringe theatres (depending largely on financial matters), may rehearse for a year or more, the deciding factor being that it is felt the play has been sufficiently 'explored'.

The necessity for directors to produce the work on a fixed date provides a difference between theatre and other arts such as sculpting, or writing a novel, and between types of theatre, and it is a difference which seems to provide important criteria for talk about creativity and Art (see later section for discussion).

The Director and the Audience

From the inception of his part in the production this director has spoken of his concern for the audience. Martin considers them in so far as his whole concept of what theatre is and does is guided by its relevance to the imagined audience's world. He consciously directs his efforts towards a specific sort of audience - the 'working man', and the particular context in which that audience will come to see the play. He also talks of the fact that audiences must be built up. The theatrical enterprise is irreparably tied to a conception of 'audience'. It is implicitly understood to be a communicatory act in the sense that it says something to somebody, and the method of production trades constantly on more or less explicit presuppositions about what is being said, where it is to be said and to whom.

Live Theatre is committed theatre in so far as it recognises certain aims for itself over and above providing 'entertainment'. This relationship between entertaining and informing provides one source of tension in production:

"We should present it in a funny way, but I think we should say something".

(trans. p.352)

It refuses any title as "Committed Theatre" in Bentley's sense (Bentley, 1968), i.e. commitment based on politics in the sense of party affiliations, or on providing a particular answer to the problems raised.

"I think that the basic aim of myself as a director would be to produce objects that are revealing to the audience about their own sort of life. I mean that's what a community theatre is about, that's what community art is about. It's not about a particular set of political viewpoints. I mean it seems to me very queer....all the fringe groups are left.... it seems to me there's something wrong about that. You know...?"

(trans. p.348)

Overt political motivation is seen as setting limits on possible explorations through providing a theme to be explicated and a constant framework for viewing life. If the only limit is "authenticity" and how well a play can be presented in these terms then:

"The depths of any problems you discover in an area, it's a limitless mine in a sense, 'cos the sort of whole gambit of human relations and emotions is available."

(trans.p.314)

Live Theatre, as expressed by Martin, sees its job as being to make a statement and let the audience react in its own way to what has been said. Participatory theatre should not legislate for an audience's solution to a problem but state problems and give the audience faith in their own ability to "deal imaginatively with those problems". (trans. p.337)

Stating problems is seen to have power in that it can articulate that problem for those not so gifted in statement and explanation. Live Theatre consciously aims to provide a theatre for the working class and presents plays whose subject matter is precisely that group. In accepting them as objects worthy of dramatic exploration instead of providing the tongue-tied, cap-in-hand, 'begging your pardon M'aam', image rife in 19th century naturalism, it aims to provide a practical way of removing a built in inferiority complex that sees 'culture' as a specifically upper class, intellectual, pearls and furs, affair.

In 1907 Max Beerbohm wrote:

"If our dramatist will condescend to make our acquaintance (or rather cease from trying to persuade themselves they don't know us), they will find that we, too, the unmentioned by Debrete, the jaded in aspect, have brains and hearts. They will find that we too, are capable of great joys and griefs, and such things come our way quite often".

(quoted in Tynan, 1964, p.84)

Live Theatre is seen by Martin as being a statement of protest against precisely such condescension and in expressing a concern with politics in its widest sense it is also expressing an acknowledgement of the fact that art is a form of action in the world not an epiphenomenal comment on it.

Live Theatre's concern is with Truth - that is, playing must say something applicable to the perceivedly 'real' world of the audience and provide an occasion for the audience literally to 'look at themselves'. The conclusions to be drawn from the play need not be tied to what is - this would obviate the possibility for radical theatre, but stating a problem clearly may show it up as untenable and in need of alteration. In this respect it is interesting to point out that notions of 'good' fiction concern drama which expresses, not fictitious views but 'true' ones.

The audience and the context in which it is to see the play both effect the way the play is produced. A specific theatre building has certain conventions of behaviour associated with it and the people coming to such a building are generally assumed to possess a certain degree of knowledge about those conventions. That Live Theatre travels to such various settings as pubs, clubs and working mens' institutes and the audience may be gathered there for the standard activity of the place as well as to see a piece of theatre, means that reliance on 'conventional theatrical know-how' cannot be made.

Martin talks, then, of 'winning' an audience; one of his tasks is seen as building up an acceptable audience from a public including a potential one.

That people gather in a particular place and that certain activities are performed within their vision does not transform that gathering into an audience. To be a theatre audience requires a more or less sophisticated knowledge of the theatrical conventions constraints and obligations involved in being an audience for that specific occasion which themselves are embedded in, and form part of, a wider body of particular culturally and historically specific resources for acceptable behaviour at the theatre. So the pantomime conventions of raucous disapproval of the Villain of the piece and the hissing and booing which accompanies his very appearance is not generalised to behaviour outside the theatre should the actor who played that part be recognised as he walks along the street.

A generally recognised and able-to-be-listed code of behaviour for the audience, (using my own knowledge as competent theatre-goer), would include such an example as a sophisticated knowledge of conventional clues for handling questions.

The audience will recognise a question as such, using the everyday pointers of intonation, pausing, and direction of speech. But it must also recognise to whom the question is posed - another character in the play; part of a soliloquy and self-addressed; directed to an imaginary audience or directed to itself as actual audience?

Having reached conclusions on such points a decision must then be made as to the necessity or giving an answer to the question. If the question has been addressed to a member of the audience is that person constrained by rules of politeness to supply a verbal answer, or any recognition of the hearing? (Viz also Burns, 1973 on 'Conventions of Performance', for *Conventions of Performance in the Theatre*.)

There are a number of relational levels operating in any performance:-

between actors and actors,
actors and character,
character and character,
actor and audience
and character and audience.

Phenomenologically the character, of course, 'is' not; character only exists in so far as he is made to appear by the actor. But actor-as-character does command a particular set of codes governing how any other person involved in the production is to relate to him, codes which are part of a grammar of theatrical presentation. That there exists such a grammar is not to say that it consists of fully explicable formulae or lists of rules. Any social situation is a constantly accomplished and negotiated one and the rules' of behaviour are not imposed on a situation from outside but are rather used as organising devices from within and form part of the situation.

So although, for example, 'silence whilst watching' may be given as a general rule, on any particular occasion of that rule not being able to be seen as being followed, then an alternative and still sensibly ordered way of seeing the occurrence is provided for. The other selection would be an admission of rule infringement and the potential collapse of order.

So Martin can express the breaking of the 'silence whilst watching' rule as an indication of a particularly good performance:

"The working men's clubs are not afraid of expressing their emotions. They're not like playing to a straight theatre where they're afraid to laugh. After the beat up scene and the line 'come back, I won't hit you', they all screamed 'Divven you gae back to him love, divven believe him lass'" .

Live Theatre has succeeded in establishing a relationship with certain clubs such that 'they will have (us) back any time we want to go'. Their audience chooses to attend Live Theatre productions on the basis of a relationship with the company itself rather than commitment to a particular text, or author.

The Director in Rehearsal

The director is given rehearsal time in which to fashion his production. Once a play is being performed for an audience the director can no longer be in control; the actor holds the stage in every sense. The director's task provides one distinction between the cinema and the theatre. In the former case the director's influence becomes stronger the nearer to completion of the film; the French term 'auteur' is indicative. In the theatre the director's power gradually lessens until at the performance on the opening night, he is powerless to change its course.

The difference resides partly in the sense in which cinema is a medium and theatre is not. Taking medium as the 'intervening substance through which impressions are conveyed to the sense' (Oxford Dictionary), the cinema makes use of a medium in the camera and its film - a ballet, play or opera may be filmed and represented via the cinematic medium.

In the theatre it is the actor himself, his body and his vocal organs which are directly presented to the audience and, whilst the theatre may take a film script and reproduce it on stage, it is not a play of a film in the same sense as there could be a film of a play.

As Susan Sontag points out (1966) whilst theatre has been described as a mediated art, and the film as one unmediated, there is "an equally valid sense which shows movies to be the mediated art and the theatre the unmediated one. We see what happens on the stage with our own eyes. We see on the screen what the camera sees" (ibid. p.30).

The film director may have total control over his medium, the theatre director whose medium is another human being may not.

One defining feature of rehearsal is that the playing that is done is done without benefit of an audience and, without an audience with whom a relationship may be developed then there is no theatre - there may be actors, a stage, and a spoken script but there is no theatrical experience.

"In his assertion 'I am actor' is found the claim 'I am watched..' The actor cannot realise his choice by himself...someone must consent to be audience to him who asserts to be actor. The theatrical world must be a closed world. The actor alone can project the theatrical world but only the audience can close it."

(Herr, 1971, p.125)

Yet the point of rehearsal is to provide an opportunity for working through a play so that it communicates to an audience those points that the director/actor wants to communicate.

"Rehearsal is a way of selecting from the possible actions, those actions to be performed, of simplifying these to make them as clear as possible in regard both to the matrix from which they have been taken and the audience to which they are meant to communicate".

(Schechner, 1976, p.61)

The rehearsal process is continuously geared towards the potential audience and during the process the director effectively adopts a position as meta-audience.

Every scene must be practically and visibly rehearsed because, although the actors/director may have worked out what it is that they want to be the affect of any particular part of the play, it is an unsurmountable fact that the actor aiming for a certain affect cannot know whether he has achieved that affect - the observer (director) must verify or vilify the attempt.

"Of course actors do have a say in the production in that they contribute to it, they suggest something - can I do such and such? - but the director has the final say and says "no, that won't work". 'Cos I know one thing from being an actor and a director, is that you can't possibly tell exactly what the effect is you are having on the stage. You need to trust the person sitting there and saying: 'no, no, what are you doing. Yes, yes, do that'."

(Denise Coffey, actress & assistant director of the Young Vic. in conversation)

Acting is arguably the only art where the creative process is visible (Viz Schechner, 1976), but it is certainly one of the few forms which the artist can never see for himself.

This raises a point in connection with Goffman's impression management which suggests that it cannot so easily be coped with through the dramaturgic analogy. One person cannot wholly determine the impression he gives off, he must be trained by an observer. The dramaturgical model also simplifies the idea of drama which presents not only a self, but others and a context too.

The director's position of power stems from the fact that he is both literally and metaphorically outside the action which takes place. His literal distance allows him a clear vision of the actor's movements as a whole and the ability to judge their effects. The fact that he is not involved with the acting through a particular character means that he has the objectivity necessary to see 'the whole picture':

"A director is a person who would have some sort of idea, a concept of what he wants the play to be and he's someone who can sit on the outside and watch, because if you try and do it yourself you can't always judge....you can't see yourself... the thing as a whole....a director is someone who will sit out and watch and see the thing as a whole and tell you if you're indulging".

(Holly, actress with the Tyneside Theatre Company, transcripts: p.456)

Another feature of rehearsal, then, is that it is always talked of as a practical doing of something. A rehearsal is ineluctably presented as a situation providing the opportunity to try it and see how it works (trans:p.454), and to repeat it until it is considered to have 'worked'.

The early part of rehearsal may involve discussion about the play (different directors have different approaches and different plays would seem to demand different techniques. Talk of rehearsal is also specific talk). But it is essentially set up as a preeminently physical affair:

"You can talk about things but you can only talk about things so far. I mean that's another reason to have a rehearsal..... you must do it, it's all very well to sit around and have the theory and intellectualise, you only find out by doing it. And that is why rehearsals happen."

(Holly, trans., p.459)

Actors do work with categories of 'good' and 'bad' directors, a distinction which Holly explicates through a discussion of 'creative' and 'technical' directors.

The barest minimum work required to present a typical contemporary play is for there to be actors who have learnt their lines and their cues and for there to be a director who will 'block out' where the actors will stand on stage vis à vis each other and the props., to say these lines. There are many 'non-standard' groups who dispense with directors and scripts (see Ken Dewey's X-ings, 1965), and even with an audience. Performance is then seen as an Activity which stands in its own right as an aesthetic production and need not be directed outwards to an audience. For an example of such a non-standard production see Vito Acconci's 'Rubbing Piece' described in At the Limits of Performance, Kirby, 1965).

A director who offers only this guidance, however, is considered a bad, unexciting, limited director. Television directors most often fall into this category. Having hired people who are labelled actors they 'just expect you to be able to produce the goods'. The limits imposed by the sight lines of the camera make exact blocking of the utmost importance and there is a feeling that they are concerned only with such technical matters and have little consideration for the "artistic" aspects of the actor's job - the effort to develop a character, to build up a relationship with the other characters in the play, and so on. The demands of the medium itself are seen to detract from the directors consideration of the play and its players.

The 'good' director provides reasons, and reasons which are concerned with the artistic effect of the production as a whole, (see later chapter on Young Vic also), for his decisions, he directs his attention to 'bringing the actor out'. The director must use the abilities of the actors, he must acknowledge their own imaginativeness in "building a character", and their own mental and physical agility in performing. The good director does not say precisely what he wants from an actor. What he does do is to construct a situation where it is likely that the actor will 'stumble onto' the idea he wants them to have.

Allowing an actor to 'stumble onto' something allows the actor to claim that idea/movement/inflection as his own creation. It allows for talk about the 'artistic' aspect of acting and allows the director control over the finished performance, as far as possible, whilst not intruding into the actor's sphere of competence and under-cutting his role as creative artist. A director has authority not necessarily simply because he knows any more or better than the actor (it is not necessarily a student/teacher relationship), but because he is better placed to see.

As the actors can produce criteria for 'good' directors so does Martin constitutively explain the existence of different categories of actors - also in terms of 'artistic' ability.

He separates 'doing a piece of theatre' from being 'theatre - orientated' and the former need not presuppose the latter. To play 'just documentary stuff' is spoken of in a disparaging fashion. The force of documentary would seem to lie here in its reference to the fact that an event has occurred in the perceptibly 'real' world and its stage representation requires a copying process rather than a truly composed from scratch (imaginative) product.

In talking of Betty - a local, totally untrained actress working with Live Theatre, Martin acknowledges, however, that re-presentation of life on stage is always a self-conscious deliberate act. He recognises that albeit someone looks and lives exactly as the character they are required to portray in a play, this does not automatically mean that they can simply get up on stage and exist and have this recognised as "good" acting.

There is some tension in Martin's use of 'documentary stuff', then. He would appear to be gaining authenticity in his portrayal of life on stage through the deep involvement in the audience's world, whilst at the same time claiming artistic status for his production on grounds that rest on its accomplishment by the self-conscious utilisation of particular forms for fictive communication. Creativity and a desire for a truly 'artistic' form is set as a typical and overriding concern of 'good' directors and actors alike. What is said or not said, during rehearsals comes to be seen as admissible in terms of this concern, and the concern itself is used as an organising device to get the work of rehearsals accomplished.

Acting as Art not Craft

Acting is a practical craft wherein the control of properties, terrorities, body and voice must be learnt (viz Lyman & Scott, 1970). But it is not only a craft; it is spoken of as an Art. To allow talk of acting as Art there are always considerations other than ones concerning what is actually done. What is done must be done gracefully but there is more to the doing than is visible.

Rehearsing is not identical with practicing which carries the notion of a finally perfectable skill. A performance cannot be perfected because the elements necessary for a performance (including an audience), are not all controllable or known in advance. Craft may be perfected but no one can guarantee Art will turn out well. (See Becker, 1978, Arts and Crafts, for a disoussion of the "two contrasting aesthetics".)

In rehearsal, as we have mentioned, there is constant attention paid to the conventions that are presumed to be operating. In discussing how to link sketches in a Revue programme, for example, (one necessary feature of a performance would seem to be an availability for it to be described as a continuous whole through a concern with theme, topic, or whatever, and a sense of it being 'rounded off' in having a detectable, unmistakable, beginning and an end - in this case signalled by a song), what the audience would accept was a prime consideration:

"He can get into his devil head in the coffin and then stick on his tail and turn round and he's the devil. They'll accept that."

"We never push them...they'll take a lot more".

(transcripts, p.350)

There are certain ways of performing which the audience will accept. There is also the idea that an audience can be taught to widen its scope of acceptable conventions; what is new one day is incorporated into theatrical lore the next - a constant problem for any 'avant-garde' work.

The probable restrictions of the audience are constantly considered. That these reactions are always uncertain yet must be coped with at the time of performance provides another distinction between rehearsing and performing. There is always a risk element in a performance. Performance is not, however, simply rehearsal plus risk. The performance is talked of by practitioners as being made by the presence of the audience and is always spoken of as a unique event, this originality lying, not in the audience themselves, but in the relationship struck between them and the actors.

This talk always of instances of performances:

"I don't visualise the audience, I daren't be as crude as that".

(Viv Daniels, Actor with Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop and Director with various companies, Transcripts, p.472)

celebrates the mystery, uniqueness and excitement of the theatre. It is spoken of as a constantly changing, ephemeral world of its own and makes claims on that basis to be evaluated in terms other than common sense ones. There is always an immeasurability (in the sense of an immensity), about a performance and this makes talk about 'the magic of the theatre' possible.

The constant concern of theatre being an Art over and above a skilled craft, and professional theatre peoples' concern with building up a critical vocabulary not available to the ordinary man, allows for the same thing.

Anyone can act (mimic), but Acting involves aesthetic sophistication.

To consider rehearsals more fully we turn to the account of them given by an actress from Stagecoach, Holly de Jeong (transcripts, p.454)

The conditions that may arise during a performance through technical problems, actors' mistakes ('drying' - forgetting your words; or 'being corpsed' - put off by some occurrence and unable to continue), or audience behaviour, can never be wholly foreseen. A well-rehearsed production is well-prepared precisely because it can extend itself to cope with whatever situations may arise.

An ideal rehearsal for certain styles of playing is not a time set aside to repeat one set way of playing (this approach may be spoken of disparagingly on the grounds that it attempts to turn theatre into a static, reproducible product) but is rather an opportunity to 'give flesh' to the characters of the play, to construct a possible, probable world for them to inhabit and in so doing to provide a way of handling, rather than simply guarding against, mistakes which may occur. Good rehearsal technique is not a constant re-doing so much as a concerted attempt to 'do' things differently.

Rehearsal does not, in this case, begin with line learning and blocking, but with warming up exercises and improvisations which give the actors time to get to know each other, to explore the ways different people are likely to react to certain situations and to build up a relationship of trust with one another.

The world to be fabricated is mutually fabricated and the other actors must be relied upon not to rupture the dramatic frame and shatter the life of that world. Having established a relationship with the actors as actors the exploring of possible relationships between the actors as characters begins and, through this process, the actor's own character emerges as a stable, predictable individual.

Learning lines by rote is the last task. The process of committing lines to memory follows after the establishment of a character and is talked of as a 'natural progression' involving, not so much learning as understanding the character established as likely to say those things in that situation.

The ultimate horror for an actor is that he will be left on stage not knowing what to say; the ultimate solution is for him to have so fully constructed and understood a character that, although the words he says may not be precisely those scripted, he will always be able to say something by drawing on his deep knowledge of the character he portrays.

Improvising around the play gives the actor the depth of interpretation necessary for handling any situation which may, and frequently does arise.

"I mean...it sounds terribly obvious but the whole point of a play is to know who you are, where you are and why you are there. And often people don't think about that..... but if you know these things then you need never worry about drying because you'll always be able to say something...and that's what's good about improvisation. I don't always like doing improvisations just for the sake of it but when you can see the point of it, understand why, they can be life savers."

(Holly, trans., p.460)

Improvising, as the name suggests, can consist of any number of ways of playing around with script, characters, story line, setting, or whatever. It is in suggesting and guiding ways of improvising that much of the director's skill is obvious, and it is through this that actors' abilities, often formerly undiscovered, may be 'brought out'.

The script offers infinite opportunity for improvisation; it should be the starting point not the limiting final authority (for a more detailed discussion of the relationship of author to the text refer to chapter five). The more exploring of the possibilities of the play, the deeper the feeling for its life, the more truly 'alive' the production.

"The hardest thing to do is to get actors to understand the play and do it naturally or make sense of it, instead of saying lines for effect."

(Holly, trans. p.466)

The improvisations mainly consist of handling the play, parts of the play, its themes, its characters etc., in a number of different ways. A tragedy for example, may be subjected to a 'corpsey run', when the actors play it all for laughs, exaggeratedly and not 'seriously' as a tragic style would indicate. They may sing a play as an opera, or do it all in double time to 'free up' within the play. The play may be split up into segments bounded by a mood change and then the moods be exaggerated and 'hammed'. This is, in effect, a deliberate use of styles of playing in order to parody them; it is a conscious misplaying deemed helpful in establishing the most successful approach.

Holly speaks of splitting a play into its Stanislaviskian 'units' and 'objectives' and discovering its 'inner life'.

The publication of Stanislavski's works (1924, 1926 and 1950), provided actors with a set of exercises and practical techniques designed to aid in developing their 'latent talent' and progressing in their art. These came to be known as "The Method".

While most actors are cognisant of The Method, and many make use of it in their work, it is not spoken of as a fixed system through which a person could work and finally appear as a proficient actor. Talk of acting must still be talk that concerns creativity; art is not allowed to be produced by recipe.

Stanislavski himself states (1949, p.279)

"The method we have been studying is often called the Stanislavski System. But this is not correct. The very power of this method lies in the fact that it was not concocted or invented by anyone. Both in spirit and in body it is a part of our organic natures.....It is not possible to invent a system. We are born with it inside us, with an innate capacity for creativeness. This last is our natural necessity, therefore it would seem that we could not know how to express it except in accordance with a natural system.

Yet strangely enough, when we step on to the stage we lose our natural endowment and instead of acting creatively we proceed to perform contortions of pretentious proportions.....So we have to find means to struggle against this tendency toward distortion - that is the basis for our so-called 'system'."

All these activities are aimed at as fully exploring and discovering what is 'in' a text as possible. The superficial character knows only his lines and his cues, the developed character understands himself and has a personality which may be relied on to cope with the unexpected. He has a life on the stage whether he is speaking or not.

The actors may write extensive biographies for their characters, again building a 'full' character in the assumption that possessing a life history, though never able to be displayed, deepens in some way the character's life on stage:

"We used to write histories for the characters, do things like...you know...colours and furniture, and....for character..... so all the time you're on stage you know who you are. Not that you're upstaging people but just that you have a life going on."

(Holly, trans., p.467)

Much of the work of all those involved in producing a play consists precisely in producing particular contexts. Human action is not a product of a situation so much as it is necessary to provide a situation in which to see human action as sensible.

Langer (1953), clarifies the terms that are used in describing the various contexts produced for a performance.

"A dramatic situation develops as the play proceeds. That is because all happenings, to be dramatic, must be conceived in terms of acts, and acts belong only to life; they have motives rather than causes, and in turn motivate further and further acts, which compose integrated actions. A situation is a complex of impending acts."

(ibid. p.312-313)

This is different from the environment wherein characters have developed; the situation is explicit and the environment implicit:

"Where 'environment' enters into drama at all, it enters as an idea entertained by persons in the play, such as the slum visitors and reformers of the 'radical' problem play. They themselves, however, do not appear in an environment, because that sociological abstraction has no meaning for the theatre. They appear in a setting. 'Environment' is an invisible constant but 'setting' is something immediate, something sensuously or poetically present."

(loc.cit.)

The author provides the situational context of the characters for the actors, and through this the play develops. The actor constructs an environmental context for the character through whom the action of the given situation is perpetrated. The director provides the physical setting in which the drama will unfold and the actions of the play make sense. This sets the problems to be tackled by each Thespian, which must be solved so that a single, identifiable, coherent play-world is the final outcome.

What the author 'meant' is a seriously heard claim for authority in settling issues of environments, situations and settings. So much so, indeed, that when the director is also the author the result is that the actors' creative contribution is considerably muted as he presumes the author-speaking-as-director to be setting the definitive context for the play and his freedom of interpretation is thus strangled.

"But the curious thing about The Birthday Party when (Pinter) directed it, was that the actors were not working in a free and open way with the director, they were working with the Author. So when Harold said, and I heard him say it, 'I don't know, what does it say?' or 'Why don't you try...?' They took it as God's writ. Therefore they acted results and simplifications. They didn't go on a quest. They didn't make something complex, which changed from second to second."

(Hall, 1975, p.13)

The actors' own ideas are taken into consideration during the rehearsals and claims for being able to do something 'authentically' 'because that happened to me in real life', are respected and used.

The actor, though, may be spoken of as having less freedom in deciding what could have happened in a play than the author or the audience, as, to construct their 'authentic' character, they need to acknowledge one possible what did happen and so provide a specific environment.

"But do you think it is possible, at least for the purpose of the actors to say what acutally happened?"

"Oh, yes, you must. Or what happened for one particular actor. It may be different from one actor to another. All you can do for actors is to discover what needs to have happened in Leeds for each of the, so that their behaviour will make human and emotional sense. And if you ask Pinter what happened in Leeds, he does say, 'What needs to have happened in Leeds?', What does it say?'. And I think that's fair enough".

(Hall, 1975, p.5)

The particular style of a play, e.g. an 'abstract' play is not taken by the actors in this case to require a similarly 'abstract' character. A character whose behaviour 'makes human and emotional' sense is built up and then displayed through the particular style of the play.

We have looked at some of the ways of speaking available and acceptable to, professional directors and actors when talking of their work, and the concerns a director picks out as important to him when mounting a production.

Live Theatre provides us with an example of polymorphic theatre. There is no direct reference to 'style' as such but there is a continuous concern with the prospective audience's life-as-lived in order to establish the conventions that may be successfully exploited in offering a dramatic performance of life-as-portrayed.

The theatre is not a world of its own; it must make use of its knowledge of styles of life and exploit them in its styles-of-portraying life. It must be attentive, for example, to the conventions of self presentation operating in everyday life, such as the modes of dress customary in public and private places (the street, the home), and the relationship between them. (viz Sennet, 1975, for just such a study).

"The discipline of studying a play is absolutely subject to understanding its original conditions of performance. Since the activity of the theatre is designed expressly to touch and involve an audience, a segment of society, that audience and that society must in part control the kind of activity found in the theatre."

(Styan, 1975, p.108-9)

That Live Theatre is specifically community theatre, playing in certain contexts, to a particular audience, determines the directors' approach; the audience and the society provide the very representational language which can be exploited by any particular form of theatre.

In order to communicate theatre, minimally, must hold the audience's attention and keep it 'alive to its perceptual contributions', (ibid. p.185). Granted this as an aim common to all theatrical performances the means by which it may be accomplished will alter. Martin uses the story line as one major element in holding the audience's attention. He uses, too, characters that 'look like the lady next door', using an audience's recognition of their own viewpoints, the fact that the play talks about them (trans:339) to capture and retain their interest. This theatre deliberately capitalises on a knowledge of its audience's world to present the world recognisably on stage; recognisably both through the mode of presentation and the topic treated.

It escapes fossilisation in Brook's terms (Brook, 1972) as it is by no means limited to using only gestures from everyday life, in the manner, of a strict Method actor. It jumps between naturalistic playing, to using specifically theatrical conventions for getting 'off stage', to representing a sitting room using one chair and a window frame suspended from a coat rail.

It is aptly described in Brook's discussion of what he calls 'Rough Theatre', by which he means theatre for popular audiences:

"The Rough Theatre is close to the people.....it is usually distinguished by the absence of what is called 'style'. Style needs leisure.....

The Rough Theatre doesn't pick and choose: if the audience is restive then it's obviously more important to holler at the trouble makers - or improvise a gag - than to try to preserve the unity of style of the scene.....

The popular theatre, freed of unity of style, actually speaks a very sophisticated and stylish language: a popular audience usually has no difficulty in accepting inconsistencies of accent and dress, or in darting between mime and dialogue, realism and suggestion. They follow the line of story, unaware in fact that somewhere there is a set of standards which are being broken."

(Brook, op.cit., p.76)

A stylistically sophisticated audience, i.e. one that is aware of categories of particular styles, which lead in turn to set expectations of ways of performing, may indeed, be fettered by those expectations and an awareness of a transgression of certain standards.

Martin is guided by an eminently practical aesthetics whose cardinal rule is to get the audience interested and keep it so. That audience will still operate standards about what it considers 'a good' piece of work but they will be standards that are phrased in terms other than accepted literary critical, style-as-category ones.

Martin remarks:

"In the clubs, when it's dead right....you see people even if you're doing something dead serious, will sort of laugh saying 'Oh, it's so true',".

(trans. p.344)

And again, talking of what would count as laudatory feedback:

"I heard at Cullercoats club, about the Filletting Machine....
like a bloke said to me afterwards: 'You laugh, but you know
you shouldn't',".

(transcripts, p.337)

The audience themselves have picked up on Live Theatre's intention to present a performance that takes them and their lives as its topic. It judges (partly at least, it must be remembered that these are selective judgements that Martin is relating to the interviewer), the performance's success by how apposite the portrayal is.

They comment on the material of the drama rather than the way in which it is being told to them. Their shared territory is theme and concern, not elegantly presented aesthetic device.

The director's intention and the audience's perception dialectically construct the social project, they mutually create the style through which the play communicates. And that there is communication at all celebrates their membership of a community which, among other projects, may successfully carry off accomplishment of a dramatic performance.

Chapter Seven

NEGOTIATING THE STYLE OF PARTICIPATING IN PERFORMANCE

Negotiating the Style of Participating in Performance

Through studying interviews by an author and a director about their work I have looked at how they describe their respective jobs.

I turn now to consider the mounting of one particular production, taking it from its inception to its performance for an audience. To do this I undertook a period of observation at the Young Vic Theatre Company during the three weeks of their Summer 1978 Festival.

The data used in this chapter includes situated talk, i.e. accounts given during the actual work process as well as field observations, rather than the retrospective descriptive talk which formed the bulk of the data for the first two chapters.

I look again at the process of authoring, directing and rehearsing a production but concentrate now on the performance itself, looking at the theatre as a physical environment and the ways in which this physical context structures the possibilities for performance.

The Company chose to exploit such physical possibilities in a particular way and during the public performance offered constant guidelines to mobilise audience expectations and conventions as to the possible modes of their participation in the event. They used what I shall term 'devices of inclusivity'. These included direct address to the audience demanding a public reply from them; active participation by the audience so that they provide part of the play's setting; asides to the audience to provide them with information that not all the characters know and initiation of the audience to the style of playing through 'preshows'.

I shall look particularly at the ways in which stressing the performance aspect of the occasion facilitate a certain style of playing and one, I shall claim, that allows for "intimate" communication as that term is used by Sennett (1977).

Before embarking on that project it will be useful to look briefly at Sennett's discussion of convention and rule as important constituents of an individual's ability to be intimately expressive with others.

Sennett notes some reigning beliefs of contemporary life that work against 'civility', which is 'that activity which protects people from each other and yet allows them to enjoy each others company', in social relationships. These are the beliefs that "closeness between persons is a moral good"; that people ought to aspire "to develop individual personality through experiences of closeness and warmth with others"; and that "the evils of society can all be understood as evils of impersonality, alienation and coldness". (ibid., p.259) Sennett presents these as founding an 'ideology of intimacy' where all "social phenomena, no matter how impersonal in structure, are converted into matters of personality in order to have meaning". (ibid., p.219)

Such a situation has a radical effect on theories of expression in society. The constant intrusion of questions of personality and psychology into social relations forces modern man into a species of self-absorption and an overriding concern with voicing his own feelings. This very concern with expressing emotions limits an individual's ability to be expressive.

The paradox of the narcissism explicit in the cry to 'look at me feel' is this:

"The more a person concentrates on feeling genuinely rather than on the objective content of what is felt, the more subjectivity becomes an end in itself, the less expressive he can be".

(ibid.:p.30)

In concentrating on self expression in this way what is lost is the sense of self-distance and of a public space governed by impersonal conventions i.e. 'rules for behaviour at a distance from the immediate desires of the self', which are the prerequisites for play acting.

So modern man becomes, in Sennett's phrase "an actor deprived of his art."

"People are more sociable the more they have some tangible barriers between them, just as they need specific places in public whose sole purpose is to bring them together. Let us put this another way again: Human beings need to have some distance from intimate observation by others in order to feel sociable."

(ibid., p.15)

Artifice and convention provide just such a distance and in connection with staging a theatrical performance I shall argue that the clarity with which its status as a play, bounded by specific conventions, is proclaimed, directly effects the spontaneity and ease with which individuals participate in a performance.

While it may seem, commonsensically, that artifice leads to distance my study of the Young Vic company would seem to display how Sennett's paradox is true; distance is precisely that feature of a communicative situation which allows for closer interaction. (ibid.,p.336)

"To the extent, in sum, that a society mobilizes narcissism, it gives rein to a principle of expression entirely contrary to the expressive principle of play. In such a society it is only natural that artifice and convention will seem suspect. The logic of such a society will be the destruction of these tools of culture. It will do so in the name of removing the barriers between people, of bringing them closer together, but it will succeed only in transposing the structure of domination in the society into psychological terms."

The Young Vic (which was opened in 1970) operates with a permanent company presenting shows in the main auditorium of the theatre at Waterloo and the studio there, "on the road" in children's theatre and various community projects, TIE (theatre-in-education) work, and national and international tours.

The director, Michael Bogdanov, 'Bodger' as he is commonly referred to, was quite willing for me to come to the theatre and watch any of the rehearsals in progress. The Company had just completed some five weeks of rehearsal for their major production, Ben Johnson's 'Bartholomew Fair', which was being performed most evenings in the main auditorium of the theatre.

Given the structural possibilities of the auditorium (which I consider in detail in the next section), this was an interesting choice of play for a first production with a new director and company. Johnson's play is one which takes every advantage of an Elizabethan audience who found no trouble in handling infinite numbers of leaps from fantasy to realism, plays within plays, and other framing devices (see Styan, 1975, pp. 80-190, for a discussion of the original staging of this play), and is a play designed for the deep embedding of the actors in the audience.

Later 19th century theatre, with its proscenium arch, separated auditorium and increasing tendency towards Naturalistic playing, is the form of theatre temporally closest to us and tends to be used as the paradigmatic form. The Young Vic moves away from that form and offers us an example of polymorphic theatre.

I watched several performances of Bartholomew Fair and listened during breaks in the coffee bar and the local pub, to many discussions about the show. The days were spent in writing, rehearsing and performing a number of theatrical ventures specifically devised for the Festival. There was a travelling Music Hall, a lunchtime musical show, a roving street theatre, a school's project and a morning auditorium show for children aged between five and eight years old. To this end the Company had been split up into groups of six, each with a director and responsibility for their own project.

It was this last group, working on the children's show 'Fayre Play', that I chose to observe in detail. I sat in on their rehearsals, joined in their lunchbreaks and watched their first week's performances of the completed show. The field notes that I took during rehearsals and performances, and the detailed transcripts of some of the informal discussions I was present for, appear in the appendix.

The Theatre Building

It may be thought that the physical context in which a production is mounted provides only an initial environment. I suggest, however, that it importantly effects the interactional possibilities for that production.

The Young Vic building is entered by means of a large foyer off which lead the coffee bar, the studio (a large room without fixed seating) and the main auditorium.

The licensed coffee bar is open to any member of the public, not only to ticket holders, and is well used by the Company itself as they have no Green Room - a relaxing room for the actors provided by most companies - and spend a good deal of time there.

Already particular democratic modes of interaction between company and audience are set up. The foyer, coffee bar and ticket office, rather than just being preprocessing areas for patrons are all incorporated into a display of the style of the occasion and are an important part of mobilising the presuppositions which allow a certain mode of participation-in-performance to take place. You may eat and drink here cheek by jowl with the protagonists of the play you attend.

Such contact serves several purposes. It effectively fetters the establishment of the sort of 'star system' which necessitates a certain packaging of an individual, a certain privatisation of The Star, so that voyeuristic peeps at his offstage life may be carefully engineered and controlled for promotional and pecuniary reasons. The highly limited

availability of a Star excludes the possibility of an intimate performer/audience relationship and changes it into a consumeristic one. (See Dyer 1979 for an extensive study of the phenomenon of stardom). It must also serve to stress the non-illusory nature of the performance to be presented. The knowledge that Romeo had pizza and salad half an hour before the balcony scene disallows one particular mode of participating in the theatrical experience, a mode which another theatre, in another time (of the urge towards naturalism of the 19th century) may have assiduously striven for.

At the Young Vic the actors and audience assemble to provide an occasion for imaginative activity not an attempt to construct an illusion of actuality on the stage. Company and spectator preparing and 'cooling off' together in the way described suggest the mutuality of the undertaking, that there will be a joint contribution made to the ensuing event. Both the audience's physical proximity to the actor-as-character in performance and their intimacy in mixing with the actor-as-performer offstage, are important factors to be considered in the staging of illusion.

The auditorium further enhances the sense of corporation. It consists of a platform and thrust stage surrounded on three sides by benches for spectators so that those in the front row have their feet on the stage. This echoes the intermixing of actor and audience in the 1780's when the young members of the upper classes had seats on the stage. Such proximity was then made use of by the audience who interfered directly with the actors through the system of 'points' - demanding a repeat of a popular part of the play; and 'setting' - making it impossible, through rowdiness, for an actor who had resorted to the prompter to carry on. (see Sennett, 1977, p.75)

The Young Vic has no prompter at all as the thrust stage affords no place for anybody 'on the book'. An actor who 'dries' must disembroil himself as best he can, through his own efforts and the help of his co-actors. Indeed, virtually the entire auditorium is permanently visible, the small back stage area and pit that do exist obviating the possibility for the sort of extensive visual surprises popular in the 19th century. During this period with the extensive wings and flies built into the design of the theatres, whole scenes, including actors, could disappear to reveal another visual effect. A love for realism and spectacle stalked hand in hand with any number of ingenious devices utilised to bring a gasp from the audience who would clap the scenery at the opening of an act as well as the actors as the end.

Ghosts, for example, stimulated much invention; whole sheets of glass which caught the reflection of an actor in the pit were used and the New York Evening Post Magazine of 20th December, 1919 told of a spectral device as follows:

"The ghost stood behind a large concealed wheel which, when started, caught up each revolution a fresh piece of some almost transparent stuff, art fully tinted to match the background, until the requisite thickness was obtained. The ghost apparently melted into thin air".

Such constant and total visibility demand of actors the skills of being expressive with the whole (and often the back) of the body, and of the audience the facility to call upon their powers of imagination using sign and symbol to construct a scene. (See chapter 3 of the thesis for a discussion of how an actor's manner of being embedded in the audience relies on a particular mode of signification).

It demands a:

"Very flexible treatment of time and space and the ability of one space to be transformed into many places through the skill of the performer not the illusionistic devices of a scenographer".

(Schechner, 1973, p.48)

The sight lines thus given mean that the audience can see the stage and the rest of the spectators simultaneously and that the actors can see the audience. This is facilitated, also, by the lighting arrangements. There is no absolutely rigid houselight/stage-light demarcation, frequently the whole auditorium is lit, although it may be darkened with relation to the stage area. Neither are there any footlights - these operate to blind the actor who is unable to see through them to the audience.

The benches themselves are continuous so it is not possible to reserve a seat and on crowded evenings you may be asked to 'snuggle up to your neighbour', so that numbers can be increased. This also means that seats are all one price and no particular part of the audience is privileged. A far cry this from the days of the 17th century when the patron of the day was the focal point for the actors who played to such benefactors virtually irrespective of the remaining audience and their view of the play. Often indeed, the audience was better placed to view the patron than the play and would wait to be guided by him before responding to the show.

The Young Vic is different, too, from many contemporary, plush, theatres where seats are split into stalls, circles and boxes of varying price and prestige. Schechner (1976, p.62), points out that allowing anyone to have their feet on the acting area is a "democratisation of the presence on stage of some of the audience, the rich and/or privileged. It extends to everyone a once restricted privilege."

This process of democratisation seems to touch on audience status, not only in the sense of there being privileged sections of an audience, but also in the sense of an entire audience's relationship to the play and the players. The audience are initiated into a position of close contact with the players but they may not control them or the text (players in the 18th century, as we have mentioned, could be asked to re-play a certain favoured section of the performance, so signalling a lack of subservience to the text), as patrons once could; the actors assume authority in such matters.

The foyer presents an area which Bogdonav made much use of in preshows.

A preshow is an informal extension of the main performance (a detailed description of the Fayre Play preshow is provided later). It uses figures from the play in costume and/or character and extends the action of the play in a fairly unstructured way. So, for Bartholomew Fair, the fair ground characters go into the local pub half an hour before the performance is scheduled to start and begin there, doing juggling tricks and telling jokes, before they move into the auditorium to entertain the audience as they are arriving. Outside the theatre doors and in the foyer more fair-ground characters are selling Bartholomew Fair badges and T-shirts, calling 'roll up and buy your badges'.

The preshow functions for the actors as:

"As a sort of relaxed lead into the play and an atmosphere so you get the atmosphere and when the show starts then they're so relaxed into the spirit of what is going to happen that it just happens, rather than the set thing of the curtains opening... oh yes...and the dialogue is set up and...whereas often, with the preshow, it has started as soon as they come into the theatre...outside in the street they are met by someone, like in Bart Fair in the pub...it all starts in the pub (.....) and then the sort of action just naturally follows on".

(Mickey O'Donaghue)

For the audience the spill over of actors to the foyer, street and public house is not used to dupe them as to actors identities but serves as an initial suggestion for ways of being involved in the production. We get to be, for example, on smiling terms with the actors which sets up the likelihood of more uninhibited response during the main body of the show.. The back chat that occurs collects all present into one gathering and may be seen as a further technique of inclusivity.

This mode of initiating the staging of a theatrical performance seems to be at variance with Schutz's idea of the necessity for being thrust into an alternative finite province of meaning through some sort of reality shock: "going to sleep as a leap into a dream, the lived experience of the 'numinous', the jolt by which, for instance, the scientist shifts after dinner to the theatrical attitude."

"The transition from one province of meaning to another can only be accomplished by means of a 'leap' (in Kierkegaard's sense). This 'leap' is nothing other than the exchange of one style of lived experience for another. Since a specific tension of consciousness belongs essentially to the style of lived experience, such a 'leap' is accompanied by shock experience, that is brought about by the radical alteration of the tension of consciousness."

(Schutz/Luckmann, 1974, p.24)

The Young Vic methods of commencing a performance are aimed at providing a smooth transition and initiation into the new order rather than administering a 'jolt', which suggests that in the space of a second the individual is propelled from one state of consciousness to another. More strongly it precisely trades on conventions in the audience's everyday life to accomplish the theatrical event.

The Young Vic provides a physical context which sets up certain possibilities for styles of performing. The Company then exploit these possibilities in particular ways underlining for the audience, in this case, the fact of 'gathering' at the theatre for a performance event.

The audience may have refreshed themselves in the coffee bar, or chatted together in the foyer. They will have been forced to make some kind of contact with other members of the audience in finding a space in the benches (no seats are reserved) as it is virtually impossible to walk in and sit down without the minimum of contact of a mumbled 'Is anyone sitting there?'.

The Company may have been seen wandering around thus displaying their double identities of working actor as well as character. The programme itself includes no photographs of actors in costume during the play but rather a centre page spread entitled 'The Company at Work'. This depicts such work as impressive acrobatic feats and playing musical instruments. The programme is used to stress the skilled, physical business of acting in the style of the old time travelling players, rather than ignoring this in favour of presenting the finished illusion of, for example, 'John Labanowski as Quarlous'.

There is no rigid segregation of actors from audience to aid in fostering illusion but a concerted attempt to emphasise that the occasion is one of performers with the audience telling a story.

History of the Play

Fayre Play originated from an idea of the assistant director. Prompted largely by economic consideration he wanted to use the set of the company's main auditorium show for the morning children's show he had been assigned.

The play then was to be set in a fairground. The cast and director talked together exchanging ideas on a story line. They considered, for example, what it was about fairs that children liked and disliked and to this end the director had actually visited several classes in a school talking to children about fairs. Using the potential audience's own experiences in this way was aimed at insuring the relevance and comprehensibility of the play and made possible the inclusion of such touches as calling the skeleton in the ghost train 'skelington' as most young children apparently do.

The discussions were deeply concerned with the social statement that the play would make to the audience. The suggestion of basing the story around a pickpocket was generally approved of, providing that it did not simply present a pickpocket as 'bad' but pointed out that it could well be an unfair social system which forced a lad to make a living in such a way. The play should deal with the fact that people who commit criminal acts are not necessarily essentially 'bad' people.

The exploration of this was taken as the theme and ways of getting this across to an audience of five to eight year olds set the problem.

After discussions lasting about one week a story line gradually emerged, which I summarise here, using, for convenience, the names which the author finally gave the characters.

Mr. Bartholomew has died leaving the fair to his son, Tumalty. His wicked Uncle Ur has hidden this fact from Tumalty and his friend Fiona and helped by a sycophantic, weedy character called Notch, is running the fair himself, concerned only to make a huge profit from it through exploiting the children who come to visit it.

It was decided that one way to present a case for the 'wrong' doer would be to involve the audience themselves in the action of the play and make them accomplices to the deed. The deed was to be the fact that Tumalty and Fiona had given free rides on the slide to the children, instead of charging them £5, so depriving Uncle Ur of his day's takings.

The basic synopsis was explained to an author, Geoff, plus the number of actors available for the play and their particular skills - tightrope walking, riding monocytes, playing trumpets and so on. Geoff then produced a script which was presented to the cast and:

"We got the script when we came back and read it, it worked immediately and was magic.....it came alive right off the page. Funny that, really good."

(Mickey O'Donaghue)

Rehearsals

Rehearsals began with reading from the script in suitable character voices while the director explained elementary positioning (blocking out), with relation to the set he had worked out. As it was run through without the script actions were devised spontaneously by the actors. Moves done were laughed at, or got a 'that's very effective' from the director and on the basis of that sort of approval were kept in.

The dialogue drifted somewhat from the original script. If a practical piece of 'business' worked well visually, the 'rabbit' (scripted dialogue), was changed to accommodate it.

The author attended rehearsals several times and was unhappy with some of the additions and omissions which had been made because they made the play 'very loose' and stopped it putting across the plot simply and strongly enough to save confusing the children. He also made suggestions for characterisations - certain movements, points of emphasis and so on. He always, however, as did the director, avoided saying that what an actor was doing was wrong. He phrased his suggestions in terms of extending possibilities for action not simply cutting something out. Talk in rehearsals seems implicitly to assume an actor's competence:

Director to actor: "It's all there....it just needs...it's just not quite working."

(transcripts:)

So while the rehearsal process is recognised as a questing for something it seems tacitly assumed that a suitable end product is always there, hidden somewhere in the fabric and simply waiting to be unearthed.

The Company work within a general rationale of democratic production with all involved taking an active part in deciding on the way the final

production will appear to an audience. An undemocratic way of working on the other hand, would be when the director has very fixed ideas on the way a play should be performed and reduces the actors to mere ciphers which give life to his conception.

Inherent in the democratic rationale seems to be the notion of collective discovery which makes an author's attempts to 'own' the text, or a director's attempts to 'own' the interpretation, likely to be successfully resisted.

Ownership of the text does provide one source of tension in producing the play. The author is deemed responsible for the script. The actors claim supremacy in the sphere of the performance - once on stage the very boundedness of the play means that they have final authority. The text and how best to interpret the script and then display the interpretation, is haggled over.

Discontent coalesced over the issue of whether Uncle Ur was angry enough and Tumalty frightened enough over the absence of the money he should have collected to warrant basing an entire play on it. Sensibleness and logic are extended to the probable life histories of the characters and not simply confined to the actions which will actually be seen.

Several actors thought that the solution lay in giving Uncle Ur an urgent reason for needing the money which would make his extreme anger more evidently explicable. Geoff pointed out that if you did that, for example - Ur needs the money to pay off a gambling debt or to buy a sweetie-melting machine for the fair - both suggestions made by actors - then the audience would be able to see his point of view and possibly begin to side with him against Tumalty.

All agreed that Ur's selfish anger must be stressed and ways of doing this were discussed. The final alterations which were made were made in all three spheres of the production i.e. the author altered bits of the text, the actors altered the way they communicated that text and the technical effects (lighting, sound, and other visuals), were adapted.

The badinage between actors and author was couched in apologetic terms but each equally laid claim to a particular sphere of final competence:

Chris "It's not a vindictive thing.....it's just that
(Actor to author) we know what works".

Geoff "I'm sorry to attack ideas that I didn't come up
(Author to actor) with, but why are they (i.e. the ghost costumes
 which had been added to facilitate a bit of
 'business') there?".

(transcripts, p.368)

Chris gives the actor unquestionable authority as to the practical business of portrayal and maintaining the play's coherence as a reasonable representation.

Geoff's claim concerns the fact that the play as a whole should present understandable characters who perpetrate logical actions with the attention of the audience being focused on those actions which importantly carry forward and display the point of the play. Geoff is concerned to maintain the play's structured coherence in exploring a theme.

Both, however, actually run through a part of the play and having done it and formed an opinion at the 'gut level' then proceed with the retrospective analytic work using presumed audience reaction (extrapolated from

themselves as audience) and actual audience reaction (the play was, in one sense, never finished as the Company used audience reaction as a basic for alteration during the actual public run), to ratify or vilify judgements.

The final rule is: make the idea concrete and then consider the claims. The concrete form, however, is never divorced from the claim and it is in setting up claims for the fitness of a certain action to fulfill its function that the artness of the enterprise is constantly maintained and reaffirmed.

"It's status as art is what we confer upon it in regarding it as the embodiment of a claim".

(Taylor, 1966, p.180)

The author, director and actor do not simply describe what is to be done but are able also to provide acceptable reasons for why it is done. Reasons grounded in, and constitutive of, images of themselves as 'creative' are the most persuasive. Norms of originality and creativity are institutionally prevalent in theatre work.

Consider the following discussion between the Director (J) and an actor (C):

J. "Geoff is having a look at the moment at the script to see if he can follow up one suggestion of Bodger's which is that we try and add five minutes into the show somewhere..."

C. "Which I don't altogether agree with...."

J. "Find another...."

C. "Did Bodger watch it.....?"

J. "Yes".

C. "All the way through?"

J. "Yea"

F. "Yea...he was upstairs...".

J. "It was his...a request if you like from the top. Uummmmm."

C. "Is that an artistic request or a...eeer...a managerial one?"

J. "No. It's an artistic one. He felt that at the moment...that there ought to be another five minutes."

(Appendix, p.359)

From the conversation several assumptions that actors and directors work with in getting the work of production accomplished can be drawn out.

Bodger is only granted a valid opinion on the basis of his having seen the whole play. Art demands that one look at the product in its entirety; it demands to be considered in its completeness. Such a claim is part also of an actor's rhetoric for dismissing the reviews of critics who slink out before the end of a play. (See also chapter eight).

The rightness of the work can, and must, be, "felt". When people say that a thing 'feels right' or that 'it works', as is heard often in the theatre, what they are saying is that it is seen to be in accordance with certain rules of correctness for that particular artistic product. The rules for deciding on correctness always consider the thing in itself (viz. Raffel, 1974, p.154).

That the vocabulary used is one of emotion also suggests that the performance itself provides criteria for its evaluation and that such criteria concern its ability to invoke emotion in the audience.

To bring 'managerial' constraints to bear on the production is taken to undermine its status as art in that it makes consideration of factors extraneous to the thing itself. One rule for seeing art then is to 'focus on the thing itself'. The display that this is being done is taken up also as a rule for producing art. Legitimate grounds for doing a thing in a particular way involve consideration of their artfulness and any other considerations are secondary, or worse, inimical to the success of the enterprise.

The director acted as diplomat in this debate talking to the author and actors privately and relating to each, the outcome of the discussions with the other.

One particular problem of production then, arises over differences in opinion as to what the play is to say and how it is to say it. In solving this through group discussion what is actually happening is that the status of the play as artistic enterprise and the group as creative artists are constantly reaffirmed.

The company discussions dealt endlessly with why such a thing should happen, what doing it in a particular way would be likely to suggest and the moral aspects of suggesting such a thing. What this effectively accomplished was the articulation of the intentionality and method of assembly of the enterprise and it is precisely method and intention that must be appreciated for a thing to be termed 'art' rather than placed in some other category.

Taking style to be 'the grammar that permits us to see in the concrete an intention' (Raffel, 1974, p.165) the production process is continuously aware of its position as enunciator of style. In many artistic enterprises the creative act is carried out by one person alone, even though the production or marketing of the art form may require the enlistment of a large number of support personnel whose activities are deemed a matter of craft or business acumen rather than artistic sensibility (see Becker, 1974 and 1978). Theatre on the other hand, is a form of art where the internal procedures of its invention are necessarily publicised during rehearsals and the actors may jointly constitute and legislate for, the rule by which their production may be acknowledged.

In this way they both work from, and build up, their communities. Whatever tensions arose over matters of interpretation or whatever, that such questions were the right sort of questions to raise and their solution a bonafide part of the creative process was never in doubt.

My own observations at the Young Vic concerned exclusively the activities of artistic personnel and did not consider directly the part played by stage managers, set-builders, technical or front of house staff. How the economics of hiring, for example, set-builders and how this constrained the inception of the play have been mentioned earlier. This omission was due to the fact that I specifically chose to observe actors at work and they had no professional contact with the support personnel whose activities were controlled through the director.

Becker (1974) concentrates precisely on how the artist's dependence on support personnel constrains the range of artistic possibilities available to him and how cooperation is mediated by the use of artistic conventions,

whose existence both makes the production of work easier and innovation more difficult.

Lyons (1974) provides us with a specifically theatrical study looking at how resource constraints in a semi-professional theatre group effected that group's aesthetic decisions.

Closer to the present project of examining how, rather than style being exclusively a product of an autonomous set of shared understandings various factors impinge on possible styles of participating in performance, is Rosenblum's study of 'Style as Social Process' (1978).

She undertakes a comparative study of news, advertising, and fine arts photography to demonstrate that "in addition to other explanations of style, style is also a function of the structural characteristics and constraints associated with typical situations in which photographs are made", (ibid.p.422). She treats artistic conventions as intervening variables, sandwiched between the organisation of production and the characteristics of the final outcome which, as she notes, differs from those approaches (Becker, 1974 and Burns, 1972) which see shared agreements as a species of independent variables that account for recurrent patterned activity and the objective products of that activity. Such an approach is an attempt to:

"Modify theories which tend to overemphasise the cultural autonomy of style, its independence from social structure and the 'out-there-ness' of socially unlocated shared meanings".

(Rosenblum, op.cit.:p.423)

Considering the Audience

That performance of a play depends crucially on the presence and interaction of actors and audience was reflected in the constant consideration of what the audience would be likely to understand and the conventions it was likely to be able to mobilise.

Acceptable questions and answers raised during the rehearsals were generally in terms that dealt with audience:

"It's going to have to be a bit more rehearsed....I don't think the kids will understand that.....really".

(transcripts)

"Except that Tumalty is in the wrong. He has been giving free rides....he is in the wrong...the point that the kids actually think that his wrong is not all that wrong 'cos they haven't got the money and it's nice to give free rides if you can, but this old cunt is insisting on having it and he's going to fucking break his back if he can't give it to them".

(Appendix, p.380)

The whole production process then, is tied to considerations of the audience in a number of ways. They must be able to understand what is said - the grounding of the play in recognisable incidents from a child's everyday life acknowledges this. They must also - and this is what gives the theatrical medium its peculiarity - actively participate in the saying, and it is that which provided the basis for the beliefs and organisational practices which made up the routine work strategies of the rehearsal procedure.

Rehearsal is a process of 'repetition, simplification, exaggeration, rhythmic action and the transformation of 'natural' sequences of behaviour

into composed sequences". (Schechner, 1976, p61) Through repeating an action in a variety of ways that way which most clearly communicates the desired message is picked out. It is picked out taking cognisance of the play's overall message and the everyday life world of the audience for whom the play is intended. Transforming natural sequences of behaviour into composed sequences is effectively making the displaying of the rules of portrayal which govern the doing more important than the doing itself; this in drama is relegated to second place. The performed quality of the act is stressed over and above the act itself.

The Fayre Play production dealt very directly with the interface between the real and the theatrical in so far as it was dealing with an age group purportedly less sophisticated than adults in managing social situations which involved constant changes of ways of being involved. In fact the children were a good deal more sophisticated than they were initially given credit for. They actually preempted the use that was to be made of them in making ghost noises to frighten Ur and Notch in the haunted house and spontaneously began 'haunting' noises before the actors asked them to.

We now turn to look at how the problem of including the children in the action to make it a lively experience for them, whilst at the same time providing them with ways for maintaining their distance from the action, was dealt with.

Fayre Play was a story to be told by means of theatre, not an opportunity to attempt to maintain a fictional reality.

The company as a whole espoused an entertainment ideology, the aim being to give the audience an 'enjoyable night out'. It is this notion which is implicit in many descriptions of what had been considered a 'good night:-

"It was just great you know...they just turned it into a pantomime"

(Labanowski, transcript)

"(of Canterbury Tales)..they suddenly found themselves in an area which was so successful that the come back off the audience was absolutely phenomenal. It was like...at times it was just like opera.....they stood and cheered".

(Mickey, transcript)

This was stressed in a number of ways and I will suggest that it is this very stressing which provides the basis for the audience's spontaneity and close involvement with the action; they 'know where they stand'.

The relationship between characters and audience can be brought very close (close in the sense of the ease with which they mutually manipulate rules), as the rules for involvement in the production are clearly stated in the constant announcement of its status as play. The theatrical occasion then becomes a truly sociable event, its sociability being celebrated precisely through the communal ability to recognise (or reformulate) the rules for playing. It becomes a genuinely participatory occasion that goes beyond stimulating private emotion in response to a constructed illusion (note that you may only participate in others lives, not your own), and becomes an expression of community through actively constructing an acknowledged fiction.

Convention and rule, then, form the basis for intimate expression: they liberate rather than imprison. As Sennett argues in the work already mentioned (Sennett, 1974), the modern tendency to attempt to dismiss convention and artifice in a search for intimacy is misguided and doomed to failure as such an attempt is based on narcissism.

I hope to show that, rather than distrusting convention as promulgator of inauthentic behaviour this Young Vic production revels in ritual, providing an occasion for people to 'engage in the social compact to be rule governed' (Sennett, 1974, p.317) and thereby creating an impersonal space where the audience can be free of the outside world, and in consciously perfecting those rules, in union with others, truly participate in the Play, in every sense.

Stressing the Performance Aspect, Techniques of Inclusivity and Distance

Play and Playing

Johan Huizinga in Homo Ludens, isolates three defining aspects of play and, while playing and attending a Play are not by any means wholly synonymous, that they have a common root is no coincidence. Play is voluntary (Huizinga, 1949, p27) i.e. it is 'never imposed by moral duty or physical necessity'.

It is also a 'disinterested' activity - 'it steps out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own. 'Disinterested' in no way means that it is not completely absorbing; it does mean that there is about it an 'only pretend' quality; it is a self-distanced activity.

It is thirdly a 'secluded' activity - 'it is played out within certain limits of time and place, containing its own course and meaning.

This is also part of its self-distanced character, it must have an end.

The first public showing of Fayre Play caused concern precisely because the ending of the show was not strong enough:

M. "It doesn't end"

J. "I know what you mean"

C. "They're not aware of the conventions of endings...."

M. "We need to make it final"

(transcripts:)

The characters originally just waved goodbye briefly and left the stage to silence until one of the teachers accompanying the children started clapping.

It would seem that simple wave is a commonplace everyday life convention and is the kind of gesture a character could use from within the play, it is not, however, a strongly theatrical one and insufficient to signal the end of the theatrical 'frame'. (Goffman, 1976)

Sennett too stresses the importance of the boundedness of the play:

"Freedom as an endless state is not what children aim at, the (marbles) rules often have messy beginnings, baroque middles, but always have clear termination points".

(Sennet, 1977, p.319)

To play happily requires that those three conditions are fulfilled. To participate in the performance of a Play requires that they be respected also, though it must be noted that the voluntary aspect of play is the one most subject to change between the two playings. If going to the theatre is a school outing it is not necessarily a voluntary attendance. The characteristics that acknowledge self-distance are, however, crucial to the theatrical enterprise.

Self-Distance and Identity

To distance oneself from a theatrical event is not a case of restricting levels of feeling nor one of taking one's involvement in the event in a less than serious manner. It does demand a particular sort of involvement and one that is aware of the conventions applicable to the event and aware of those conventions not as definitive rules but as productions liable to change and manipulation. It is in other words, through an individual's interest in the content of rules themselves and the recognition of his ability to interactively control them rather than be controlled by them, that he may objectify actions and put them at a distance from his Self. Such self-distance is the skill which children acquire in order to be able to play with each other (see Piaget, 1965, e.g.) Through erecting rules children establish their own play world and such rules accomplish self-distance by, for example, putting off mastery over others as an immediate end - so handicaps are invented to allow a boy to play with his younger brother. He will then play to win but that is the aim not the substance of the play itself.

Distancing allows one to modify the simple direct response to an immediate here-and-now interpretation of an external event, by mobilising a second category of interpretation dependent on perceiving the event through the operating conventions.

The kind of emotion expressed is dependent on the meanings abstracted from the situation and the awareness of the rule-boundedness of the theatrical event directs that meaning.

At Fayre Play after the director had requested that the technical effects be stepped up during the sequence in the haunted house so that the entire auditorium was very dark and the ghost noises very loud, one young boy had to be taken outside as he was overcome by fear and had started crying.

He had stopped at experiencing the immediate feeling of 'fear in the dark' whereas presumably the other children had gone on to a second order of fear which drew on this immediate sense but was mediated through an awareness of the performance situation and the community of the audience and although no less truly frightened had gained sufficient self-distance to enjoy the fun of frightening themselves.

The child who left has lost the capacity to appreciate playacting, he had failed to keep the theatrical milieu at a distance from his Self. Maintaining self-distance allows a boundary to be built around the Self and this in turn facilitates a truly expressive Self - the very opposite in effect to that Self absorption which measures social reality in psychological terms, and prompts Sennett phrase "makes members of an intimate society artists deprived of an art" (1976 p.29).

Fayre Play demanded public expression from the audience - it demanded verbal replies to questions e.g. deciding whether or not Notch should be allowed to stay and run the fair with Tumalty after Ur had been banished.

To the extent that this style of theatre requires an active rather than a passive role for the audience, the translation of all matters into matters of personality as is promoted by the passivity of the mass media spectator is avoided (viz. Sennett, op.cit.)

The child is given an identity as an audience member which liberates him from a strict concern with personality.

The importance of the community of the audience is recognised by the actors in discussing ways of limiting fright in the play.

- C. "...when they go in the ghost train that is the worst thing that could happen to anyone...it's not kind of....it's actually the worst place anywhere...it's Hades...and I think that it ought to go that far...
- M. "...so that when he says 'I'll put him in the ghost train' there ought to be 'ooooooooooooo.....'"
- J. "It's that strength...even more evil."
- F. "They won't be frightened by a total."
- G. "They are all sitting together as well, they are not by themselves, not in front of the tele and their mums out....."

(transcripts, p.367)

These two facts - that the children actively participate and are one of a community of participants who collectively establish a public space, are facts that are importantly different in e.g. TV watching and going to the theatre.

The strength of the theatre lies here in its engaged impersonality. The audience 'can invest in a good deal of passion in an impersonal situation and think of expression in the situation as a matter of the remaking and perfecting of (those rules to give greater pleasure and prompt greater sociability with others.' (Sennett, op.cit.:p.315)

Proclaiming the Performance

Unlike, for example, naturalistic films which attempt to dissolve their medium, Fayre Play stresses at every opportunity its theatricality; it revels in proclaiming its nature as a dramatic performance.

It is not an escape attempt, a case of sitting in a seat trying to pretend that the world you are looking at removes you from the world from which you do the looking. It is rather an immensely sociable affair within which, as participant, (rather than spectator with its overtone of passivity), you acknowledge and celebrate its rule-boundedness and its conventions, together with the rest of the audience.

Bartholomew Fair also emphasises the performed-for-an-audience aspect of the event.

A character from the play begins with a prologue:

Jim: "I don't want you to get arty farty about this, just sit back and enjoy it because Jonson wrote it and, if he was alive today..... he'd be four hundred years old! Don't worry about the length 'cos this book here (he holds up a Penguin copy of Jonsons' works), has Volpone and The Alchemist in it as well, so Bartholomew Fair is only this long. And we've cut this bit here (rips out some pages) and the first half of act II (tears out some more), and I'm adlibbing this bit so don't worry if you haven't brought cushions 'cos it won't be too awful". etc.

As he is doing this people are still arriving and one lady is signalling furiously to her friend who has gone up into the balcony and whom she obviously wants to come down and sit with her.

Jim takes this up and says:

"What's the matter madam?. Is your friend up there, well come down then sir, don't be embarrassed, you just come down and we'll all laugh at you".

The same character announces the interval saying:

"We've got fifteen minutes to clear this (the set) up and you've got fifteen minutes to clear off and have something to drink".

(transcripts:)

Such banter is the prerogative of non-illusory theatre, unscheduled off-stage incidents may be picked up and used to carry the business of the play forward. Illusory theatre must ignore such things at the risk of breaking the fantasy; it is in this sense a more fragile fabrication.

MacCannell (1977, p159) explains that just seeing a sight is not a touristic experience:

"An authentic touristic experience involves not merely connecting a marker to a sight but a participation in a collective ritual, in connecting ones 'own marker to a sight already marked by others'. In the same way just being at the theatre is not automatically to become an audience. An audience collects itself into a body through its voluntary negotiation and manipulation of the rules for attending to a performance."

To take an example of this we shall look at the preshow which worked as follows:

Ur and Notch stood in the foyer rubbing their hands together and saying to the arriving children "Go on little children, go and have a ride at the fair".

In the main auditorium Tumatly and Fiona stood next to a slide near which was a large notice proclaiming '£5 a slide'.

Tumatly looked at the audience and asked 'does anyone want a ride?' Several kids put up their hands at the first request, with some prompting from friends 'go on, go on'.

Tumatly then asked the volunteer: "Have you got £5", to which the child shook its head. "Have you got £1 then?" "No".

Tumalty then addressed the audience as a whole: "Should we let him have a go anyway?"

To which they replied 'yes' (on about the tenth ride some started saying 'No'), and Tumalty agreed to let them go on the slide anyway. The child was put on the silde and the audience taught to sing a song as each child slid down.

"One, two, three, four, five, go for a ride on Tumalty's slide, hey o, hey o, du du dudum dum dum" (this was the popular football chant, complete with hands in the air on the 'hey o' bit).

The audience were exhorted by ruses such as, "no more free rides till you sing louder!"

Ur came in from the foyer shouting for Tumalty, which stopped the preshow, and sent Tumalty scuttling into the audience to hide. Ur then calculated how much money he should have received, asking those who had rides to put up their hands, doing a quick multiplication by £5, and then this number was used throughout the play, i.e. it changed every day.

This caused some consternation amongst the actors:

- C. "You know that we've got this notice for five pounds right....which means in effect that you're only going to be able to charge about five pounds...which means when we count them up and find out how much precisely we owe you....."
- M. "It means that you have to be good at mathematics..."
- C. "It might only be fifty pounds....."
- J. "Yea....tomorrow there are fifty children so if everyone has a go then it is two hundred and fifty pounds."
- C. "So this figure of two hundred and fifty.....if there's four hundred kids then you've got some bloody working out to do....you need a pocket calculator."

- M. "Do you know how you should count, you should do Irish counting... look...mumble mumble mumble....that's two hundred and fifty pounds".
- C. "No no no...if you invite them to put their hands up and count them then make it real. What you're talking about....."

o

(transcripts)

Various things are going on in the preshow which can be explained in terms of constituting an audience through teaching them the mode of involvement.

Tumalty addresses the whole audience - this recognises them as a collectivity, at least in terms of potential answerers of questions.

It also demands a verbal answer - silence is no rule of this performance. Establishing that meant that when Ur had a line,

"Children have more money now than ever before, they don't know what to do with their money",

there were vociferous and anguished screams of 'no, no they don't', from the audience. They all seemed aware of the classic pantomime convention for when one character is creeping up on another and equally screamed out: "Behind you, behind you....".

The prompting from friends for someone to try a ride was actually saying: "Go on go on, you do it first so that through your embarrassment we can find out the rules-in-play for having a slide and save our own".

Tumalty lets the audience as a body decide whether any particular child should have a go. This draws the children into the action and gives them the power to control the events taking place to some extent. This control over the play then allows them a crucial distance from it, whilst at the same time promoting a close involvement in it. They will be mentioned personally in the play several times as one of the £5's owing to Ur.

Hiding Tumalty under their legs and 'lying' to Ur also draws them into the action, but in such a way that they take communal responsibility.

When, after several children had had slides, there started shouts of 'no, no' in response to the question 'should we give them a free ride?' what has happened is that some of the children have become certain enough of the rules for participating that they now have the confidence to experiment with them. They have learnt that you can reformulate rules, that they are not 'immutable truths but conventions to be controlled, they may be played with' (Sennett, 1977).

Not all children were wholly adept at handling the rules, there were some mistakes as when, in answer to Ur's threatening 'have you seen Tumalty?' one little girl piped up 'Yes, I know where he is', and got enthusiastically hissed and giggled at and was so brought back into line by the rest of the audience.

One child also responded affirmatively to Tumalty's 'have you got £5?', but Tumalty led her back to the expected answer by setting it up in the next question.

Both the children as members of the audience, and actors as leaders of the play, give direction to participants; they 'show them the ropes.'

Fayre Play also stresses the performance aspect of the occasion by underlining the actors' positions as performers as well as characters. By this I mean that, in allowing the actors to display their skills - e.g. playing the tumpet, walking the tightrope or riding a monocycle, they perform stunts which are able to stand in their own rights as bits of entertainment, over and above their part in the characterisations and role-playing that the actors achieve.

Theatre that does involve the audience closely in the sense of physical proximity and interaction, that leaps between styles of playing realism to fantasy; the live pigs and handing out gingerbread of Bartholomew Fair to imagining yourself in a ghost train with the visual aid of one cardboard cutout, using the slide, being ghosts, coping with direct address and answer does, so successfully because it stresses the playful nature of the event. It displays its rule-guidedness clearly and through this creates a genuine public space where people may express, or more strongly celebrate sociability through their mutual ability to be so guided.

In looking at the Company's work in this way I have hoped to show how a collection of strangers may be constantly provided with cues to enable them to establish the style of the event; how the physical context structures, and the actors exploit, opportunities for particular styles of involvement and how, through stressing the conventions in operation and using them as the basis of expressability rather than considering them its antithesis, the audience negotiates the style of the event and leaves the building having spent 'a lovely night at the theatre'.

The mounting of this production at the Young Vic had as a constant concern the provision of clues, expressable codes and rules for the style of the audience and actors' interaction in the theatrical event.

Mileage was made sometimes out of tensions generated precisely about legitimate modes of involvement but never to the extent of anarchy or anguish.

The performance events themselves were endlessly exciting, the spontaneous interaction between actors and audience effectively altering the event of each replaying.

It would seem that Baker's claim is contradicted:

"The many technical developments which had overtaken the theatre in the course of the period (i.e. late Victorian) to produce a strict separation between performers and spectators - the use of a stage curtain, a picture frame proscenium, a darkened auditorium and stage spotlighting - these had taken the actor to new heights of professionalism. He was now, as never before in control of his audience. Indeed it is possible that his role will be never quite so distinct again, for some modern trends in the theatre, such as towards audience involvement and improvised performances appear to be reversing this process. In doing so they are blurring the distinction between the world inside the theatre and that outside it and there is a risk that the actor will be devalued as a professional.

(Baker, 1978, p.161)

There are occasions that are specifically structured to confuse those present as to the nature of the occasion as with, for example, Guerilla theatre, and this may result in a 'blurring of the distinction' between worlds. This blurring, however, I would argue is not so much to do with the fact that the actor is not cut off from his audience by the physical means which proscenium arch staging affords but by the paucity of clues to decoding the event offered by the protagonists.

Chapter Eight

CRITICS AND ACCOUNTING FOR THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

Critics and Accounting for Theatrical Performance

Critic as Judge

My project is to look at how theatre is constituted as a taken-for-granted cultural institution and how the style of any particular theatrical event and its status as a performance is a matter of practical constitution by the interactional procedures of individuals.

I have looked at accounts of the theatre and Thespian work given by actors, author, and directors, indicating how accounts constitute the topic itself and constitute it in a particular way through employing certain available rhetorics and calling on explicable institutional norms to describe dramatic activities.

I have displayed some of the resources available to members in constituting theatricality.

One particular set of accounts, specifically and professionally produced as talk about the theatre and providing one resource for such talk, are those reviews written by theatre critics for circulation in newspapers.

These reviews are readily available to the practitioners and publics from which an audience will be drawn and may be used by that audience to direct their gaze to particular aspects of the drama, recommending such aspects for their serious attention. They offer examples to individuals of what would count as successfully accomplished 'cultured' talk and, through this ability to carry off such talk, collect themselves into a community of competent theatre goers with the stock-of-knowledge of theatre at hand necessary to be able to provide, for example, formulable criteria for a performance being either more or less successful.

Commonsensically newspaper reviews written by dramatic critics offer readers a description and evaluation of a theatrical event. They are arguably of especial import for the theatre as the performance of a play is an essentially ephemeral, unrepeatable, undertaking with a play, be it performed in the same place, to the same people, by any particular company, only able to be performed once. The theatrical institution and a text may continue, a performance, dependent as it is on so many contingencies, is unique.

It has been said that 'dramatic criticism is to the artists what ornithology is to birds' but it has equally been argued that for practitioners, for the actor-as-blind-artist, criticism has a particularly important part to play. There is no opportunity to put the performance and the critic's views on it side by side as there is with, for example, literary works as the thing criticised and the criticism itself has no period of coexistence. (see Emmet, 1973, p.5)

Reviews also function to alert a potential audience to an event and to offer recommendations as to which plays are 'worth' seeing and for what particular reasons. That reviews are indexically tied to the media through which they are expressed means that the publics being aimed at and the criteria of 'worth' being chosen will vary in each case. So a particular newspaper will require a review to be written to accord with the image of its 'reader profile' and one which stresses aspects of the performance deemed of greatest interest to the group described in such a profile. These criteria of worth are as likely to include such things as the star-value, sex appeal or local origin of the actors involved in a particular performance as they are to express acceptably 'aesthetic' criteria of evaluation such as 'the subtle handling of narrative expectation' or use of 'imagery'.

Similarly talk about how 'good' a criticism is will employ particular rhetorics which are dependent on the status of the discussant - as member of a public or as a practitioner and within those categories will alter with the perceived utility of a review - whether that be to fill the column inches of an arts page in a newspaper with the sort of journalism its readers expect or whether the critic is taken as 'defender of the arts' and his review taken as an attempt to judge a play's aesthetic worth according to accepted theatrical standards.

Everyday discussions of critics and their work tend to estimate the 'accuracy' of a review in terms of an assumed 'correct' way of understanding the play (see, for instance, Esslin's study of a number of criticisms, 1973 and 1976) and censure such things as the failure of critics to achieve this understanding or to concur on a performance's merit. As I hope to show through the following study of critics and reviews, however, such reviews are not a simple report or substantive account of a particular performance but are, in the case of newspaper reviews the product of an activity which treats theatre as news and as such provides us with insight into the production of news as well as the constitutive conventions available to the critic for describing the concerns of a theatrical production.

How descriptions of criticisms vary according to the social situation of the person providing that description may be explained through a consideration (following Chaney, 1972) of the "organising terms of significance" they employ. Actors and critics may be related through the similar topic of "theatre" but they are located within particular institutions which have specific norms and are thus concerned with that topic in differing ways, they employ, in other words, distinct and often opposed terms of significance.

As Chaney puts it:

"An actor uses significance in relation to a context as a way of saying that from a particular stance one's perception of the environment should be structured in this way."

(Chaney, 1972, p.2)

The practitioners, i.e. directors and actors considered in this chapter organise their talk of critics employing the term critic-as-judge as the significant one and one that provides a prescriptive description of criticism. Dependent upon this notion of critic-as-judge practitioners have built up a sophisticated rhetoric through which they discount 'the crits' through listing a number of competency criteria for adequate judgement which many critics do not fulfill. So the critic may be decried on the basis of such things as being a less than impartial, and an uninformed, sort of judge. Critics, so the practitioner's rhetoric goes, are untrained in the art of acting and incapable of judgement on this count:

"Critics are the only people allowed to take part in an activity and even become judges of it without any training in that activity".

(Osborne, 1977, p.66)

They are also described as offering only highly subjective and partial comments on the performance with that partiality stemming from their personal relationship with the performer, author or whoever. Ionesco sees them as presuming a prescriptive role as 'prophets of fashion' whose 'setting norms and making rules are ways of seeking authority and taking command.' (1978, p.650) Without training they position themselves in some sense above the author and this position is practically enforced through the critics ability to "open and shut theatres' doors to the playwrights work." (idem).

They are also described as being dishonest in their criticism because their main concern is 'to be caressed by their own received ideas' (Osborne, op.cit.:68), and their aim to develop their power and authority vis-à-vis their readers.

Critics are seen as being tied to their age, its ideologies, language and social milieu in a way that theatre practitioners refuse for themselves.

"For the artist independence is everything. For the ideologist and for the critic authority and power are important."

(Ionesco, op.cit.:649)

This particular version of one of the reasons why critics reviews may be discounted at the same time provides a version of "artist" as someone capable of throwing off any enslavement to public opinion and fashion in the search for noble generalisation. Whereas the critic's dependence on keeping his readers is seen to constrain him by a concern with 'being liked', this concern is not admitted into a notion of aesthetic endeavour which stands outside such mundane concerns.

Critics as judges are furthermore highly fallible, frequently contradict each other and make the statements they do in an achievedly objective way so not to appear confused in their opinions. (see Haddaway and Holly transcripts in appendix).

Thespians talk about critics, in sharing excuses and legitimation, persuading co-conversationalist to see each concrete instance though unrelated in themselves as combining to produce a coherent set of reasons for why critics are 'not to be taken seriously', produce incontrovertible evidence for judgement-negators that are employed and thus build up an orderly and sensible (if unjust) world.

It is through the actors' and authors' use of the same sort of reasons for negating criticisms, in their drawing on similar rhetorics to conduct their conversation about critics, that we are given a display of a unified, extant Thespian world, which operates somewhere unspecified and is the authorising source for such judgement-negators. (For a discussion of institutionalisation see chapter 2 of this thesis.)

I have looked briefly at how actors and authors use a normative order as a persuasive explanation of their conduct. I turn now to an interview with Michael Billington, (one of whose reviews we shall study in depth) where he displays his knowledge of the set of circumstances which artists allude to in the face of (unfavourable) criticism and in answering it in his own talk he refers to, and constitutes this list as a regular feature of the theatrical world. Both parties use this 'list' as the "source of, and ready explanation for, the distinctive patterns of behaviour" and to make their affairs appear orderly and rational to any outsider who hears their talk and employs it as an embedded instruction for seeing their world as they describe it.

The accounts we study in this chapter may be taken, then, not as more or less accurate in providing a substantive description of the theatrical world which is their topic but as actively constructing that very order which they describe. By picking out certain features of a critic's work and relating them to current Thespian maxims on the position of the critic in the theatre a sense of structure is given to the code which may be used by actors to discount the import of critics and their reviews.

As Zimmerman notes in the preface to Weider's work:

"...the plurisituationality of the rules of the code is a situated accomplishment, or outcome, of the skilled use of the code rather a precondition for its use. That is, the actors' sense of the 'relative constancy' of the meaning of the code for conduct across situations is accomplished in situations; the equivalence of behaviours classifiable as fulfilling the code is a consequence of the use of the code to analyse behaviour, rather than a prior achievement making the code usable for that purpose behaviours encountered in the setting are subject to analysis in terms of rules and, thus, are normatively controlled. The reflexive use of natural language makes observable, and thus constitutes, the features of members' social reality."

(Weider, op,cit., p.18-19 emphasis
in original)

"Telling the code" is a multi-formulative and multi-consequential act of such natural language accounts and an individual's ability to formulate descriptions of events which exploit knowledge of the code and provide one more instance of its use are simultaneously displays of membership in a group for which the code is an important organisational device.

Thespians grounds for complaining about critics are that critics are subjective (arbitrary, contradictory and biased by personal dislikes) in their judgements; cerebral (having different concerns from the artists); and uncreative (only doing what they do because they cannot do anything else).

That they are subjective is tied to their inability to make judgements. That they are cerebral is tied to the proper ways of being involved in the theatre.

Billington provides us with accounts of how such specific changes may be dismissed and he also gives us a number of rules which guide him in his work. The charges which he answers and the rules which he formulates as guidelines ("have a Cause", for example), are only available to use through talk about them. They may be talked about as if they could be neatly

produced if such a request were to be made, as if critics had some useful hand book and authors and actors could refer to some written comprehensive catalogue. Yet what both groups are doing is taking the observed facts and offering recipes, explanations and theories in such a fashion that they self-evidently account for the facts which they discuss.

This is a process of 'idealization', (as is my own organisation of the idealizations which I am noting as useful devices in the work of critics) analysing and accounting for behaviour in terms of rules. As Zimmerman and Pollner (1970, p.84-85), put it:

"According to Schutz, the world as it presents itself to the member operating under the jurisdiction of the attitude of everyday life, is a historical, already organized world.... The member takes for granted that the social world and, more specifically, the aspect of it relevant to his interest at hand is actually or potentially assembled by rule or recipe. That is he may know, or take it that he could determine by inquiry, the rules or recipes whereby he and others might gear into or understand some activity. Put another way, the member assumes that such structures are actually or potentially locatable and determinable in their features by recourse to such practice as asking for or giving instructions concerning a given matter. Everyday activities and the perceived connected features present themselves with the promise that they may be understood and acted upon in practically sufficient ways by competent employment of appropriate proverbs, paradigms, motives, organisational charts and the life."

We look at how Billington as critic provides such appropriate proverbs during the following account of his work.

Subjectivity is unavoidable but a Good Thing

"But the essence of a critic I think, is that you have to shut out other peoples' opinions for long enough in order....you know....to be yourself and that is very difficult sometimes actually. It's difficult if you go to the theatre with wildly opinionated people uuummm... and I would say I would never go to a theatre full of actors....It is difficult actually, just preserving your own vision of what is happening."

There has been a frank admission of the fact that knowing an author personally does have an effect on how one can write about his work. For that reason Billington sets himself the principle of never talking to an author before he sees his play and never asking him what it is that he is trying to do in it. Even reading a play before seeing it at the theatre is unwise but this lack of wisdom is on the grounds of such pre-knowledge taking away from the excitement of the performance.

The critic, then, talks about subjectivity and bias in reviewing but it is in a way quite different to his complainants discussion of the same point. They ally subjectivity with an inability to judge, whereas Billington is only concerned that his reaction be insufficiently subjective and guided by others' opinions as well; this would be the problem for him.

The critic is meant to offer his own statement of his own reactions and anything else is contaminating his work in some way. There is, then, no attempt to gain objectivity through mass consultation, but there is a sense in which the connotations of subjectivity as 'too personal to be of any use' are counteracted and that is through the presentation of his work as based on 'informed' subjectivity.

Discounting any attempt by critics to be just the 'man in the stalls'-critics are there on free tickets, they see four plays a week every week of the year which differentiates them from the ordinary man - he presents as the main point of being a critic his ability to 'relate one play to another'.

"Or you can put a work in some kind of context and I would always be more interested as a reader, in the opinions of a man who has seen twenty Hamlets than I would in the opinion of someone who has seen one Hamlet."

There is, then, a sense in which he does offer more than a (derogatively) subjective viewpoint. He has a comprehensive knowledge of types of plays and theatre and talks in terms of having progressed through a career structure in expanding his theatrical knowledge (appendix, p.393-416). He acknowledges the arrogance of the position of a critic:

"If you set up in business as a critic you are saying uuummm... I think I know what is good for people. There is a kind of terrible arrogance inseparable from the job, it...I make it sound a bit heavy...I mean what....all that I am saying is that a critic should point out, I think really, the defects of the theatre in any given time...."

(Appendix, p.403)

He legitimates the arrogance as necessary to provide a review which will interest the readers of the paper as "there is no point in reading you actually if you don't sometimes blow up your own commitments and theories." It is also necessary if the critic is to be seen as a creative writer in his own right.

Here we get an answer to the allegations of authors that the critic is a frustrated artist.

The Critic as Creative Artist

The critic does have a function to report on the event in a purely descriptive manner advertising a play and simply letting a potential audience know what is on at any given time. He has a function beyond that, however, and that is to modify the art he is writing about. It is through his description of his job as including this genuine concern for the art form with which he deals that the critic makes claims to be talked of as an artist himself. The critic is creative as he may actively form the way in which theatrical history progresses. He has the power to encourage writers in their work and to illustrate this he provides us with the example of Pinter being on the point of giving up his writing of plays and being saved from doing just this by a good review of his work from Harold Hobson. The critic picks on the positive proverbial incidents whereas the authors and actors used a slightly different store of stories. Using the example of Bernard Shaw he claims that he:

"Would rather be a good critic than a bad artist honestly. I'd rather have written Bernard Shaw's dramatic criticism than I would have written the plays that he was writing about. And in fact Shaw's criticisms have lasted longer than most of the plays he was actually writing about.....and therefore it seems to me that it can, as I expressed, only at its very top level become an art in itself if the prose is good and if the opinions are well expressed."

(Appendix, p. 414)

In saying he would rather be a good critic than a bad artist Billington in fact leaves the 'being a good artist' as the higher achievement. He then qualifies this by saying how it is possible for a critic to be placed even higher on the meritorious scale than the author and in doing this he makes exactly the same point as Osborne did in the article already cited but makes it this time for the critic rather than for one author - the criticism now lasts longer than the plays.

The critic is capable of artistry in writing a review (if he is not then it is the limited time and space of newspaper journalism which constrains his ability to be 'much more subtle and nuanced' and forces him into a 'kind of hurrah or yaboo attitude'), and is creative himself.

To make an even stronger claim for the critic Billington then answers the charge of uncreativity by offering us a demystified version of the writer as Artist.

"I think there is a romantic ummmm....picture of any creativity as holy however mediocre or shoddy it may be and any act of criticism as somehow ummm....as second rate and parasitic. I would like to demolish that actually, I don't see any virtue in actually churning out ummmm bad novels or bad plays or bad anythings for that matter."

(Appendix, p.415)

Billington is building up a picture of the critic as a crusader with a banner in contradistinction to the authors'/actors' view of him as an uncreative ignoramus who is capable of anything other than a cerebral approach.

Criticism is a cerebral activity

There is an acknowledgement of the excitement of being present at a play, the charge drawn from 'discovering' what a play is saying. There is also the admission of the possibility of criticism being a short term occupation precisely because the palate becomes jaded and it is not possible to maintain the thrill afforded by live performances.

These are two affirmations of theatre as live and wild (in Styran's sense, op.cit.), and yet the phrasing of even these affirmations is done in terms that always includes some notion of employing the intellect:

"So I'm not sure how long one should be a critic.....
actually.....that's another problem....how long you can go
on seeing plays,(.....) and responding to them with any
intelligence or enthusiasm or whatever".

(Appendix: p.400)

Intelligence is mentioned first.

Critics are portrayed as being sensitive about actors 'egos'. A choice and witty phrase used by an American critic:

"I have knocked everything but the knees of the chorus girls
and nature has anticipated me there".

(Appendix: p.410)

or Alan Brien's assessment of Michael Horden's 'Macbeth':

"He looks like an Armenian carpet salesman who has
entered Dunsinane by the back door".

(both comments do have the virtue of being indeed, witty - the choice is wit
or kindness, never simple rudery), should be turned down in appreciation of
the fact that actors (unlike authors who are legitimate targets), must get
up every night and perform and can be both 'physically and p~~h~~ysically
damaged by harsh criticism.

The critic has a heart, then, but the vocabulary he uses to talk of the pleasure he gains from his work is notably different from the actors'. They phrase their speech in more emotive terms stressing a concern with, for example, 'really feeling'.

The greatest personal pleasure in reviewing for the critic is in seeing:

"A new play.....and trying to kind of lasso it in the course of...you know...a certain number of words and in trying to find out what it's about."

(Appendix: p.398)

He attributes his very career to the:

"Puritan urge not to waste anything actually ummmm...it's that English Puritanism when if you see something you must utilise it in some way and if you just go and enjoy it it's not enough."

(Appendix: p.397)

Billington recounts the story of Norman Mailer who had received an adverse review from Gore Vidal and when they met at a party punched Vidal in the face. Vidal's reaction was to retort:

"Words failed Norman as usual."

This example, though flippant, gives us an example of an expression which compares violent emotion with an ability to make detached judgement. There is no heat of the moment response from the critic but a cool rejoinder and, in so far as this is retold as an effective put-down the detached riposte is promoted as the sensible approach.

Criticism as Topic

The approaches to critics and criticism mentioned so far treat them in their own terms. In refuting certain reviews or praising them for particular reasons, the refutations themselves further swell the annals of dramatic criticism by offering 'better' ways of accomplishing criticism and suggestions for overcoming its perceived inadequacies.

I intend to treat criticisms in a different manner by refusing to accept the commonsense view of criticism as offering a judgement of a play but treating it as a topic in itself.

Williams notes (1976, p.76) that there is no necessary association between criticism and judgement, though their alliance is commonly treated as a natural one:

"Criticism as fault finding...depends fundamentally on the abstraction of response from its real situation and circumstances; the elevation to judgement and to an apparently general process, when what always needs to be understood is the specificity of the response, which is not a judgement but practice in active and complex relations with the situation and conditions of the practice and necessarily, with all other practices."

My approach to criticism will question such an assumption as, in the words of Zimmerman and Pollner:

"We propose to suspend conventional interest in the topics of members' practical investigations and urge the placing of exclusive emphasis of inquiry into practical investigations themselves, lay or professional. The topic then would consist, not in the social order as ordinarily conceived, but rather in the ways in which members assemble particular scenes so as to provide for one another evidence of a social order as ordinarily conceived."

(1970, p.83)

The questions we can then ask of it are radically different from those previously mentioned. We are no longer interested in what a review says about a performance but in how it displays what it says and how, in offering more than a simple description, it offers us a 'persuasive version of events which assemble those events as events of a particular kind'. (Silverman, 1975, p22) How it both explains and constitutes the topic (theatre) for us.

Criticism locates a performance in a particular framework and exhibits whether a reviewer is concerned with internal artistic or external social referents. By this I mean that talk of plays can be in terms of other 'oeuvres' and aesthetic standards or in terms which consider an important part of playwrighting as a concern with and comments on, the world at large.

An account is always presented in, and is, in a reflexive fashion, constitutive of, a particular context. The context of the review will then play its part in instructing us how to read the account and will set certain limits on what would count as an appropriate account for that context.

In the case of a highly institutionalised undertaking such as the production of newspapers these limits are able to be fairly easily defined, if requested, and noticed, if ignored.

The History of Criticism

It is worth pointing out in connection with this that the format for criticism established in newspapers is used as paradigmatic. Reviews for 'The Stage' (the practitioners own journal where it might be thought that more space would be given, for example, to the skilled acting aspects of performance) and indeed, radio and TV shows which offer reviews of contemporary cultural activities follow much the same pattern as the newspaper review I shall study.

In looking at reviews we look at how newspaper criticism provides us with some examples of socially agreed grounds for talking about theatre. But also at how the review displays itself 'at a glance' to be what it is and thereby provides us with recognisable criteria for what would count as an adequately produced piece of newspaper criticism.

We must ask how it is that theatre comes to be seen as a reportable event that counts as 'news' and how the fact that it must retain its character as a newsworthy event structures the sort of stories it may tell us about theatre.

To do this it will be interesting to trace briefly the history of dramatic criticism, paying particular attention to the appearance as a subject for the newspapers in the early 19th century. And too, the contemporary practices of newspaper journalism which will provide us with a review to be studied as an account in depth.

For a rather different approach to the history of criticism the reader is referred to Eagleton's Criticism and Ideology, chapter I. He treats the history of criticism as:

"an aspect of the history of a set of specific ideological formations, each of which is so internally articulated as to privilege certain critical practices as a peculiarly overdetermined instance of its other levels. The science of the history of criticism is the science of the historical determinants of this over determination of the literary aesthetic."

(Eagleton, 1976, :p.20-21)

Eagleton seeks the "determinants of the particular historical 'spaces' which make the emergence of criticism possible in the first place". He locates such determinants in facets of the ideologically conducted class struggle. In doing this he alerts us to the position of criticism as elaborator of texts so that they may be more easily consumed by their readers. And also to the fact that the very birth of criticism, while it takes literature as its object, does not depend on it for its sole point of genesis.

"Criticism does not arise as a spontaneous riposte to the existential fact of the text, organically coupled with the object it illuminates. It has its own relatively autonomous life, its own laws and structures; it forms an internally complex system articulated with the literary system rather than merely reflexive of it."

(ibid., p.17)

Criticism actually arose during the mid 17th century when Corneille in Europe, and Dryden in England, began to offer critical prefaces to their own works. Until this time dramatic criticism as such was not thought of. Indeed even such modest beginnings brought much ill-favour on the heads of the fathers of dramatic criticism. A poet who explained himself condemned himself in the eyes of the majority who worked with concepts concerning the self-sufficiency of any literary work. The offering of such 'examens' illicit snide comments about the literary competence of the poet or dramatist who gave such explanatory prefaces.

"(Dryden)...has often said to me in confidence that the world would never have suspected him to be so great a poet, if he had not assured them so frequently in his prefaces that it was impossible they could either doubt or forget it."

(Swift, 1704)

Until this time critics were writers themselves or, at least, aspiring writers, and part of a literary minority. The mid 18th century brought with it an enormous increase in literacy and for the first time there was what could be called a widely dispersed mass audience for written works. In fact theatre had had a mass audience in the sense of an anonymous public as far back as Shakespeare's age but it was not until this period that a publishing industry surrounding the theatre grew up. And even then, although books, gossip periodicals and newspapers were appearing they were still written for a minority so, although the potential was there, it is perhaps premature to use the term 'mass' as the literature was not read by a vast popular audience. (See Lowenthal (1961) for an account of the development of a 'mass' audience in the 18th century and James, (1973) for an account of "Fiction for the Working Man" which follows the early 19th century demand for cheap books and the popular literature which sold in Victorian England). However, it was during the mid 18th century and its atmosphere of increasing literacy that literature became considered worthy of analysis in its own right and criticism became established. Criticism as an activity started to become institutionalised.

Johnson and Addison were the critical names of the mid 18th century and with them criticism changed from an exercise in self-justification to one of judgement of others' work through the employment of techniques of disinterested analysis.

A number of other developments went hand in hand with the spread of literacy and the creation of a 'mass' audience. I will not attempt to discuss these intricate relationships here (see however Lowenthal: op.cit. for just such an account), but will briefly mention those which particularly effect the theatre.

Under systems of patronage, the artist and his audience had been in close contact. Suddenly the artist became separated from his audience and could address a potentially limitless public. This meant he was cut off from the reception of his work and criticism - a feature of the time of large and anonymous audiences - which interpreted back to the artist the reactions of his audience, flourished. The critic began as a privileged audience tied to the artist's world and likely to adopt a language and attitudes closer to those of the actors than the audience. The actor's knowledge of popular taste was therefore mediated by a favoured cultured sector.

Artistic products also became eminently saleable and 'art for art's sake' with all this implied in terms of art as a financially rewarding, marketable commodity, became the ruling notion.

Gradually critics were no longer drawn from the ranks of the elite - 'anyone who could wield a pen could produce reviews'. As Lowenthal puts it:

"It was no longer a case of intellectuals endeavouring to search out truth and beauty but middle class men in the stalls advertising cultural goods."

(op.cit.:p.94)

It was generally accepted that there was a lowering of theatrical standards and many blamed this precisely on the fact that any incompetent could pass judgement. There was, too, a shift towards 'realistic' productions

centred around characters easily recognisable to the middle class theatre-goer: decorous comic operas, sentimental comedies and melodramas, political farces and pantos were the order of the day. (viz. Nicholl:1946)

Theatre became a socially acceptable institution where formerly it had been the preserve of the classic 'pit' audience and the gayer of the aristocracy. Off-stage incidents, brawls, and the havoc caused by those who indulged in the 'Funn of the First Night', when crowds went specifically to disturb the performance (Nicoll, *ibid*.p.12) provided excellent copy for the newspapers of that time without any consideration of the production at all. (See the Daily Gazetteer, Wednesday, 23rd February, 1737, for such a report).

1763 saw the final banishment of the audience from the stage, as dandies and gallants were no longer allowed to pay for the privilege of sitting on the stage; this was the end of the intimate theatre of earlier days. The platforms gave way to the apron which in turn grew less and less and the era of the picture-frame stage with its proscenium arch was ushered in.

The producer, responsible for the overall effect of the production rather than a single stage part became a ruling force. Great emphasis was laid on startling stage gadgetry and for the first time rehearsals were undertaken going through the performance as it would be done on the first night. It is notable also that, although some actors gained wide acclaim during this period - Kemble and the Siddons to mention a few - it was a time peculiarly barren of writers of note and those who managed to get their work performed did so by a system of bribery and backhanders if we are to believe Leigh Hunt:

"A bad writer who cannot trust to the intrinsic merit of his productions for their success, had a thousand manoeuvres to supply the deficiency. In the first place he scrapes acquaintance with all the actors, invites them to dinner, takes tickets on their benefit nights, and praises their jokes...he becomes a haunter of the green room, and the Manager at length accepts his piece, though he knows no more of the talents of the writer, than his drollery at a dinner, his turn of a pun, or his slapping the actors on the shoulder and calling them Dick, Jack and Harry.....He flies to the newspaper offices, and scrapes acquaintance with those goodnatured paragraphists who cheat the town by false criticism out of pure love for their friends, or what is the same thing, their friends suppers, one he invites to a bottle, a second he praises for his learning and wit, and to a third he whispers "Box tickets - no reserve - all your friends". Having thus secured all quarters and well stocked the galleries with those strong-lunged idlers who, for the consideration of a few tickets, are always at the service of a timid author, he ventures his piece on the public.....In two weeks the piece creeps into it's grave, the author however, being a friend of the actors, and as it were naturalized in the green room, grows like a bad habit upon the Manager, and toils every year to be applauded by the papers and to be forgotten by posterity".

(Hunt, 1807, appendix, p.14)

Acting became coarser as the distance between actor and audience increased and to be heard by the pit took precedence over subtleties of performing. The theatre audience increased as suburbs thrived. Better modes of transport meant that more people could contemplate travelling to the towns to attend performances.

Censorship and morality in the theatre became a burning issue by the 1870's:

"The subject of regenerating the stage (was) taken up as a stock text by editors and leader writers in the leading daily journals."

(Nicholl, Vol. III, p.13)

Theatre had become an established social organ attended by all classes.

Leigh Hunt was the first well known writer of 'the theatricals' for a newspaper. He worked for the News from 1805-7 and wrote exclusively for the Examiner thereafter. He had very definite opinions as to the position of the critic which was 'to lead the taste of the town round from the buffoonery in which it has so long exercised'. (Houtchen's and Houtchen's, 1950). His bywords were impartiality and independence and as the paper was produced and printed by his brother, John Hunt, and was a paper proud of the fact that it carried no advertisements and paid allegiance to no-one, this he was able to have.

"We saw that independence in theatrical criticism would be a great novelty. We announced it and nobody believed us; we stuck to it, and they believed everything we said. The proprietors of the News of whom I knew so little that I cannot recollect with certainty any one of them, very handsomely left me to myself. My retired and scholastic habits kept me so; and the pride of success confirmed my independence with regard to others."

(Hunt, 1850, p.155)

His opinion of other critics of the day was low indeed. He saw them as blatantly part of the commercial aspect of the theatre, selling themselves to the highest bidder in return for writing reviews that gave a favourable advertisement to a play.

His reviews were lengthy and dealt very precisely and generally quite harshly, with the actors. He mentioned their performances in such detail as to cover their pronunciation, tendencies to posture and flirt with the audience, to wear clothes that suited them rather than their part in the play and so on. He also wrote several pieces on the state of the theatre generally and was ever ready to comment on the box-office bolstering activities of the managers.

Criticism as News

The advent of newspaper criticism was inextricably tied up with the general shift towards the sale of art as a product and the proliferation of literature as an economically rewarding business.

It served to advertise a play, stressing theatre as a financial undertaking rather than an artistic practice and it served to sell newspapers. Effectively it used "art for news sake" (Durant:1947). It established 'the theatre' as a cultural institution worthy of "news" coverage and the paper as a responsible organ for the public good and concerned with such things as the 'cultural' life of its readers.

News itself may be defined as "the information which people receive second-hand about worlds which are not available to their own experience". (Molotch & Lester, 1974, p.53)

News literally constructs for its readers the objective world 'out there' whose existence they are assured of although it may never be empirically available to them. It is in this spirit of approaching newspapers as reflecting the practices of those who write for them and the use made of them by members, rather than that which accepts them as merely reporting on an available world, that we will look at newspaper criticism.

Articles about theatre constitute it as a cultural institution with an objective existence. Reviews deal with performances which are essentially practices involving participation by, and interaction between, an audience and a group of actors. The performance itself (as we have already suggested following Styan:1975) exists 'in the mercurial relationships between SCRIPT:ACTOR:AUDIENCE".

The pressure of presenting theatre-as-news, however, is inevitably to ignore the live and immediate aspects of the drama and present it instead in a reflective, docile way which addresses theatre as a finished text rather than a process.

Popular newspapers are meant for immediate and rapid consumption and are designed to assuage the urge for endless novelty. There is vast pressure on reporters to be the first at the 'scene' and the first to relay copy to the newspaper offices.

Critics generally attend a special preview night (on complimentary tickets), the day before the play is open to the public. Their reviews appear in the following day's newspaper which gives them a matter of hours to produce it. Their space is also strictly limited, generally to around 400 words.

At the time of the interview with Billington The Guardian copy had to be handed in by 11.00 p.m. giving the critic a matter of an hour for his review to be produced. The Financial Times and The Times itself, for example, had longer than this as they are not constrained by being printed in Manchester, and the weeklies are obviously not so tied. Four hundred words is the average brief for the daily papers. The Guardian upped its quota to six hundred and fifty words three times a week late in 1978 following complaints from reviewers and the appointment of a sympathetic new Arts editor.

Both these constraints on producing criticism have to do with its status as part of a newspaper which must retain its readership, and have little to do with the nature of the practice under review.

"Even in respectable dailies the business of criticism tends to be dominated by the folklore of news. For example, reviewers of music and of plays must write their comments within a few minutes of leaving the concert hall or theatre. It is grotesque to suggest that any paper could loose circulation if it held such notices over for a day or two and it is certain that sound criticism can only be achieved if the critic has had time to think. In fact, he needs to sleep on his opinion and should not be forced into the rapid writing which is imposed by necessity on reporters. Criticism in general suffers under the limitation of space and the demand for brightness. (the reporter)...in the popular newspaper....is expected to spice his remarks with anecdotes, facetious quotations and startling remarks. Indeed he is lucky if he need not truckle to best selling opinion."

(Durant, 1947, p.73)

Further, each paper is geared to a particular readership and the style, form, and content of the review is largely dictated by the employment of a stereotype of the reader for whom the review is written, (e.g. type of headlines, demand for witticisms, aspects of the performance picked out).

The employment of such a stereotype will itself largely limit what sort of things may be talked about in the review. It must be written to avoid alienating any of the groups of potential readers, and it may only talk in terms deemed comprehensible to the 'average' reader.

'Fringe' or 'radical' theatrical activities are likely to be ignored by critics as they write for a mass audience who may be expected to attend such performance (unless they involve incidents which may be taken up as newsworthy due to their character as potential scandals, or whatever), and as such will necessarily be conservative.

Critics dealing with plays as 'good' plays will stimulate a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy as economic gatekeepers; they review plays likely

to be of interest to the newspaper readers, and in advertising these particular productions make it likely that those plays will indeed be those attended by the readership.

The review page (and the 'Arts' typically occupy one page of a twenty eight page paper), is also placed in a particular section of the newspaper.

Prime importance is given to the 'hard news', that which is collected on the basis of the most 'natural facts about a story and the reporter's five W's (the who, what, when, where and why).

Specialised news come next giving us features on holidays, women's pages, and so on.

Then comes the Arts page or entertainment guide, followed by the 'classified ads.'.

The newspapers appear to be organised on criteria of perceived importance (measured on the amount of copy for any particular section), and perceivedly objective nature. The reviews come next to the editorial page which unashamedly deals in opinions and non-objective features.

They relegate theatre to a position of minor importance, leaving it as 'the sugar on the pill' of the truly 'important' events of the world.

When we read a review we read it in its context as newspaper copy. When a critic writes a review his writing and the language he uses will be constrained by the job in hand which is to present an acceptable review for his journal.

Having looked at the workings of newspapers in general we now turn to examine in detail one particular review, namely Billington, Guardian, 22nd April, 1977



Dudley Sutton: *Royal Court*

and it's palpably the work of a real, complex writer.

What is at first surprising, considering Shepard's track-record, is its old-fashioned linear structure. The setting is a decaying Californian farm where the cars are rusting, the avocados mouldering and the livestock nearly dead stock. And inhabiting this putrefying estate are a family all of whom dream longingly of escape.

Mamma Ella wants to sell up and is doing clandestine deals with a shyster-lawyer; Pappa Weston has got a cash-offer from a downtown bar-owner and hopes to escape to Mexico; daughter Emma, just having her first period, wishes to become either the female B. Traven or a motor mechanic rescuing stranded tourists. Only son Wesley clings to an antique ideal of home believing that to lose the house would be like losing a country.

Already you can probably hear the echoes rolling in like thunder: Chekhov, O'Neill, Steinbeck, Miller are

all in there somewhere. And at his worst Shepard becomes rather woozily portentous as when he gives Ella a speech about the curse that overhangs this family and this land ("We inherit it and we pass it on"). But for all that there is something rather complex running through this play: the notation that these people, however feckless and sloppy they may be, are blighted by forces beyond their control.

Shepard clearly sees America as a place made up of predators and victims with lawyers and professional men on the one side and the poor farmers on the other. And the play's key aria is a speech by Weston in which he remembers an eagle pouncing down and flying off with a cat which proceeded to claw and tear at the former's innards. For Shepard that clearly says a lot about his homeland.

Like Chekhov, Shepard is a dramatist of might-have-beens. And Nancy Meckler's exact production gives you this sense of wasted potential. Dudley Sutton's Weston, spitting words out of the side of his mouth like a rustic W.C. Fields, is clearly a man of verbal energy who has turned into a bum.

Patti Love's Emma also suggests a vivid fantasy-life mocked by her tawdry reality. And Annette Crosbie as Ella hints at resources under the soured surface. In many ways the play is sprawling and indulgent. Yet I am also utterly convinced it is the work of a genuine poetic imagination.

22/4/78
ROYAL COURT
Michael Billington

Curse of the Starving Class

THE BURGE regime at the Court really gets under way with Sam Shepard's *Curse of the Starving Class*. And while the play may lack the wild, imagistic razzamatazz of Shepard's earlier American work, it has a density, of texture and echoing resonance that makes it oddly satisfying. It's not perfect but it doesn't short-change the audience

The Review

Billington commences immediately by proffering an 'insider's' knowledge of the theatrical world; he uses the familiar version of the theatre's name - The Court - and displays his knowledge of the internal workings of the theatre's artistic directorship in referring to Burge. He then states the author and the title of the play he is to comment on.

A tentative judgement is offered in terms of literary phrases 'imagistic razzamatazz', 'dentistry of texture', and the play is compared to 'Shepard's earlier American work'.

The critic has thus far used several competence claimers; insider's knowledge of the theatre and acquaintanceship with the authors' other plays.

As Tuchman says:

"Readers accept the reporter's information according to their assessment of his qualifications."

(1972, p.671)

Billington parades his qualifying, easy knowledge of the theatrical world - both the theatrical institution that is the Royal Court, and familiarity with authors. The readership may rest assured that they are attending to a man who 'knows what he is talking about'.

His initial judgement of the play is in terms of such literary features as textual density.

"In the process of attending to, and evaluating the choices made by the artist the appreciator is employing his competence in the conventions of the symbolic code and applying criteria by which he can perceive the creative competence of the artist and thus engage in aesthetic appreciation."

(Gross, 1973, p.116)

While Gross is correct in approaching such a display as one of competence and in noting that the appreciative approach requires the assumption that the 'selection, transformation and orderings of objects images and action which are embodied in the work must be perceived as.... the result of purposive acts of choice', (in assuming the self-consciousness of the author's manipulation of audio and visual symbols, we are directed to the artness of the production), we would wish to go further and suggest that the appreciator is not only employing his competence in symbolic conventions but simultaneously displaying it, and constituting such conventions as a proper concern of theatre audiences.

The 'conventions' he cites, the norms of aesthetic appreciation he gives us, exist precisely in his telling of them, and through this tale the readership is provided with legitimate criteria for appreciation.

Billington places the play firmly in the theatrical world and locates it in the reader's knowledge with a certain status attached.

We are told that 'the play is not perfect but it is palpably the work of 'a real complex writer'.

Later we are informed that "at his worst Shepard becomes woozily portentous.....But for all that there is something rather complex running through this play; the notation that these people are...blighted by forces beyond their control'.

Shepard's status as accomplished playwright is explicitly presumed to be apparent to any other person, whose criteria for judging his craftsmanship will include some notion of complexity in being a 'real' writer.

The use of the term 'real' writing was discussed in Ch. five with reference to authorship. Its force here is similar and linked with the enterprise of serious playwrighting offering more than simple entertainment but making valid comments on the world. It connotes a version of playwrighting as a craft.

That Shepard is an accredited author reflects back on the way in which we, as an audience, are to view the play. An audience does not go to the theatre to be impressed by a single performance, 'going to the theatre' is a cultural endeavour where the literary status of a work is the sort of concern which a competent audience holds to heart.

Employing the judgement disclaimer - the play is not perfect but its author is a real writer - accomplishes a number of things for the reviewer, which may be tied to his need to be opinionated, and the necessity to appear to have an informed, and reliable opinion.

To retain its character as 'news' a review must say more than a simple advertisement and say it originally.

If a reviewer were consistently to damn plays that were elsewhere, and more powerfully, acclaimed as successes, then his credibility and readability would be damaged.

In 'hedging his bets' through partial judgement disclaimers he allows his comments to say a number of things any one of which could retrospectively count as evidence for a diverse number of opinions.

The reportage work begins with a quickly sketched setting and 'potted' plot being offered. The 'plotness' of the account works in several ways.

It is composed of a series of phrases which progressively build up a story of the social decay of a country and a family and, as each phrase is read, it further explicates the preceeding phrase in a type of retrospective appreciation.

We are given the bare facts of the matter and from these, without any autobiographical background, the world of the characters is constructed in a similar fashion to the way we can construct life histories, impute motives and make character assessments on the basis of our glimpsed world (see Goffman, 1976).

Providing such a plot effectively advertises the play giving a basis on which a potential audience member may choose which play he will go and see. A review is concerned with audience-building both in the sense of straight advertising and in providing an audience with ways to see the play.

Then, for the first time, the everyday life world which the performance portrays and is part of, is referred to in a retelling of the 'obvious' meaning of the play. The play is presumed to have been written to tell us about Shepard's homeland and the characters are treated as the author's mouthpieces. Plays, then, are treated as offering comments on the world and part of a critics work is to read the performance in terms of the sorts of comments they could be seen to be making. This presents art as concerned with social meanings and involved with the world, but it is involved in an essentially passive way, commenting on the world rather than being a part of that world. The review discusses the play as an artistic product and tacks on what it 'means' as an afterthought (or not at all, viz. Wardle's review of the same play: overleaf).

Wardle seems wholly concerned

The Times April 22nd 1944.

11

Curse of the Starving Class Royal Court

Irving Wardle

Point one about the inhabitants of Sam Shepard's play is that they repeatedly deny that they are members of the starving class. Moreover, they have an electric cooker and family fridge on stage to prove it, and for much of the evening the audience is enveloped in the aroma of bacon and eggs. Point two is that they have no one to blame but themselves for what goes wrong.

On the strength of *The Tooth of Crime* and *The Unseen Hand*, Shepard has certainly made his mark on the British stage, and put himself well beyond the reviewer's jibes of the foregoing paragraph. But *Curse of the Starving Class* is different in kind from any previous Shepard play that has appeared in this country, and invites a kind of rational attention from which his earlier plays have been immune. It tells the story of a family's collapse in a way that prompts comparison with O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, invoking the same dynastic conflicts and the same instincts for territorial possession.

Over the heads of their teenage children, Ella and Weston are separately plotting to sell their house and orchard, each leaving the other in the lurch. As the play opens, the son Wesley is mending the front door which his drunken father has kicked in the night before, while his sister Emma is throwing a tantrum over a chicken which her mother has purloined for the family pot.

One gets the impression of two straight teenagers who would be ready to make a go of things, if only they were not

afflicted by a violent drunk father and a mother intent on eloping with a smooth real estate lawyer. Heaven knows, one is not asking for a writer of Mr Shepard's stamp to parcel his characters in neat moral categories, but it does come as a letdown to the English spectator to find the situation developed with so little consideration of narrative expectation.

As of old, Mr Shepard works through imagery more than plot, and seems most at home in the free-wheeling tirade. Some of the tirades do take one inside the characters' experience, as where Wesley (Brian Deacon) relives his father's nocturnal assault on the house, and Emma (Patti Love) imagines her mother's flight over the Mexican border, completing the fantasy by introducing herself as a garage mechanic who rips off the eloping couple for the cost of a new car engine.

But between one riff and the next, one is left to fill in the psychological details that bring about, say, the father's change of heart towards his property, and the daughter's calamitous descent one of her father's creditors which lands her in the town jail.

Nancy Meckler's production is staged in a whitewashed wilderness restricted to the basic kitchen properties. The fridge is the centre of the action: sometimes gloomily contemplated when there is nothing inside, sometimes ransacked by the starving boy. Perhaps actions like that symbolize the lack of parental affection, but the effect, like everything else in the show is arbitrary and verbally trigger-happy. One starts prepared to care about the people, but the riot of styles, from Dudley Sutton and Annette Crosbie's naturalistic parents, to the jazz-idiom invasions by Ray Hassett and Michael Walker progressively alienate one's sympathy.

with 'good' theatre judged in terms of the dramatic world rather than in what relationship a play has to the everyday world; he uses no external, non-literary referents at all).

Finally the review turns to the performance itself and acknowledges the actors and the directors.

The actors are still not discussed per se:

"Dudley Sutton's Weston, spitting words out of the side of his mouth like a rustic W.C. Fields, is clearly a man of verbal energy who has turned into a bum."

We are told that the character is given its life on stage through a named actor but the talk is still of Weston and what sort of a man he is, rather than of the actor and how successfully he has played the Weston of the play.

The review from the actor's point of view, a point to remember in connection with the claim that a critic is useful to the actor-as-blind-artist, says very little. It concentrates almost exclusively on the non-performance aspects of a play, on the play as the literary work of a particular author.

That criticism only deals with the author may be tied up to the necessity to see 'art' as the work of a single, inspired, creator. In dealing effectively only with the text, ignoring actors and audience, and that a play does more than simply 'say' its message, criticism steadfastly refuses to deal with the performative aspects of the theatre.

Not mentioning the audience except in the context of retelling what an audience will experience if present at the performance acknowledges

them only as consumers of a production. Their part as a vital constitutive element of a performance is ignored.

In offering a single 'what the play means', the critic refuses to admit that one possible reason for a play to exist is precisely because of its power to suggest a number of different ways in which an undefined truth may be approached. This is another part of the critic's refusal to deal with the unique and peculiar experience of the drama.

The review provides us with examples of the use of literary methods of criticism but little of that is dramatic. Until the final paragraph the only way in which we know it is a piece of dramatic criticism is that the word 'play' is used, yet it would read equally as well if we were to substitute 'book'. If we were to read the review having, as far as possible, put aside our presuppositions and expectations of what a drama critic would commonsensically write about, then there is very little left to tell us that what is being described for us is a dramatic production as opposed to some other literary effort.

If we had assumed that a newspaper critic comments on performances we must now agree that 'performance' is the one thing which is effectively ignored.

We are told about the theatre in so far as the critic establishes it as a legitimate artistic product, self-consciously put together by an author and consumed by an audience.

He also displays the criteria of evaluation of such a performance - its being a 'good' or 'unsuccessful' play is discussed in terms of such features as: the fact it has been written by an acclaimed playwright

(establishing legitimacy), its complexity in characterisation and dramatic texture, its novelty in such things as its narrative structure and its similarity to other plays; the author's sincerity in commenting on the world (the state of Shepard's homeland) and the skill with which it is produced.

I have used here some of the criteria of evaluation which are listed on Gross's table of 'the operational actions of aesthetic communication' i.e. legitimacy, complexity, novelty, sincerity and skill. I have used them, however, not as Gross does to tabulate an audience's response to a particular artistic performance but as being the criteria of evaluation that are displayed in a review as importantly part of an appreciation of the theatre.

The review actually directs us continuously towards the play-as-product with the social relationships of which it is formed, the interaction between audience and actor which is the performance, being totally ignored. There is no attempt to embrace the uniqueness of the performance but it is presented as just one example of the purchaseable theatrical events of the moments.

In critically discussing the theatre for a newspaper review the performance is wholly encapsulated. It is read back in this instance in terms of an author's intention though one feature of fictional work is its ability to stand on its own as a meaningful discourse independent of its mode of authorship. We are directed to its meaning rather than its ability to be used in the process of articulating a myriad of possible meanings. We are shown the 'skill' with which it is written in lieu of any consideration of its performed-for-an-audience aspects.

It identifies the performance as non-serious entertainment which once seen becomes curiously irrelevant to the 'real' world. In refusing to come to terms with the peculiar aspect of theatre - its position as a unique event constituted in the interaction between actor and audience - it removes its live and participatory nature and the review acts as an advertisement for a commodity which profits by wide-scale retailing.

The basis of the critic's review is essentially literary and the critic employs the vocabulary associated with that enterprise. This means that critics are likely to have difficulty with styles of theatre that are not so founded.

Mimetic theatre provides a mode of presentation that perhaps most easily furnishes its own referential judgemental criteria. The aim of such theatre is to reproduce 'a slice of life' on the stage and thus it provides fairly straightforward standards for what may count as an adequately produced representation. It adheres to a conventional literary form: the action is set in a particular location/s and it has a plot with a beginning, middle and an end, which is moved forwards by understandable transformations in outlook and situation of the characters. It has, in other words, an 'information structure' (see chapter 3 of this thesis).

Many dramatic performances are not premised on such a code of representation and may be extra-literary. The new theatre that Schechner describes in Happenings (1969,p.146) is a case in point. He gives a generalised list of the differences between 'new' and 'traditional' theatre:

TRADITIONAL	NEW
Plot	Images/events
Action	Activity
Resolution	Open-ended
Roles	Task
Themes/thesis	No pre-set meaning
Stage distinct from house	One area for all
Script	Scenario of free form
Flow	Compartments
Single focus	Multi-focus
Audience watches	Audience participates, sometimes non-existent
Product	Process

So 'new' theatre does not necessarily possess a sense of past and future, of the 'destiny' which is taken to typify drama. It does not follow a clear line but attempts to bring into celebratory focus the full message complexity' of the situation, topic, or whatever, that it deals with. It plays with modes of perception and may merge audience and performer with the latter performing tasks (carrying heavy burdens up a net e.g., see Anne Halprin's "Esposizione"), rather than playing roles. The actor's importance and the notion of a single author are diminished in such conditions.

The critical code we have looked at does not have language to hand to evaluate such a performance and thus "criticism of the new theatre has been mostly opinionated reaction - and angry reaction at that". (Schechner, 1969, p.145)

It is thirteen years since Schechner wrote the first draft of his paper and since then an extensive literature on Happenings has grown up which presumably could be used by critics to provide clues to, for example,

author's intention and therefore bring such dramatic performances within the range of their reviewing techniques. The style of the theatre and the ease with which it offers codes for evaluation, or may be fitted into critical vocabularies of stylistic conventions, effects the sort of review it does, or does not, get.

Reviews actually assume the reader's ability to recognise, at the same time as they display, the constitutive conventions used for getting a piece of theatrical activity accepted as just that. While refusing to approach the study of a review in any sense of being able to do criticism 'better' than Billington, what I have hoped to do is to go beyond reading criticism as providing a substantive account of a particular occasion and look more closely at what reviews in their capacity as theatre-as-news are able to tell us about newspaper criticism and about the style of the theatre which they discuss.

Chapter Nine

INTRUSIVE THEATRE AND CONSTITUTING THE LIMITS OF PERFORMANCE

Intrusive Theatre and Constituting the Limits of Performance

The final chapter of this thesis takes as its subject matter an example of an intrusive theatrical event that is staged in a manner which deliberately confuses the audience as to its nature. As an event it depends on the deliberate manipulation of the boundaries between the real and the fictive and part of the entertainment value of the staging lies in observing how individuals cope with the confusion stemming from their uncertainty over what is 'really going on here'.

It carries forward the topic of the thesis-constituting theatricality - by providing an example of the specific situated work undertaken by interactants to actively frame a situation in a particular way. It would be possible to argue that a 'happening' such as that described could not be called 'theatre'. Such an argument is of no importance to my study. What is important is that those involved in the event, through picking out certain features of the setting and the 'actor's' behaviour, and through displaying in various ways their decision to take the event as a consciously performed one, with all the behaviours which such a decision legitimates (staring at the performer, laughing out loud, to mention two), actively constituted the event as a staged event.

The study is based on a period of participant observation of a fringe theatre group operating on the London Underground system and appropriately called Tube Theatre. I followed several weeks performances of Tube Theatre taking in five sessions in all and, espousing the stance of detached observer rather than entertainment seeker, systematically observed and recorded both the non-verbal reactions of participants and any comments I overheard.

The travelling nature of the audience and the act made prolonged on-the-spot interviews impossible but in the brief moments when the train stopped at stations I asked some of those who had witnessed the act by chance what they thought had been happening. I taped and transcribed one of the after-performance talks between 'actor' and audience although the background noise of a busy underground buffet bar made the quality rather poor. At several of the performances no such chats took place as the bar was closed and participants simply spoke together on the platform which, with trains passing every few seconds, made taping wholly impossible. I therefore arranged with one of the group who had chosen to follow Tube Theatre to conduct an informal interview after the show and away from the underground. The transcript of this recording also appears in the appendix.

The public accounting work that was undertaken by participants was mainly of a non-verbal nature - the noises of a functioning underground system makes verbal responses other than comments to immediate neighbours or consciously projected statements impracticable. In deciphering such non-verbal accounts I obviously used as a resource my commonsense knowledge of the meanings of such things as shrugs, giggles, blushes and eye movements and could have operated in no other way. What makes the study different from any observant lay person's description of the event is the distance gained through the self-conscious manner in which features of a situation are deliberately 'made strange' in order to reconstruct how they are made sensible and orderly through the interpretative work of participants. Such distance extends the ability to attend to aspects of a situation which the pragmatics of mundane life preempt. In this particular case to examine how members accomplish a display of their

framing activities and in noting the devices they employ to indicate a code-switch i.e. announce that the strip of ensuing activity be taken as a particular kind of activity which carries with it an instruction to employ a particular set of grammatical codes, to explore further those codes which concern notions of performance and theatricality (see Basso 1979, p.8 for an explanation of 'code-switching' which he takes as "a linguistic device for framing verbal messages....a fine grained technique for identifying stretches of talk as particular kinds of doing that are intended to accomplish particular kinds of "work"" but which I have used as a technique equally applicable to non-verbal communication).

The Show

Tube Theatre began in 1972 and, bar a brief respite during the height of the London bomb scares, has been operating since, on the Piccadilly line of the tube on Saturday nights.

The main actor and instigator is Ken Ellis who works with two stooges. He travels with an audience who know what they are involved in and consciously choose to participate and, indeed, pay for the privilege. This group I shall call 'conspirators.'

The second group of participants are those unwitting travellers on the tube who are at first innocent of Ken's intentions and through no choice of their own happen to be present for the event. This second group I shall call the 'nescient' group. I begin by offering a simple history of how the conspirators are assembled and what a member of that group experiences during a typical night's performance.

Collecting conspirators

The following cryptic advertisement appears in the 'Theatre:fringe' section of Time Out, a magazine billed as 'London's Living Guide' and giving information listings of conventional and fringe entertainments in the city.

"Tube Theatre (794 7296)

The eccentrics on the underground are not increasing - it's Tube Theatre at work. Be in on the joke by joining the travelling audience. 7.30. £1."

Phoning the number given puts you in contact with Ken Ellis, the founder and main actor of the three person group, who explains that:

"Tube Theatre involves making tube travellers believe that they are witnesses to a harmless, amusing, deception or situation happening to a commuter, I travel with the audience who follow me from carriage to carriage and pretend not to know each other or me. We meet at 7.30, at Green Park, on the east bound Picadilly line; look out for a tall man wearing a suit, hat and glasses."

Meeting Ken and the rest of the conspirators was made easy by the fact that, unlike Main line stations where more than one train goes from each platform and it is possible to be meeting people from, or seeing people onto, a train, a tube platform is completely cleared each time that a train pulls out. There is no reason for being on a tube platform then, except to catch the train. Those who did not get on the train were easily marked out as having an unusual motive for their presence.

Furthermore the people who finally composed the conspirators were on the whole identifiable because of a more open, friendly, cheerful demeanour than the regular commuters.

Both Ken and the male stooge, George, wore city suits (Ken's suit was decidedly tatty, too small for him, and topped by a well-used hat), and Melanie, the third member was 'smartly' dressed.

A group gathers around Ken and, while the stooges (having been introduced to us in this way), surreptitiously collect the money, he explains how we are to behave.

"Welcome to Tube Theatre. While you're in the audience just act normally unless you see anything funny and then I beg of you laugh. You follow me around but pretend you don't know me or each other; we get on and off carriages between Leicester Square and Gloucester Road but we break up the journey. We may take three stops to do one routine and five to do another one. You'll be given your destination before we get on. Your guide is George over there, and when he gives you your destination please pass it on. You must follow him and not me because sometimes I pretend to get off the train and then get back on. If you get lost then get off as soon as possible, the other people will catch you up at the next stop. Any questions?."

The group then splits into smaller 'withs' (viz. Goffman, 1971), and singles to await the tube.

Ken gets on first and the conspirators position themselves for viewing both Ken and the nescient group, generally choosing to sit or stand together at one end of the carriage and avoiding placing themselves too close to Ken.

Ken simply sits for a moment or two, though most of the conspirators are already focusing on him and not trying to dissemble very effectively. One of the routines (they are predominantly silent routines as the noise of the tube makes speaking difficult) then starts.

The Twopence Act

Ken asks the stooge for change for a ten pence but , having attained a handful of coins, he then drops them as he tries to put them into his purse. He bends down to pick them up, as do others (conspirators and nescients) around him, but he continues to drop the coins which have been retrieved while murmuring 'thank you', and getting progressively more clumsy and flustered.

The Map Joke

Ken ostentatiously studies an underground map, turning it upside down and rustling it. He gets up, stumbles over the stooge, rips his paper with the umbrella, then gets off and gets back on the train.

Coat Routine

Ken gets on just as the doors are closing and gets his coat caught. He undresses to free himself (people help him to get his coat off sometimes), then he exaggeratedly pulls the coat and tugs at it until the door opens at the next stop when he gets off followed by the conspirators.

Letter Reading Routine

Ken reads a 'goodbye, it's all over letter', from a girl friend loud enough to be overheard by all in the carriage though ostensibly addressed to the stooge.

Tie-tying Sketch

Ken tries to tie his tie and keeps getting the two ends radically different lengths. He looks very puzzled, turns to the window to use it as a mirror and eventually gets out a large pair of scissors and trims one end of the tie.

Fetish Act

Ken has the stooge lay papers wherever he walks, sits, or touches.

Strap-hanging

Ken ties his tie to the hanging strap to keep his balance.

Paper-pinching

Ken starts to read a newspaper held by the stooge who is sitting across the passageway. He then asks to read page sixteen as there is an article he is rather interested in. The stooge looks long suffering and hands the page over. Ken then says could he please have page twenty five as the article is continued there. The stooge looks exasperated but hands the relevant page over. Ken promptly takes out a pair of scissors, cuts out the bits he is interested in and hands the ravaged paper back to the stooge.

The Ticket Joke

Ken sits himself down in a carriage. The male stooge comes along and using an Italian accent he asks Ken what he must do with his ticket. This evokes the reply 'You hand it in at the finish', the stooge says in a heavy accent 'Oh, it's finish', and throws the ticket away. Ken retrieves it and the routine starts again. The next time it is thrown on the floor the female stooge starts to get off and steps on the ticket which, being covered with glue, sticks to her shoe. Ken grabs her ankle and tries to explain that she must not get off as she has someone's ticket stuck on her shoe. Ken explains very badly and the stooge gets irate saying she

has missed her stop. The ticket is finally discovered and Ken and conspirators get off. The male 'Italian' stooge gets off also and finally throws his ticket onto the platform in clear view of the carriage load who by now are laughing unrestrainedly.

The evening ends, after about two hours of routines, with a drink and a chat in the Baker Street buffet bar. Members of the conspirator group exchange stories about the funny reactions they have witnessed.

Conspirators' comments:-

- "One woman got out a book and started reading it, or I thought she was reading it and then I noticed it was upside down...(laughter)".
- "One man said, 'he must be an eccentric, he must be such an eccentric that he doesn't have to bother with his socks because they're a bit holey aren't they?'".
- "That's what I think is good, watching people try to suppress their laughter. Like that guy with the monocle...you could see he was quite a distinguished chap, and he felt it would be rude to laugh yet he was dying to....really rolling all over the place and sweating with the effort."
- "The first time I came...when those drunk Scots men were around, some of them were holding their stomach and saying "For Christ's sake make him stop", they were really hurting."
- "When you were reading the letter out there weren't many people in the carriage but you said something about....and one of the ladies opposite me said, "Oh my God, everyone can hear what he's saying"."
- "You're a bit mean though, because the last time I came, which was the first time, I didn't look at you as much as I looked at the other people who were laughing at you. I mean you do transform them into the performers in some sense....."

Ken "I just mean to entertain really, but I know that you need that for the most successful sort of evening.....I mean I don't set it up."

Ken explains that:

"I get scared when somebody helps me a lot 'cos I can't just stop the act dead 'cos that would sacrifice it for the audience. If a man helps me like that man did (nescient group during the Coat Routine), I get a bit scared because it may dawn on him that I'm some sort of act, or making fun of the situation, and in his eyes I could be making fun of him, so I lay off and try not to make any disturbance. When he moves away then I do something else, but he took it in good heart".

In answer to the author's question to members of the nescient group,

'What do you think is happening here?', there were a variety of responses:

Nescients 'I've no idea what's going on'.

 'It's nowt to do with me'.

 'I just think he's a little unbalanced and is having trouble with his tie'.

 'It's an act or something'. (on leaving)....'we'll never know'.

Confused Reactions

The nescients' reactions were numerous and varied but a pattern of ways of handling the situation, and certain unusual ways of coping, were observable. That is to say, able to be picked out by me exploiting my own competence in display coding.

When Ken commenced a routine (for those not "in the know" a remarkable action) people first looked at him and, without fail, looked around the carriage to see if other people had noticed something amiss, and what they were doing about it.

The conspirators generally laughed, or smiled broadly at each other quite soon after the beginning of the routine and following this some of nescient group also smiled or laughed.

Individuals were less inclined to laugh openly than couples or larger groups. Several times one member of a couple would seemingly reprimand their partner for laughing at what they obviously found unfunny/embarrassing behaviour.

Friends are already acquainted with, and can more easily read off correctly each others actions (Miller, Hintz & Couch, 1975). A number of acquainted people will then, intersubjectively establish a mode of reacting to an unusual situation and auspicate a definition of the situation more easily than a single person may do. The adage of 'safety in numbers' seems to apply here. It is interesting that Tube Theatre remains a one man show, the stooges acting as foils only and never initiating action. If several people were to perform such violations then passengers may feel threatened, the safety in numbers working in such a case for the violators.

Many people evolved elaborate schemes to establish their 'elsewhere-ness'. One lady got out a book and began to read with the book upside down. Others attempted to cover their laughter, turning to look out of the window even though the window of a tube offers no view. Only one man physically removed himself from the scene and this after having helped Ken to take his jacket off which increased the laughter of the onlookers and which he found objectionable. At the next few stations he got off the train and seemed to be looking for someone (a guard?) on the platform.

One very noticeable effect of the routines was that, as Ken got off, whole carriages, formerly silent, would begin to chatter and giggle together. A feature of spectacles, be they consciously staged as football matches, or spontaneous occurrences as with car accidents, is that the audience which forms around such focal points, though total strangers to each other, deem it admissible to utter conversational openers to their neighbours on the grounds of a community of spectators.

To carry off a successful definition of what is happening requires more than a subjective confirmation - it involves sophisticated intersubjective work which here resulted in the unification of typically uncommunicative passengers and the abandonment of the usual comportment of isolation.

The fact that the performances take place on Saturday nights ensures a different set of passengers from those who travel on the early morning weekday trains - the veritable 'commuters'. It is quite possible that the reactions on such a train would be markedly different from those observed on a Saturday night when theatre goers, party goers and other entertainment seekers make up a large percentage of the numbers. Commuters may well be

so adept at civil inattention routines that they could studiously ignore the most outrageous routines. Or if, as Levine (1973) suggests, they generally relax some of the rules of travelling operatives at other times, due to the normal rush hour crush, they might respond in other ways. Presumably however, Tube Theatre could not operate in the rush hour as the routines would be too difficult to see.

Many asides were made from unwitting participants to conspirators such as:

- 'Is it Candid Camera?'
- 'Is it theatre or something?'
- 'Do you think he needs some help?'
- 'That man has got on again you know!'

The stooge himself made very exasperated noises and executed a series of elaborate glarings at Ken. As a conspirator remarked of the stooge after a performance:

".....he'd be the guy who would say, "God, this behaviour is abnormal". He was the mortified commuter who had certain ideas of what was right and proper behaviour on the tube, what's funny, odd, what's downright rude and what's accepted".

(Appendix, p.419)

Several of the routines consistently fall 'flat' - the tie-hanging sketch and the Fetish routine in particular.

Constituting a Context

Tube Theatre claims its own definition and works to frame itself as an acceptable theatrical experience for the conspirators. The nescient group, however, are in effect those being contained by a benign fabrication and subject to the practice of playful deceit:

"Those who engineer the deception can be called operatives, fabricators, deceivers. Those intendedly taken in can be said to be 'contained' in a construction or fabrication'.

(Goffman, 1974, p.83)

Tube travellers are deceived into seeing Ken and his stooges as ordinary passengers. Their initial appearance and actions are intentionally choreographed to be misleading. The fact that they wear respectable, conventional clothing limits somewhat the sinister definitions of their actions (e.g. dope-freak, drunk), which could more easily and instantly have arisen had they worn outlandishly 'hippy' gear.

The routines are also dependent on the reactions of the contained. They are not themselves particularly skilled or complicated as in 'clowning', nor would they all be remarkable in every context (it is quite permissible to cut sections from one's own paper, or read a letter to a friend privately), the joke is also played by exploiting rules of place and particular people. (See Goffman, 1971, p.415)

That the tube is a quintessentially frightening location makes it a peculiarly 'neutral' public place, with personal anonymity being jealously guarded. This both allows Tube Theatre to operate, in so far as it trades on the nescients initial reluctance to proclaim their presence in any way and the fact that the methods they evolve for overcoming, or maintaining

their facelessness are risible methods for the conspirators, and constrains it in so far as there must be a continuous concern not to overstep the limits of tolerance and cause mass panic.

The group-in-the-know form a collusive net and provide proof, should it be demanded, that Tube Theatre is only a leg pull. That the staged events could be seen as threatening is implicitly recognised, hence the show was voluntarily stopped when suspicious behaviour was likely to be seen as connected with terrorist bomb-planting.

The first thing to notice is that whereas the nescient group has access only to a "glimpsed" world which it must make sense of immediately (viz. Goffman, 1976, p.90), the conspirators inhabit another world vis à vis the Tube Theatre actors - a world which has an extended character with a unique relationship established over a period of time.

The very first introduction to Ken's work calls itself 'theatre' and has a conventional booking system, a specific time at which it begins and to be included in the audience involves a set payment.

Mentioning "eccentrics" in the advertisement does the work of saying that it may look like an eccentricity but it will in fact be theatre. It also chooses a very harmless word and one that has inconsequential overtones in a way that a statement to the effect "maniacs on the underground are not increasing" would not have.

Tube Theatre is at 'work' - self-conscious, rehearsed, productive effort has gone into this performance, it is not simply playing in an effortless way.

We are told that we will join a travelling audience and be welcomed as colluders to a joke. Again the harmlessness of the undertaking is stressed. Whatever actually happens we will have been provided with a particular frame for viewing that happening.

The handout that the stooges distribute to members of the unwitting audience as they are leaving the carriage after a routine, attempts the same work but provides a retrospective, after the event, frame for understanding:

"Eccentrics on the Underground are not increasing, You have been watching Tube Theatre, the celebrated real-life entertainment that has been established since 1972.

Be in on the joke by joining the travelling audience for a whole evenings performance. You pose as ordinary passengers.

Bookings, 794 7296

With financial help from the Arts Council"

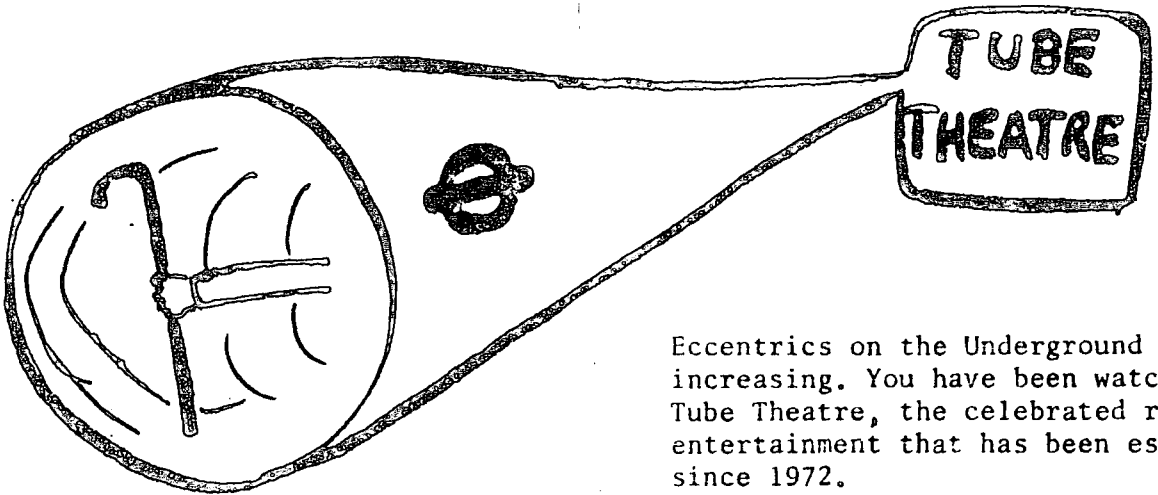
Those recently duped by the show are assured that it is an acclaimed long-established entertainment and has even warranted a grant from the Arts Council. It is firmly a joke and one feature of claims for joking is that the victims should be able to laugh at their own ineptness in being taken in and acknowledge that their interests have not been harmed.

Had the man who was offended actually found a guard it is hard to see how he could have phrased an account of the affair as a complaint.

"A man had his coat trapped in the door, I helped him and everyone laughed at me",

would not seem to constitute a valid complaint.

A joke is only ever revealed as a joke subsequently yet, whatever has happened, the revelation carries with it a demand to act as 'a good sport'.



Eccentrics on the Underground are not increasing. You have been watching Tube Theatre, the celebrated real-life entertainment that has been established since 1972.

Be in on the joke by joining the travelling audience for a whole evening's performance. You pose as ordinary passengers.

Bookings, 794 7296

With financial help from the Arts Council of Great Britain

The handout acknowledges that there is deceit practiced - you 'pose' as ordinary passengers, but it is not malevolent deceit.

You cannot simply walk into Tube Theatre, the phoning and booking procedure makes the process one of initiation not simply commercial transaction. There is a practical reason for this in that Tube Theatre actually contravenes London Transport byelaws, but it also accomplishes the conspiratorial feel of the fabricators.

That those who are to compose the conspiratorial group are easily identifiable - by the fact that they indulge in interpersonal chatting and smiling amongst themselves and introduce grouping into the normally staid business of travelling - highlights the structures of rules for behaviour that operate in tube travel.

Tube travellers are generally concerned solely with getting from A to B and doing so without any untoward interruptions. The general demeanour, then, is a display of civil inattention, care being taken to stress one's unavailability for focused interaction, and isolation and defensiveness is the habitual mode of comportment.

As Janey Levine points out in Subway Behaviour:

"In subways people are on their own and protection is afforded by particular seating arrangements, the affording of civil inattention, involvement shields to maintain distance that are brought with the passenger, and taboos against physical contact."

(Levine, 1973, p.216)

The Tube Theatre conspirators, whilst the place and the fact that they are a mobile audience is unusual in theatre (though by no means unique, see The Performance Group's production of Tooth which involved the

audience moving around to follow the action, as cited in Schechner (1973)); to be an audience in no way requires uninvolvedness and stationariness) have still come determined that an evening of Tube Theatre shall be an evening of entertainment and their behaviour varies accordingly.

When getting into the carriage the conspirators position themselves at a distance from Ken (so that their field of view embraces both Ken and the nescients who are thus framed as performers themselves), generally at one end of the carriage and fairly close together. They actively construct a viewing distance between themselves and those they will watch, and establish the physical constraints of the performance, the stage space.

Although asked to pose as ordinary passengers all eyes in fact rest on Ken until he starts doing something extraordinary and they then move to take in the nescients' reactions. The conspirators also re-arrange themselves so as not to block others' sight lines.

Collusive glances and gigglings go on between conspirators who also point out particularly noticeable reactions given by those not 'in the know'. They have specifically been asked to laugh if they see anything funny. This is the first attempt by Ken to begin providing members of the unwitting group with some clue as to how to behave.

The routines must be sufficiently bizarre to become remarkable, but they must be remarkable in a bearable way. If the nescient group were to exit en masse from the carriage (this would only be possible at the next stop, Ken has a literally captive audience), then the performance has failed.

If a nescient offers help to Ken the act is usually dropped for a time so as to minimise the offensiveness of gulling someone into lending a helping hand out of their charity and then discovering the assisted is in no way helpless. Ken is careful to remain in control of the situation. The drunk who became too chatty when reading Ken's behaviour as a genuine invitation to accessibility effectively stopped the show.

Ken relies on breaking taken-for-granted rules for setting up the joke, he also takes for granted that he will be the only one infringing such laws. If there are others around equally insensitive to the codes of tube behaviour then the act finishes and a fresh carriage of dupes are found. Tube Theatre practices rule misuse not banishment. The actor must control the world of the act, the audience agreeing to this in choosing to participate (hence the tension already noted in audience-participation shows when to participate successfully threatens the fiction). Ken also presents himself as inaccessible to cut down on the threat of others intruding into the fabrication - he never indulges in eye contact with anyone, he rarely touches anyone or talks to anyone apart from the stooges.

That he does not appear to seek reassurance from others in the vicinity but is effectively a self-confident deviant, requires framing in terms other than those of coping with a merely socially inept person and is part of the specific work Ken undertakes to establish his actions as theatre.

The stooges are also instrumental in guiding actions - relying on the exasperated but tolerant attitude exhibited through routines of eyes looking up to heaven and shaking of the head from side to side whilst making 'clucking' noises. They provided the stereotypic (carefully non-aggressive) reactions of the 'sensible man', whilst the conspirators tended to smile or laugh to each other and to pass encouraging smiles to nescients.

Recognising a Performance

The most 'successful' routines of Tube Theatre (success being measured, following Tube Theatre's own criterion of providing entertainment, by the amount of uninhibited laughter which ensued) were generally performed in carriages in which a group of three or more were gathered together.

'Success' in this context presents a paradox. The conspirators are actively involved in constructing the narrative organisation of the performance. The dramatic irony which provides much of the group's pleasure is accomplished, not at the level of events as is most usual, but at the level of stage and events, with the nescient group being framed as part of the performance and thereby transformed into actors rather than audience. Ken as actor does not constitute the whole show but rather provides an occasion for certain activities to be seen as part of a performance. (Note that the comments made by conspirators, cited earlier, are all comments about nescients' reactions).

That Ken must be sensitive enough to 'set up' nescients with no chance of rectification means that if they establish a theatrical definition quickly and enjoy the staged aspects of the performance in themselves then there is actually more laughter in the carriage immediately. The nescients then enjoy Ken's action and the conspirators enjoy their enjoyment. But this is a temporally strictly limited success as the routines do not offer skilled amusement in themselves and cannot long sustain the demands of being taken in this way.

One particularly hilarious carriage involved a group of Scots football supporters who accomplished exactly this. They applauded routines, laughed unrestrainedly, pointed at and stared at Ken, and finally took a hat round to provide payment for the entertainment which Tube Theatre has devised for them.

Virtually the entire carriage seemed quite happy to go along with this definition of the situation as a performance one and the anxiety apparent in other groups was banished by the provision of an easy set of rules to follow.

It is not important whether the Scots actually thought Ken was part of a theatrical event or simply an eccentric, what is important is that they successfully transformed him into a performer and the situation into a performance. Being faced with difficulty in defining the occurrence satisfactorily in terms of categories normally employed on tube travelling and so readily available to them people actively search for, and constitute a more fitting frame of reference. Until the fit is accorded feasibility, in other words a consensus reached by the majority of those present, discomfort will continue. Consensus is used here as "a term which implies a common definition of the situation in the sense in which Thomas uses it and is a requirement laid upon people (which they may of course fail or refuse to meet) who are present together in a space definable as a social setting". (E. Burns, 1973: p.351)

Faced with an unusual situation one possibility is to read it as an intentionally extra-ordinary one. That is, one that is consciously constructed as a series of actions in some way removed from the constraints of ordinary, everyday life behaviour. A claim can be made for it to be theatre and such a claim does the work of making anything an actor does a permissible and infinitely non-threatening thing to be doing. That the situation is potentially readable as a serious one may be explained by the fact that the joker authors a world of make-believe but the drama is not entirely a product of the joker's imagination. As Basso (1979, p.41) points out, the scene staged by a joker and the characters he animates are

patterned on slices of unjoking activity that he employs in the capacity of a model or a primary text: "Drawn from various sectors of community life, these strips of 'serious' behaviour furnish the raw materials from which joking performances are fashioned. Consequently any actual performance may be said to consist in the construction and presentation of a secondary text that is intended to be understood as a facsimile or transcribed copy of the primary text on which it is patterned." That a joke comes off, says Basso, depends on the joker persuading the butt to participate in the sociological fiction that "the whole affair is not a mock-up of some precedent reality, but that reality itself." If the announcements of a code-switch have not been heeded, and perceived boundaries between the real and the illusory not constructed, then the constitution of the fiction is one-sided and the joke is played at someone's expense.

For the nescient group, at the time, there was no way of being sure whether what they were witnessing was theatre, though handouts explaining that they had 'chanced on Tube Theatre at work' were handed out as Tube Theatre alighted and provided the chance for a retrospective reframing of what had gone on. They may have 'chanced on Tube Theatre' but simply seeing it does not make it automatically available to them as a joke. To be 'in on the joke' requires the knowledge that it is Tube Theatre and not tube madness or a tube maniac.

Sequence:

Interviewer. 'What do you think is going on here?'

Nescient. 'It's someone doing a thing....an act or something....
 ...I've read about it in the paper but I've no way of
 knowing...'

Interviewer. 'Does it worry you?'

Nescient. 'No, it's very funny. If someone was in serious trouble then I suppose that I would be'.

(transcripts)

The statement that it is someone 'doing an act' rather than simply acting, provides the rationale for inaction in response to funniness. For someone to be seen as in serious trouble would require the rejection of that definition and the imposition of some other, non-theatrical, frame within which practical responses were in order.

There is no ultimate way in which any nescient could finally make that decision - dependence on how others in the carriage are acting provides pointers sufficient for the practical purposes at hand, but no certainty.

The conspirators on the other hand, had established a relationship with Ken and each other, and a relationship which had been concerned all along precisely with framing the event as a theatrical one. They were provided with a number of clues available to be called up to substantiate the claim of Tube Theatre being just that.

An examination of the differences in the knowledge states of conspirators and nescients will take us further into what sort of conditions are necessary to allow people to define any particular instance as a performance rather than something else.

1. For the conspirators the performance was consciously and deliberately presented; theatre does not happen by mistake.

2. They had also chosen freely to participate in the playing - one feature of playing is precisely that it is not obligatory. The nescient group had 'theatre' imposed upon them, they could not choose not to be present thus removing one playful feature (viz R. Gaillois, 1961).
3. It was bounded and given a definite beginning (the greeting on the station) and ending (the meeting in the buffet bar); it was constructed as a social occasion of 'going to the theatre'.
4. Acknowledging the theatricality of the event meant that the actor/s were available to be stared at, talked about openly, pointed at and clapped in a way other people were not - they are on show.
5. A distance was established, both physical and in terms of closure of access, between actor and audience. Also between the everyday life world and the theatrical world. The actions of the drama were taken as having no consequences for the ongoing, ordinary world of the audience, whilst at the same time exploiting the conventions and categories of that ordinary world.
6. In cases where nescients successfully attempted to establish a theatrical definition of the situation their attempts were not disrupted by either Ken, the stooges, or the conspirators, in fact they were sanctioned. Ken maintained his distance and offered no responses to their stares, or laughter, as an ordinary passenger may have been expected to, and smiling made others smile rather than anything else.
7. The conspirators had come for an evening of entertainment. The nescients, however, were simply tube travellers with access only to their glimpsed world and could employ only that broad set of categories which are used in making sense of situations immediately and

7. with no protracted information. Categories which are, as Goffman (1976, p.90) points out, generally "entirely adequate for the job they are designed to do". But in the case of a concerted effort to exploit the transformational vulnerability of a scene, as in the case of such a benign fabrication as Tube Theatre they become wholly inadequate and can be used to set each of us up as a legitimate dupe ready for containing.

Cracking a Joke

We will now undertake a detailed examination of one particular routine, and how it was handled by those consciously or surreptitiously involved with Tube Theatre, in an attempt to explicate more fully the situated work done to establish and display the occasion as a particular occasion and warranting certain sorts of action.

It is not an attempt to say X is theatre (or whatever) but to study how a context is provided in which it is sensible to say that X is theatre.

More particularly I will look at joke openings, both successful and unsuccessful, how jokes are maintained or become subverted, and how features of joking become available as part of a legitimate description of doing theatre.

The jokes I will consider are manufactured jokes rather than told jokes, the latter depending on verbal work play and the former on an active manipulation of the environment so that others are persuaded to live in an invented world (viz Moss: 1977).

The work done in this case was predominantly non-verbal work, though comments were made from time to time and couples whispered to each other frequently. The public accounting however, as noted earlier, was accomplished through face work, general physical movements and positioning tactics as much as through verbalisation.

Although this situation stresses non-verbal accounting practices any analysis should be concerned with actions in a context and this context is inevitably composed of what was done as well as what was said (talking is

done in particular ways also, viz hesitations and interruptions). To neglect non-verbal aspects is to neglect a vital feature of any situation. As Del Hymes states in his foreword to the work by Basso (1979) on linguistic play and cultural symbols amongst the Western Apache:

"It ought to be fundamental to all understanding of language to attend to enactment, including intonation, tone of voice, accompanying gesture, all the communicative modalities that began to be analyzed as 'paralinguistics' and 'kinesics' a generation ago."

(ibid., p.xii)

The conspirators are secure in their knowledge that they are in possession of the accurate version of what is "really going on here". Their extended relationship with Ken, extended both temporally and in so far as they have access to the back stage areas - that time between getting off one train and preparing to enter another carriage on the next, has firmly established a sensible and predominant definition of the situation which they will enter. Indeed not only enter, but they have been alerted to the fact that they will actively take part in constituting it. The stance of self-conscious accomplishment has been presented to them marking them off from the members of the nescient group.

There is already a tension in their position, however, as they are asked to act 'normally' - i.e. as if they were merely travelling by tube (it being presumed that anyone would be able to reconstruct an adequate version of the 'ordinary commuter') but they have also been made guardians of social reality in that they have been exhorted to laugh if they see anything funny and so establish a safe public stance towards the activities they will observe.

A detailed study of the Map Joke will take us further into how settings may be set up:-

The conspirators waited on the platform with Ken and the stooges. When a train drew up Ken chose a carriage (sufficiently peopled by dupes and sufficiently empty to hold the conspirators) and got on the train. Those in the know either followed Ken or got on first, following a stooge. Ken then chose his position. This had advantages for the 'naturalistic' aspect of the performance (the conspirators could not cluster at an appropriate distance from Ken), but disadvantages in that Ken sometimes sat amongst them rather than dupes and no attention was paid to sight lines so all the action was not visible to all the group.

Ken waited roughly half a stop before 'doing' anything - he merely sat without attracting attention. He then got out what was in fact a bus route map and proceeded to study it holding it several feet from his face and finally turning it upside down and sideways whilst looking perplexed.

Several people focused on Ken at this stage and some began to giggle.

At the first stop Ken got up from his seat (he occupied a window seat with the stooge sitting next to him), tripped across the stooge's leg in passing, got off the train, looked at the map, then jumped back onto the train and went back to his window seat again, hitting the stooge in transit and muttering 'excuse me' several times.

He continued to study the map upside down and the stooge, having displayed some impatience with being tripped over, asked:

'Where are you trying to get to?'

in a voice loud enough to be heard by all the carriage. Explanations then followed with Ken saying where he wanted to go and the stooge explaining that he was going in the wrong direction and that he would have to get off at the next stop and go back to Leicester Square.

At the next stop Ken got up, dropped his hat and, in picking it up, managed to trap his umbrella in the stooge's paper so ripping it when he exited.

All the people in the carriage were now laughing quite freely, and nescients were pointing out Ken as the focus of attention and indulging in much whispering whilst glancing in Ken's direction.

The stooge settled back to read his torn paper. Many kept an eye on Ken and laughed loudly. Just as the train moved off Ken jumped on again causing members of the nescient group to attract the stooge's attention and say:

'That man's got on again you know'.

People were by now wiping their eyes and quite literally crying with laughter. One woman buried her head in her companion's shoulder and shook visibly with the effort of laughing. One man asked "Is it Candid Camera or something?".

The stooge, having been warned, turned to Ken and explained again that he was going in the wrong direction. This time when the train stopped the stooge got off with Ken, followed by the conspirators and continued to obviously direct him until the train departed.

The Map Joke

Practically Defining a Performed Situation

From the first instance of getting on the train the conspirators, in the main, position themselves precisely to form a group. Where they go is not determined by where there are free seats but where they will be best placed to see Ken. Once Ken has chosen a seat there is a further reshuffling of position with group members arranging themselves so that they face in the same way towards Ken. Those who have tried to 'choose a seat normally' and ended up with their backs to Ken content themselves with frequent head swivelling which is a noticeable action in the context of tube travelling where one keeps oneself to oneself and consciously refrains from staring at anyone else.

Generally people would not have a common focus - travelling is typically a suspension of usual activities, it is a transitory state and people are generally passive not sharing focuses of activity. Refusal to be open to communication in this way means that constraints of being collectively responsible are lifted. Being in transit also means that it is difficult to set up physical markers to establish possession of an area; privacy is gained through the non-accessibility routines cited by Levine (1973).

Already, to the shrewd observer, something is 'going on'. There are certain things which habitually go on in tube trains - finding a seat, reading a book, studying the advertisements, and are thus unnoticed. But to disregard maxims such as 'find a seat where there are not too many people', or at least only people easily definable as socially innocuous (middle-aged ladies and children are generally chosen as we can attribute innocuous

qualities to them, viz Levine op.cit.), is a noticeable feature. For a number of people to focus on one other person suggests there is something about that person which warrants such staring although at this stage it could be taken that the bowler hat and too small suit provide reasonable grounds.

Given that there is a bias in social interaction towards the 'nothing unusual' stance (viz Emerson, 1970) persons will actively negotiate such an attitude towards the situation they find themselves in and provide themselves with satisfactorily mundane explanations.

Ken does not do anything to contravene accepted ways of travelling immediately. He first established himself as someone capable of following rules-in-use for 'normal' commuting.

In taking out a map and holding it, not so that he can see it but so that other travellers will be able to see that he is seeing it, he does a display of reading which introduces movements extraneous to the practical job of working out a map route.

He is providing now some reason for being the centre of attention. It is a controlled reason, not something that has slipped out (such as hiccuping), and would thus be a candidate for tactful ignoring, but is hard to see in any other way than an extrovert action.

Looking at the map upside down compounds the felony and becomes increasingly remarkable. It is not so much that he holds the map upside down - this may happen to people who forget to put on their glasses, or foreigners not familiar with the English language - but that he does not seem to provide any public motive for doing such a thing. He appears as

a middle class English gentleman who could be expected to be familiar with such things as maps and he does not indulge in displays of squinting, for example, to suggest short sightedness as a person so afflicted might be expected to.

Ken's actions sanction the transgression of the normal 'civil inattention' and the stooge asks 'where do you want to go?'.
.

Ken is travelling and must be going somewhere, his display of ineptitude at deciphering routes on a map suggests he can handle the actual getting there even less. The stooge then responds in a reasonable way.

That it is 'reasonable' is important. A bald question, uttered without noticeable warrant, could be seen as rehearsed and 'theatrical' and the chance for fully exploiting the dramatic irony of the situation for the conspirators lost.

People stop staring (possibly because the remainder of the exchange is verbal and so can be overheard rather than over-looked, possibly because Ken could be seen to have accomplished what he set out to do - a non-verbal request for help in planning a route), and the stooge explains what Ken must do.

His tripping over the stooge causes everyone to look and the conspirators to laugh. The stooge's routine of showing good-humoured exasperation provides a way of responding to events which could as easily be seen as threatening 'personal space' or indicating a serious case of drunkenness and the likelihood of further loss of self control. The stooge's reaction and the choice of the conspirators to laugh at this antic, carefully guides others' notions about what could be seen as happening in the direction of harmless clumsiness.

There are those who studiously ignore Ken or reprimand a partner for laughing. They will not be guided into seeing Ken as a joker, as a figure to be legitimately laughed at, but can still construct the situation as one of an unfortunate person mishandling all he does.

Ken's getting back on the train, going to his seat and beginning the ostentatious map reading again, puts a slightly new complexion on the matter.

He has not been embarrassed otherwise he would not come back to the same place in such a blatant fashion. There were other seats free which he did not choose - this again is unusual in that travelling generally involves no claims for 'my seat', having left a seat it becomes anyones. This is unlike, e.g. a doctor's surgery where it is likely the seat's occupier may come back.

That he trips again can then appear as contrived, the redundant movements he makes, redundant in that they practically accomplish nothing also can be picked on as 'done on purpose' in some sense. That this purposefulness now seems more likely is shown through the open regarding of Ken and the nudging, whispering, and giggling that grows with Ken's 'confusion'.

Ken himself displays his distance from the surroundings by avoiding eye contact with any but the stooge. He on the contrary takes up any glances directed at him and answers them with an amused, "some mothers do have 'em", look. Whilst Ken makes himself inaccessible to focused interaction the stooge seeks out such intercourse and becomes the de facto leader laying the interpretive cues for the rest.

Getting out at the next stop and ripping the newspaper is greeted with what can only be called "hoots" of laughter.

That people laugh may be used as a signal that they have issued Ken with a licence to joke (viz Handelman, 1972) firmly placing the ensuing action in a non-serious realm, agreeing to be guided by its own particular rules and rendering permissible what in another situation would be illicit.

Laughter serves as the public expression of the stance taken toward an event - serving here to indicate that nothing disturbing is happening. That the passengers all laugh at the same thing signals a reallocation of attention and the creation of a shared focus thus providing for the possibility of concerted action in the future.

Simply laughing does not make a joke-working within the framework of Ken's being a bit simple laughing at him could be seen as merely rude or heartless, eminently not a laughing matter. It is not the laughing itself but the negotiations which have been undertaken to make laughing in such a situation a justifiable action which establishes the joking framework.

Douglas also suggests that laughing at the new experience which has been set up re-establishes the primacy of the initial order which was subverted. The initial order, then, stands untouched and the joke is only a play on the ordained patterns of that order which are, through joking, shown to be escapable.

"A joke itself exposes the inadequacy of realist structurings of experience and so releases the pent up power of the imagination".

(Douglas, 1975, p.103)

The conspirators laugh readily as they consider themselves as at a staging of some kind and therefore in a place which has a low threshold of social control making 'flooding out' in laughter permissible. Tube travelling demands, on the other hand, high threshold control and such actions become sanctionable.

Not laughing does not necessarily mean that licence is being withheld. There are a variety of expressions - wide-eyed, smiling mouth, grinning and shaking of the head, and raised eye brows, which may accomplish the same display of tolerance of the new order.

There were also displays of dissociation noticeable through the overt displaying of total absorption in an alternative activity, such as reading a book, giving a statement to the effect that 'whatever is going on here, I am not here but elsewhere'.

While being one way of coping with embarrassment and providing, literally, a way out for that person it is not a strong move in that it leaves untouched the definition of the situation being simultaneously made and displayed by the others present. There is no attempt to renegotiate the rules of the activity, but a cutting off of communication with others in the situation.

A number of such displays could prevent the joking frame ever being established by refusing to grant an appropriate licence (a joke can only be subverted once established) but others having entered a joking realm it is not sufficient to subvert and transpose it into a 'serious' action.

The sequence:

Int. "What do you think is going on here?

Commuter. "It's nothing to do with us".

- displays verbally this same refusal to be included in the situation at hand. The reply is not an answer to the question, no decision as to what is going on is made, but a claim for being removed from whatever is happening is lodged. That they are in the interactional field of those joking and events could thus force themselves on the couple and become very much to do with them makes this a difficult claim to maintain.

The lady who addresses the whole carriage with:

"Is it theatre of something".

and the gentleman who similarly asked:

"Is it Candid Camera?".

were actively negotiating what the event could be.

In stating 'Is it theatre?', the person displayed that she knew that the situation was event-ful and staged in some way, legitimated her bewilderment through providing the public with an admission of confusion and at the same time suggested that it could be taken as theatre and coped with via actions that could sensibly be seen as typically 'at the theatre' activities.

The most successful routine - involving the twopences Act and the Tie Act in the carriage of Scotsmen - was successful precisely through a group doing a display of 'this is theatre'. The youths involved went through classical 'Theatrical' actions - they stared, and laughed openly, they clapped enthusiastically and finally even took a hat round to collect money which they offered to Ken as they were leaving, thanking him by saying:

"Thanks mate, It was very good."

"It" must refer to a consciously constructed event which may be judged by criteria as being 'good' (or bad), an event which may be selected out from the stream of activities and spoken of as an entity - this statement actively frames Ken's activities.

Not everybody in the carriage gave their wholehearted support to converting the perceived events into theatrical ones but no-one actually displayed any fierce objection to letting it be taken in this way.

Presumably had somebody set up a definitional challenge then the most persuasive account would prevail i.e. the account that most deftly accentuated features of the situation which could be seen to back up their claim.

The Strap hanging joke which provoked little laughter (some conspirators giggled quietly) gives us an example of a joke which was never successfully launched. The clues which had been present in the Map routine for decoding the situation as an amusing, fabricated one were again present. But there were fewer extraneous actions performed by Ken, the routine lasted only one stop and the conspirators did not laugh very much. To get framing accomplished successfully the boundaries must be clearly visible.

Tying the tie to the strap was quite a contained action, not glaringly visible. Neither did it parody the number of everyday rules which the Map routine did viz: violating the stooge's personal space, maltreating his private property, disregarding the maxim of civil inattention by making himself remarkable and performing ostentatious and redundant movements, displaying incapability to handle simple exits and entrances whilst not displaying any public motive for being so inept (such as a bad leg).

It not being classed as 'only a joke', fixing his tie to the strap could be reasonably seen as an initial step in a suicide attempt and thus a wholly serious business which could call for practical action.

The fetish joke was similarly unsuccessful. It would seem that the 'funniest' jokes were those which parodied the rules-in-play of the context in which the joke was set, in this case tube travelling, and that those which had more general referents were more likely to fail.

This could perhaps be further explored in relation to the ability of stand-up comedians, unhampered by complicated props and settings, to pitch their jokes at a higher level of generality (to include the universally important questions of sex, race, death and so on), than can be done within the confines of, for example, a classic situation comedy.

Being engaged in travelling by tube at the time and therefore concerned (though unconsciously) with 'doing' tube travelling correctly, those routines which violated such taken for granted rules were easily perceived as so doing. It would seem that Mary Douglas' suggestion that:

"The joke affords the opportunity for realising that an accepted pattern has no necessity. Its excitement lies in the suggestion that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective. It is frivolous in that it produces no real alternative, only an exhilarating freedom from form in general".

(Douglas, 1975, p.96)

is a useful one.

Tube Theatre undertakes a typical Garfinkellian experiment (Garfinkel, 1967) breaking the taken-for-granted rules of tube travelling and so forcing commuters to recognize what remains generally unnoticed and submerged.

Tube Theatre is setting-specific joking for the nescient group (viz Handelman, op.cit.) and those routines which depend on resources derived from within the context in which they occur would seem to be the most successful.

It could be said that for the conspirators Tube Theatre undertakes category-routinized joking. It having been established as a theatrical enterprise Ken is afforded a licence to joke in the terms of long standing social conventions which allow actors to become involved in non-serious activity.

The important point, however, is not that a joke itself is either inherently setting-specific or category-routinized but that contexts are constructed wherein a joke becomes available to be seen as one or the other.

Once the joking frame has been established the conspirators can no longer derive the essentially smug pleasure of watching others struggling to construct a sensible situation out of what are, on the face of it, contradictory and confusing actions. There is also a limit to the number of contextual rules which may be broken resulting in surprised laughter. Once the joke has been played and the laughter has sanctioned its playing then there is nowhere for it to go and Tube Theatre must find a new carriage of dupes.

We have seen, then, how jokes get done or subverted through the negotiations of those party to the activity.

For some of the nescient group they have merely witnessed an embarrassing social situation. For others they have been involved in an amusing practical joke. For a few, and for the conspirators, they have been involved in one mode of theatrical event.

For a situation to be describable as theatre it must contain features which are available to be picked out as typically theatrical ones.

Doing practical joking and doing theatre must then share some features in common:-

Both successful jokes and theatrical performances reflect elements of the social situation. A joke jolts you into a different way of seeing things, it opens out the possibilities previously hidden within a situation. Theatre displays alternative possible ways of living through a fictive construction.

Social negotiations are artfully and consciously undertaken to construct a specific context within which the joke/performance may unfold. There is a deliberate manipulation of 'frames' and the recognition of an alternative view of reality. The reality manufactured demands a suspension of the rules of everyday life and the recognition through use of alternative rules which will hold for the duration of the set-up.

The social conventions for the theatre are more routinized and rigid than the rules of doing joking. The theatrical frame, then, is less easy to subvert than the joking frame which is always open to just such a redefinition of the situation and its transposition into something other. The conspirators have incontestable evidence of the theatrical status of the event whereas the nescient group do not have access to such knowledge. Their position and the viability of the joke established is correspondingly more tenuous and difficult to handle.

The joker/actors had the ability to operate across two frames; the actor must be 'in' his role yet aware of mundane events so as to be capable

of handling all eventualities, the joker must constantly monitor his dupes and keep sight of the fabrication he is busy constructing.

Both are conscious displays and require an audience to be completed. The joker/actor effectively controls social experience taking on the job of persuading the audience to accept his construction.

The theatrical event removes itself from everyday life as does the practical joke and this separation from mundane life means that no practical actions are necessary to remedy events in this constructed situation. "Acts of play may be defined as those which are modeled on acts that are 'not play' but which are understood not to communicate what would be communicated by these acts if they were performed unplayfully. jokes are not intended to be taken literally, "seriously", or at face value." (Basso, 1979, p.37). Theatre being a more rigidly routinized activity means that to frame-break is a more serious misdemeanour. If the joker persuades someone to commit themselves to providing a comment on the action he has merely been fooled. Publically committing oneself to such a comment by physically helping Ken, for example, is a commitment less easy to retrieve than a mere mis-thinking and presumably people are wary of executing physical responses precisely because of this.

Certain features of the situation are noticed and commented on, both verbally and through non-verbal routines, in such a way that a joking frame is established. That some nescients go further and recognise the event as a theatrical one is perhaps an attempt to provide a motive for doing joking on the tube. The joke is seen to involve a cohesive group and a sensible reason for such a group activity would be that they were involved in staging a particular type of theatrical performance or organised entertainment.

Through a consideration of the production of a performance in a specific setting I have teased out those features in a situation (both conventional and setting specific features) which are available to be singled out as warrantable features of a staging of some sort and in exploring the similar concerns of jokes and performances explicated a particular instance of how theatre may be realised.

Conclusion

The project of the thesis has been to explore the ways in which theatrical experience becomes possible. Making use of the distinction between theatrical enterprise and theatrical experience I charted at the beginning of the work such an exploration has not been concerned with the physical practicalities of mounting ^{a play} in terms of who pays the actors wages, or turns on the electricity, but has looked at the theatrical experience as it is constituted by those involved. That is a realm of theatricality through which participants in the experience actively achieve a sense of the dramatic and in which the rules-in-play are descriptably different from those operating in the mundane world of everyday life.

It has provided, in effect, a study of institutionalisation i.e. the organisation of a rhetoric and set of rules of behaviour and perception (understanding rather than sight) into taken-for-granted patterns so that novitiates can have some sense, however vague, of shared social expectations for an "area" of life.

I have argued that it is impossible to draw precise boundaries to an "area" such as theatricality, just as it is impossible to delimit other institutions such as the family. Drawing definitional limits to such areas remains, impossible, even though in both cases it provides little problem for individuals who feel generally confident in deciding, for any particular occasion, that they are a family member or are included amongst a theatrical audience. The normative character of institutions - using norms in the sense of summonable behavioural explanations, means that patterned expectations are always in something like a metaphorical relationship to lived experience; they are illuminating but remain fundamentally imprecise.

While a conclusion is no place to enumerate what has not been done it is fitting to mention other possible approaches to institutionalisation of the theatre if only to chart them as inappropriate expectations for the present project. One such approach would be to study types of theatre in terms of a dramatic transformation of space. To follow the changes in designated theatrical arenas from the luxurious, or functional, purpose-built building, through temporary adaptations of other buildings or places as in street theatre, travelling theatres which use more or less elaborate props, to permanent transformations such as the Greek amphitheatre. (McNamara, 1974, provides a preliminary classification of this type of project).

A study of institutionalisation might also concentrate on types of acting and performance looking at how the distinction between actual identity and performed character is handled and sustained in a variety of instances. This could cover such performers as the Balinese ritual dancers, performers in village religious mysteries, circus families, and those receiving professional training at established drama schools, to priests, politicians and newscasters whose lives involve much public performance either more or less choreographed.

The range of recognised performances in West European social history as charted by Sennet (1977) suggests the enormity of such a classification of the constitution of types of identity. Other dimensions of the same heading might be differences in the languages of gesture and portrayal as in a consideration of the use of properties and the naturalism of staging.

A third approach to institutionalisation would be one which espoused a systematic historical perspective. One temporal frame which could include other types of classification would be, for example, the evolution in methods of financing dramatic production from communal rituals through artistocratic patronage to entrepreneurial sponsorship (for either a paying audience or one financed by advertising) with the consequent changes in relations between performers and audience.

While the present thesis undertakes none of these projects it does consider institutionalisation of a mode of socialising. If it is allowed that theatricality is the dramatic representation of social experience, then theatricality as the ways in which dramatic representation becomes possible is in practice a language for social experience. Theatricality is the conceptual armoury through which sociality becomes thinkable. The community which grounds individuality is available for visualisation through theatricality.

I am using institution, then, as a language form. While it may be argued that the concept of language is now used so often and so indiscriminately that it has lost any utility it is a justifiable term here as the dynamics of social process, which I have elucidated in my several chapters on different theatrical roles, have been conventions governing interactional forms, much as the stylistics of speech enable us to differentiate between such different forms as questions and commands.

Examples of conventions for discriminating between styles of social consciousness and involvement, what I have earlier called the dynamics of social process, would include : material on the presentation of the self

and the extent to which performed characters may be said to have "selves"; the salience of distance to performance and a vocabulary for playing with distance; the interdependence of artifice and convention and the extent to which performed representations are trading upon community in formulating relationships between performers and the audience they perform for; the constitution of a theatrical public as a speech community, and the ways in which performed representations use code-switching and highly sophisticated sequences of consciousness as framing devices.

The claim is that the institution of theatricality is a set of patterned norms for representing social experience. By social I mean the constitution of identity through the interdependent perspectives of self and other in a setting. It is through negotiated representational norms that theatricality is practically experienced and effectively defined as rules for negotiating the constitution of meaning in the interdependence of performance, audience and space.

At the start of the thesis I mentioned the frequent dependence on the dramaturgic metaphor in sociological discourse. In conclusion I turn again to that metaphor but the persistence of its use in sociological work and its salience to such work should no longer strike the reader as a surprise to be commented on but be acknowledged as radically inherent in the topic.

The metaphorical cliché of looking at life as if it were theatre can only enlighten to a certain point and in practice has tended to mean that sociology has largely avoided the direct study of the theatre itself. But my claim is stronger than a call to revitalise the metaphor by a deep

study of its components. I propose that theatricality is sociality, that the general interpretive processes of presenting a self and of making sense of the world are the basis both of sociality and theatricality. It is not that theatricality is at any one point able to be permanently set aside from sociality but new ways of representing the social to ourselves are constantly negotiated. Dramatic performance is the use of general interpretive modes for a particular reason, that being precisely to highlight that society consists of just such ways of being together.

As Geertz (1972) says of the cockfights in Balinese life: "They are not merely reflections of a pre-existing sensibility analogically represented; they are positive agents in the creation and maintenance of such a sensibility...societies, like lives contain their own interpretation."

Theatricality is a particular mode of being in the world which tells us about possible other modes of being. Theatricality is sociality both in the sense that it is a communicative enterprise and it displays for us our own notions of community.

Taking the constitution of the dramatic as topic in the manner of the present work means that it can provide information about the theatre without burying itself in theatres and for the same reasons its discourse on theatricality can be taken to elucidate the nature of sociological talk as much as it does the constitution of the dramatic.

Sociality is the language of all drama. There is, however, the possibility that a society could order its institutional integration such that it could meaningfully be said to have become more dramatic through time. The institution of theatricality could become more self-

conscious in particular historical contexts. If the evolutionary perspective is stretched too far then it obviously becomes non-sensical as "primitive" sociality is as dramatic as contemporary New York, just as ultimately there are no grounds for saying that a primitive language is less "good" than the discourse of philosophers. In practice self-consciousness of theatricality in a society is likely to manifest itself by such facts as the recruitment of full-time performers to careers within the theatre institution. My ideas on this point have been helped by Raymond Williams' reflection on how training as a theorist of drama led him to sociology - the reverse of my own direction. In his inaugural lecture on taking the post of Professor of Drama in Cambridge (1975) he suggests that Britain is more dramatised now than at any previous point in her history. He gives four meanings to this claim:

1. "It means that for the first time a majority of the population has regular and constant access to drama.
2. It is that drama, in quite new ways is built into the rhythms of everyday life; the force of drama as habitual experience is that dramatists interrogate those rhythms and make them their subject so that plays have followed the privatisation of life and been set themselves within the confines of rooms looking out onto a world.
3. This is a dramatic perspective given technological force by the intervention of new media which bring drama into the nuclear sitting room so that the dramatic relationship of performance and audience is also our standard political relationship. "On what is called the public stage improbable but plausible figures continually appear to represent us." (ibid., p.13)

The fourth point made by Williams is that because of this dramatic representations become basic social needs. Elevated from an occasional event dramatic performance, a flow of action, acting and representation has become a necessary convention and consciousness itself become dramatised. Modes of fictionalisation are in our time particularly active as social and cultural conventions used not only to see but to organise our seeing and thereby our construction of reality.

Sociological discourse then has a particular contribution to make to the exploration of the constitution of meaning through expressive resources. And it is this which forms the double movement of this thesis that it should both tell the reader something about how a dramatic performance works and the social resources necessary for that work to be accomplished.

Interview with Tom Hadaway - writer and actor in Live Theatre 1.6.76

I = Interviewer

T = Tom

X = another author who joined in

I Tom why did you start saying that it was very limiting writing for the clubs?

T I'd have to give it a lot more thought. Why is it more limited? Perhaps I don't really think it is limited, perhaps life just happens in a sort of parochial scene anyhow. Like, you know, Greek theatre is all about what happens in one little place on earth at a particular time and you can say sort of universal things about what's happening inside of people....in a sort of parochial context. But if you're writing specifically for a club audience in a working class area, then you've got to relate to their lives, and their background, and their work style, and all that other sort of huge universal area of life going on everywhere else in the world has got to be sort of neglected if you've got to..write about shipyards, coalmines, and fishermen and the errr and the basic material you've got is going to be stretched isn't it?

I What would you say your aims are when you write a piece, I mean what... how do you envisage it being performed...or...what are the steps it takes to go from you, to a director, to a...

T I always think I'm in the position of a medium and I'm translating a social experience. So that I don't actually create it, so I never think of myself as a creative or an inventive person, I think of myself as being in between an audience and a social experience. So

T I have access to the one thing first and to the story, to the character, basically the character. I think first of all I have to find the character and then I let that character speak in their own terms and so errr....pass it on to an audience.

I Well where do you get your character from? What's the character's relationship to....

T Merely by discovery, I think you begin with character and I think the plot and the story and the theme as you call it is sort of second. I think character comes first. I think if you discover a character first then you've got a play. You've got a play when you've discovered a character.

I Where is it that you discover a character?

T You might discover a character in your own back yard, you might discover it among your relatives....

I So it's based on an actual person always is it when you write?

T I think so yea... I think character and character development comes first in a play, it may be different in a short story but in a play I think character is fundamentally the first thing you have and errr the play is not so much a sort of curiosity piece about what is happening to people, but a revelation of character.

I And that's the aim of writing it, to show the audience.....

T That's what I think all the best plays are, revelation of character, because finally the characters must speak in their terms and the writer must be less evident, the hand of the writer should not be

- T sort of apparent, the characters must appear to be speaking of their own volition, their own force, and if you find a character you should let that character sort of emerge you know...
- I You say that but how do you monitor how authentic the character's going to appear?
- T I don't know how you do it, except other than instinctively, except you can certainly tell when you're not doing it properly. Cos it sounds wooden and stiff but you know you've done it right after you've finished it when you begin to see things in it that you've never planned to put in, anyhow, I think when you've written anything you discover afterwards what's in it, and other people tell you what's in it, and at the time of putting it down you never realise that you're doing it, that's why I think that I'm in a position of a medium or a middle force.
- I Presumably you have some idea of what you're trying to say when you write a play, how much do you think....
- T How much of yourself is in it?
- I No, how much of that do you think the audience understands, I mean do you have specific aims when you're writing a play?
- T No, it's just that a character has excited you, the frailty of the character, the humour of the character, the tragedy of the character is what excites you in the beginning. And everyone has got these stories in their mind that they want to tell if only they were articulate, and you get in this privileged position of saying "Well, I realise what's happening to that person, and errr.. and I'll encompass,

T in the space of thirty minutes of dramatic time, his total life experience". I feel that's an exciting thing to do.
And it's a difficult thing to do.

I How closely to you work with directors then?

T Directors and everyone else, you see the whole thing about plays is that they're a group affair anyhow, it's easy enough to be literate in a little corner, in an attic by yourself, but finally you hand it over to a group and performance counts you know. It's very important to work very closely with them because if the performance is not right then the character will be muted you know.

I So you do have a big say in how it's performed in Live Theatre do you?

T Errrrr...no, I think finally it's in their hands, I have a big say when I write it to begin with. If erreee they don't fulfil it that er' there's very little I can do about that, except grind my teeth in a corner, you know...

I But you do see possibilities within the text that you want them to bring out?

T Yes, I can certainly eer, make my presence felt, I can tell them what I think about the performance and how I think it should be done, you know. I think writers should cooperate in this. No, not writers that should cooperate but directors that should cooperate with the writers. I think the writer tends to be a bit neglected. People take the scripts from them and say well we know best from now on. But it's because the writer has discovered the character in the first place that he should be sort of ..errr.. the pivot of it all, I think the best directors realise this, they realise that they should be in consultation with the writer.

I When you hear a piece of dialogue, or someone having coffee with a friend how do you translate that into something that can be acted, because it's never the same is it... as just sitting here chatting?

T No,...

I What is it that you have to put in as well to make it good theatre.

T I think it's something to do with condensation, you know, it's...all plays are sort of unreality, all plays are plays, are just a fragment of a total reality, and ere you've got to make choices and just select relevant and err.. strong moments and just set them down. It's no good trying to put the whole of life onto the stage because you'd be there for a week you know..I think it's just like err a painter, writing plays is very much like visual art - you select certain colours, certain shapes, if you choose the right one's its going to be an interesting painting, it's going to be an interesting play. And you out out all the sort of dull and awkward and err sort of boring moments, it's very difficult to portray boredom on the stage without actually boring people. Boredom it's an integral part of living I think.

I But when you've given an actor a script what do you think they have to feel when they're acting it. As an actor as well...I mean you have to feel anger to portray anger?...

T Ahhh.. I don't know much about the art of acting, I've just sort of got into it as a sort of amateur you know...I wouldn't like to comment on the art of acting but I suppose complete involvement with a character.

I That's what you feel yourself....

T I'm just trying to understand a character, as the writer's understood him, and if possible to add something else. An actor who gives a perfunctory performance and just sort of breathes the lines is not enough, if you can get an actor who can do all the things....
you see I'm saying in the beginning that the writer doesn't really realise what he's putting down if he's acting in the role of a medium, and it is up to another people to bring it out in performance, so if you've got a gifted actor who can perceive things in the script, in the play, which are analytically apparent to the writer, then he's doing his service to the play. I believe in gifted directors and gifted actors... aye..

I The world's full of genius....

T Every play should have the best if we can get it.

I And when people come up, when they've seen a performance of your play and they talk about it have they ususally understood it as you meant it to be understood or is there a big disparity?

T Sometimes, and sometimes not, and sometimes they see things I haven't realised were there, and that's very pleasing then..it's very pleasing when they discover things that you haven't realised were there.

I Why is it pleasing exactly?

T Errr...well it's pleasing because you realise that you've got to the core of some understanding, that even though it was an accident it wouldn't have happened unless you'd had something to do with it, you know.

I Are you conversely very disappointed when...

T They fail to use it altogether?... No, you blame yourself entirely then, you think that you've done a bad job. Yes...is...I've never been that disappointed. Why I do it I don't know like...why anybody writes anything is a complete mystery to me. Vanity I suppose, what do you think?

I I don't really know, I suppose it's a..

T Cos it's not just an exercise...

I It's satisfaction in...

T Is it? There's nothing more elevating than having an audience respond to something you've done. It's great that.

I (To other writer with Tom) What sort of things have you written?

X Just comedy stuff for Live Theatre. Nothing very elaborate. I mean it's incredibly difficult you know, I mean technically, to write anything with a balance of seriousness and penetration which will reach these kind of audiences.....

I Why, cos they want entertaining rather than just..why do you say that?

X Well because you know in this atmosphere (Club, music, and beer) you're dealing with an audience that is anything from a quarter to three quarters out.

T A quarter what?

X A quarter out.

T Yea

X They haven't got..you know, it's got to be a fairly powerful piece, because the concentration just isn't there. It's not like the theatre, where they go for a sort of intellectual gymnasium. If you don't grab them in the first five minutes you've had it. So basically you're writing material that's got to have the power of a stand up comedians, but inside that you've got to do some writing, which is incredibly difficult, I don't think that can be done..

T Yea..

X But it has been done you know,.....

(Called to get ready for the performance, but discovers he has another 10 minutes so chats again)

I And what, you wrote a play in your spare time?

T I started off writing short stories, poems, and I used to read them on the radio, and then a friend I have encouraged me to write a play.

I Which was your first play?

T It was a very turgid historical drama, it lasted two hours. Thirty characters. It was described by the critics as a basket of red herrings. It sent me into retreat. I thought that I'd never write anything again. People were dropping off to sleep... on either side of me you know. I was very proud of it actually. It took me a year to research and to write, and I thought I would impress the intellectuals with it you know. Sort of not having a literary or scholastic background I thought that writing a play might impress those sort of people, and I

T set to work to do it. I wrote a play about the Restoration period of English history, and I didn't know..the Restoration period of English history was a complete enigma to me, you know. And then eventually I became an authority on the Restoration period, I wrote this play and read about thirty books on it. And it read beautiful life. And all sorts of people were ... said amazing things. Hey that's lovely, I wish I could have done that. And I said, I've had no education and they said that doesn't matter. It's better cos they haven't put you into a sort of a rut you know. You're better to be free of it. But it failed to impress the intellectuals and they sneered at it.

I So what sort of change did you....

T Well, I sort of stuck in my own back yard after that like. I wrote this play about a lad who lost his job on the quay - The Filleting Machine, and that went down well, that impressed the intellectuals for some strange reason.

I They're an odd bloody bunch aren't they?

T Yes, that was really weird that.

I When you said your friend helped you and gave you lots of good advice... what, on how to write a play...or...

T Yes, he sort of read the first draught of that play I did "The Filleting Machine", and gave me some good tips.

I Like what. I mean what good tips...?

T Well...theatrical tips I suppose. Like this boy in the play going to get a job on the quay like which will put his father out of work, and

T he nurses this like a secret through the play, its a secret from his mother, his mother wants him to work in the town clerk's office. He's got this job on the fish quay which doesn't want him to go... and I kept it as a ... what do they call it...a denouement...and at the end he would sort of reveal it.

I And say weeeee.....

T But my friend told me the best thing to do was to tell the audience right at the beginning let the audience in on the secret, so it was no secret to them, but it was a secret from the mother on the stage, and they had this over... you know it was... it was good advice.... It's one of the things about it, the techniques, the audience having one over on the actors. They know something that someone up there doesn't know and they're waiting for the surprise and the shock when she finds out you know, that sort of advice is good you know. And I don't ...

T I always remember the pat on the back from the teacher when I did my first composition...and I felt I ought to do something about it. Filleting Fish is alright but...it just leaves you at the end of the day...asleep in a big chair you know. Not very good, the money's better like...

Why do you do what you do? You come from a middle class background, and were sent to university and all that?

I Oh, yes the whole lot...it's pretty obvious isn't it, I keep trying to disguise my accent but....

T Oxford?

I No, no..

X No, no.

I No, I've never really worked, I had a year off between school and university and I've worked all the holiday jobs, you know, washing hospital floors and things, but I've never actually had to work.

T Had to do it in order to keep a roof over your head.

I It's bad that isn't it, that's why I can't understand why people pay me to do this sort of work 'cos it's so incredibly selfish really, I mean probably no one will ever read my thesis, at least very few people.

T Well I will if you send it to me.

I Will you? But it does seem a really selfish thing that I do, I get a guilty conscience about it now and again.

X I think though you're not being selfish (inaudible) they seem to temper it by working very hard to get more money for themselves, I don't seem to manage either very successfully.

X But in theory you're supposed to be working furiously hard aren't you? You're meant to be asking penetrating and relevant questions.

I Well anyway thinking...

X But you don't actually do it...

I I have flashes of insight about once a month, if that....

X That's not a very high percentage of the time....

I But you couldn't really could you... I'm not a very committed academic you might have noticed.

T No, I can't think of you as being an academic.

I No, I ought to wear spots, pick my nose and have glasses oughtn't I?

T And spit on the floor.

X All this would help.

T Well we're getting an audience.....

I I think you're wanted actually.

We'll sit here and clap very hard you know....

T Thank you love.

Live Theatre - interview with director Murray Martin

I = Interviewer

M = Murray

7.6.76

M and sometimes I say, well I think it was....discuss it and then try it this way.

I And you try and see that in the way that an audience might see it?
Or is it just your opinion?

M No, I would say it's just me, it's totally me. I would say when I'm directing, it's totally whether it convinces me.

I Cos Annie talks a lot about breaking conventions, "they'll accept that", not having full frontals all the time.

M Oh yes well, I think that's just her, that's just ...an example of her wanting to push theatre barriers and saying that we should, you know, experiment technically and so on, a thing I think Davie would be in favour of as well.

I It doesn't worry you so much!

M It doesn't worry me one way or the other, I'd either do it or not personally, but within the group I would say that Davie and Annie are the two people who are most theatre orientated.

I In that they've had specific training?

M It isn't anything to do with specific training actually, it's interest in a broader notion of what theatre might be than say, simply playing the way that we do, I mean Ronnie is quite happy to play documentary stuff the whole time, I mean he doesn't care either way that much,

M but I mean Annie and Davie I think would like to find things that were in a way more challenging and I would say that they're probably the two most committed performers in some senses. You know Ronnie didn't come out of any sort of acting background at all and he's got involved through a slow process of sort of, being involved with this group. Y'know, I mean I'm sure that's again what Annie was getting at to some degree talking about standards which she feels are ummm, she wants to have obviously a much more creative climate and it's very difficult to maintain that when you work for long periods of time with people. You can easily go stale, you're bound to go stale, you know, and how you find a situation which is continuously revolutionary in terms of sort of ideas and development, I don't know. It may be that no director can...can last long enough, or you've got to change the structure. Any director in a small group, in this sort of group maybe only lasts a short period of time.

I You mean you sort of wear him out, throw him off and get another?

M Well I think, it's not, it can be simply that people become dissatisfied with the limitations of a single individual, not that the individual themselves couldn't....it may be that the actors get sick and go you see. That's why I think that it's more of an actors' group than Annie seems to think. Cos traditionally I think it would be the director to go in Live Theatre if things are going badly.

I It's sort of inherent in the set up really in that there are a lot more of them than there are of you.
What sort of feed back do you get from the clubs. I mean presumably there are a number of people who won't have seen any sort of theatre before. What are the reactions?

- M A complete variation really, ranging from comments like - "If I wanted to be tortured I could have stayed home with my wife."
- I Fairly blunt.....
- M To you know, fairly ecstatic reactions really, I mean that club on Friday night was pretty fantastic, the climax you get in clubs if it goes well are something you'd never experience in a conventional theatre.
- I What does the ecstasy consist of?
- M Well I mean, very nice comments...I heard at Cullercoates club about the "Filleting Machine", like a bloke said to me afterwards said "You laugh but you know you shouldn't." You know.
- I Which is success to you because he's thought about it more then?
- M Yes, yes, he feels that it was really authentic which is what the idea was. You know. I mean often what we're doing is presenting cameos of life which give people insight to problems, about people losing their jobs or about work situations, and in that sense you're potentially trying to make people more sensitive to their situations.
- I That's where you go beyond doing just a documentary in fact is it?
- M Yes, that's why it has to be a creative process, it has to be revealing in some way, I mean we don't do just documentary, I mean I'm not interested in film which is just documentary very much.
- I A film never could be just documentary really could it, it's a bit of a myth to talk like that really isn't it?

M So's theatre, theatre can't be.....

I No, no it can't....like film for e.g. all the news stuff, it's just that people manage to bring off talk about them as being just documentary which is so patently untrue.

M Well, the other is that in TV there's a technique which gives the illusion of being objective.

I Of being objective, you mean the neutral eye of the camera?

M Umm.I mean I suppose the main compliment I'd accept is that some clubs would have us back any time that we wanted to go, and they always feel they're going to see something special I mean, I mean you always go to the toilets for the comments you don't...that's where the dialogue takes place and ummm...there was a conversation on Friday, Graham pointed it out, a bloke said "I haven't see you down the bloody boozier."

"I'm upstairs watching the plays"

"The plays?"

"Well I never thought I'd see the day when I went to see a play but I'd never miss one of these."

He's been about six times now, so there are certain people in an audience that we've actually won as an audience, which I...is encouraging from that point of view. What we're trying to do in a sense I think is to sort of celebrate people, you know, I feel there is a sort of fantastic inferiority complex among working class and I think it's due to the whole tradition of education and umm under privilege which I think is still very strong there.

I Oh yes, sure....

M Now personally I don't find myself that interested in it as a political force. I think the working class is conservative rather than revolutionary.

I Well yes, a large percentage of them vote Tory.

M But I think the problems they have are valid despite the fact that they're very often inarticulate and we tend to confuse lack of articulation with unintelligence and so the subjects we look for tend to be particular problems in working class life. Given a play like Irene which you've seen and which, as I say, I don't think is Tom's strongest play by any means, the fact that he takes as the subject a girl who's had two children and she's trying to find some way out through an older bloke and in the end is...yet still finds herself turning very easily to the younger bloke and yet still going back and finding herself in the same situation, nothing's altered. The fact that you present those problems to people who would normally see them in the context, in fact never see it and the fact that you present that as a real experience for them, that they identify with, that you can achieve that so that people come to trust and believe in what you're saying, means that you're potentially making them aware of the problem. They will think. That may have some sort of impact. If you make people think that way, then it may make people more sensitive to their situation and their problems. If you achieve that I think it's a major achievement.

I Then it's a tremendous responsibility, especially if you establish a relationship with certain clubs, and they believe you in a couple of plays, then you can really.....

M Right, and the building of the relationship allows you to do a special sort of work. For example, we worked in Long Denton in a school for younger kids about 12-14, maybe younger, and we went down really well and we did a rock show there and everyone was sort of hero worship and so on...and we could do anything in the school and we gave another show there and the staff said we've got a real problem, we've been trying to get in contact with the parents, we've been trying to get out to the parents, and we can't get the parents in at all. And we were doing a play about Byker which Circa wrote, called Fish and Chips, so we said alright, we'll do a play for them... for the parents and they would put on the booze and so on and we'd provide the entertainment and the kids were told to tell their parents they had to come and so about 200 parents came.

I They all turned up.

M And they all turned up and we had a fantastic night and the school was over the moon because that has altered the relationship, I mean it at least gave a dialogue which might be very important for the kids in the circumstances. Now, just the fact that you achieve that makes it a very worthwhile thing and it's the sort of thing we're interested in doing, building up a trust and a relationship.

I What are more specifically your relationships with the people you've met at clubs...like with Stagecoach it's a bit...I mean they're all from London and things and it's a bit more like me...I mean, I go to the clubs and I'm overwhelmed because everyone's so friendly and so warm, and you feel you could hug humanity its so nice, but I'm never part of it, sort of thing.

M Well, I'm an outsider as well and I've got barriers I've been to University....

I You've got a posher accent.

M Slightly posher yes...But not that posh.

I But it's still an embarrassment isn't it?

M Well it's a barrier certainly, there's a schism. Ummm..I don't know, it's very difficult to make claims as well for yourself.

I Not so much for yourself but, you know, the pearls and furs idea of an actress, where you get all their signatures and autographs and things. I mean what (inaudible) reaction.

M Well, there's another reason, that there's this problem cos of TV, like Madelaine, because she's immediately recognised as from "When the boats come in" and everyone says, "Ohhhhh, how, isn't that...you know, fancy you coming here" and it undermines that quality, it's almost another sort of barrier, which is why we all so...react against it.

I You just drink and stay on afterwards and drink after the show do you?

M Oh yes.

I You go for a good night out as well as...

M Yes, obviously you would go...there are other members of the group like Ray, who's recently left, who don't like clubs, he actually doesn't like them and that may be very important whereas I do, I perhaps don't like them as much as I used to cos I found them a bit limited.

I Limited in what sense? The people?

M In the sense that they're organised and their entertainment is...you have in some senses ...pubs are better.

I Is that cos they haven't got a tradition of doing certain things or...

M Yes, they're not so regulated, they're not based on the sort of rigid entrance, bingo every night at nine o'clock precisely. It's a more anarchic sort of situation. But..Clubs are in fact environments which attract vast numbers of working class people, of course, you have to look at them as a possible venue for theatre, They also have concert rooms which can easily be turned into theatres in that sense. Ummm As far as our relationship with them is concerned you know...it's difficult. I mean we're basically very much accepted by the clubs, I mean I think the clubs we go to...you get a very honest response, I mean they'll tell you if they don't like what you're doing. And if they do, if they do like it then you build up a warm relationship. Like tomorrow night at Bambros, there's a very synthetic situation I think, we just work in that cos the festival's coming on and it's good for the shows in that sort of environment in the city. There are very few places in the city you can do a festival show, that's why we go, want to work in Bambros. Really, it's the only sort of city environment probably in a sort of pub, club-type place which has ummm where the working class would come. They'd never go to the University Theatre.

I Can you blame them 55,000 Quentin Crisps in the foyer but slightly more insidiously so, isn't it?

M I mean, I don't know, y'know if you listen to the arguments today, you might feel there's a certain sort of disunity in the group, mmm.

I Or unity in that they are prepared to say a lot of things.

M Yes, yes I think they don't realise the degree of commitment that's there to make things so they can have that sort of openness, I mean it would never happen in an ordinary acting company, I mean it doesn't - I've seen the conventional theatre and I've seen how unhappy the actors are and then I have learnt to cope with, of course, is that it's inevitable...unsecurity base on which is...I mean Dave is ill before every performance.

I Really, that's....

M Nerves, just nerves. He's been playing the clubs for two years.

I Yes, Betty was worried that she wanted to go to the loo about fifty times, she was worried it was just her....

M Betty was ready about three quarters of an hour before the show last time.

I Yes...she did carry it off quite well in fact, she was very good...

M She was smashing, she really was.

I There again it's because she's absolutely totally authentic. She does just look like the lady next door.

M But that isn't quite true you see, because a lot of people couldn't do it.

I No, no, no, they couldn't just be themselves there's something more.

M Yes, I mean I couldn't act, I don't think, I don't have any inclination to perform in that sense. Whereas she obviously does and she was very good. She was spot on, that's the main...in the clubs when it's dead right you see people, even if you're doing something dead serious will sort of laugh, saying 'Oh it's so true'.

I Cos they're so surprised to see....like seeing yourself.

I And obviously if you do that the depth to which you can actually pursue material - the depths of any problem, you discover in the area. It's a limitless mine in a sense, because the sort of whole gambit of human relations and emotions is available but...what we're doing is working in a particular class field which is working class.

I Yes, it would be interesting to see what comes of the dole sketch with people thinking about their own ideas to that.

M Yes, I mean we don't have any consistent theme, we don't have something rigidly defined.

I Yes, that you have to portray the nasty bureaucrats and the...and yet as Annie says, after you've worked there for a while, you get like that cos you're so pissed off with layabouts or whatever.

M Well I think that's valid and that's a perfectly right response cos it's much more interesting to portray a much more, in a sense what I would say is a sensitive portrayal of a situation than it is to have the sort of cardboard political one, although y'know that's what Dave - I mean the group is a bit nervous as they feel a lot of the left wing wouldn't

M approve of the way we work or what we're doing. I mean they've all flopped in the clubs, even the best ones like Red Ladder and Belt and Braces, just can't work audiences the way that we do. That doesn't make us good, it means that we're doing a different sort of thing. It makes us more successful in clubs. But I mean their main success still tends to be invited audiences of Trade Unionists or students, who are informed of the arguments anyway, which I think....don't believe is any challenge. I mean I don't believe in preaching to the converted in any way and our problem is finding material to some extent which puts things increasingly at risk. Which actually exposes problems and areas in which you've got to be very delicate and very careful with, which touch on people's prejudices and fears and so on, and if you can do that, if you can do it sensitively then you can make them aware of their own problems and give them a bit of faith in their own imagination, then I think that's achieving as much as you can ever achieve in anything. If you achieve that then that's sort of everything. It's not so easy to sell, you're selling a thing on a cultural basis and not on a...the basis of...

I But then as you say, you're getting it over to people who aren't just IS or convinced marxists.

M You see they hated Circus play and "Fish and Chips" -

I They being other fringe groups?

M No, I think we've got a lot of respect from groups actually. They may be very nervous about certain aspects of the group. Most people know that we work with audiences and they know that's difficult. They know, they've all lost out on the clubs, none of them have actually....

I Why is it that - just that.

M Too difficult audiences.

I Because they'll just stand up and say, or just start talking, I mean they don't shut up and listen just cos there's a play do they? If they don't like it they..

M They let you know yes.

I That's where the difficulty locates itself?

M Yes, to some extent and also because there's a tradition in the pubs whereby entertainment is background anyway.

I Yes.

M It's not there to be listened to.

I Yes,

M Like Circa's play expresses views about marriage through an older woman called Agi Kelly. It was based on tapes Circa recorded in Byker, and this woman had been quite a radical political woman of her time and she had, on the surface, what you might say are 'reactionary' views about marriage. But the play very much set out to express, mainly through the three generations, daughter, mother and aunt, and the different attitudes how ideas were laid. Now, in fact the dialogue was authentic because it was recorded, but the group didn't like some of the politics....and they took an intense dislike to it because they felt as if it reflected what they felt, considered to be reactionary viewpoints. Like, you've got to train a man, and all that sort of

M thing, and they hated what they said were the wrong ideas, as they're not progressive, and yet it seems to me to be extremely narrow and limiting if you're going to have to say that. You don't express the viewpoints that we agree with, then the group cannot express a viewpoint he doesn't agree with,

I Mmmmmmmmm.

M They assume that because you put on a certain play that expresses a certain fact that you agree with those statements which we didn't, there were a total variety of viewpoints about the statement.

I But how do you try to show to people who are listening that you don't in fact agree? Or do you just let it stand as a statement?

M You don't, you just let it stand as a statement. And what we would say are well here are the statements that are being put forward, make up your own mind. You know, as long as it's worked out a bit more than that, in that sense the girl who didn't want to get married and the sort of boyfriend left her I think, yes...and there was a big dialogue scene between the aunt who expressed certain reactionary views and the daughter which included the fact that the daughter....she put... Agi Kelly put this step daughter out in the streets for going out with a boy when she was fifteen, this was an adopted daughter. And this was actually a case we just documented it, and these ideas that we expressed really offended certain people, they feel you shouldn't actually express those views and yet to hide the fact that they're there is...

I narrow minded....

M It's like saying it's wrong cos I'm prejudiced against Pakistanis, I

M bloody well am. You know I think expressing that within a certain context may make people look at it..And see themselves, if you didn't express those sort of views then they know you're not talking about them, you have to be accurate in what you're saying.

I But then you are using theatre in a way to make them look at themselves in a way that they never otherwise could?

M I think..yes, that's when the whole business of creating theatre and craft and art becomes relevant because if it's simply a piece of craft then it obviously has an effect on people, if it's a way of controlling emotions as an actor, what you can get out. Whereas if it's a much more creative process it does in fact reveal something to people and I think that the best theatre does that to people like the best photography, the best film making, and I think that the basic aim of myself as a director would be to produce objects that are revealing to the audience about their own sort of life. I mean that's what community theatre is about, that's what community art is about. It's not about a particular set of political viewpoints. I mean it seems to me very queer, all the fringe groups are left. It seems to me there's something wrong about that. You know....

I Except they feel they have to prosyletize more than the Monday Club presumably.

M I mean I understand it but I think that there's scope for other sorts of theatre, it's a very limiting view of what theatre means.

I Are you going to have to go back?

M Six o'clock, what time is it now?

Live Theatre - Monday, 7.6.76

M = Murray Martin (Director)'

A = Annie (Actress)

(New play rehearsals beginning. They start by discussing the Festival stuff - mainly material by Len Barras)

M 'It's got to be very controlled you know, the husband and wife play off each other you know. Read Tom Pickards 'Dole' and see what you think. The thirties is a possibility.'

They have ten days to get a new show together and to rehearse it for the 19th, the first day of the Festival. They plan to put on the play "Irene" unless they get some better stuff but they will try to put together some sort of revue stuff based broadly on the "life of a working man". This theme is chosen because they have a number of sketches that seem compatible with it rather than as a theme they want to build on.

Murray wants to make the Festival show one of Northern writers' work - three short plays possibly.

M 'We can do anything we want to do - we just have to find a way of linking that in an imaginative way. Improvising, providing stuff ourselves.'

He discusses with the actors what they can do: "Take the 'Dole' as a theme and work at it?'

He suggests taking the market place as a theme and doing a sketch.

Annie is still grumbling because she wants a theme. Discussing how to link sketches' - the dole and the devil sketch.

M "He can get into his devil head (in the coffin) and then stick on his tail and turn round and he's the devil. They'll accept than."

A "We never push them, they'll take a lot more, we always have...."

M "Yes, I'd be in favour of that format. We could find a musical, visual, verbal act to link them."

A "Get 8 or 10 Geordie sketches... Winkles, clinker, dole sketch, so far."

M "Winkles, although it's trite, works in the context of the audience position."

(Annie suggests using a link man to introduce a number of sketches. Quite an argument gets going about whether to get more people or not into the group, whether to do sketches first and then cast or the other way round. Discuss the political nature of the sketches as a link.)

M "The radical fringe wouldn't like it"

A "They don't like our stuff any way."

M "I'd like the link made visually, with a musical set up, rather than find a specific convention. Accept it as not linked and just do it."

A "The Festival show is about being in a good mood, even corn is quite amusing."

M. "You get away with it, people accept it, if it's done properly. Look at the Len Barras stuff, read the 'Dole' and see what you think."

(Murray then explains what the story of the Dole is about:)

M "It's a story, a story about a young lad, who's unemployed, goes to the Labour exchange, they want to send him to the Rehabilitation Centre"

A " - Oh, I've done it. I've done it in real life"

M "He's sent to someone for an interview, goes to a committee, 'cos he refuses they start trying to persuade him. We can read it and then change it if we want to."

(Davie reads some passages from a Pickard play):

"Juicy cunts dribbling into nylon panties. Hitler's cock pickled in a jar."

(When he reads these bits out Davie looks a bit amused/reluctant.)

M "Apart from Tom's attempts to shock his audience what do you think?"

A (Quite ferociously) "It's far too black and white"

M "Don't take it so personally."

A "I'm not".

M "You are".

(Anne then admits that she thinks that the situation is good.)

M "The hut Tom's talking about, do you know it, it is the green hut in New Bridge St.?"

(It transpired that Ronnie had been there.)

A "Are you trying to entertain or just say something. None of us are interested in the fucking bits."

M "Oh. Oh, hell, is it a good basis that's all?"

A "Tom is a bloody lay about... I'm more interested in... I'm against people going on the dole".

M "A lot of the people in the audience will have very fascist ideas, in a right wing way, they'll agree that dolers are layabouts."

(Anne puts forward that she knows people who make a packet on the dole because they've got three kids and so on. They have a long discussion then about the dole, embarrassment about collecting the money, the merits of rent rebates etc.).

A "What I think we should do is to get actual cases and present them, you know theatrically. If we want to take the dole as a subject then it will take longer than ten days."

M "Do you think the dole's a good idea, we can do research?"

A "If the Festival is going to be light entertainment...then I'd prefer to do.."

M "It doesn't have to be light. Fringe things aren't always not serious."

A "We should present it in a funny way, but I think we should say something."

(The company then started offering a list of personal experiences about people who'd been on the dole. They picked out such stereotypes as people getting drunk on the dole money. People who were too scared to go into the civic centre to claim stuff, people making money on it, people getting trodden on by bureaucrats. Got onto funeral jokes - again, and

descriptions of people's personal reminiscences. Picking the funny bits out of funerals. Of the phenomena of the Club Committee Annie says: "It will go down well because they will recognize it."

They are mad at Stagecoach (the University Theatre group) for doing shows which are heavily backed by subsidies and the name of the Tyneside Theatre Company because that means that other shows who are concerned only with working the clubs find it hard to follow their highly polished and entertaining stuff.

Stagecoach do not have to charge realistic prices for their club work, and it is difficult to explain to audiences that a less spectacular show must charge more than the spectacular one.

(Note Taking by Murray on the "IRENE" Show of the Night Before)

M " - It was fast because of nerves I think."

"You were talking when the audience were laughing."

"It went down exceptionally well, in fact it's been the best received of all our plays, but if it doesn't go down at Camden then..."

(meaning that it is an easy place to play and one which generally likes what L.T. does.) Time and time again there is reference to a place - If you can't make them laugh here then....

If you can get them to listen here then...

M "There was a bit of repeating of lines and miscues. We'll go over the script before tonight then."

(He then went into a criticism of certain scenes.)

M "Tom - I don't think that it was less of a performance just different. Ron can be quiet, hysterical or whatever."

M "Ron wasn't particularly convincing, to me as a personal, individual. It's to do with presence, it's very difficult to put your hand on it."

(Ron himself was sure that he had done exactly as he had done at previous rehearsals when everyone said that he was very good.)

M "OK. We'll look at it again but play it the same tonight and we'll see."

M "Annie, you play the Wangies scene different every time, not in terms of performance but your sitting down and standing up."

M "You should hit Irene twice for the beat up scene Ron."

(Murray is going through the play chronologically as he has taken the notes on the performance as it ran the night before.)

M "There should be a longer time delay to give that dramatic moment, you can overdo it but it's nice that people should know that."

"Betty, you said the wrong word and smiled, and you shouldn't do that." (This was said amusedly - Betty had never had any training and this was the first time in her life she had ever acted.)

M "I'd like to see it a couple more times before saying anything. The audience, I was watching them and they understood the jokes."

(They then had a general company discussion about the way they would conduct themselves during their working times - should they begin the day with a warm up, must they penalise members for not keeping time, how the division of jobs was to go (driving the car, doing the petty cash, sewing, etc.) They had taken an earlier decision to fine latecomers but it hadn't worked.

They had also said they would start with a warm up but had lapsed on that too. Big argument about whether Ronnie was fit to drive the van because he drank and drove. Murray tried to calm everyone down by saying:
" - The difference between this and a conventional theatre is, it's an actors group."

A "No way" (vehemently said and they discussed why not - whether Murray should resign if they didn't agree with what he was doing. Annie saw this threat of resignation as a form of blackmail.

They tried to make a ruling about the company's ideas on T.V. A very sore point this as they had lost a number of members to the fame of "When the Boats Come In" and "Coronation Street".

M "It's always been disruptive, fame changes people. Live theatre isn't into the star system, Madeliene, she came back much changed."

Annie is for letting the actors do some T.V. work if it doesn't interfere with the company's plans - this on the basis of change being necessary to the creativity of an actor, artists need a challenge and a stretching and one company can't do all this.

The discussion ended in a dead heat and this issue was deferred.

Live Theatre - Tuesday, 8.6.76. - Notes on Rehearsals.

The improvisations for the dole theme are underway when I arrive. Each actor does a sketch based on people they know, dole situations etc. One spends it on booze, wife claims for husband on sick and can't get it because he has saved some money in his savings bank. They recorded all the sketches on a tape then listened to them and talked about them. Betty comes in saying that: "they give the Giro to the drunks over the counter and to the likes of me they say I'll post it on."

Annie says you don't need a dole clerk in the sketch because they're just anonymous figures anyway: "You just waste a character on them if you put one in."

All sitting in a line talking at the audience as if they were the clerks. This is the idea that is taken and finally used. Annie says she thinks the audience will pick it up straight away.

M "We must define the characters, no, we don't need a dole clerk."

Ronnie gives a story about how he refused to sweep the floor so left the job he'd been given - they said he'd left and he claimed he'd been sacked so he was still eligible for the dole.

Murray liked the story but said that they'd have to find some way of ending it.

Annie is all for: "getting actual stories, it's always best."

Davie did a drunk impersonation, he gets his money from the dole for a blanket but is dying to go off and use it for the booze.

A "I think that the drunk worked."

Then they discuss how to structure the dialogue snippets they have invented. Should each tell his whole story at once, or each in little bits?

M "We'll try them both to see how they work."

Betty comes up with a story about how she gets round the Giro - someone signs her name for her then she goes back and says 'that's not my name on the Giro, so gets some more. Thousands of fiddling stories come out.

M "We can see then that there are two sides to things, one person getting found out might be quite good. Should we write out the individual's characters?"

A "No, lets do it again improvising."

They try it again with speaking in turns to build up the story.

M "That has real possibilities. We need to balance it out and time it, but it's good."

Then found a song called the 'Dole song'.

Annie decides she needs to talk to her mam about her experiences and get exact stories. One issue they want to talk about is that 'the social' won't give people money if they've got savings which strikes everyone as wicked.

(Afternoon rehearsal)

Reading scripts - do a few different readings and see how it goes.

M Should we start blocking it out?"

One actor reads something one way then they swap over characters. Then they get round to blocking. This means they go through it line by line thinking how it should be said - a laugh, nastily, etc.

M "The audience will like that line."

M "It's a good performance thing."

A "Yes, but the performances will come from the actors."

They have a number of scripts on their files, bring them out and study them.

A "On the Smales sketch it's not naturalistic, it's zany and we should treat it like that. It should be very overacted and laughs for the audience.

M "But we've not said that it is. We can't play it realistically, no way."

A "Yet, but it should all be totally, ...y'know."

M "All I've said is there should be a change of tone there....The way they act behind each others backs that isn't dictated for here (i.e. in the Barras script). Should play this bit out front as you and the councillor are isolated in some way."

28.6.78.

S = Steve J = Jeremy I = Interviewer F = Fred
C = Chris M = Mickey G = the author

- J. "It will develop into .. the first time that we do have a big house in...
I think the first time is next Thursday when we've got over two hundred
people already for that .. ummmm that's... I mean we've got to tighten
things up a lot by then so that err... there was already some quite
interesting and pleasant come back from the kids at certain points today
and that was only with about forty of them in there ... when it gets
bigger I imagine that it could be quite chaotic, potentially. There
were certain moments I felt, when we have just got to tighten things up
and just get a move on. At the same time it err .. it only lasted
forty minutes .. ummm if we tighten it up it will shorten some of it.
Geoff is having a look at the moment at the script to see if he can
follow up on suggestions of Bodger's which is that we try and add five
minutes into the show somewhere."
- G. "Which I don't altogether agree with ..."
- J. "and find another..."
- C. "Did Bodger watch it.."
- J. Yes.
- C. "All the way through?"
- J. "Yes"
- F. "Yea he was upstairs..."
- J. "It was his ... a request if you like from the top. Umm"
- C. "Is that an artistic request or a errr ... managerial one?"
- J. "No, it's an artistic one..He felt that at the moment .. well, he felt
that there ought to be another five minute ... well another five

minutes taken up with some other kind of major event in the build up.

Some new sequence as it were, that goes into some variation."

M. "Having kicked it out of the original script..." (laughter)

J. "What was that?"

M. "Well Geoff's original script. "

J. "I can't remember what it was."

M. "We met the stutter man."

J. "Oh the man who stuttered and they played snap with him.. when they were trying to get the money? Oh that was it ... oh yes .. back in the annals of unrecorded time, isn't it."

F. "Well, we could have easily added another five minutes in ... after Chris on that washing line ... "

J. "Oh, no, no, it's not, I was looking at that this morning and that's that's er ... it's not a matter of padding it out for another five minutes, no."

F. "I was worried that when Bodger says 'add on another five minutes' that means another five minutes of unicycle..."

J. "No no it doesn't.. it's not in this case..."

M. "When you come ... it's after the mirror."

J. "Well, now I'm not sure about that you see. Because I like the three events that build up into the haunted house, the mirror, the cutouts and then the haunted house. That has got a sort of nice sort of consecutive logic to it. No, I think that if it is to go in then it would go in somewhere in the first half of the play. You know, maybe... or maybe something could occur just before the hall of mirrors, just before the chase or something. I don't know ... if that ... is if it was to happen."

M. "I think that if there is going to be that then it must be in the area of ... after the ghost train, after we've entered the ghost train..."

- C. "No, I don't... don't you think so...?"
- J. "I think build up..."
- C. "I still have a horrible feeling ... I still have the same feeling that I had before which is that the whole thing is not important enough.
(pause) The kids don't really feel that ..."
- F. "That you're in trouble..."
- C. "That I'm in trouble enough ..."
- J. "Over the money and all that ..."
- C. "To warrant an entire play about it ... do you know what I mean?...
and if we could build that up so that ..."
- J. "ummm"
- C. "Him demanding his money is about the most important thing that ever happened..."
- J. "Yes, there is I mean there is ... at the moment there is a sort of great hiatus..."
- C. "I think it's in that sort of direction ... err, which also I'll ask Geoff to have a look at which umm ... in Ur's threat to Tumalty; 'if you don't do that I will ... 'ooo that really needs either rethinking or working out in a much more frightening way."
- C. "It's something to do with making the two hundred and twenty pounds more important ... and err ..."
- G. "In the original script there certainly was if you remember ...
the whole thing of Ur coming into the audience and absolutely rubbing his hands with glee and counting all these kids who were worth a pound each as far as he was concerned and as I remember ... I haven't got it I'm afraid .. but as I remember in the original ... that seemed more important at that time... that he was absolutely..."this is going to be fantastic", and there was dialogue between Fiona and Tumulty about"

"he's really smiling, he's really happy, yea well he's not going to be happy for very much longer, "I know that we had to redo it because of the mirror thing but I think it's a pity that some of that did actually go a little bit as well. You know, the thing of him not going to be happy because "Jesus God" she says, "you've what", yea I know but I couldn't... CHRIST ..", and it actually came from Fiona more". He'll go beserk"... and that was in the original thing you know. ... umm it was actually there and I think that is actually ... let's reinstate it again by all means.

C. "It's that atmosphere that we actually want to get back in.. and we'll try to keep in the mirror and the spooks.

G. "We've got to keep in all that, that's very nice, all I am saying is that it was there originally this thing of Fiona saying 'listen pal the best thing you can do is just to start running now, run like hell now."

S. "In some ways, I don't know whether it ... to do that one has to be any more verbose... I think that we've got enough verbosity .. in fact possibly too much action. It's active sort of... presentation..."

G. "It's a question of trying not actually to scare the living daylight's out of these kids .. but actually it's just a theatrical thing Tumatly has got to be more frightened than they are and they've got to appreciate it through Tumatly... like "I'd be as frightened as that but I'm alright cos I'm sitting here in the audience", you know."

J. "Well, one thing that is helping Fred at the moment, and helping us to achieve that ... which is not to scare the living daylight's out of them is the pre-show..."

G. "Absolutely ... I think you're right..."

J. "Which helps a lot..."

F. "I think .. it helps an awful lot ..."

G. "It's a good move..."

J. "Cos they're out there ..."

F. "What I tried to do this morning when I was out there, with Steve, every time the kids came in, Steve would say "come on and have a go", and it was like "have you paid" (in character voice), "where's your money, where's your money", so I was trying to make a point of the money. But then it seemed to get so disipated once you got down to it ..."

C. "Yea..."

J. "Is there something that you could do, is there anything in finding out the reason... as Chris told us ... why Ur needs all this money? Perhaps there is a variation comes in there .. or the development .."

G. "Yes, but the thing is you see ... if you remember we spoke about this originally ... if Ur is any less than the bad guy then we actually start to see his point and we actually lose a lot of mileage there. I think, I think we'll .. do you remember that first thing that someone came up with about he owed this landowner, you know, so many pounds, you know so ... then the poor guy has got a point...actually, he's not just a jerk, he's not just a horrible.. person.

M. "He's trying to survive..."

G. "He is just trying to hustle in a cruel world.. the reason he wants it is that he is greedy, he's horrible..Fagin.. I just want it."

C. "Yea, I'm not putting anything more on that, I'm just saying that I think it can be more. Its not the repetition of 250 pounds over and over again that will do it, it is more to do with the fact that that is extremely important to you... whether that's been the best day's takings that you've ever had in the world and therefore the disappointment of not having it.. is that much bigger."

F. "Yea..."

C. "It's to do with the fact that the whole premise of the play, and the whole premise of even Tumalty discovering the will and therefore finding out that he owns the fair is just based on this one thing. And I think you can build up that somehow in some way.

J. "Yea..."

F. "But, as Geoff says, the actual terror. It actually struck me this morning that...this isn't a note... that you're more afraid of telling me that you've broken the mirror than actually saying that you can't give me the money. That's why I've always been a bit suspicious of that thing of breaking of the mirror, cos then the kids can wonder why is he chasing them... is he chasing them because of the mirror? or what. You know that whole level. I mean, I'm meant to be after money."

J. "Ummm.. and yet Chris seemed more frightened about breaking the mirror than actually not having the money."

C. "Well, I only actually mention it once...."

G. "It's what happens to ... our fear is all built on what is actually going to happen to Chris.. It's not actually why ... we're not concerned with why you need the money or your disappointment ... it's what you'll do to .. if you don't get it. Which is not quite the same thing is it. It's like I'm going to send you to a children's home .. I'm going to stick you in the cellar."

M. "Exactly..."

G. "I mean if something could be done for that bending of the nails..."

J. "Yea, well I spoke to ..."

G. "I think that the thing we talked about before is the metal bar. It's

just got to be that."

F. "Have we investigated the copper piping?"

J. "Oh yes awful ..."

S. "I'm sorry I didn't set that up very well. It took me about three hours to find the nails in my bag... I "

G. "It needs to be big... it needs to be.. like we said the other day .. if you could just find some copper pipe with a spring in it.. stick two corks in the end of it, get hold of it and go errr round your neck.. go "Jesus... and next time that'll be your back" or words to that ... Great drama off stage, like when he breaks the bicycles."

J. "That works wonderfully ..."

F. "Which one would you like (break an ordinary cycle into two monocycles). that's my favourite bit."

C. "The adults appreciate it though "which of these unicycles is yours?" (laughter)

G. "Can we use any of those balloons... I know they are set for another play but can we actually get a pin and pop them and say, "I shall do that and that", I mean it's more violence... Just have one metal pipe and then actually go beserk... cos that's how I envisaged it when I said He performs various ... he just actually goes nuts..."

F. "I was just thinking of really picking up poor Notch... you see it done so many times... a big heavy with a little side kick... "take that, take that",..."

S. " "I believe you ... oooooo.... I agree..."

J. "Very good..."

F. "By the ears..."

S. ""I did it I did it ...""

F. "this morning when Ur and Notch actually got physical ... when we collided and we did all that..."

- M. "I still think that you should hit him like I said yesterday."
- S. "He did hit me... No, but it needs to be that QUIET..."
- S. "Oh then, yea... but I think not with the hand I think that the hand is too... it's the hat or any implement ..."
- F. "The Harry boys...between physical... (pause....) should you have a whip? (laughter) "
- G. "The most important thing is that you've got to be seen to perform an extraordinary feat of strength. Something that you think if that had been done to his head... you'd been looking for a new Tumatly."
- M. "On the South Bank they had a predominantly kids audience and they thought it was fucking amazing... they didn't believe it... it was amazing to them cos if you try to tear a newspaper...it's a big thing..."
- F. "But after doing that then I always think that it is sort of too big a jump to say 'no, the ghost train'. I felt that today, cos that has always been a very grey area."
- G. "I think that ... a production note... forgive me. I just feel that you can actually whip yourself into such a state that you know very well that you can actually murder him now, and its just holding back... it's that thing of just.... the ghost train... but I just think that you've just got to get yourself into such a state of absolute sort of manic... sort of state..."
- M. "There is a thing about ghost trains that we didn't capture um..."
- C. "No, we've relied on preshow for that ... which we... didn't use."
- J. "They picked it up wonderfully didn't they ... the suggestions..."
- C. "Well we had one pillock who suggested the ghost train... and I said 'no, I'm petrified of the ghost train.'"
- J. "Yea, I heard that."

- C. "Cos she said "where will we hide?" and some little kid said "in the ghost train.""
- F. "Because the ghost train is the obvious hiding place..."
- C. "Right, but maybe the preshow... maybe we should intersperse slides with conversation about fair grounds."
- M. "The ghost train doesn't look particularly frightening. If there were sort of like hands coming out... when I used to go as a kid I used to go to the fair ground and I used to spend every penny I'd got on going in that ghost train... I'd look at it and I'd go through it and I'd come off it and I'd look at it for half an hour and I'd steel myself up and all my nerves again... right... and go in it again."
- C. "I've said this to you before that I do think that the lighting could be more can be more atmospheric... Having seen it today with these kids I think we're in to spots on that entrance... and total blackness everywhere else... in you go, really frightening... it's dark, a spot on the entrance."
- J. "Ummm.. there is a spot there, there is a special..."
- C. "Yea but we've got lights everywhere else.."
- J. "No, no, I'm just saying that there is one there... Chris."
- C. "Yes, but I mean just that... when they go in the ghost train that is the worst thing that could happen to anyone.. it's not kind of general state of lighting up and the lights on the ghost train it's actually total darkness and spot and.... Notch... It's actually the worst place anywhere... it's Hades... and I think"
- J. "Yes..."
- C. "and I think that it ought to go that far."

- S. "... and the same with the sound thing as well... it's got to be loud..."
- M. "So when he says "I'll put in the ghost train" there ought to be
"ooooo-"" smoke "
- J. "Maybe, when the door opens, maybe some sound ought to come out?"
- M. "That's the bridge of course isn't it..."
- J. "It is, that's the strength... even more evil..."
- F. "I think that we should play it for atmosphere as well as...real
extremes."
- F. "They won't be frightened by a total..."
- G. "They are all sitting together as well, they are not by themselves,
not in front of the tele and their mum's out."
- C. "Right, I mean I didn't get the squeal of fright ever, and I should
have done."
- M. "I was surprised that there was no ... when I came on. I expected
there to be a "behind you"... and there wasn't... "oh a skelington..."
- C. "And there should be."
- M. "There should be".
- C. "They should be screaming if we'd got it right, and then we've got
to know how to control it, but we've got to have that reaction off
the kids and then discover how to control it, at the moment..."
- M. "We must build that feeling up so that whenever it's mentioned."
- C. "Oh, gor blimey, there is a skelington behind you..."
- S. "So they are as frightened as you... if they don't then we know that
they are just watching the play..."
- G. "That's right... would there be anyway to use those washed out spooks
in that scene?, it seems an awful waste just having them..."
- G. "This is it... I felt that today actually... I'm sorry to attack ideas

that I didn't come up with, I don't mean that, but I mean I just think that then they are redundant, they are lying there, which is fine, but... on the washing line... but why are they there? In one way... "look I know what we'll do, we'll."

C. "I know why we put them in, it was because there is no justification for the haunted house being empty of spooks... and therefore using the kids..."

M. "Other than Mickey's speech which goes in... in the old speech there was the thing you couldn't get the spooks to work there any more.. they didn't realise that they didn't want to do night work anymore.."

C. "But that is like information being given at the very moment that you want the kids to know already.... the idea of that is that the kids suddenly realise along with him that ..."fuck, Tumalty is going into the haunted house, and there aren't any spooks there".. it's building up that when he says that Tumalty is in awful trouble the kids should say "of course he is there aren't any spooks there", all in the washing... that's the only reason for trying that..."

G. "Yea...yea... I'm not knocking... it's just that if they are there then let's... you know... get three kids and say put this on...yea... or you put them on..."

M. "It's just that there should be, when the door opens, there should be noise... and smoke belches out of the ghost train and Fred says to Notch "go in the ghost train" and ..."

G. "It seems to be a logical development that....fear..."

J. "Yes Is there...how can we apply this practically?... it's very good to make..."

C. "Well, I've just had a thought... Fiona, me, and skelington can actually put the spooks costumes on..."

J. "What, inside the train?"

- C. "No in the haunted house. He does all the business about "oh they are in awful trouble... what are we going to do... we'll all be monsters", and then we all come in..."
- G. "And then Mickey's got to get them off the clothes line and say "here you are"..."
- F. "If anything that would actually scare them even more if it was actually spooks telling them..."
- F. "Yes so instead of Tumalty actually saying go...spooks yea..."
- J. "Oh I think that he's got to actually reveal himself at the end for that hasn't... for that... once he's scared them..."
- F. "Oh yes but if everyone is in the spooks costumes then that will make it even better... because... yea yea..."
- J. "Is there some way when you come in before skelington comes out, when he says 'here I am'... and he says... is there perhaps a link in there when you realise that there aren't any ghosts in there and it's you two who remember the spooks."
- C. "I felt like today..coming into the haunted house and saying 'fucking hell, of course, they've all been washed. It's the same as going to the hall of mirrors and saying "fucking hell it's all been broken"."
- J. "So then it's your idea and you go up and get these things...skelington is in hiding in the audience and he has told the kids that they're going to be monsters..."
- G. "That's right, cos then with five people we can say... it's alright, we've fixed it..."
- C. "We come in and say "fucking hell, Jesus, the haunted house is empty of ghosts we've got to hide, where is skelington, "here I am", and skelington says "go and put them on we've got more monsters here".. yea..."

G. "That's right..."

J. "Oh, I see..."

C. "We come in and we are despondent and we've thought we've suggested a great idea about the haunted house and it won't work cos there aren't any ghosts..."

G. "They're full of anticipation this time..."

C. "Oh I'll lose my favourite line... Don't be afraid Fiona, I'm not, alright you go first..."

J. "Alright no spooks..."

G. "No, no, it doesn't matter they can stay..."

J. "But, I'd also like to go back then and work out... Geoff I don't know if there is anything you can do to build up the ghost train.? before hand. OK there is actually, there are things we can do on this set, there is a limit to the number of technical things we can achieve in this place, with the equipment and the time and that kind of thing, in terms of making sort of spooks and ghosts and smoke. We can do some of it but is there anything in the text whereby the ghost train..."

G. "The first time that the ghost train is mentioned... I don't know, it's just out of my head, if when Uncle becomes absolutely demented and then suddenly gets this idea that it is getting dark and says I'm going to put you in the ghost train...' and we can have an effect of Bumbumbu... and (noises) "Not the ghost train uncle..." the lights come down and back and smoke... that's what's needed."

J. "Bring in the elements" (laughter)

G. "We've not had to lay it on at all, really, we've actually said, there and then," this is what happens when you mention the ghost train", kids."

C. "Except when she said "where do you want to hide" and they said 'the ghost train'... they think because we work in the fair it would be a

good place for us to hide..."

G. "It's alright."

J. "It would be good if there was some way of bringing in the fear of the ghost train before-hand as well."

G. "You'll have to leave this place...and hide... get away from here and hide." Cos I remember in the original text there were the lines "you'll have to get away and hide", hence America... 'where else can I go'?"

F. "Yea, you get this whole business of 'where should I hide' in the ghost train, under that chair, no no I think I should... America. (laugh) (cos it does sound illogical)."

C. "Somewhere further away... America... and they'll go
"what!!!"

S. "What do you want to go to America for you great..."

C. "To watch television."

G. "So it is perhaps that, the dialogue... to get that thing of getting away from the fair, you've got to leave this fair and go and hide somewhere."

J. "But that still hasn't achieved yet the fear of the ghost train..."

F. "Why don't we make the ghost train... leading on from your suggestion... turn the ghost train into some sort of animal. So that when the ghost train in the smoke comes out of the tunnel and the curtains move as if to say "errrrr... send them in", see what I mean, so the ghost train becomes almost human.."

J. "We could put a speaker down in the tunnel perhaps..."

M. "The groans..."

F. "Like a beast"

G. "You've got to be careful of effects..."

C. "I think that we go right over the top with lighting and sounds and otherwise half the effect will be missed, I really did feel that we did

have a kind of general state all through the show ... as soon as the bell starts there should be lighting change.."

J. "There is a huge lighting change..."

C. "Well I didn't notice it... there was..."

C. "Well, it's not all that big .. it didn't seem any different to what it was before.."

J. "Well it was I assure you, quite a lot."

C. "Ghost train should be one spot on that hole there... with ghost train and nothing else anywhere in the building so that when you are being pushed down there you are being pushed into the worst place you could ever be."

M. "With flames coming..."

J. "Absolutely... I take that point..."

C. "Yea I mean don Giovanni stuff with Hades... and I mean the haunted house likewise... work it out into something really..."

J. "That looks much better from out front than I think you think it does."

C. "I came out front and stood here and watched it. . But it's going to be a much bigger contrast anyway, cos they are going to put much more light on Mickey when you're teaching the kids. Or rather, not on you, but generally bring the lights up so that you can teach the kids."

C. "I think that the state we see Notch and Ur entering is the one we should enter into... and when they come in it should be worse than that.."

J. "The same...."

C. "No, it's not, it changes... we come in and then

J. "...all that happens before they enter is that we take down any white light that has been out front which is the same as happens to you. When

they enter it seems to go much darker.."

J. "The smoke helps a hell of a lot..."

A. "We could bring the smoke up to there actually for the ghost train..."

J. "Yes... well I mean I'll go away and have a look at all this... all the entrances where we can do effects like that."

F. "Back stage is it possible to have bits of white tape..."

A. "We're going to put yes..."

M. "I'll tell you what worried me is working on that shelf..."

J. "I don't know what we can do about that."

M. "In the business it is called a stage (quote from B.Fair)..."

J. "No-one told me."

M. "I almost feel that I should come out of the ghost train down in that pit... cos I felt totally detached and I thought and this is one of the reasons why I felt that I had to project so much to reach..."

G. "You could actually, it's a bit static... you could move onto the steps without much problem..."

J. "It's still only a gesture though isn't it?"

C. "What do you think Geoff... You haven't seen it as many times as Jeremy has. What do you think?... I mean, we've set the convention of the entrance and exit down there, right, and therefore the ghost train comes up behind it... can one interrupt that conventions... could we have brought that scene up there, down here and got back up for Notch's..."

J. "I think that you could you know, just thinking about it... if Mickey comes up... out of the ghost train... yea with his tray.. and"

G. "Looked up and said alright"

J. "Because you know, taking that argument further on, the logic of the

haunted house, is the same place as we've seen outside..."

G. "You actually get your shock... you jump and leap nicely onto those things, as you did, and then actually just, fascinated, it pulls you down those stairs. Tiptoeing forward... saying "I don't quite believe that we're seeing this skelington"..."

M. "I know how I envisaged it when I saw it before...this is wrong.. immediately you've got impressions in your head, this is how it should have been. Was that... the train comes on... and it stops and Fiona says, they get off and Fiona says "can you see anything"... it goes down the steps.. and he says "spooks, spiders, cobwebs, skelington", and he's down the steps now with whatever it was... and at the bottom of the steps... I came up out of the middle."

C. "So we hit you at the bottom of the steps?..."

M. "Yea"

J. "You've seen him as a natural progression..."

J. "You could still rush back up and climb up those poles... it's marvellous."

M. "No, we could just go up the steps..."

J. "When you see him straight up the steps, straight back up and on the ladders, cos they look very good, and then slowly come down again.. we'll rehearse that anyway."

F. "Is the idea to come on with the ghost train from the same place, come down..."

J. "Come down and when they hear Notch say "you will"... they rush back up again."

M. It's their fear of the ghost train again... that we've got to establish. Is there any mileage at all in them running back into the kids? Because

when they're frightened and..."

C. "But that is engendered from us..."

M. "Yea but what worries me is that you move away from the audience which is an energy moving away rather than in ..."

S. "If you've got all your audience sitting round there.. Will we have that every time?"

J. "No, not every time... you'll have it sometimes..."

F. "I think that it's nice that the fear is contained in two characters, you join the audience eventually again before the forces of evil."

M. "Yea... I know but it's getting that fear..."

F. "If you join the audience too early on then surely that dissipates the whole thing?... it's all of us against the two villains."

C. "You are revealed to be actually a non-threat very quickly..."

M. "Yea."

C. "As soon as you are as frightened as we are... when we go up so in fact we don't actually need to use the audience..."

G. "Mickey's first entrance is a non-threat... you can't walk on with a teapot in your hand and be asked to be taken seriously as a frightening element of this play. The build up beforehand which makes that more important... that dreadful place..."

J. "Where do we stand at the moment, then, in the first ten minutes of this thing in setting up Tumalty's fear a) of Ur and b) of the ghost train, I still think we haven't quite cracked that..."

C. "I think we could make more of it..."

M. "I think there should be something..."

- J. "You see some event that could occur, some event that could happen. Ur and Notch may be in the ghost train..."
- G. "I mean look... can I just go back for a minute to the original thing. Now Fiona is saying "you know what will happen, he'll put you in the ghost train", now originally that wasn't there... you know I do think that if you come up with a threat that you've never heard about before it's the way you handle it... it's what you do with it. If we've never spoken ghost trains, if Uncle Ur comes along and says that "I'm going to do something to you... awful"... "I'm going to put you in the ghost train", it is the reaction that moment "My God". I don't think that you necessarily have to build, I think actually that you weaken it rather by building it up, by mentioning it in the first place. You know we'll put you in the ghost train because in one way it's a casual reference..."
- C. "But a child suggested that we should go and hide in it.. which suggests that it is no threat at all..."
- G. "Yea..."
- J. "Cos it was visible..."
- C. "Yea..."
- C. "If someone says "go and hide in the ghost train", and he says "I'm going to put you in the ghost train" it doesn't, it's got no..."
- G. "That's true..."
- C. "But if he says "I'll put you in the ghost train, and I go "Oh fuck, oh no, "oh christ", then he does, then it is the worst thing that could have happened."
- G. "I know what you mean..."
- C. "I mean it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. It's finding out which way."
- F. "You say "where can we hide in the fair?", No, we never say that, it is just assumed."
- F. "Yea..."

- G. "What I was saying was that if you say, "We've got to get away from the fair", again I keep going back to the original thing which was about getting away from this place, you know."
- C. "There's no problem about putting that back... cos that's just you and me."
- G. "Which might just stop the reaction."
- J. "But I'm sure that somewhere there is a link that we could put in between a) the ghost train as a threat, b) the... Ur's threat to Tumalty and his fear, c) Ur's fear of the ghost train."
- G. "Except, logically, we're not actually discussing threats at that time are we?. We are actually having a happy day carrying on, life's alright, giving a few free rides away. We're not thinking about..."
- J. Yea, but in that I'm wondering how in that first five or ten minutes, before maybe getting into the tricks."
- C. "Well I tell you what you could do..."
- J. "Which for my money... from the tricks onwards... that this show is... its got, you know, a good flow"
- C. "Off the top of me head, if Ur was playing poker with Paul, and was losing a lot of money, while we were doing the preshow... currently... at the end of which the preshow... Ur... we pay him, or should have paid him a hundred pounds, we haven't got a hundred pounds..."
- G. "That's what we're back to though Chris, we start to see the guy's point of view..."
- C. "No, because you have got a statement of values there. This man has lost a hundred pounds, he says "never mind, you've won, here's your hundred pounds, cos I can get it back off these little kids who've had rides and

paid for it".... as opposed to the values of Tumalty who's said
"ere Have you got five pounds?. No, well go and have a free ride"
That is a ... that's not seeing his point of view. They will know
that he is evil and... I'm good.

F. "I mean kids today they just go straight in to..."

G. "No, well I'm talking about a scene, an event in terms of Jeremy.
Like, in the first scene of the play, the preshow happens, and you
all watch and actually you're... almost give him a note, or you're..
there... scene No. 1 is a gambling scene in which you lose a hundred
pounds, which your happy to lose and say "never mind I know I've got
a £100 pounds coming from the kiddies, "enter Fiona, who says
"errr it's just..." something like that so that you need 100 pounds,
you're going to get it off Tumalty. Tumalty owes it to you and you
know he owes it to you 'cos you've got a list, and the kids know
then that Tumalty is really up shit creek. I mean that's just off
the top of my head, but something like that. First scene is a gambling
scene when you lose £100."

F. "Or it could be something as simple as "I've just got these new
clothes"."

C. But they haven't seen you do it."

G. "And we come back to this original ... you know you owe me a 100 quid
or whatever for parking your fair on my land, I want me money, give
it, which... I agree it is a different moral thing, I mean but..."

C. "Also if the kids can see that you need that money then they know
how important it is to you. Not necessarily how right it is but how
important it is for you to get it and that means Tumalty really is
up shit creek 'cos he can't give it to you.

G. "Unless it... is the possibility of that whole thing.. I've got the

equipment to maintain, I've got to do this and that, how dare you give away my ... or is that a complex argument that kids are not really into anyway? Do you know what I mean? If he comes on saying I know why I need this money."

C. "No, cos that justifies it, cos you've seen him.."

F. "It's nicer though that uncle just wants the money for the sake of the money. "

G "Cos he's a greedy old..."

J. Gambling though is quite a that sort of follows that sort of idea round though.. Doesn't that switch..."

F. "What I am afraid of is, as you said Geoff, the audience think that's fair enough, he owes them the money, you're in the wrong. I want to get back to the wicked uncle thing... who wants the money for the sake of it..."

C. "Except that Tumalty is in the wrong, he has been giving them free rides, he is in the wrong... the point is that the kids actually think that his wrong is not all that wrong. Cos they haven't got the money, and it is nice to give free rides, and if you can, but this old cunt is insisting on having it and he is going to fucking break his back if he can't give it to him . I er..."

M. "You see the commodity that you give isn't actually a valuable one."

S. "What are you doing in the preshow in terms of you giving rides to the kids?

C. "We ask... I mean ... today was a kind of ... a bit loose cos that..."

S. "That is fairly important isn't it? If you spend more... if their confrontation is more learning the song... or getting people up to the slide thing, then they miss the point..."

- C. "No, I was watching the kids when he said "how many of you have paid him" and all that and they actually...."
- S. "They actually..."
- C. "They really do feel involved... they felt to blame."
- G. "Can I just say one more thing before I go?"
- J. "Yes"
- I'm sorry I've got to go to the road show...
- M. "You don't care about us I know..."
- G. "I do... shh that's why I get upset because I care..."
- M. "They're not on yet, we've done a show.. and you are just leaving us ignoring us I know... that is why you brought me this drink at lunch time."
- G. "My note is for you Mickey (in an odd voice)... (laugh).... I just think that... the thing with the kids is too long. I think that the explaining thing is too long... the reason I think so is that we have got to feel that Ur and Notch are going to be there any second, from any area in this building, and so it has got to be, all the time, even when the children arrive... it's got to be pant, pant... "look we've only got a second to explain this, so get it right first time kids"... even though you bring them out and demonstrate... it has got to be... urgency has got to be there the whole time. So the kids are on edge, once they start to relax we've lost them really, cos as Chris said before, they sit back and go you know... "that's a nice show"... That's got to be the reason for doing it."
- G. "That's right, "oh god, what are they going to..."

Note taking 29.6.78.

Fayre Play

Coffee Bar

- F. "We're going to melt all the ice cream in the world, and we run off and we're really happy cos we think that we have the grand total with an extra 150 quid see..."
- C. "So that's right when you say to Fiona 'how much have you got' and he says 'I don't know Tumalty's got it'..."
- J. "Do you reckon in that sequence, they escalate so much, they all say ... you paid didn't you? and Fiona is sweeping up the stage at the time, sweeping up the litter..."
- C. "But if you are nasty as you are and you go 'you have all paid, haven't you?' they are all going to go 'no' Unless... that is very, very strong."
- J. "Yes, but it could..."
- F. "But I've told Ur in the preshow... 'Alright, alright, you've got no money, alright but don't tell anybody' If when they say 'Have you got five pounds', 'ok, you haven't well go and have a free ride but don't tell anybody.'"
- C. "For goodness sake don't tell anybody that you got this ride for free"
- F. "Yea"
- J. "And also Fred, for Ur could turn around and when he and Notch come in.. could stand up and say '£150 it looks very good' at Fiona, "All the people who had a ride today, they all paid did they?" "Oh, yes" says Fiona. "Did you all pay?" You turn round and that's set it up..."
- C. "It should do... It's just that so often when the villain asks anything, they say 'no' on principal..." "is he bad?" No" Do you know where he is? No."

F. "Yea... I mean this morning, when I said "have you seen Tumaty, where is he?"... but that is the motive we need, a £160 quid to buy a sweetie melting machine..."

C. "I still think there ought to be a lighting change in the build up. I really didn't notice..."

J. "Quite a lot happens Fred. There is quite a big change in the basic state, the chase that goes on the house lights go out..."

C. "I didn't notice any change..."

S. "When you were up on the tightrope and I was down below... I thought that it was fucking raining..."

(inaudible)

J. "So... how are we doing with"

S. "I'm not sure how involved we ought to get... involved in... sort of ice cream machines unless we can bring it in at the end, or unless there is something already in the play..."

(inaudible)

C. "The only thing is we can't set up anything that is too subtle... If that is more interesting than the rest of the play... Well then maybe there's the thing... well let's all go down to the factory and destroy the fucking sweetie... destroying machine..."

F. "No, we haven't paid for it yet, you see."

J. "He's going to buy it... to build it perhaps... he's going to build it with the money."

S. "But I think if someone could think of something that either wasn't so outside everything that we are doing anyway.. even possibly to do with the fair, or... anything that with children is related to the fair..."

- J. "I'm not entirely agreeing with Geoff, I mean like, if Ur, as master of the fair, wanted to buy the latest roundabout and he had all the money except for the last hundred pounds, and because Tumalty and Fiona has given free rides he didn't have that hundred pounds.... I don't think the kids are going to say that he has every right to be angry, I think your anger exceeds the..."
- F. It could be a special roundabout that straps people in..."
- J. "No, how about... and doesn't let them off until they pay (laughter) if the reason she wanted the money, what he was going to spend it on was stocking up the ghost train with the most terrifying spooks that the world could ever ever think of..."
- S. "Yes, yea, that's getting closer. "Oh says Notch", that will frighten me..."
- C. "But the kids aren't quite sure whether that is a good or a poor idea."
- S. "But we don't want to set the premise that the ghost is really..."
- J. "this is just going to make it the frighteningest in the world... even more frightening..."
- (inaudible)
- C. "We could use that alligator that they've all seen in the foyer and they don't know what it's for, but they are sure it is something to do with the play..."
- J. "It's not going to be there much longer... I bet that wasn't fireproofed.... It was used in the show last week... the ILEA thing... it ought to go in the ghost train..."
- (general chatter)
- J. "I want to actually rewrite...."
- F. "Are you going to summarize this so that Geoff can write it?"

J. "Yes, I think that's the best thing...cos I do want this to go back to Geoff..."

J. "Money, songs, ghost train..."

S. "Not a song, a chant or a rhyme..."

J. "Well, at the beginning on comes North, "our business is booming", he has a bell, Fiona... "shut the fair"...Fiona starts sweeping up, alright... rubbish..."

F. "Not dirty rubbish."

S. "Clean rubbish...ginger bread..."

J. "The line then follows... we ought today to have made enough money... how much money have we got. Ur... Notch, he gets out his notebook perhaps, could it be that... he has a note book, writes in it... now we need another hundred and 25 pounds... in order to buy this... stock up with spooks and then some dialogue coming out of that... oh there it could be really frightening... Yes I know it will, it will frighten even me... some way of getting in that Ur hates spooks..."

S. "I think if you give a very bold synopsis today then he will do..."

J. "Yea..."

S. "Cos he knows the characters."

(mumble)

M. "We shouldn't have dykes in this company.

Bev. "When are you going to leave?"

M. "I'm not a dyke, I'm a homosexual... I'm into bestiality..."

F. "Jeremy you dyke lets get on..."

S. "Hang on then, does..."

J. "Ur turns round to Fiona, who he spies, and says "everybody paid

today didn't they, who went for a ride"....therefore... words to that effect. "Oh yes of course", says Fiona... course they did, then you two turn round and say "is that right, is she telling me the truth? Did you pay.". so they'll do that... "excellent, now we can go off to the spook shop.""

F. "He's got to tell... go to Tumatly to collect it..."

S. "Well it might be a case of doing it the other way round... do you think, asking the kids about the money and then... so we're establishing a relationship with the kids..."

C. "No, say "did all you kids have rides" and then say "that means that we must have made all that money"..."

S. "We need something really strong in there to get them to actually tell... But if they are drawn into that first and then we give them the information about what we want to do with it then... it's better than if we give the information ... just a semantic..."

J. Yes, Money, kids"

(mumble)

J. "So then Ur goes off saying "great marvellous... great news, tell Tumatly to bring us the money cos we're going to go straight off and pick the ... from the spook factory"..."

F. "No, just leave it at that..."

S. "... and then end up with the chant "Money money money," whatever it is."

J. "Yes... So we can go off..."

M. "There is a lovely idea that anyone who has ever been in that ghost train has never, never come out again...laughter..."

C. "An extraordinary idea... yes..."

(mumble)

J. "Right, also, I'll try to devise ways of technically tarting up the ghost train..."

F. "When are we going to rehearse this Jeremy?"

J. "Well, I was going to suggest that we cancel Tuesday morning's performance as there's only one ticket been sold, and that we rehearse instead. In the theatre with all the technicals and the schedule hasn't actually been done for next week."

F. "What else could we be rehearsing but Fayre Play?"

J. "I'm busy... I'm doing the play scheme..."

C. "Well, what are we going to do, we've got one rehearsal it says..."

J. "I think that you have actually got some time off..."

A. "Well, you've got two sessions off on Monday."

C. "Why don't we do that on Monday"

F. "I'm not available..."

J. "Now, let me work on this cos there are a couple more rewrites just to... the opening now there is a feat of strength so far... yea I've asked Geoff to rewrite that link as well... to write up a bit..."

F. "What are you doing this weekend?"

F. Learning lines.... stop it..."

J. "It looks like you were feeling Fiona's kneecaps..."

C. "I wasn't I was feeling her feats of strength..."laughter murmur"

J. "Next we must renew our efforts to find this metal bar... The more I think about the more I can't believe that there isn't one... it can be a piece of rubber piping if necessary... a piece of hose... painted in gold paint..."

- M. "There is one in the Bush..."
- P. "We can't get it..."
- J. "Feats of strength..."
- C. "Well one, one feat of strength"
- J. "Bend bar... burst the balloons..."
- F. "That's an acting job then isn't it... I get you, I get you..."
- J. "That's why I want him to write something for you 'cos it is very difficult....to act...."
- C. "But it's difficult unless he knows what to play with..."
- J. "Well, here you are you can bend a bar... he's going to pop a balloon so we'll have to get some balloons in... lifting Notch..."
- C. "But I got the impression that Geoff wanted us to do all sorts of things, one of which was bending a bar..."
- J. "Yea... it's just a great work up. Is there anything you can do swinging on that tightrope?"
- C. "No, not without gloves...."
- J. "Cos that is another reason right."
- S. "Can I pop the balloons...eree..."
- N. "No, you've got to be terrified... he'll pop you... he'll poke pins into you..."
- J. "That would be quite good wouldn't it... bang, bang..."
- S. "Are these yours Tumatly?" "
- J. "That's it... I think if Notch wanders up behind him with the balloons and he jams a pin into Notch... then there is the umm the spooks... and the Haunted House..."
- C. "We haven't got any monsters, we're all going to be spooks and

you're all going to be monsters... and we've got the spook costumes here. Did you lock the door... No, right well then put these on..." And he can set it up... and they're not allowed to move..."

J. That was funny this morning wasn't it?... Stephen standing there errr.. and all these little children clinging to him like shell fish. (laughter)

J. "But then there has got to be some dialogue when you come out, he tells you that you're going to put these costumes on... " mumble.

J. "Now is that it.... rewrite."

S. "If there was to be another episode have you got any ideas what?

C. "If there is an episode then I am sure that it is in that area of setting up the importance of the money. I mean what we tried to do was to do it by repetition... laugh... and if the kids can see that that is important then they can understand why he's chasing and he's running...."

J. "And I can build up the ghost train a bit more...like for example when you go down there we can go into that solo spot with the lights around the ghost train and smoke coming out...."

M. "I tell you what is a lovely noise, is that dungeon noise... when they go and then groans.... creaking doors..."

A. "Jeremy it is actually rather difficult to reset the smoke gun, can we have the smoke coming from the pit for the ghost train?"

J. "Yea... when Notch puts them down there, that is when we want a burst of smoke... Both times."

- A. "So if we reangle it so that the smoke is actually in the pit... rather than coming out of..."
- M. "You want Labanowski to do some sounds... the tube train needs to be longer..."
- F. "There are some BBC recordings..."
- M. "He's better than that..."
- J. "Is there a sound record of ghost effects..?"
- C.
- J. "Let me just... one or two, I didn't write many notes this morning actually."
- C. "Those noises have got to be earsplitting... and the noise must be where the mirror... cos they went off and the crash came from where they've gone off and it sounded just as if they'd broken it..."
- J. "I know that in the building there is a sensational recording of a crash and we can't find it... it's in the loo, in the lady's lavatory..."
- J. "You didn't do that... and you left out "Do I have to?""
- S. "I know cos I didn't hear the door open..."
- J. "It did open... and they were waiting on you for the cue, bang ghost train and all that."
- S. "Well the sound effects didn't get to me at all."
- C. "Turn everything up full..."

J. "They haven't got the right bloody.... there are also times in that opening sequence when Notch, Ur and Fiona, the set pieces when it just needs pace, where laying the plot... just got a bit heavy-handed at times and I think once it became a bit dissipated and... it's practice as much as anything... just all that sort of stuff... there are so many of those little sequences but it needs so much bite, cos it was all a bit thin this morning... It's in the first ten minutes... now, the other thing is that I thought about losing your chase back across the wire..."

C. I agree, cos I can't run across it and... he has to wait for me... its great... but I can't run across it..."

J. "Oh, yes Fred, some little tiny hint... your head should come back through Ur, back here Ur.

F. "You said to us Jeremy..."

M. "He's changed his mind."

J. "No..."

F. "You said the heads come through on "some tiny hint... I tell you what I want..."

F. "Will you back me up on that, "some tiny hint?"

J. "I can see that; faces appear... I've got it written here... "They're both behind here Mr. Ur sir", "I can see that" - faces... some small clue to their whereabouts, some tiny hint..."

J. "It doesn't matter how long you take once you've decided to do it. If you can be hiding behind them so that when their faces appear you're right underneath...."

J. "Is that alright?"

F. "There is only one towel behind that cut out... we fought for it... there is only one towel behind there..."

- J. "I will try and organise the administration about Tuesday cos what we have got to do is to rehearse, even if we are doing a performance on Tuesday we must rehearse."
- C. "Tell them that we were chucked out of the auditorium this afternoon."
- J. "No, we weren't... that would be a lie, Christopher..."
- M. "I prefer lying to telling the truth."
- S. "To tell the truth..."
- A. "Can I just say one thing about the ghost noises, that I havent actually got a lot of time to fit any more ghost noises in unless you want them after the skelington appears..?"
- J. "If only there was a way of timing it exactly so that the laughs came on on the same tape.... unfortunately the problem is Chris, unless we go into two machines... then we could just have ghost noises....oooooo"

Michael Billington - Theatre Critic. Interview. November 1977

I = Interviewer

B = Billington

B. Have you got many critics?

I. No, you're the first one. I'm just starting in on critics.

B. What are you interested in about critics, I mean.....

I. Well, I suppose what I'm going to do is to talk to everyone involved in theatre, actors, audiences, directors all those sort of people... I'm going to try....I'm actually interested in talk that they're doing, not so much what they're doing as what they say, how they're choosing to tell a certain sort of story about theatre, rather than choosing another way. But of that, it's all very airy fairy mind you and you don't decide that until you actually start writing up...but how theatre becomes a topic that's able to be talked about. What sort of things it is that people see as being theatrical, or a reasonable way to express something of theatrical concern. It's sort of...it's an interest in talk....

B. Uh uh..it's a new way of looking at the theatre actually. I mean most people want to know the nitty gritty....

I. I'm not trying to define theatre as such because obviously that's an ongoing thing...

B. It's fairly undefinable actually too...

I. It is...

B. There is no easy single definition of theatre....it includes everything from circus to opera...

- I. No, but in fact people do manage to talk about it, and furthermore when they're sitting on the train...as with Tube Theatre, I don't know whether you've hear of it? --
- B. No.....
- I. They do actually manage to decide that they ought to clap or they ought to laugh...and that it isn't a maniac sitting there, that it isn't a commuter gone wild, or something a bit worrying like that...they actually do manage to work with some sort of reasonable concept of what the theatre could be. Like...when it is theatre, when they've decided and come to some sort of definition they do manage certain reactions...like staring at people that we wouldn't normally do. I mean you can't normally just look at people.
- B. Yes....but theatre is any activity where, isn't it...a group of people watching another group of people, it seems to me.
- You can argue, I think that you know...a boxing bout, or a football match or...whatever, or a street accident in a sense can become a form of theatre can't it?
- I. Yes,
- B. ...in the sense that a lot of eyes are simply focused on a lot of people doing something, performing something. And theatrical metaphors are often used to describe sporting events, e.g. so theatre is a very loose poor... mans sort of word.
- I. People could use the word theatre but they actually don't usually.
- When they talk about theatre then it's.....

- B. Well I mean it's very hard to define even a play...apart from the (?) it's very difficult to find a definition which will take you all the way from the Greeks to the...Waiting for Godot to you know...errrrr a lunch time play to monologues to whatever.
- I. The only thing I haven't ever found is a play without players...
- B. There is a Beckett play....I can't remember the title now, when the curtain rises and you simply hear a noise, you simply hear the sound of breathing I think, it lasts I think it lasts about five to ten minutes and it was done at the Oxford playhouse as part of a sort of Beckett evening at a celebration some years ago but you simply had a stage filled with some kind of rubble and you simply heard the sound of breathe. I'm not even sure if the play isn't called Breathe, I mean you might check on it actually in some Beckett anthology, ummm but no actual actor appears on the stage. So I mean you don't even now have to have human beings, necessarily.
- I. Well, how would you cope with that in your role as critic?
- B. Well, I didn't review it but I just remember reading about it.
- I. What would you have done?
- B. Umm oh gosh, it's difficult without seeing the work, it seems to me actually that it is rather a sterile cul de sac form of theatre. Because if you dehumanise the theatre totally, I mean if you take away the presence of living people then you are taking away its greatest strength. I mean I wouldn't say that that kind of work leads anywhere. I mean all it does is perhaps prove that you can keep people in their seats for up

B. to ten minutes (laugh) probably not much longer...without any actual human being on the stage. But it seems to me more and more that people are looking at the minimal possibilities of theatre and how little we can actually get away with and how little you actually need to keep people enthralled or occupied and Beckett time and time again does this. It seems to me, and he is working to a point of no return, where there is nothing to see.....

but that doesn't actually seem to me a fruitful area scientifically interesting perhaps but it doesn't seem to lead anywhere, because obviously theatre in the end is going to come down to people, words and images. I suppose in the sense you could say a son et lumière is theatre without people isn't it....I mean it's lights and sound and it's imagination but its no actual living presence in front of you but its not a development I would actually wish to promote I don't think.

I. Why did you become a critic in the first place, because you loved the theatre very much or.....?

B. Yes, I mean it was very much design it wasn't that I was thrown into it because I happened to be around a newspaper official. I mean I did consciously want to be a theatre critic. It sprang obviously, yes, from a fascination with theatre from the age of seven. The good luck of living near a lot of good theatres, I mean I lived with Stratford only eight miles away, and I found myself from the age of seven or eight being taken to the Shakespeare Memorial theatre, as it was then, in Stratford and being exposed to incredibly complex and difficult plays, you know very early on. You know I can remember seeing Troilus and Cressida e.g. at the age of seven. I mean I don't remember much about

B. it but the, you know, obviously something in it grabbed me...I saw a bit in Stratford. We also lived near Coventry where there was a big variety theatre, I got to see a lot of comedians and clowns and that's something which...I mean Shakespeare and comedians were my initial pre-occupation with the theatre and those two things I mean I'm still absolutely fascinated by them ummm so it was partly environment.... and why one wrote about the theatre I'm not really sure because I can remember in exercise books at the age of ten or eleven starting to write down about the things I had seen umm out of what instinct I don't really know, simply I suppose the urge to....I think it's the puritan urge not to waste anything actually, umm it's that English puritanism when if you see something you must utilise it in some way and if you just go and enjoy it it's not enough. You have actually got to set down in writing what you've seen and why you've enjoyed it. Umm so I think it was that urge which with a strange mixture of influences. I mean being a theatre critic is a strange occupation if you like, 'cos you are actually turning your delight into work, ummm and that is a very puritan thing to do....

I. There you are talking about writing for yourself but who do you write for now when you do the Guardian crits?

B. Errrr....Myself still...it's a slightly untruthful answer in that there's an element obviously in all writing...I mean any writer will say that...that you're there to please yourself...and most novelists admit that they write the kind of books that they would like to read... I suppose as a theatre critic you're writing the kind of reviews you

- B. would like to read, hopefully. So there is obviously that.....
- there was an element of self satisfaction, and just self fulfilment about it quite honestly, umm, and the pleasure is...there...is a personal pleasure in seeing something.....particularly a new play and trying to kind of lasso it in the course of, you know, a certain number of words....and trying to find what it's about, what the author's intentions are, whether it works and so on, and that's the highest pleasure in a review, to actually be confronted with something difficult and complicated and a convoluted work, like No Man's Land, by Pinter, or Stoppard's Travesties, and then the moment you've seen it, trying to define it and pin it down and a lot of time one doesn't succeed and this is one of the.....(inaudible)errors of the play, but there are occasions when....which are very gratifying when you think you have got, you know got in touch with what the author's trying to say...so there is that self satisfaction, one reason for writing reviews. But obviously there is another basic one which is the journalistic function of telling people what happened in the theatre, you know, like a crime reporter tells what happened at the Old Bailey or the football reporter tells you what happened in the football pitch, you are there to report and describe, as well as analyse, to let people know what it looked like, who was in it, what it was about...and so forth...
- I. When you said before that you felt gratified when you thought that you'd got what the author intended well, in fact, when the author's still alive, you patently obviously don't sometimes get at what the author thinks he was doing....ummm.....

- I. How much do you respect what the author thinks he's doing or do you ever go and talk to authors before you review their plays and see them?
- B. I never ever go and talk to an author before I review his play, never ever...unless I was...you know, unless a gun was pointed at me..Ummm for the very simple reason that I think it would just confuse the whole process because if you do...and you like the person and you like the man ummm...and you know....it colours your writing obviously, and also if he tells you what he's trying to do then it becomes less exciting to go to the theatre and actually respond to it and for that reason I'm against reading a new play if possible before I see it, because it does actually take away some of the charge that you get out of doing the job, some of the excitement, of discovery, ummm....I think that it's a difficult area and I think that ummm...I'm all for contact with authors after you've seen their work, and directors and actors, but not before and I mean one does form friendships with people in the theatre but its only as a result of.....its because you've liked their work, you've formed the friendship, its not that you like their work because of the friendship. You know it follows afterwards. And of course I mean there are frequent ruptures in those relationships which you know....if an author to which you are committed and he thinks you are on his side and then you turn round and don't like his latest work obviously that poses personal problems.
- I. Well are you setting yourself up then as seeing a performance as an ordinary member of the audience might see it?
- B. I don't think you can. I think its very fallacious view I mean some critics take that view that they are simply you know, not the man in the street, but the man in the stall...they represent a man who's paid

B. £3 or whatever to see the show when you haven't paid that's the first thing. Point one, you're there on a free ticket. Ummm secondly not many normal human beings could go and see a play four times a week, two hundred times a year, would they, so in that sense you are in an abnormal and unusual position and the whole point of being a critic is I would have thought, that you can relate one play to another, or you can put a work in some kind of context, and I would always rather have I mean I would be more interested as a reader in the opinions of a man who has seen twenty Hamlets than I would in the opinion of someone who has seen one Hamlet. You know the first time you see something you're bowled over by it...and I want people who can relate one experience to another and evaluate it and in that sense critics would come...reach their peak it seems to me but the danger of the job is that by that time you have become so jaded and so saturated with theatre that you've gone soft in the head whereas....so I'm not sure how long one should be a critic....actually that's another problem how long you can go on seeing plays, night in night out, and that you're responding to them with any intelligence or enthusiasm or whatever.

I. You still do enjoy seeing theatre?

B. Yes but I mean....

I. When that stops that will make you feel like you shouldn't be a critic any more.

B. Right...ummm...its a difficult thing this because if you start young which I did youngish, it pays to go in...I started when I was about twenty five I think, I've now been doing it just over ten years. Umm and I'm just beginning to wonder, you know if the natural span is about to be ended and what one does next.

B. I think ideally the best way to organise one's life if one is a critic is actually not to be a critic till you're about forty, I think it's much better to have a job in the world you know, the real world, yes, and then...actually to work in...with other people umm and then you have to come (inaudible) (later in life?) There was a very good critic called James Agate who used to work for the Sunday Times in about the 1930's/40's, and I think his great strength was that he started very late in life, and therefore had a wealth of experience of the world as well as a passionate enthusiasm for the theatre, but if you start young, I reckon by the time you're in your fifties then you've got nowhere to go but down....

I. Yea....

B. So ideally it should be a short term occupation, but for simple economic reasons most critics cling on to their jobs for dear life.....

I. And who do you feel.....I mean it is obviously a responsible job, who do you feel responsible to?

B. Well, I have got a responsibility to the Guardian because, haven't I, because they're paying me X pounds a week to go and review plays and to tell Guardian readers what's going on in the theatre. I mean obviously I have got a duty to the editor the newspaper and the amorphous readership about whom one doesn't know that much. I think there is also the obligation to the art you're describing and that seems to me to..I think the job really falls into two categories, I mean there are two functions and the first job is to report what you see and to describe what's happening but I think there is another function beyond that which is...a lot of critics would deny it...which is to change the

B. theatre, and to campaign and crusade and wave flags for neglected writers and for neglected styles of producing plays and so forth, and to help modify the art you're writing about and that to me is the view that makes the job also worth doing.

And I did have a long argument the other day with some critic about this because I wrote a piece in the Guardian a few weeks ago about the dearth of foreign plays in British theatre, you know, and....I thought antagonism almost to foreign theatre and our ignorance of world classics and all the rest of it, and a colleague on the Observer, Arthur Cushing wrote about Britain and we had a broadcast set-to about it and he said virtually the task of the critic is to describe what is set in front of him and I think it is not just that, that you should not just write about the plays that you see, I think that you should also write about the plays that you don't see, and I don't think that you should just accept the food that's on the menu, I think that you should try and change the menu, you know, or try and change the share or whatever, umm... But I don't think...I think that it's too passive a job I mean I would get very bored if I thought that I was just there to ummm. describe what was put in front of me, I want actively to change....

I. It is anyway, because the way people use what is written, it will probably be something like it should have been done differently.

B. Yes, but I think that one should write about, literally, plays that are not being done, I don't think, for instance in describing the National Theatre one should just gratefully accept what they put in front of you I think that you should question what they are putting in front of you, whether they are putting the right things, and that applies to most companies actually.....

- I. So the right things would be the right things that you'd like to see?
- B. Well yes, I mean there is a built in arrogance to that of course, to the assumption that you know what is good for people, but I'm afraid that is inescapable if you set up in business as a critic you are saying ummmm I think I know what is good for people, there is a kind of terrible arrogance inseparable from the job, it...I make it sound a bit heavy I mean what...all I'm saying is that a critic should point out I think really the defects of the theatre in any given time and he should look at the hour hand as well as the minute hand. I mean really that is all and take a longer view, and I mean that one can cite a lot of precedents for that without in any way suggesting that one is doing the same thing or is in the category or in that league but you look at history of the 20th century theatre and the critics that have mapped it have been people like Bernard Shaw, and William Archer, who campaigned for Ibsen in the early twentieth century when no one was doing any plays by Ibsen and it was because of them that he did get done on stage, ummm. It was because of Kenneth Tynan campaigned for Brecht in the 1950's that Brecht gained a foothold in the British theatre. It was because Harold Hobson constantly campaigned for Plays like Waiting for Godot ummm or some of the early Bond plays, that Pinter I mean if it hadn't been for some of the specific notices that Harold Hobson wrote for the Birthday Party then Harold Pinter would have given up for writing for the theatre and he admitted this and I think that that is the direction I would want to go in as a critic, to feel I was a crusader with a banner.
- I. So that is what good criticism would be like for you? someone who does have the ability to have the sort of urge....

B. I think so, yes, all the sort of critics that I admire have been that sort of kind definitely, I mean someone once said that a good critic describes what he does see and the great critic describes what he doesn't see..and without..I mean..I'm not elevating myself to be Shavian.

I. ...don't be modest...

B. No, but I think that I have got to make that clear...I'm not saying I'm Bernard Shaw but I think that Bernard Shaw is not a bad model or Kenneth Tynan is not a bad model for a critic to have, and I would say the deficiency amongst my colleagues is that they do not have that feeling, I think...it is regarded as rather obstreperous and pushy to have any causes that you believe in ummm...and I would say that the majority of my colleagues do simply see their job as that kind of... reflexive reportage of what has gone on....

I. You say that you are not famous but in fact your name gets mentioned an awful lot when people talk about criticism and all the things that I've read...I don't know why this is but they have all been rude about you saying...That you're very fascist and...like that thing by Osborne and stuff...The mafia

B. Oh yes.

I. Did you read that?

B. Yes, that puzzled me slightly actually because I mean that was very puzzling for me because...they said something about where did I stand and I praised a lot of reactionary....he didn't name any reactionary junk that I'd praised but I was very puzzled by that because the

- B. accusation that is levelled against me is that anything vaguely proletarian I will immediately latch on to, I've lost one job specifically because the editor of the newspaper said that I was quotes 'a left wing intellectual' or 'isn't he a bit political' he said to someone else, by other people I'm accused of being a trendy lefty to put it in a nutshell and then he writes me up and says where do I stand so I find it a bit bewildering, I suppose the only thing... the defense I would offer is that I don't think you can be rigidly doctrinaire as a critic and although I do espouse plays that are about working class life and I like plays that...public plays and social plays rather than domestic or private plays in general. But I think you have to be honest and if you actually see a Noel Coward comedy which you find funny it's dishonest not to say so. So I think one should have, as I said, causes and beliefs of the critics, but I think if you ever get to the stage when you cannot stomach any plays which do not fit into your snug theory then you become predictable. You...there's no point in reading you actually if you don't sometimes blow up your own commitments and theories.....
- I. So your always thinking of your commitment to theatre but also your ability to gain...keep readers?
- B. Ummm. well I'm not...it's not uppermost in one's mind but all I am saying is that if one becomes absolutely rigid and absolutely inflexible then you know you can almost predict before you go to the theatre what your response will be, and the reader will almost predict what your response will be. I mean I have been accused of this. I mean Charles Marowitz in Plays and Players whom....I reviewed a play by Howard Brenton, called Weapons of Happiness, it was charming and delightful - image of me

- B. creaming my jeans anytime anyone from the proletariat came onto the stage, of course some people think one is rigid and inflexible and I would hope not to be. As I said I think you can make a decision, I think you can be, I hope you can be crusading without being ummm narrow....
- I. We're talking about enormously being issues really yet the fact of the matter is that you do everything in one hundred words really.
- B. That's a thing, I'm trying to change that situation ummm as from last night actually. It is a fact that most reviews in the Guardian are ridiculously short, for six years I've been struggling trying to put thoughts into four hundred words ummm and we have just changed the art editor on the Guardian because a lot of us concocted a manifest stating what we would like to see happen and my great cry was for some space in which to review plays because I think that you cannot discuss your responses in four hundred words.
- I. That's the brief is it?
- B. Well...it's...it hovers around four hundred to five hundred but it rarely goes above that. There are technical reasons why...I mean it's to do with the fact that we have an earlier deadline than say the Times or the Financial Times...which are comparable powers, but you could write up to midnight on the Times or the Financial Times, eleven o'clock is the absolute deadline for the Guardian which is to do with internal technical response, you know the page has to be sent to Manchester. But to cut a long story short I am now campaigning for more space and I got a sympathetic new arts editor and the last line he gave me was six hundred and fifty words and I felt much freer...it's much easier

B. to write a long review than it is to write a short review ummm I can't remember who said it I think it was.....that I wrote you a long letter because I didn't have time to write a short one, and it is infinitely easier to write a thousand words than say, three hundred words, so what I am now campaigning for and will get about once or twice a week is a long detailed feature review and I think it's good cos I think that it does mean that you can get away from kind of unshaded yes and no thumbs up and thumbs down notices which I think you fall into in four hundred words cos there isn't time to go into all these ifs and buts and qualifications one has about most plays and most productions. But it is, I mean think that it is very important the way form dictates content in theatre reviewing and if you are writing for a popular newspaper then you are forced into a kind of hurrah or yaboo attitude because of the nature of the form 'cos if the nature of the headlines and the nature of space and so forth. On the other hand if one can write for the Financial Times then have 1200 words then you can be much more subtle and much more nuanced and I'm all for that.

I. And something else that is a criticism from a couple of actors I've met is that obviously the theatre is never the same two nights running.. and your review is the only thing about theatre which will actually stand for posterity and they complain that you only come the first night and that isn't any sort of adequate.....

B. Ummmmmm you mean critics in general?

I. Yes, they say that you either ought to come half way through the thing... or come twice before you make....

B. Umm that's difficult actually cos there has to be some point when some judgement is offered doesn't there... and it's always going to be arbitrary it seems to me....you can never dictate that it's going to be the good night in the run and productions are variable. Some reach their peak the day they are coming on and how is one to know which is to be the ideal the optimum time to see any specific show, I'm not too sympathetic with that argument because I think another thing... I think in practical terms if you waited till the show had run itself in comfortably most productions would be off. I mean there is a very simple fact of...which one mustn't ignore of the publicity value of criticism to the theatre and at times of newspaper strikes and things like that it is amazing how agitated people in the theatre get because there is no discussion and without reviews people don't know that something is on...one basic function from this point of view is just to tell people that XYZ is happening and that is particularly true I would have thought of say sort of fringe theatre where things do come and go with amazing rapidity. And if you waited until the thing was comfortably settled in then you know, you might...it might be killed off. I think there has to be some night when critics descend....whether we should go on the same night of course is open to question. Whether you should have the artificiality of a first night when everyone is there. I mean that is a better point I think and there is something horrific about the first night of a new play, particularly the West End, I mean I will cite last night - classic incident actually. A play in the West End called Philomena, which was put on by a new commercial management. I mean the whole point of the play is that it is a very, you know, it's a pretty gentle play and it has got a popular theatre technique behind it and to

- B. find it subjected to the chronic pressures of a first night, even the Miss World contestants had turned up or had been invited to attend the first night. That meant that the play didn't start until twenty minutes late, when all the girls had been photographed coming in and so on. It meant that the audience was getting very restless, the gallery was slow handclapping, immediately I felt sorry because the play had got off to a bad start because of that. It meant that intervals were prolonged and the rythms of the play were destroyed. And it was very sad to see a play that was written as a neapolitan comedy played to a neapolitan popular audience, in the desert of Shaftesbury audience playing to the smarty boots audience you know who were there to look at themselves.....
- I. Who were more interested in the long-legged ladies....
- B. Yea, well I'm not against long-legged ladies, I'm just against the psuedo-glamour I think of West End first nights which I do find as a critic more and more repellent which is why I said to you earlier that I like plays in Birmingham or Nottingham or Manchester, I don't feel that there is the same self-consciousness about the event, or the plays around the fringe. I mean I don't find this atmosphere at the National Theatre or the Royal Shakespeare Company, it seems that their first nights are simply umm nights like most others, I mean the audience hasn't dressed up. But there is something awful about the West End premiere, and those same old faces that one sees you know.
- I. Do you get many...that was just a criticism of a couple of actors...
- B. No, it's a fair criticism...

- I. Do you get ummm. many sort of hate campaigns against you by actors, do they write to you saying how dare you sat that aboutmmm? Is that a feature of a critic's life?
- B. Umm...I haven't had a lot of it, I've had more flack from writers, I would think, and sometimes from directors than from actors actually. I would say on the whole critics are very gentle with actors because they are sensitive enough to realise that you can actually damage an actor physically and psychically in fact if you are cutting and cruel and unkind and umm it's very easy to do. I mean there was a very interesting example of this that came up on one of those TV programmes I was involved in where I was confronted with an author I'd attacked and Alan Brien was confronted with Michael Horden, and twenty years ago Alan Brien had said of Michael Horden's Macbeth...."He looks like an Armenian carpet salesman who's entered Dunsinane by the back door", and Michael Horden said that for twenty years this remark had haunted him and it had upset him and had erased all the kind things people had said about him and this had stayed with him and this is a very good instance of the way in which you know, a flip remark which is very funny actually and one would be quite tempted to use ummm can actually have a fairly wounding effect on an actor. I think it has been more an American tradition than a British tradition that you do actually abuse actors personally and physically. I mean what was it one American critic said to me, "I have knocked every thing but the knees of the chorus girls and nature has anticipated me there", you know. That's the kind of thing an American critic would say I think rather than an English critic. And I think the tradition of knocking actors died and I think perhaps, if anything we are almost over gentle and affectionate and

B. respectful of their egos. I think on the other hand with writers and directors you do feel freer because they are not going to get up every night and do it and you feel they are somehow more resilient perhaps than actors and...it must be awful to get up on stage you know X times a week after you've been torn to shreds so I think in answer to your question I think that I get more response from writers personally than I do from actors....

I. In what way do you.....

B. It's usually to do with the fact that you haven't grasped the point of what they were trying to do and....it can be more than that. I mean there was a confrontation I had with Terence Rattigan. That one I was talking about where there was a play called 'It's all right if I do it', which was about umm sex and opened at the Mermaid and had got from me and several others some really brutal reviews and I think we were all horrified by the play ummm it is an interesting example because his claim was it was the audience which really upset us it wasn't the play. It was the kind of hysteria of the first night audience, that had set actors on edge and that had caused in the reviews rather violent and brutal and hysterical reviews and there is something that actually you are susceptible to the mood that is around you and you can't ignore that and if the first lines of the play are....in.... the first scene of that play I can remember Prunella Scales coming on and kicking her husband in the shins and saying 'you shit-faced bastard'. All the audience went 'Oh!' You know, "hurrah", you know and laughed and one thought how crass, I mean what is actually very revealing or funny about that and Terence said after about three minutes, to his wife, or his lady, I can't remember who he said it to, you know, 'they've killed it',

B. and it was true. The audience had actually helped to kill the play, by hysteria. And Terence and I had a violent set-to about it, a verbally violent set-to on television. He then wrote me about a twelve hundred word letter in which he explained what he was trying to do in the play, to which one had to reply, it depends sometimes the reaction is verbal, sometimes its physical. I mean I am one of the few critics who has been physically struck umm by David Storey after a play of his at the Royal Court last year, I happened, or he..it didn't happen, it wasn't chance he was waiting for the critics when they next came to the theatre in the bar and he started kind of attacking us verbally but me, for some reason, perhaps because I am smaller than the others, he started to attack me physically, he started to cuff me on the back of the head, as well as to abuse me verbally. That seems to me...it doesn't get you very far actually. I was...funnily enough, a propos of this I was reading a magazine yesterday about a physical encounter between Norman Mailer and Gore Vidal at a party in New York, where Norman Mailer had gone up and punched Gore Vidal in the face and Gore said, 'words failed Norman as usual'. And that's what I'd have liked to have said, but it's a story actually that if you have to resort to physical violence to make your point then it can't be a very good point.

I. What sort of thing had you said that he didn't like?

B. In the context of the play? Oh, I mean I began by saying that this play is a stinker, I hadn't minced words but I had gone on to explain why I thought it was a stinker. And it was I suppose a fairly extreme review, but it was an extreme review from someone who is an admirer of David Storey. If it had been a bit of old trash in the West End

B. I probably wouldn't have bothered to be so aggressive but because, you know, one has got used to David Storey plays which are, you know, very subtle, metaphorical, full of respect for the characters, suddenly you see a play which I thought was just a crude cartoon from him and it really incensed one. So I suppose from me, there was an extreme reaction....as there was from him...But it's another point actually, about the tone of reviews, someone once said "no play is ever quite as good or quite as bad as it appears on the first night," and there is something in that argument too, that because of the nature of first nights and because of the instant verdict one is offering one is perhaps sometimes intemperate, whether it be intemperately enthusiastic about some show, for example, Bubbling Brown Sugar, you know that Black musical at the Players and I remember writing that review in a flurry of excitement and instantly tapping out that excitement on a typewriter. Well perhaps if you see it on a Wednesday matinee in its second year then the play won't be that exciting, umm and comparably if you've disliked something then perhaps you'd like it more....(inaudible)

I. Do you talk to any other people about the play?

B. I try not to, I would rather discuss almost anything else actually. It's almost unavoidable when critics get together, you don't even, sometimes have to talk to critics you only have to look at them, I mean you always sit behind them, you know, I can tell from the backs of peoples' heads in fact what they are thinking and how they are reacting. Ummm....I mean you can just tell (laughs) if they yawn, talk to their wife, look at their watch every five minutes you know, you get the impression that they're not having a whale of a time. And one colleague of mine, who I shall not name went through a period of intense

- B. vocal reaction to everything that was put in front of him. I always remember one night in the theatre when someone came in dressed in white tennis flannels and a blazer and his comment was 'Oh Christ,' and, I mean, nothing had been said, it just happened that his anger had been roused merely by the sight of a man in flannels. Umm, so I would say that one does talk to people willy nilly but you don't actually need to talk to people, you can tell. But the essence of any critic I think, is that you have to shut out other people's opinions for long enough in order to know to be yourself and that is very very difficult sometimes actually. It's difficult if you go to the theatre with wildly opinionated people umm, and I would say that I would never go to a theatre full of actors, and I'm also chary of going with them because they always resent the fact that they're not in it or that someone is up there doing it and their dislike can communicate itself to you so umm...it is difficult actually. Just preserving your own vision of what is happening. And not being over influenced by whoever you're with at the time.
- I. The other thing that people say about critics is that it is a way to relieve frustrated creativity. I mean have you ever wanted to act or?
- B. Ummm..I have acted at university, I did direct plays professionally for a short time in Lincoln, I mean I had a taste of what it was like working in the theatre, I slightly doubt the argument about frustrated creativity, because I think at its highest criticism is itself a creative occupation. I mean I don't think of myself, as I said to you before that I simply have this sort of negative, parasitic, passive function, that people like to think it is very difficult actually to compress..you know, your thoughts about a play in so many words and at the very highest reaches of criticism then I would rather have written Shaw's dramatic criticism than I would have written the

- B. plays that he was writing. And in fact Shaw's criticisms have lasted longer than most of the plays he was actually writing about and therefore it seems to me that it can, as I expressed, only at its very top level become an art in itself if the prose is good and if the opinions are well expressed.
- I. You say that you'd rather be a good critic than a bad artist but what if you could be a good artist or a good critic?
- B. Ahhh....well (laugh)
- I. Because that is what that throws up?
- B. Yea, well...I would like to be able to write novels and plays and direct movies and do all sorts of things that I know that I am not equipped to do but I think that you've got to accept the limitations of your talents, your craft, or whatever and concentrate on the things that you are, you know, reasonably ok at. What I was getting at by that was that I think there is a romantic ummm picture of any creativity as holy however mediocre or shoddy it may be and any act of criticism as somehow umm as second rate and parasitic. I would like to demolish that actually, I don't see any virtue in actually churning out ummm bad novels or bad plays or bad anythings for that matter. If you can do something else. I think it much better to be a good plumber than it is to be a third rate novelist. The world needs plumbers actually (laughs) more than it needs third-rate novelists. I don't believe that it is holy simply to sit in front of a piece of paper and write something at all as long as it's in dialogue form or whatever. Umm I think the important thing in life is actually to do whatever you're talents suggest within maximum skill and I think therefore then one should never apologise for being a critic.

- I. Although you are called upon to do so quite often.
- B. Oh it's the most attacked profession umm...that I can....a politician I suppose has to defend himself at cocktail parties and any social gathering doesn't he, it's assumed that you're crooked and malodourous, and I suppose that people have the same, some of the same reactions to a critic, though the main thing I find is curiosity actually rather than other things, it is a sort of freakish occupation.
- I. Freakish?
- B. Well, freakish in the sense that it's, you know, ummm...it is a slightly odd way to earn a living....umm and people are very curious you know, I mean a doctor and architects and the professional people that I meet are always curious about.....(tape ends).

Tube Theatre - Interview with Jim, audience member, 5.6.77.

- I. What was it we decided about people looking at each other?
- J. The people who weren't performing were equally as important as the guy who was performing ... Ken Ellis or whatever he was called. He wasn't the sole reason why we were there, I was watching commuters' reactions. What made it funny sometimes was, one the quality of his material, and other times I'd respond to people laughing at him, he'd interpret my humour in a way.
- I. It was quite noticeable that the first thing people did was to look around, the first thing they did when they saw this guy doing funny things was that they looked around, wasn't it really.
- J. That was one of the most important things about it I thought, that people's reactions were, bewilderment, not so much bewilderment but wonderment....
- I. What's the difference....?
- J. The stages, the way it progressed, and they were trying to interpret this abnormality, they were perturbed, worried, irritated,...initially it was just wonderment, then bewilderment, then they had to look around, to explain it as far as I could see....
- I. How do you mean explain it?
- J. There were other people doing it...and then, you know, and then they came across one of us, several of us laughing, and then they knew what it was about. So they started laughing, then they went back and started killing themselves.

- I. So if there hadn't been an audience like us who were already in the know, then other people might not have found it as easy to laugh?
- J. Like the two Americans. The two Americans didn't find it funny at all....well the woman did, the bloke thought it was really odd.
- I. What was it the Scotsmen did, they took a hat round?
- J. They took a hat round 'cos they thought he was very good.
- I. They knew that he....was putting them on?
- J. No, they thought he was an idiot.
- I. They just thought he was an idiot?
- J. Which he did pretty successfully.
- I. And that in a way was the easiest of all the incidents wasn't it?
- That was the funniest.
- J. Yes, they were the only people who went up and talked to him.
- No-one else said anything to him.
- In fact the two Scots....
- I. The two Scots what?
- J. The two Scots, the one who was sitting beside him when he was doing his tie up, talked to him, or in fact didn't directly have a conversation, but directed comments at him.
- I. Tried to help him in a way...
- J. I couldn't hear what they said really..but that one nearly died laughing.

- I. There were some people who were absolutely beside themselves...the first couple when the lady was actually streaming...she was doing it quietly on her husband's shoulder actually, and she had to keep taking her glasses off.
- J. Ah...that was because the dupe, the straight guy....
- I. The accomplice?
- J. The straight guy in the act, was trying to get a response from people by looking around....."look at this idiot, what's he doing..."
- I. He did actually direct peoples' attention didn't he, the accomplice?
- J. Well he'd be the guy who would say, 'God this behaviour is abnormal', i.e. when he started asking people for bits of their newspaper. And he'd relent, be indignant, then give him a piece of paper, but then he'd...always relented, and played the part very well indeed.
- I. The part of another commuter?
- J. The mortified commuter, the commuter who had certain ideas of what was right and proper behaviour on the tube, what's funny, odd, what's downright rude and what's accepted.
But it was funny that it was a commuter taking it all in his stride.
- I. What....nobody got up and got off because of it though did they?
- J. It wasn't obnoxious, or aggressive, it didn't put you out of your way... that woman who turned to her book and it was upside down....
- I. The only thing I didn't understand was, the accomplice, was he pretending to be his friend when he was putting his newspaper down.

J. He was trying to be his assistant, yes.

I. Like a guy with a fetish or....

J. A guy who can't touch dirt, but he had a pretty foul suit on... he should have been in white overalls.

I. Do you think that it's fair that he makes you pay for it?

J. Yes, I don't object to paying a pound....

I. Why do you think he bothered to take you up to the finale that didn't come off, in the bar?

J. I don't know, to make it into a.....beginning and an end. You meet up, you do something...to bring it into the theatrical sphere really. You meet for a drink and have a chat about it and relate it to something...

I. Do you think it was fair to call it Tube Theatre?

J. Oh yea, he put on a performance. That's fair enough. Some people might disagree.

I. Why? what grounds would people have for disagreeing?

J. They could think it was rather silly and ummm...intruding on your privacy in a way. You know in the tube you're in your isolated little box, you're going from A to B and that's your sole purpose and then some idiot comes along breaking into your world I suppose, is intruding.

I. What do you think the group that were in-the-know thought about it?

J. Well, they varied, they were different people, but most of them thought it was very funny as far as I could work out. Why they thought it was funny is a different matter. Some people were killing themselves laughing.

I. Why did you think it was funny?

J. Overall, my overall impression of why.....

I. Why it was a good night out?

J. To see commuters react to a fool, that was why I thought it was a good night out. In a way...they were totally unlike commuters....once he'd left....never before, they started laughing and giggling and chatting among themselves and making really humorous.....

I. Yea, whole carriages went off....chattering away....as if they were long lost friends.

J. They were really good friends after that, laughing for ten minutes at a fool.

I. The fact that everyone was looking around and talking seems to suggest that you couldn't cope with something like that by yourself, that you need other people to check.

J. Oh no, no, 'cos just the way they looked for reactions, that's why I think the group should have been smaller. Or I think that another stage you could do is to have a control, to take three dupes around as an audience, guys who were acting and they're the audience and they respond, and they sit down and they're the immediate participants, they... the two actors sit down perform, then beside them there are unaware commuters and beside them, surrounding two or three of them, there's going to be four or five planted people to react.

I. Like us?

- J. Yes, except we're actors we're not just audience, we're acting on their side.....and we just had varying responses - one time we just laugh at the guy, one time we sneer and just see what the other people do, if they laugh 'cos we laugh, sneer 'cos we sneer, see how they respond to that. That would be quite interesting. They seemed to laugh 'cos we were all laughing, tho' you can't say that 'cos they might have laughed if we weren't there.....
- I. The Group we were with were young people and they were laughing all the time, they made it quite obvious.... All the time...in some of the carriages that they were looking at this guy, 'cos the minute they got on, the other commuters didn't have any reason to look, they were all looking so the commuters started looking. And that was where it fell down in a way. It was also surprising that someone could do so much in one carriage and in the next carriage no-one notice.
- J. That doesn't surprise me...it was 'cos there were a lot of Scots screaming in the background...there were a lot of foreigners. That does make a difference.... The foreigners are looking around, it's new, they don't just sit there, there aren't all that many metros in the world and they're taking it all in and seeing how people act in the metro.
- I. I wonder what sort of people make up Mr. Ellis' audience?
- J. People like you, then they write about it.
Fairly studenty.
- I. There was one couple who were fifty five. They enjoyed it.

- J. No-one...I tried to look like a commuter, everyone else just laughed.
At the end they tried to merge into the background, but they would
merge into the background then they would laugh and giggle and shout
and nudge each other.....
- I. Yes, 'cos he had asked us not to know each other...
I don't think that came off very well.
- J. Not at all.
- I. Oh, yea, the best one was when we went on first, and we'd all sat down
and then he came in....
- J. Then he chose...because what would happen was that he'd get on and then
everyone would go bom...whereas if we were all spread out around the
carriage and he chose a couple...though you didn't really know who was
with him, he sat down by me once. 'Cos I nipped in and he sat down next
to me.
- I. Well, he said that he didn't notice us.
Which is strange 'cos I reckon that I could have picked out at least
twenty people with us.
- J. Ah, but he wasn't really going around with us, we were going around with
him.
- I. But he spoke to us all at the beginning.
Anything you want to say?
- J. It would be good to pick six instances and remember as much as you
could about each instance and then compare them to one another...that the
Scots were there. Because there were so many different things happening.

- J. Sometimes they fell flat. You'd get an analysis, a comparison, of humour, the barriers between people in the tube, and the ways those barriers were broken down and how people respond to instances. Because that American woman, even though she was laughing her husband wouldn't laugh, why was that? Now why should he not find it funny? Now why should he not find it funny when his wife found it funny? In exactly the same situation as the American couple when the wife found it funny then the American guy started killing himself. I think that's partly due to the fact that he didn't have the stooge to play against, all he had was his wife, he had to interpret himself, he had no-one to bounce off, to interpret it. He just thought he was an idiot and that was it.
- If there was a guy thinking this guy's a bit of a fool...a fool rather than an idiot who needed sympathy, astonishment, or disgust or just a John Cleese type fool who can't do things right.
- If you thought of him as accident prone you'd laugh and think it was funny, if you thought he was a mentally deficient idiot then you would be repulsed.
- I. One thing I was confused about was when he was cutting things out of the newspaper, I didn't really see why that shouldn't be a fairly normal thing to do.
- J. If someone had done that to me I'd have been really fed up....you just don't do that on a tube...ask for someone else's newspaper...
- I. Oh yes, he was cutting some else's newspaper. That was the problem.

- J. And people if you look over their shoulder and read their newspaper they get really stropky, asking to read a section of a newspaper, then when you've got it to rip it out of the newspaper and then say it's continued on page sixteen.
- I. He must have travelled on the tube to know what sort of things you mustn't do on the tube.
- J. Yes, you know you're totally private on the tube, you'd as much borrow someone's newspaper as you'd go three houses along, knock on someone's door and say have you got the time or something.
- I. In the tube people just keep themselves to themselves?
- J. Totally, I could be this far away from you, closer and I wouldn't even acknowledge the fact that you exist, let alone communicate in any way. Everything is surreptitiously done.
- I. Right, I think we'll leave it there and start the heavy drinking.

Interview with the Tyneside Theatre Co. - three members of the

"Billy Liar" cast, actors Ron, Holly and Liz

9.5.76.

R = Ron

H = Holly

L = Liz

I = Interviewer

(Talking of a lady who had seen the play and given her criticisms of it:

H. "Oh, I thought the costumes were all wrong".

R. "Yea, in the book you see they all say - the mum and Barbara and everyone, they all say about Liz that she's scruffy and dirty and everything and when she comes on she's not. And the audience is so thick that they don't realise ...

L. "It's not really their fault ..."

R. "No, it's not their fault, I suppose it's more explained in the book."

H. "Yea, I mean it's a bit of a stupid thing to describe her as scruffy and then when she comes on .. you've got to explain it, you can't expect them to realise."

L. "But if they knew the difference in that time - a duffle coat was scruffy in the fifties whether it was brand new or not. If you were in a duffle coat then you were a hippy or..."

I. "How much do you really expect the audience to understand of what you're doing?"

L. "You've got to think of it in 1970 terms cos what's her name .. Anne (who plays the mother of Billy) says that that little girl wasn't upset that Billy didn't go with Liz as she should have been but was upset that Billy was two-timing Barbara. Now that's a young kids attitude to the play whereas in the fifties, or older people, sort of our age, would probably be mad that he didn't go out with Liz. This kid was about fifteen and she was upset that Billy was two timing someone."

R. "He really is, he's a fart."

L. "Oh, he is, he's horrible."

R. "Cos I actually get the feeling from the audience as I've often said to you, I get this terrible thing when I'm with Barbara, cos he's dreadful with Barbara, it's very funny but ... he comes across right on the balance of being funny ... one woman, when I said to Barbara "Oh you'll always love me won't you", this woman in the audience said, "eeeeeeee". She was so upset that she had to vocalise it "eeeeee"."

I. Do you ever get anyone saying anything out loud?

R. "Mmmmmm. They describe us in Skivers. You know at the end of the play where I got caned and umm I did it ... and it's the character sorting out that he's got to make himself a martyr, to get what he wants, so he takes a public caning, when he's quite innocent. And we did it in schools and near to the end, it's a very simplistic part ... we came to the end and just when I get caned, cos I actually get caned, he actually caned me for it, there's no way of hiding it, when you're that close, and one girl stood up and said "eeeeee, divven hit him.""

I. "I suppose that that's a success isn't it,"

L. "My dad said that when he saw the gate latch go .. at the end when you come in, when he saw you he vocalized, "Oh, the idiot he's back.""

R. Yes, lots of people do. They're actually involved in it, for a few seconds, they're caught up in it."

L. "But those kids the other night, in the front, they were actually kicking the seats and things during our bit. Do you remember that, cos you had them all the way through the play? When we were being very quiet on that seat, they were kicking."

H. "I remember in Godspell once, in the last supper when Judas goes out to betray Jesus, the only sort of serious bit in the play when we're all sitting there and he gets up and runs out, through the back of the stage. And one little boy screamed out "Eye Bye", Laugh. And we had to all sit

there while the bloke who was playing Jesus handed out the wine ...

(giggles)."

R. At the Young Vic they had this show - the Fantastic Fairground, and at one stage there's a poison candy floss, and none of the characters will have it in the play, and one little black kid who was watching the play, you know totally involved in it stood up and said "I'll have it".

L. "Aaahhhhh!"

I. Have you ever been in anything that involved participation?

R. "Oh yea."

I. "Well how do you cope with that 'cos it seems to me that you've got a problem. Cos if people do participate as you are asking them to - start acting and so on - then you lose control over them entirely don't you,"

R. "Well we've both done that kind of thing; it's children's theatre when you're trying to get participation. But it's difficult because you're halfway between doing drama and doing a play. And I don't think that it works."

I. "How do you make that distinction,"

R. "Well, if you're a teacher or you've got an amount of time, unlimited amount of time - you don't have to put on a performance, you can take them and do drama with them, they make their own things up, or you give them inclination and information, and they improvise and there is participation where you act with them. But there is no time limit, there's no performance, as long as you reach some kind of conclusion that is satisfactory to them, you've gone through the process of drama. Then you get the play, the straight play. We did these plays which were a mixture of both. You have a play and there are certain sections

in it which allow for participation. Now the trouble is that you still keep the kids to a limit 'cos you know at a certain point that you must cut them off and you can't always know which way they're going to go - sometimes you have to call them back and divert them which is not ..."

I. "Well how would you do that,"

R. Well you've basically got the story haven't you. You've got the story and the character, and the character can always persuade. I mean the actor knows ... I mean I think in these plays that it's very unfair that the actor always knows what is going to happen."

L. "We used to have an alternative ending.."

R. We used to have an alternative ending, and usually actually it was always the same ending isn't it,"

I. What, an alternative ending that you could use if they get..."

R. "Yea, sometimes you'd get to a point where the kids would have to decide a moral issue, and either they'd have a vote on it or something. There was a marvellous one they did where they came to the end and it was like a judgement. There was one that had a certain character - it was for older kids I think, and it was like a court. They had to decide about the punishment. And the punishment was that .. it was a kind of mythology thing ... for him to be frozen, and it was amazing 'cos they did it, and the kids said oh yes he had to be punished, and the actor whenever they said that line, had to just stop and he froze. And then after the play had finished he was still there, right up to the time when they were leaving for home - they were packing all their things away, the kids had gone out and were looking through the window, and he was still there, and they began to be a bit panicky, and they were going "Hey, hey, he's still there, he's frozen." You have always got the story."

I. "Why did you especially do that?"

R. "I don't know really. Something about the consequences of making decisions. It was a bit unfair really ... cos there were ...

I. "You seem to be really trying to make the kids feel ... what sort of relation did you see operating there between life and theatre? What sort of emotion has someone got to feel to be acting then?"

R. "I don't know. I did a village tour ... well it was smashing, improvisations with kids from five to eleven ... and where we just, for instance there was one part of it - a rocket ship, where I take the rocket out, and I had a tape with all rocket sounds on it, and slides with all stars and everything, and I said "right, we're going to another planet", we'll have to get the rocket ready," And the kids took over themselves and they made the rocket and did whatever they had to do. And when at the right time it took off and whatever happened on the journey it was up to them. And umm you get little kids coming up, little five year olds, coming up and saying "I can't go I've got to be back for tea." (laughs) Or getting very frightened and coming up and saying are we really going? Are we really leaving earth? And you're in the classroom, they've still got the classroom around them and they say "Are we really in space?" And I say no."

I. "You actually say no do you?"

R. "Yea.. but they're still feeling it, they are going through it. They know, .. it's like people in the theatre they watch the play and they know its not real, if they don't then they're loony.

H. "That's like the 'Infants' we did with Stagecoach, we were ... I don't know if you remember ... This was a very interesting participation idea we did with Stagecoach, and it's an idea our director had for four to five year olds, which is the reception class, and we all took on a character

and made up a story so there were two groups, the group I was in - there were three of us. I was a bear, and there were two jobber men. And we went to the school and the kids didn't know anything was going to happen. The other story was a wizard and a mouse. And the idea was that these two blokes walked into the classroom and they had an intercom, and they would just walk in with these very brightly coloured costumes, and these four year olds would see, and they would just come in and .. the teacher would know, they'd say things like "If we drill a hole in the ceiling we could plant a banana tree in the middle, just here". And these kids just didn't know what was going on at all and they'd use the intercom to talk to each other and things, and then I would appear, and I'd creep in doing these pantomime tricks and all the kids would say "where, where?". And then the idea was that I was a bear who had lost his memory and eventually, you know, the kids then ... so you have all these crazy things going on and it was really mean cos they didn't know what was going to happen, and I mean in fact I used to get reactions ranging from screams of fear, to people coming up and saying "you're not really a bear are you?" And then what we would do is they would find me a name - it was very loosely improvised for the three of us - and the idea was to get them out into the hall and make a fair or a circus. And in terms of controlling them you can't control four and a half year olds, but we had the basic thing where we would get them out of the classroom, and make a fair and get them to exercise their own imaginations a bit. But the interesting thing was that the director said that if you ask a four year old to be an elephant they won't go around with their arms as dangling trunks, it will just be going on in their heads, and they all just ran round in a circle, but in their heads it's going on. And then we just used to go and leave and the other one was quite funny with a wizard and this mouse had a really long tail and he used to get it stuck in the door, and you know. But I thought it was a really good idea because it was really like magic for the kids and you didn't think about

controlling them. But I nearly got murdered once. I did this in a theatre and we changed it and I came out as a foam rubber box, it was just a box and you couldn't see me under it and before you knew what had happened sixty kids had just piled onto the stage and were on top of me. It was a foam rubber box and I was smothering to death and I panicked, I really was quite scared because I couldn't breathe. It was interesting, we realised that we couldn't do... you can't just expect kids to accept a moving box, they want to know what is under it and all they wanted to do was to stop it, so they sat on it. It ruined the whole point of the play."

R. "There was a thing at Leeds as well, where one of the actors came in to the classroom, the class didn't know anything about it, so the class was going on - and he had glasses on and a moustache, and he started climbing all over the place, and he's say "excuse me can I go here..." so the kids looked at him. And then he climbs out the window, and then the class goes on and there's a knock on the door and two people come in and they're detectives looking for this person who seems to be around here. And then it all happens - the teacher sort of disappears and the policeman says "right, well we haven't got time to ring up the station to get reinforcements we'll have to get some people to help here." And it all goes on from there and they go out and try and find this bloke."

L. I did that with a teacher at a school practice, you know, and they wanted them to do some creative writing. So we planned that I would come into her class and have an argument with her. The kids wouldn't know and then we'd see how they would react to two teachers having some stupid argument about - she'd stolen something, or she'd told a tale on me. But she got some good writing out of them - they believed that we had had an argument. And they had to write about it, or discuss or make a moral judgement on it."

- R. "Yea... the kids knew, in these schools they were used to having the theatre come around. If we went into a class that was in a school that had never had a theatre group before, and we just went right in and did that it might be a bit cruel - but it's, I don't know - they kind of believe it and yet they know it's not real. Like those little kids asking if we were going to space quite seriously and I had to say no. And then it was alright, but they got into it completely."
- I. "What do you feel yourself when you are on stage, what sort of emotions do you have to feel to do that display of emotion?"
- R. "I don't know - it's difficult. Like that other night when I did that final scene, I felt ... I really felt it.. it happened last night when I actually cried and it's just that it gets better as you actually feel the emotion."
- I. "What, your acting gets better?"
- R. "Yea, well it depends on the actor, cos its very dangerous cos you don't like to go too far, I've acted with actors and they get lost in it and then you can't touch them."
- I. "What do you mean that you can't touch them?"
- H. "You can't communicate".
- R. "I suppose it's a bit different on film..."
- I. "Does that mean they forget their words and that's why you can't communicate?"
- H. "It's just that they get very selfish on stage.."
- R. "Yes, it's that they get very immersed in their own work."
- H. "And you still have to have a third eye, you still have to keep the play going."

R. "Right. You have to know what you are doing in case things go wrong."

H. "Like if you have to fight someone every night on stage and if you really believed in it then you could kill someone. You get this ... like the drama school I went to, she used to get very keen on taking people who really had been boxers, and there was this bloke that I knew and he really had been a boxer and in the end they had to throw him out because he became really violent. And you have to have a third eye. And if you... it's crying on stage I think that doesn't mean necessarily that you are doing the scene any better, if you really cry, but it's to know how to make yourself cry, how to get that feeling. I was telling you, we did an exercise at drama school when the tutor sat us all down - we'd been there a while - we all knew each other - and she asked us to recite the most embarrassing moment, or the saddest moment of your life. And most of us didn't do it very well, 'cos you tried to be honest about it, and there was one girl who was a little fatty and she sat there and she described how, at the age of eleven she had been called fatty and this had sort of ricoched and everyone ... and she actually then began to live that moment and tears were streaming down. It was actually really rather a silly thing, but that worked for her."

I. "Did that mean that any time she wanted to cry she must think of that thing."

H. "Yes, and then would say ... but that doesn't mean it would work every time."

R. "Yea, in "Sons of Light" I had to ... a very difficult scene when I had to come on and bury a brother - my twin, and, did you see "Sons of Light", "

I. "No"

R. "...well I had to sort of come on straight away and I couldn't... I just had this straight description of how he'd died and I couldn't work out what

was happening, I just used to come on and think of my own brother, and that's the exercise. Like with the Granny, actually thinking of Anne, I actually thought of Anne. And that's what I did that night and you actually get into that state of mind ..."

I. So do you use any incident that makes you angry or sad to get anger or sadness across?"

R. "I don't really know.. I can't describe it..."

L. "Well you're obviously influenced by what your dialogue is at that particular time and the character you are does ... but if you have a cold emotion to display like anger then it is usually possible to resurrect some memory to help you, but I should think that it's not always necessary - the lines might do it for you."

(Lot of gabbling here - can't understand it but it's obviously a sore point)

L. "I mean you can get up and pretend..."

R. "Yea... but you can do that by improvising."

I. "Sorry, what can you do by improvising?"

R. "Well anger and that... I think that anger is the easiest. To get that out of the actual situation in the play and you can do that by improvising scenes. Similar to leading up to the one ... you can improvise and get emotions. And once you've done it once, or if it's a very well written play then you can reach that stage during rehearsal."

H. "But that story of the actress who hurt her feet, her way of finding emotion, she did the "Glass Menagerie" which she was famous for - but for her to get anything out she used to hurt her feet. Every tension she felt was in her feet - she used to have blisters and bleeding feet when she came off, and that was her way, her technical way of finding..."

like Edmund Kean was a darling because he used to give so much. But then you get onto the thing that if you have to portray an emotion like that then you have to do it every night, when you're feeling fed up, you don't always change your feelings when you get on stage. I've done a long run and you don't always get into it. You can and this thing about techniques, although it's awful when you get someone like Richard Steele saying he doesn't work on techniques when he does it all the time - you have to find some way. I mean I had a reverse thing when I was with Stagecoach, we'd had a really bad row and we had a morning show at 9 o'clock and I had had sort of a pitched battle and I'd been crying because I was so angry, and we then had to break that and do a show where you had to be very very happy and I found that very hard because I still wanted to hit this guy. And it's the same reverse thing of having to switch 'cos sometimes ... you can go on and you are thinking about other things, you can't help really."

- I. "How do rehearsals help you, what is it that you carry forward from rehearsals to the actual performance? Is it that you monitor the movements you do to make sure they give off the emotions you mean or what?"
- H. "It's up to the director then isn't it?"
- R. "Yes, yes you can .. just like what I feel .. I mean its difficult to talk to because it's different for every actor, but what I was saying the other night about rehearsals where I get the ninety percent, or the ninety percent that is the performance and I can repeat that, like doing it that Friday night. The audience who watch it will probably enjoy it and they're very aware of everything and yet you'll come off and you'll think that it wasn't quite right. This is what I do, if I'm feeling the emotion, but you still know you're acting."
- I. "Is that because you amuse yourself in some way?"

- R. "No, it's for the audience because I think they automatically know it's better if there's something extra, you then get actors who are quite competent, and you see their performance and you come away and think it's alright. Like the ninety percent in rehearsals, and another night you have that extra concentration and spark in it, and that extra thing that you know when you've done a good performance yourself and that will make it more alive. It will make it a performance. I'm very wary of actors who are termed great actors, because most actors must have nights when they're bad. And the great actors tend to be very technical actors."
- L. "But to go back to that resurrecting emotion I remember at RADA having a lecture about someone, who had been given an exercise by someone and they had to drink from each glass, they sat in a row, and in each glass they had to say whether it was a sour taste, or bitter, or whether they liked it or both, and of course they were all full of water and they played a trick on a girl and they put in something acidic in one of them and she came along to it and of course she had to show distaste and she did you know, but she was all uugh! And then they asked the class who had watched which she had done better and which she had done worst, and they all said she overdid the one that she didn't like and that was the one that was for real."
- R. "These tricks ... people often play tricks on stage and it depends on your ... we all had different training ... as actors .. some had technical training and the actor walks on and it's pure technique, which is very difficult to do. If you can do it well then O.K.. but then you can get the sort of training you had .. which is more emotion."
- I. "What using your every day life emotions as a basis for characterisations?"
- H. "No, you just try to take things from life .. yes you do exercises based on real emotion, like the basic Stanislavsky thing of hiding a ring in a

room and making people look for it and people will look as if they .. if they thought they were on stage and thought they were looking they would sort of go (does a theatrical searching with exaggerated movements)

Actually really having to find something and doing it properly and knowing what it feels like. And just playing with you and playing with your minds which can be quite dangerous. You know I was broken after two years, they had this thing when they had to break you. They do it any way they can."

I. "What does that mean?"

H. "Well it just builds up, I mean I just remember once I was doing something and I remembered once that the tutor had said something to me, and it just snapped and I just burst into tears and I ran out and couldn't stop crying. They kept going on at me because I was very young, and they wanted to make you really feel things, whatever, to really know what it feels and then learn how to repeat it. They don't actually help you with that but if you've got that basis and you go out into the theatre and you do have to repeat it it's a great help."

R. "We had an exercise which everyone went through, where you sit, it was an exercise in concentration, and they give you something to concentrate on and then the rest of the class can say anything they want to. They're not allowed to touch you - it's a game for anyone to play and you've just got to sit there and people come up and say the most awful things, and when they know after two years they know exactly what to say and they just sit round"

I. "Do you use the other actors that are on stage as an audience?"

R. "Well you're always aware, at least you should be but not all actors are .. (whistles) it's communication, two actors. Say you get good actors and very sensitive actors .. because sometimes you come on and you say things very different - Richard says his the same every night -

but you come on and it's quite interesting, and it's good for the actor and the audience to try and say it a different way so they can respond and say it back."

H. "Well, it's like that .. it's another basic rule at the place I went to and it's sensitivity and so on and just because you're on a stage doesn't mean you don't see the person you're with - that's why it's like real life too - I mean one of the most fascinating things for me on stage is to see people doing something different one night because you find something, and sometimes in performance I find an awful lot 'cos you have stopped rehearsing and you've got an audience and sometimes the audience help you because they react in a certain way but the thing is to just go on stage with an open mind instead of with a shut one, which is why this whole idea of RADA trained actor, the technically trained actor you always had a very stulted performance, always pick up a glass in a certain way - crook their fingers in a certain way. And in my school it was always how would a wrestler pick up a glass, or how would the queen pick up that cup - everyone picks up a cup in a different way not in the same way and that's why people mistake it for real life - it isn't it's just sort of inquiry and curiosity."

R. "Also you get into the thing of being a queen or a boxer, you never think of how you'd pick it up you just do it."

H. "Was it you said Geordies drink in a certain way - someone said that if they're drinking their beer they do that - which actually seems rather effeminate. It was my cousin..She saw James Bolan do it in "When the Boat Comes In" and she said it was fantastic because it was a really true thing he did, he did it naturally."

H. "But someone like Richard Steel is such an example, I think Anne and Brenda are like that to a certain extent as well."

R. "Brenda not so much 'cos she actually she does change and respond."

H. "What is it that you want to know?"

I. "Well all this is good stuff! But one thing I did want to know was what are your ideas of good and bad actors?"

R. (Laugh) Ask the audience to decide

L. "Not at all not at all..."

I. "You must work with some idea of good and bad..."

R. "You hope - it's like we've been talking about Richard, he's difficult to work with because he's lazy, he's not adventurous, he won't take risks you see. I mean it's nice to work with actors who in rehearsal will take risks and see what is right."

I. "What risks do they take?"

R. "Well they .. make a fool of yourself in front of someone else. 'Cos in rehearsals you are trying to find a way to do it and the way to do it is by discarding 2 or 100 ways not to do it and Richard would go into rehearsals and play it safe all the time and by playing it safe its not having the courage to go and make a fool of yourself and then say that's not right and so we'll discard that. I suppose it's 'cos of the way we were trained as actors so you're sensitive, so you want someone who will take risks in a way 'cos it makes them more exciting. And someone who is sensitive to you as well, I mean you can be doing things in a scene with Richard we play it the same every night 'cos if

I. " ... like the other night when I picked up the cushion - it was nothing - and he'd gone completely. Now if he was there and watching what I was doing then he'd be ... some actors don't even listen .. to what you're saying. All they know is that they've got to say their line after

you've said a certain word. I mean Richard does this - I didn't last night say the last bit of my sentence and he was stuck."

I. "How can they not listen"

H. "Oh it's very easy to .. yea you do it yourself when you're not there, you're not concentrating or something's going through your mind, and you miss ..."

H. "I mean that was what El5 was all about - taking three years trying to explain to you how to listen to people. The whole idea of prompting is unnecessary if you know where you are on stage. You're not listening for the lines you're listening for the sense of it. You should never be at a loss for words on stage - you should always be able to get back on .. but it's so obvious and so practical. But again this is the way people live - they have an idea of action, like in the 20's was that you didn't, you just listened to the sound of your own voice."

R. "There are very selfish actors too. And you can get selfish actors on both sides - actors who won't listen to you and they are off in a ... and selfish actors who won't listen to you because they are so involved in their emotions they give the audience nothing and they give you nothing cos they are so involved. That's one extreme from another."

H. "Then it's a mistake when that happens."

I. "Then you're always having to work with at least a dual consciousness?"

H. "Yes, you always have to watch yourself."

R. "It's difficult asking that because I find that .. cos it must be very different for every actor to explain what happens when he acts. And I can't really explain. You know that some nights - and it's usually the nights that I'm more involved in it, so it must be that I'm concentrating more, and I'm more sensitive to the audience. If it's a

good audience you see, then you connect to them and you get more energy or something goes on, some nights the audience are bad and you might do a good performance and you don't get that reaction. And with actors too, sometimes it's like playing in two boxes and some night zoom, you spark each other off. It's incredible and it's difficult to know what happens when that happens. I mean when ... that night when I felt that emotion which I was meant to be feeling at that point. But I was still aware what I was doing, I was still timing the jokes with the audience, I was still there with Liz."

- L. "You find your brain will work in many directions in a split second you know. You know what the audience are feeling - you can remember that you've forgotten a line - you know what's coming up, you're also clearing your throat cos you know it's going - all in a split second."
- R. "You're on about five different levels, or should be. I tried explaining to my father and he said no his brain doesn't act like that. I don't know whether that makes any difference to a performance. It's interesting- I had a part time job, in an office. And this guy was really in tune because he used to get part time actors to do the jobs. And I asked him, why do you get actors in to do the jobs? And he said sometimes the jobs you have to do here are little jobs and they vary, they vary a lot, and he said he found, by accident he's had actors in and he's found that they could do that, they were able to change - someone would come up and say do this and then something else and you could do it."
- H. "That's a change someone being nice about actors. "
- R. "Well it doesn't mean they're good assets but it just means that in their life, in their training they get to taking in a lot more of what's going on around. Cos basically your life - you don't know where you are, you don't know where you're going to live, you don't know what you're going to have next - the job, you don't know the money. You don't know anything

really so you always have so many influences and I'm sure it has an effect on the way actors think."

I. "What, in that they're sensitive?"

R. "Hopefully. You can see sometimes you work with people over the years and you can see as the season goes on the performances get less interesting. Cos they just turn out the job."

L. "It was funny that before this job I had been on a commercial tour and my confidence was knocked for six but Warren has pushed me right back again."

I. "Why had you lost your confidence?"

L. "Well it was sex comedy, one or two odd people .. My confidence went .. the girls in the company with me you never knew what they said behind your back, and you'd get the word that you'd improved so much over the tour, and that made you think what was I like at the beginning? Fortunately this has given me my confidence back - but you set yourself up just to be knocked down really in this business. The thing is always to get back up again. When you're in a play you're setting yourself up for criticism. We're not to know that Richard hasn't gone and talked like this about us, and perhaps got to far more important ears than we'll ever do. Gareth Morgan yesterday with me asked me how Workington was, which meant he thought I was with Stagecoach and he apologised and asked about Saturday night's house, but the more I think about that the more insulted I feel. It's a terrible thing to say no matter how vague he is. It's all this terrible distrust and fear you get amongst actors."

L. "Do you remember when I was talking to Warren about Richard coming in on us. And I think you followed it up saying "Oh it's getting worse, just a sentence . Oh, he's getting worse. And then I jumped in on you

and I said ... (side 11.) ... because Brenda was telling me the same thing about me rehearsing my scene and she'd spent hours telling me how she'd play Rita, and how she .. and then she said don't mention to Warren that I said anything about it."

L. "Like she said to me Oh, stick to your own notes, and .. you could have knocked me down. But that again is part of the fear that that generation of actors have which I feel we shouldn't have. No matter how hard it is we should not be afraid of directors and things like that. I mean I'd like to go to Warren and tell him just what I think except I was a bit nervy having just come up, but it's important for him if he's to carry on directing in a group.

H. "Why don't you see him, you know him?"

L. "I feel he did let us down by sticking to the text all the time ... I felt it had a tightening effect on everybody. We should have improvised, we should have laughed a lot more."

I. "In rehearsals?"

H. "Yea,"

L. "Well he told me it wasn't his cup of tea at all."

H. "Well that doesn't matter, that doesn't matter at all, that's all the more reason to play around with it and learn from us. Cos you know what I mean..

L. "I'm quite happy with him...."

H. "Oh I like him, I like him immensely, but having directed some students myself last year, I know I keep going on about it, but I learnt so much, although they weren't professional actors, I had to rely on everything I knew in terms of exercises and I tried everything on them, and I saw result that I thought in some cases were amazing - people actually did

- L. "But Rob he didn't block us really did he, I mean he didn't say you've got to move four paces to the left did he? And we worked it around."
- R. "You came that day when we did our scene and we've done it the same ever since."
- L. "But I was given freedom, I never felt I couldn't change it."
- H. "Yea, but the thing was he did two opposite things - he did no blocking and a very conventional way of doing the play. Either you do the full Noel Coward thing of not bumping into the furniture and sticking to the text, or you don't, the mixture just doesn't work. The whole scene with me I'm like that (head turned sideways) and it's just crazy. The only way not to block is to rehearse around the text."
- L. "As soon as you get a lot of furniture on stage it's a hell of a job, especially that big sofa in the centre of that room."
- I. "Do you dislike working in a totally naturalistic setting or are you happier?"
- L. "I don't mind really, I suppose as long as I concentrate on not bumping into things I concentrate on what's in here, I don't really think of what's on the walls around me."
- R. "It's very interesting but Warren said something I didn't know, on Thursday night I did something I'd never done before, I kept holding onto the furniture throughout the whole play - but he said it was amazing. I mean I wasn't doing it consciously, but he said that I must have been so nervous that I was just all the time holding onto the furniture. It is a bit restrictive cos you haven't got that much room really - like up front, the garden's minute it restricts me enough. Cos we come on and that's it .."
- H. "You ought to do a tape with old Veronica.."

R. "I'm dreading doing TV."

H. "But she's probably say everything opposite to what we'd say."

R. "I think that acting is a very personal thing. I mean what I do, I find things as I go along, in any play you do. And you find things you can do that make things work for me personally. That's the only way."

I. "But people are always using the analogy of acting-role playing, or whatever. Especially sociologists who always use that vocabulary to get across the idea that people do nothing but pretend all their lives.."

L. "It's an awful thing to say, but the acting profession is a way of life. Once you get in it it's a life style that you can get into and some people can take it and some can't."

H. "I feel I'm playing a role when I'm not mixing with actors. I feel then I'm not being myself. Like a lot of Micke's friends who are accountants or solicitors I find myself putting a rein on myself, I sometimes don't say a thing all night. 'Cos I get totally tied up inside. I feel I'm playing a role."

R. "It's strange but you sometimes see other people playing the role of that way of life that they've decided. There isn't... there's a way of life but it isn't particularly involving."

I. "But what does that mean then - that they sit there thinking something else and acting another? What you mean when you say someone plays a role,?"

L. "You watch ..."

R. "Like X's friends they will come in and they will act in a certain way. And they will dress in a certain way, just plain things - they have a

language between themselves. This is the thing I said, I'd say something that for me wasn't particularly outspoken, it was just an honest thought you know, that came into my head and they're not used to it, so they're actually conforming to something that they've got to conform to."

I. "So they set themselves up with props and all the other things?"

R. "They'll always argue that they're not."

H. "I mean I just find myself watching people a lot, like in the way that you sit on a bus. I always enjoy being in a bus, because I always enjoy watching people. Like academics for example, cos Mike went to Oxford I meet a lot of them. And apart from getting very worried about my own intellect half of the thing that takes my breath away is cost I see people behaving in a way that doesn't seem very natural to me. I can't think of an example but I like the way people talk, the attitudes, like arguments for example. I've never... I've often got riled and felt really vicious cos I've heard these people talking about something, but at the end they'll just go Haw haw haw. And they haven't taken it seriously and I have. I often think academics enjoy arguing just as a sort of mental not an emotional thing. I'm used to emotions being very honest in the theatre. You can be more honest in the theatre."

I. "Yet people say that people are very theatrical and false in the theatre."

H. "Some of them are, but some aren't, I think it's a thing of generations. You haven't heard Ron or me or Veronica say darling to anyone once."

R. "I think that that only comes across because... you get someone who's like Vicky who is outrageous ... neurotic. You meet so many people in your way of life that you should have to remember their names but you don't so... I'm sure that's got something to do with it.. Cos you say "Hello love, how are you?". No, you were saying do they actually think

something different. I think very often they do, cos you can catch them out off guard. And they laugh with it and then they laugh cos they were perhaps thinking the same thing but wouldn't say it. I'm sure that's why people laugh in plays. They come and watch Billy Liar, and they - cos he's a sod, I mean the things he goes through are absolutely agony for him, absolutely terrifying, I mean when Rita comes in and his mother's there and his grandma's dying, it's an absolutely horrific situation, yet people are laughing."

H. "Yea, but the scene is written that way, it stinks that scene, it's very silly."

R. "But when Billy does his sort of fantasy things obviously ... I got cheered last night."

I. "What happens when the wall shakes when you shut the door, does that bring the atmosphere down?"

R. "Yes, little mistakes can .. anything can destroy the move .. it depends sometimes you can do things, like that night when Richard .. I bit the glass.. "

H. "But as I said that was so good for me - I mean I hate to say it, but I ... you just looked so stricken. I didn't stop and think what's happened to Ron, I didn't allow myself to be distracted by it I just took it ... cos your face was so good, I thought maybe you had a spot or something, it was just a little bit of blood, but your face was so .. you really did look exactly how Billy probably would have looked."

R. "I thought about that last night, in that scene, I played it a bit more scared."

- I. "What did you feel when you bit the glass."
- R. "This bring you ... shock. The audience ... it was incredible ... it was electric just like that. I was worried about swallowing the glass but I went on with the scene, it must have been in a very comical way really."
- I. "What effect did that have on the audience?"
- R. "Actually it did distract from the line cos it didn't fit in."
- I. "Sometimes if things are too real - like the caning -(I tell the story about Mark Saunders trying to do a funny sketch eating the revolting mixture of daffodils etc., and the audience didn't laugh, they just went Ugh.) You can over concretise some things."
- H. "Yea, like the Ken Campbell show I watched, I couldn't laugh 'cos I didn't find anything funny. This bloke sticks a ferret down his trousers but he actually does it, and there's no way he can fake it."
- R. "There's so many different forms of theatre now that overlap into circus. Like motor racing... like the Pip Simmons .. they do things to themselves on stage. It's this thing of German concentration camps and they actually hit themselves and do things to each other on stage."
- I. "And what's your reaction to that?"
- R. "The audience.. people come out saying it's ridiculous, it's sick, or its brilliant. One woman gets her breasts smacked about, and it must hurt. The first thing that came into my mind is that it hurts and it's probably doing her some damage. You go into when is it actually .. when will you get people coming on and committing suicide on stage, when are you going to get ... Then you get people taking risks in circuses.."
- H. "But that's a calculated thing, like this Japanese theatre group, 30 of them and they looked very Western. And we arrived and everyone looked

horrified, they'd pulled a leg off a chicken on stage. And we went back stage and there was this one legged chicken in a cage. (Laughs) And they in fact, they had this terrible mixture of cultures, and then we discovered that they all had this hierarchy of six leaders, and each of them had five slaves and they had to cook for them. And they did this show of cages, and one couple actually did get locked up in a cage, and again they had roughed this girl around and roughed her up and cut her face. And the management were very upset about it, it was very anarchical. And people came to see our show, which was a spoof on Bulldog Drummond, and at the end we have this shoot out where everyone gets shot, arrrrgh.. you know comedy, and they'd all been sitting there and one of them said to one of the guys that it was a pity it wasn't real bullets in the gun!"

R. "It's like that Dadaist thing, coming to the end of Hamlet and all the bodies on the stage and instead of the curtains closing and the actors getting up, there's all these terrible things going on. The curtains open again and they're still there and in fact the pools of blood are getting bigger. And they come rushing out and saying are there any doctors. And the effect on the audience having just watched Hamlet, they come to the end... "

H. "There's another I saw 7,84 do and they did "Sgt. Musgrave Dances On" and they changed it for Northern Ireland, and they had a scene when they had real machine guns which they turned on the audience (I knew) but they were actually trying to frighten the audience. And they did, these ten guns 'cos they wanted thirteen hostages, I didn't get the feeling anyone believed in it. In fact that night they used the stage manager in a coffin and he had fainted, and they thought he'd died 'cos he just didn't get out of the coffin."

L. "I remember one boy at the end of term had chosen to write and act in his own play, and it was basically on the theme of someone out of their environment. And he did it in a drama studio, and when we went to the

doors of the studio to go in they had some big brown canvas for a tunnel which you went through to sit down, and in the tunnel which was dark, he'd hung balloons with water in, and air beds to walk on, so you as an audience were actually prepared for the emotions which he would try and portray in his play. He had some mates on the outside of the tunnel - we weren't expecting this and me and this girl went absolutely berserk with fright in this tunnel - we weren't expecting this we thought we were just going to see a play. And you could go down one alley way or another and we sat there and watched his play."

R. "It's really funny but the one thing that I hate - I mean I love doing it, going out to the audience and doing all these things, especially if its a comic thing, the one thing I hate - I absolutely freeze, is if I think they're going to come at me."

H. "Pip Simmons are always doing that ..."

R. "I hate it ..."

H. "Did you see the George Jackson black and white minstrel show? They all played niggers, and they were all niggers - one was a chopping nigger and one was a fucking nigger, and in the interval - I was with this fringe group and they didn't know me luckily but everyone else in the group they knew, and what they did, they had handcuffs and things, was to come and handcuff a member of the audience to them. They were taking all these poor people out to the pub going arrghhh... and one boy in our group got Lew, this girl who was an amazing little dynamite thing, and she was the female fucking nigger and she was going arrghhh etc... so Ron dragged her into the men's urinal and she absolutely freaked. And another guy at the Oval House had done the same thing with a girl, he kept saying 'take your pants off', and she did. He didn't know what to do .. the actors got caught. I remember that I sat there and thought that if they come and handcuff me, I mean the chopping nigger's fair enough

and the crazy nigger... no I just no..."

H. "I think that takes it too... I mean you get very frightened..."

I. "That's where it falls down .. if the audience do do it too well then you've lost them .. that's really the question I asked you at the beginning."

H. "Yes, but mainly they don't. They just don't mostly, they're all curled up in embarrassment like I would."

I. "Well there's all the difference between presentation and representation ... What? (laugh)
Well, if you present something on stage rather than represent it .. like with this move with sex..."

R. "Yea, I was saying to Maureen that the most erotic scene I've ever seen on stage was when they were fully clothed and they just had a plastic wand in Midsummer Night's Dream, but if they took their clothes off uggh!"

I. "Well what is it that it loses if they actually start presenting something?"

R. "Well, you make the audience work ..."

L. "You don't use your imagination at all .. half the job's the audience's."

R. "It depends on what kind of art you're representing, I mean people go through .. I mean in Billy I'm sure that .. it's difficult to explain .. you can actually feel an audience .. you can feel that every audience is a different ... it's difficult to say .."

H. "Well you've done some acting yourself so you know."

R. "You come off always and say they're a funny audience tonight .. like last night we came off and .. you feel you know .. obviously if the

audience is in a good mood it makes you work more. But they must be going through what you're feeling if it's working. For them to be involved in it they must be going through what Billy's feeling at that minute. They're involved in a dilemma at the present time.

H. "The hardest thing I think .. when I was doing this Community thing and doing very political things and going to very strange venues, sort of meetings where you've got people who haven't come to see theatre, they've just come to see people doing things. And apart from one show when we went to a battered wives home and we were in a room that was probably just a bit bigger than this and I actually experienced... I couldn't remember a word 'cos I was standing with a woman sitting just there ... and I couldn't remember anything, cos I could see their faces. And that's where they get the idea called Agit prop actually where the idea is to try not to act in a funny sort of way. In fact it's trying to be honest. but it's easier for me to do that cos I know that it's actually a lie, but you can still approach it in the same way. The most interesting thing I had to do was .. we had to do a Labour party .. we went back to 1974 when it was the elections and I had to be an MP giving a political speech which I actually found hard to understand the content of. And the reason I had trouble with words was because the words I had to say were not easy to rectify if you got them wrong. Like some of these we did at proper Labour Party meetings and so if I said the wrong policy they'd know. That was fascinating because I was wondering if that was how politicians must feel. Cos actually it's very hard, much harder than I thought trying to .. Actually I started off by trying to take the piss out of it, all these funny statements... it's amazing to find out all the things that the Labour Party said they were going to do in 1974 which they haven't done. And then eventually I got round to doing it very seriously, very straight and sometimes people are sitting there saying.. 'Right, right on..' you know. And you just wondered if people realised. ..well again it goes into the realms of politics."

Interview with actress Holly de Jong, 7/7/77

I = Interviewer

H = Holly

I. Let's start with why do you have rehearsals?

H. I think it's necessary to get to know a play, helps you learn the lines for one thing, it's just to help the process, to get to know the people you're working with. I mean I didn't think it would be possible just to do a play without rehearsals, I mean you couldn't put a play on if you'd just read it. I mean even if everybody just learnt the lines it would be very fake.

I. You mean you have to learn to move in certain places and things I suppose?

H. Oh yes, there's so much that goes into writing, the technical things it would just be an impossible feat to do that.

I. When you say that you have to get to know people, what do you have to get to know about the actors you're acting with?

H. It's nice to get to know people, to get this thing - trust - so that if you get to know them then you can work better with them, it's like any job. The more you work with someone then you can get some sort of intuition going maybe. It's just a way of getting used to each other so that when you start to do the play itself you've got an idea of what that person is going to do, how they're going to react to you, if they're difficult, I mean sometimes you find that someone is difficult to work with. And certainly in El5 the whole idea is to develop a trust so that if you do want to do something slightly different then people aren't going to fly into panics.

I. So it's really so that you can cope with any situation that comes up?

H. Right. And in any form of life it's nice to get to know the people you're working with, (to a certain degree I.)

It is important if you're on stage you really do need to know people and rehearsals are for, if you like, getting used to the way people are going to present the characters, although I don't necessarily believe you should do the same thing night after night, it gets stale.

I. Well what is it that you get to know then if you're not doing the same movements, I mean a lot of people think that rehearsal is for getting the movement worked out, what is it if it's not that?

H. Well, some rehearsals you can do improvisations, I mean sometimes I work around the text, I mean not just to do the text itself but to experiment, I mean I think that that's what rehearsals should be, a time to experiment but some people wouldn't agree with that, so that you can pull the most out of the text as possible and find out the different things and the more you do it the more you can find out about it. I mean I directed "After Magritte" with Guy's people and I was amazed, actually, in rehearsal, that every time I watched people I was actually finding out things about the play that in reading it many times had not become evident.

I. That was you as a director?

H. Yes, I mean maybe I'm a bit thick in that way and Tom Stoppard is a bit of a clever Dick....I mean especially with him because his works are - it's like a jig saw puzzle and it just opened up and opened up

H. and I came to the conclusion that if you saw that play once then you'd never understand it.

I don't think that's always so but I got a lot of pleasure in rehearsal in watching other people do it.

I. Why, if the actors were teaching you things about the text that you hadn't.....

H. Oh, they were learning things too.....

I. Why do you need a director?

H. Usually a director is a person who would have some sort of idea, a concept of what he wants the play to be and he's someone who can sit on the outside and watch because if you try and do it yourself...and I've been in that situation...you can't always judge...you can't see yourself..~~the~~ thing as a whole..a director is someone who will sit out and watch and see the thing as a whole and tells you if you're indulging....

I. How do you mean indulging?

H. For example, in God Spell we used to chase our tails a lot because we didn't have a director there all the time...and once the show was running we'd always get together once a week and discuss and say, should we try something different but ultimately there was nobody who wasn't directly involved to tell us if we were doing something silly, like if we were indulging, 'cos I think quite often....although we tried there was no-one on the outside to say, no you shouldn't have done that. And I think the show did get bogged down in the end 'cos I think we were just too involved in it.....

- I. When you didn't have a director did one of the actors sit out front and say do it this way?
- H. Well the stage manager actually...unfortunately...he used to give us notes but then also for him he got too involved in it...that's a different situation because if you're doing something for a long time then people just don't realise that they might be getting stale, that they're just too involved. In fact the man who wrote it used to come along from time to time and he was fresh at least and he would say look you're indulging dreadfully there...and so and so, and it's something that happens if you haven't got someone to control things and basically a director should be someone who should control, who's quite astute and shrewd, and has an eye for a whole, whereas the actor more concerned with their own character then relating to the other people whereas the director is the one who should paint the whole picture.
- I. How...the director knows what he wants, does he mould you to fit into what he wants?
- H. It just depends on the director, I mean some of them would try to do that and if they're very good then that is fair enough, but sometimes you find that - especially on TV, that the directors are more technicians than artistically interested. So they just expect you to be able to produce the goods. So ummmmm but the sort of training I had is to mould yourself and not to let the director bully you too much. I think you have to learn what to take from the director, and what not, I think sometimes they will try to do that, there's a man called Keith Hack who does that, is very firm...he's just done the Hedda Gabbler with Janette Simms. I think you just need give and take with a director, I would hate to be told what to do in fact, 'cos I would like to think I

H. have enough imagination and intelligence to work it out.

I. But he sets certain limits and then lets you play around within them?

H. Yes.

H. I think the worst thing is finding out that you know as much as the director, whereas when I was at drama school it was all quite new to me, what fascinated me was that I thought that my tutors knew so much more than me so I would trust them and they would get you to do certain things, if you did improvisation, not knowing quite what was the point of it, but now that I've been doing it for longer I know more about the end result that they're looking for.....

I. Yes 'cos directors are cagey in that they don't say "do this" but they put you in the sort of situation that that's what you will end up doing?

H. Yes, so you'll stumble on to it. But obviously the more you do it the easier it is to be always one step ahead, or at the same step, and I wish I could work with someone who knows more than me - that sounds arrogant but I have worked with a lot of bad directors, I mean that director on Billy Liar was hopeless.

I. Yes, why were you so fed up with him?

H. Well, one important reason, in rehearsals, he made the rehearsal period extremely boring by just doing the text and....

I. Just the moves and the words?

- H. Yes, and just making us repeat the scenes over and over again, and whatever anyone thinks about improvisation and playing around with it, that is an extremely boring way of doing it, and that is why the production suffered, it was very tight and people just weren't relaxed, even the older actors, he just wouldn't even let us have a giggle. We need to have what they call a 'corpsey run' you know....
- I. What's that?
- H. When you just laugh and fool about and let everything go, I mean, that's a great help, or you do something like a fast run so that you do everything at double pace, just to zap you up, to freshen you up, and I got terribly frustrated with this guy and I thought, tomorrow he'll do something different...and the effect was that it made you terribly tight inside, you could talk about things but you can only talk about things so far, I mean that's another reason to have a rehearsal, you must do it, it's all very well to sit around and have the theory you only find out by doing it. And that's why rehearsals happen.
- I. When you said corpsey is that just like corpsing someone?
- H. Yes.
- H. Maybe you find something by doing that, something in the text that you haven't found before. But just so that you can free up within the play itself.
- I. So that if different things happen each night you've got lots of ability to take it and change it whereas when it was tight in Billy Liar then you didn't have the ability?

- H. Yes, that was why the one who played the father couldn't learn his lines properly, 'cos the other thing he did was to make us learn the lines too quickly whereas it is much better if just, in doing the play, then the lines just come naturally. I mean even I used to panic about the lines a bit because I'd force fed myself, and I wasn't happy about that. The point about improvisation which is very good is that it will help you if you dry, if you've improvised around the point. I mean it sounds terribly obvious but the whole point about a play is to know who you are, where you are, and why you're there. And often people don't think about that, but if you know those things then you need never worry about drying, because you will always be able to say something, I mean if you're sitting on the park bench and you can't remember...if you remember that the audience on the whole don't know the lines, you can get yourself out of any situation, by knowing exactly where you are, and if then the other actor who is with you is relaxed with you they won't panic that you've dried and if you just say 'Oh, it's a lovely day', they'll know exactly what you mean and they'll help you get back, you see. And that's what I find good about improvisation. I didn't always like doing improvisation just for the sake of it but when you can see the point of it, understand why, they can be life savers.
- I. How much do you use critics, what sort of position does the critic have in the theatre world?
- H. Well, you get the old thing, if the actors get bad crits, they say that they never take any notice and if they get good crits. then they are very pleased. I find, I'm not sure, I've had some nice ones. It seems to me a shame that one person should judge. I know one thing that

H. I don't like it that they come to first nights. Whether it's brilliant or awful it will never be the same again as when the adrenalin is running.

It seems a shame to judge the play on the first night, 'cos a play could be said to be brilliant and then become mundane or be said to be awful and then develop and become awfully good, and I think that they should come a week later or something like that or at least come again. 'Cos I think that the first night is not a normal night and also the play probably isn't completely ready at that point, they'll miss a lot of developments that will happen when the play is running, people will relax into the roles and then you start finding new things and I think that's when the critics should come and anyway I think that's a shame that you get just one person, I mean we seem very bogged down with Bernard Levin and Nicholas de Jong, and people have pet hates and that thing that Harold Hobson always says the opposite to what every other paper says...I find in the end that sometimes you look in the paper and see what so and so says about so and so but if I'm reading a crit. about a friend of mine, I don't take it too seriously.

I. But do you think the general audience, like me, take it seriously?

H. I don't know...I mean that guy in the States, Clive Barnes can make or break a show by saying "don't go and see this show" whereas I do think that English audiences are, tend to be more...they don't seem to take that much notice of the critics. I actually do think that they don't take that much notice of the critics.

I. Perhaps they feel that they know enough about the theatre to judge themselves.

H. Well they wouldn't be going to see Pyjama Tops and Oh Calcutta if that was the case, but I suppose that they don't go there to see the theatre. Take Fire Angel that was banned, it really was very bad, but whether the critics had anything to do with it I don't know.

I. I suppose you don't really?

H. I think it's a shame because sometimes a particular person can be terribly hurt by a critic, just saying something rude. I think also that they tend to be very pinnickty and very grudging, they look for what is wrong with it not what's right. And also see things in a different way, probably looking for something intellectual...and the director too....they're never really satisfied either are they?

I. No, I suppose if you're a critic then you can't be.

H. And you tend to feel that they're looking for what's wrong not what's right.....

I. When you said about the first night being different, with lots of adrenalin flowing, is that what makes the difference between a rehearsal and a performance. Presumably at the end of the rehearsals you are doing a complete run through, what is it that's different when you perform?

H. Well obviously you get very excited when it is the first night. I think a lot depends on how the rehearsals have gone. I mean if you don't think that you're ready then that can be terrifying like in Billy Liar. If you feel confident then you get a good sort of excitement, obviously worrying what the critics will say, and if people have liked the play,

- H. and like you, 'cos you don't know until you've done it. I suppose it's like a tennis match, you don't know what the result will be until the end.
- And e.g. technical things can well go wrong, lots of things go wrong on the first night. I mean, in fact often things have to go wrong....
- I. In rehearsal I suppose you just go back and do it again?
- H. Well people just don't think about it, so again people get very... can be very thrown if something doesn't happen. It's just like taking an exam really, you know, people rushing around and getting excited and hoping for the best. It can be affected if you don't feel that the play is ready to put on.
- I. What's the difference between rehearsals for TV and the stage?
- H. They are more...the directors have to be technicians as well and so do the actors so they're more precise, you do actually have to be properly blocked and you do actually have to go where you're told because if the cameras are going to be in a certain position. I quite enjoyed them but I just found that the directors were not all that exciting.
- I. It's blocking that you do...you don't get into the characters or do improvisations.
- H. But one of the directors was...used to do fast runs cos he thought TV was very slow and he wanted to find variations and he didn't mind if you had a giggle and a laugh but in Duchess I actually made that character myself.

- H. It started off as such a very small thing, that no-one told me what to do with it, it was what I wanted it to be. Not even what I considered but it just happened as I kept doing it. Depends also on the writing, but the rehearsals tend to be less exciting probably. And then of course at the end you've got the studio - you have two days at the end in the studio when you get used to having the cameras you get problems which are nothing to do with you but are very big technical problems, so that quite often you do changes, you have to be prepared to do something completely different. And to do very weird things, like one time I had to say a line out of a scene on my own 'cos the camera couldn't get round to my face, so I just had to say it as if everyong was there. You know do it quite cold. But I quite enjoy the silence in the studio, people always say there's nothing like an audience but I find I can get quite a high level of concentration 'cos obviously it has to be quiet to get it done, it's a different sort of experience.
- I. Do you see the rushes of what you've done?
- H. Only when it's filming, when its VTR you don't, I have to wait to see it.
- I. How awful. You'd have thought it would be quite useful to let you see how you're doing.
- H. They just assume that you don't need that, so you just try and watch it yourself, I sometimes go up to the camera....the gallery and watch other people...but on the whole it's not more casual, but it's just accepted that because they've hired you you can do the job and they'll worry about the....

H. It's a shame in a way, I suppose there must be TV directors who.. like Herbert Wise is very good, the performances in Claudius... I know some people in it and they said he was actually very special... he brought them out.

On occasions they say try this or try that, that doesn't work or whatever. At least at El5, we were taught to fend for ourselves and I've found on the whole that you do have to fend for yourselves, as opposed to being absolutely rigidly...

I. That was how El5 taught you to cope with rehearsals?

H. Be prepared to have lousy directors so that you yourself will never feel at a loss, you should be able to help yourself without relying too much on the director, which could also be dangerous...to keep open to their ideas...but it is true because there are an awful lot of very bad directors.

I. You mentioned doing a 'corpsey' run, a fast run, and improvisation, are there any other things that you can do in rehearsals?

H. Well we used to do very silly things like play it as an opera, as a Victorian melodrama....just take sections out, reverse the roles, everybody play the role with their idea of how someone's playing the character, just things, you know, to help cheer it up if you've got to the point where things are getting a bit bogged down.

I. To give you a new look at it really?

H. Yes, we also used to do a Stanislavski thing...which was divide the play up into units and objectives, which is actually very good for

- H. getting pace and variation, you chop it up where you think natural breaks come or where you think the mood changes and we actually used to go to big extremes which I don't do now....but maybe I do them in my head....give names to them.....and again something which helps you remember your lines, so that if you forgot a passage then you could remember that that was unit such and such with a particular name, and sometimes we used to do the whole play through the units through tableaux.
- I. The unit is each bit bounded by a natural break?
- H. Yes, so you'd say have unit one called "the Captain" and unit two called "the Mad Dash", and then we'd do tableaux for each one but trying to show what happened in that particular bit, which again makes you understand it, 'cos surprisingly the hardest thing is to actually make actors understand the play, and just do it naturally, or make sense of it....instead of just saying lines, for effect....a lot of subtext works, an objective would be you'd see a line which would say something like....I don't like you....but it might actually mean I love you... you know what I mean...but also trying to find what's going on underneath. Like with Pinter you've got to find.....
- I. What's going on is the mood?
- H. Yea, or what they're actually meaning, cos sometimes in life the people don't say what they mean or they say the opposite to what they mean. But they're trying to tell you just the same like in Chekov I think....
- I. So in saying one thing you've got to show the audience that you mean something else?

H. And you can find an inner life too, so that also your character is always doing something, something's going on all the time, all the time and not just standing there if you're not speaking....

I. You've got to have a reason for being on the stage all the time?

H. Yes, yes, we used to write life histories for the characters, do things like you know, colours and furniture and..for character...so all the time you're on stage you know who you are, not that you're upstaging people but just so that you have life going on.

I. With Pinter, these vague plays, as an actor do you always have to know what's happened before you can act, have you always got to have something concrete...like Waiting for Godot, have you got to know who Godot is before you can act the play?

H. Or have an idea of who you think Godot might be, even if no-one else had....

I. Even if no-one else has the same idea?

H. Yes, you've got to know the answers, or at least have some idea of the answers in a way, even if it's mystifying everyone else.

Vivian Daniels - Head of Audio-visual centre at Hull University

One time actor and Director. (1930's onwards)

25.5.76.

V = Viv Daniels

I = Interviewer

I. "I have a video-tape as well, that's what I really want to do is to to film performances and rehearsals and then get the actors' and audiences' views during a rerun of the video tape. What I want to do is to take you back to this business of producers not being creative and ask you to give me your ideas on this."

V. "Is that thing rolling?"

I. "Yes, unobtrusively".

V. "What do I mean, Ummm, I suppose it's partly inverted snobbery but it's also partly an attempt to be an honest jack umm... and differentiate between interpreting and creating."

I. "uummm..."

V. "ummmm, a painter starts with a blank canvas and finishes with a picture on it, a playwright starts with a blank piece of paper and finishes with a script on it, a composer starts with a blank score and puts notes on it, and an actor doesn't start from square one. He doesn't start with a blank, not even in Commedia del'Arte. Even he starts with a plot - there may not be lines. But..."

I. "He has the character....."

V. "He has the character, he has his predefined tradition, which has been developed by other people, and once he has done it, he has all his own performances, and those of other people, so he's adding flesh if you like... And a producer, director, can we not distinguish between the two please, a metteur en scene, a riggisseur."

I. "... even a maestro at some points"

V. "Even a maestro... what is he doing, ummm, with different producers

they're doing different things. And I can only really talk ummm, with miniscule authority about what I'm doing. My first...ummm responsibility is to the writer, my second responsibility is to the audience".

I. "When you say your responsibility to the writer does that mean that you feel you have a job in putting authentically what the writer thought he was saying?"

V. "I'll be much more arrogant than that, it isn't as modest as it sounded."

I. "It never is..."

V. "I think that...mmm... a director's responsibility to the writer, is to divine if you like, what it was the writer wanted to be the result of his writing."

I. "Yea..."

V. "The writer is not always aware...ummm...is not always necessarily... necessarily consciously aware of what it is that....that resulting action was. One of the things that happens to the writer is... and it's by no means denigrating about writers, one does have to remember, I think, that a writer in the first instance is sitting in a room - probably alone - with a typewriter which has on it a blank piece of paper, and if you have ever written letters, and typed letters you'll be aware that different letters come out from the ones you write."

I. "Yes, yes...."

V. "And different communications come out from eerr... what would happen if you made a telephone call".

I. "Yes"

V. "And the paper, and the print, and the keys, have an effect on what's typed and... certainly... umm... quite often I think, what

gets on the paper is a distortion... which the writer is incapable of controlling, of what he wanted because he's having to cope with a sort of hairpin bend, instead of taking the short cut. He's having to go from a to z ".

I. "Ummm"

V. "Z being the piece of paper, A being what he's got in his head, B is the performance in the theatre, and he has to go through this ridiculous game, of putting something down on paper...umm... so I think that one of the responsibilities of the producer is to have the courage to decide for the writer what it was he wanted to be the outcome, whether the writer is aware of this or not".

I. "Do you not have a huge problem when the writer is actually alive? And you are trying to reinterpret what he's saying from just the words?"

V. "Well all I can say is that I never had it,... umm... I worked with writers, very closely with writers, and never had this problem. It's very difficult to talk about it without sounding arrogant...but... after all it's only...umm...it's not because one knows....because I know better than Charlie Farlsberg, what he is trying to say. It's because I am fortunate enough to be in a better position than Charlie Farlsberg is...umm...because I wasn't buried under that amount of paper and I didn't have to actually press the keys and type the words out".

I. "Ummm"

V. "Ummm. so... that it, you know, it does happen that you do say, you read the scene and you say that to the author, "Look, I think I know what you mean, what you're wanting to happen", "What you're wanting it seems to me is this. Is that true?", and he says "yes", and you say "well that isn't what is going to happen"."

- I. "What, with the bit of paper you have...."
- V. "With the bit of paper... that came out of the typewriter, Umm... and so, you know can we muck it about? Sometimes it involves mucking it about before the actors get at it, sometimes it means mucking it about together with the actors. Either way."
- I. How do the actors bring a great deal to bear on the initial script. What is it they rely on, the conventions that they have always used as actors?"
- V. "I think here you have a difference between what you call traditional acting and fringe theatre, or improvised theatre, and so on...um.... but do you want to talk about traditional acting or...?"
- I. "Well anything that you know more or less.
- V. "Ummm well again, you will find as many views as there are actors and producers, no doubt. Umm... but in traditional theatre I should think that the majority of producers, the vast majority work, or worked, in terms of casting, in terms of looking at the script, and getting from the totality of the script and... a concept of the realisation of each character, that would...ummm...when put together as a totality, communicate what the author wanted to communicate. Having done that you then think around...of your experience of actors who you have seen, who you know, who you've worked with, people you've heard about, umm... and you make either inspired or uninspired guesses, and that if I can get umm Freddy Frinton... to play this character the way that Freddy Frinton will interpret it is the way that I'm aiming for. But he'll do it for his own reasons. Ummm... and the reason why I will ask for him is that it is my guess, that he will, of his own volition, come out

with what I think the author wanted and on occasions you get it absolutely wrong and the result is disastrous and very worrying".

I. Laugh...."and sometimes presumably you get the right choice and... But you've already had the process where you have read the script the play-wright has given you and you have said "Oh I think he means this", well... there is another process where the audience has got to come to the final performance and interpret what they see is going on there".

V. "Yes"

I. "Well, how much to you think the audience understand of what you mean them to understand?"

(Silence)

I. "I mean how do you visualize the audience?"

V. "You don't, at least I don't visualize the audience, umm.... I daren't be as crude as that. Umm... I think I suppose, this is very, very difficult. That it's all a wild amalgam of past experiences of past audiences. Current experiences of changes in society".

I. "What sort of things are you picking up there?"

V. "Well, take a very very simple example, a play of Alan Playters, a radio play. Umm, was it radio, no T.V. I think it was his very first, very early, which was about an anti-hero, as usual, ummm... who at one point is picked up by a copper and wheeled into a magistrates court. And...ummm., this was in the early sixties... and he refuses to say a word... and the policeman produces his sort of... noddy type policeman evidence which is mildly comical.... umm and then there is the archetypal idiot magistrate who then said to the anti-hero, "Have you anything to say?", and in the original script the anti-hero's line was "you stupid bastard". Umm... I saw this and read this, and thought about it and rang up Alan, and said look chum it makes me laugh

but the play, apart from that line...will entertain an enormous number of people and make a lot of people laugh, if we keep in "You stupid bastard", this is going to put off and alienate a fair proportion of the audience, is it worth it? Because surely you can think of another way of doing it. Alan said "leave it with me and I'll ring you back". We rang back about half an hour later with a line that was far better - it wouldn't have turned anyone off, it was much better, however narrow the society might have been at the time and instead what he said was "You great steaming nit".

I. "Yes....yes just pure humour".

V. "Yes. yes but that's a terribly miniscule example really, but it must be happening all the time. You must have some awareness of what is acceptable and what is expected. Umm and this works both ways, not only an awareness of what is acceptable but you may be aiming at ways not acceptable, you may be wanting to shock. And if you are wanting to shock you've got to have some reasonable basis to go on...umm... getting right about what will produce a shock, what will shock."

I. "You're shocking people, then, in so far as saying a naughty word rather than people... some theatre does aim at shocking people in so far as what they are putting on isn't easily classifiable as theatre, for instance, they try and override the conventions of... the normal ways of putting on a theatre or a radio play. You've never been in to anything that does that sort of thing?"

V. "Yes, I have, umm.... but I'm not yet.... I'm certainly not totally... I don't know I'm... just not convinced at all, that a proscenium arch is this great sound barrier that it is represented as being, that you burst through the proscenium arch and suddenly it becomes something entirely different.... ummm. because...umm.. trying to rationalise....um...I think one thing that is a sound

barrier is whether it is a prescribed performance...which the audience knows is going to start at a particular time, in a certain place, which is called a theatre...or a village hall but it is ceremonial, it is an artificiality, but if you said....umm... supposing we employ an actor and we say what we'll do is to give you a facimile of a gun, and you stand outside Goodge Street tube station at half past ten, Tuesday morning, and you stick up somebody coming out of Goodge Street station...umm and you have to convince him that it's a real gun and get him into a car that you have waiting... um... no-one's going to call that theatre, or fiction, or a dramatic illusion."

- I. "Cos the theatricality of things resides in the fact of the self consciousness of the fact that you are at a theatrical performance?"
- V. "Yes, that you have been told and you know that this is something outside "the normal" run of events, this is a situation in which other things appear to happen, that you know that it will start at half past eight and will cost you five bob to get in or twenty five p. or whatever it is."
- I. "Ummm..."
- V. "I don't care whether it's in the Round House or the civic hall or the National theatre, um.. the fact that it is an occasion is enough".
- I. "That it is a ritual? "
- V. "It's a ritual yes, and whether the actor jumps off the stage and is sitting next to you or...shouts from the orchestra stalls or whatever, or starts rushing stark naked through the audience, um... I don't think this is as different from a proscenium arch performance... um... as something that happened unexpectedly in the

street or at your front door without any pre-announcement, is different from a piece of theatre."

I. "When you say there is someone rushing naked through the stalls there is again a move in theatre, isn't there? to mark down the difference between presenting, really presenting and representing it. Like screwing on stage, some performers want to actually do it rather than represent it. Where do you locate the difference here?"

V. "I don't think it makes the slightest difference because the object at least not for me, for the objective is of an experience for an audience, is what the audience believes, and what the audience believes has no necessary correlation with what actually happens. So whether he actually screws her or is only giving the appearance of actually screwing, is totally indistinguishable...um...what is distinguishable is whether the audience think he did or whether the audience thinks he didn't."

I. "And there, presumably, you rely on conventions of what the theatre has been like for decades". Like - in the theatre that sort of thing doesn't really happen?"

V. "Umm... well the audience knows that doesn't really happen. On the other hand, you can stand it on its head as well, because you can say if the audience knows that doesn't really happen that, therefore if in the action, he actually does screw her then the audience won't believe it".

I. "Yes, so you've already set up a situation where..."

V. "Yea, I mean there was an occasion years ago, and no doubt there have been others...um...there was an occasion when they with that doomed play called "Macbeth", There was an occasion at Oldham Rep. many, many years ago in the thirties, when in the last act, Macduff

was actually killed.....by Macbeth. or rather Macbeth had actually killed Macduff, with his dirk".

I. "The actor was actually killed, copped it?..."

V. "Yes, the actor actually died,.but the audience didn't know. I mean you 'tell me the difference, for the audience?"

I. "I suppose they just applauded it as a very viable simulation."

V. "Yep".

I. "Why did he die in fact? Cos the actor got so carried away?"

V. "No, the actor... there was one of these unfortunate slip ups in a well-arranged duel. It was a well rehearsed duel but not as well rehearsed as it should have been, and they weren't using collapsible daggers, they were using proper ones, as far as we know. I think the verdict was accidental death. I don't think Macduff actually had it in for the actor who was playing Macbeth umm... but... there's the film of Ben Hur"

I. "Yes, and the director's son gets killed in the chariot race..".

V. "The one who's mangled under the chariot. I took my son to see that, fortunately before I knew, before I'd heard of what happened and when it came to that - in retrospect - I still remember when it came to the part of the chariot race my son, who was watching, about nine at that point, he got very uncomfortable and said to me in the cinema "hey, how do they do that", is he really dead?" And I said "no it's raspberry jam, you know, that's what film production is all about". And he said "oh, alright". He didn't actually vocalise that's alright, but more or less, and after he sat and watched the rest of it and then after we'd done this it wasn't actually raspberry jam..."

I. "They had in fact left the cut in..."

- V. "Yes, they actually used the shot. But does the audience actually know the difference. Umm... and is theatre about what the audience believes or is it about what actually happens. You tell me? But I, for me I can't think that it's about anything other than what the audience believes".
- I. "Yea.... That's the final verdict, but as a producer, or as an actor, what sort of emotions were you actually trying to elicit in the audience?"
- V. "There is an enormous variation, it varies enormously from play to play to play".
- I. "Well, when I say emotions I don't mean, are you trying to make them angry or sad"
- V. "No, no, no."
- I. "What sort of relationship do you see there being between the emotion that you have to feel to portray the emotion that you have to portray and the emotion that the audience would feel"? In response to the acting".
- V. "Well, the first and easy answer is to say that it... that I'd have to polarize it into two situations, into two sets of situations. One, which is the majority of the work that I've done and this is the situation where the intention, the desire, whatever you want to call it, is to lead the audience into experiencing some emotion, to lead the audience into admiring someone, feeling sorry for someone, hating someone, whatever...Ummm the other set is the much more curious, the much more fascinating..umm...set of situations in which what you want to do, what you know you mustn't do is to say without saying it, to the audience, this is what happened, or this is what is happening. And you're on your own, you've got to make the judgements. Umm... you've.... we're not telling you that

Goneril is horrid and Regan is horrid and the other one, whose name escapes me for the moment is a goody, this is what they do, this is what they did, you work it out. And a script, if you're receptive, and producers are receptive, um... otherwise they wouldn't be producers, a script will tell you what it requires, again...umm... I suppose the biggest script that I ever got involved in, in... which screamed this at me, it was John Hopkins first play. When um... the moment that I'd finished the script, I knew...that this had to be done in a way totally different from the way in which I had ever done any other TV script. That all I had to do... - not all I had to do, but what I very much had to do, was simply to say to ... the audience "you're on your own". Um... and you can hate the central character or love the central character, or feel sorry for him, at the same time as hating her or whatever. You have a judgement to make and I'm not helping you".

- I. "So you see yourself really as just putting forward straight facts and not trying to..."
- V. "It's very much more difficult to do that than to lead them, actually. Very much more difficult, to resist making judgements all along the way...umm... and illustrating their eerr..."
- I. "What sort of cues do you miss out then, when you try and present views that are objective?"
- V. "Mmmmmmm you... oh goodness, it's all.... it's... any answer will be an artificial answer because it's a post-facto rationalisation, rather than an explanation of what you really did. Ummm, if I can slip off at a tangent, trying to answer that is a bit like trying to give a lecture or demonstration on cutting and editing. You can take a piece of film, that already exists, whether you did it yourself or someone else did it... and with it there you can run it through, you can see... as one wanted the tension to mount the speed

of cutting increases, accelerated, when you're in fact writing that script or the editor's putting those pieces of celluloid together, he has.... nothing is further from his mind than the fact that oh I'll use twelve feet of celluloid, then ten feet then six frames. He simply sees on the screen the effect of the cutting, and knows that this is either going right or going wrong, and there is a post-fact rationalisation".

I. "Working so much as you do with TV cameras how do you see the position of the camera, do you see it as a neutral recorder or do you see it as persuading people, is persuasion part of what it's all about?"

V. "Well, this is a part of it, the answer on how you separate out...."

I. "Yes, I'm still trying".

V. "Because oh, wildly simplified, you can use three types of camera work: you can use subjective camera work, where the camera is actually one of the people, so it really has the eyeline of a person, a character. That is rare. What mostly happens in films and TV, is what I call, for want of a better word, sympathetic camera work, where the camera keeps sympathising with one person and then another so you get the over-the-shoulder shot. So you don't appear to talk actually to me watching the screen, but you talk to someone by my side so that I am sympathetic with them. I get a similar view but not exactly the same, and because it's only similar, that enables me to cut from this sympathetic view to one that is sympathetic to you, next. By your side and then the other one, the 3rd kind, is objective camera work where the camera is clearly, not sympathising with one person or the other. The.... you'll find a smashing example in Antonioni's "Red Desert". There's a scene... where he's going to set her up with a small art gallery... and there is a conversation between them in the art gallery and it defies all the rules of cutting, because there are what we call reverse cuts. There is an

over-his-shoulder shot with him foreground left, with his back to the camera, and her background right, looking towards him, so she's looking slightly camera left and you cut from that to a dead profile shot of her looking camera right, for her answer, and immediately the audience - who haven't taken lessons on cutting techniques or anything like that, but they know that they are outside this conversation, and they also know that it is not a real piece of communication because these two are not really communicating to each other, and they can sense this and.... this is produced quite calculatedly really by the editing technique".

- I. "But presumably another category in the objective shot would be the "Man with a Camera" where you see the camera, so you get someone actually taking a shot of the camera shooting things. Where would you like to put that?"
- V. "Then you're introducing in to the illusion.... if you see the camera, if it's in something that is loosely called a play, if you do that on the screen then what you are saying is that the cameraman is another actor".
- I. "Because it can never be the same camera".
- V. "It can't be umm..... And so you're doing something like... making a film about someone making a film, but it doesn't make it any more credible, it doesn't make it any more credible or any less credible. All you're doing is adding another element to what is to be believed or not believed".
- I. "Talking about objective film you are never claiming that the camera is objective are you? Because even the "M.W. Camera" when it changes shots is trading on the conventions that make people think "Oh yes, well I'm an outsider looking in". The actual camera work is never objective, in that sense is it. Or would you say that

it could be?"

V. "Oh yes, undoubtedly it can be..."

I. "You can get more objective camera work?"

V. "Well if, for instance, you think of starting off with a two shot looking over his shoulder, with him foreground left, and her background right, if you want to go into a close-up of her if you track straight in towards her is that he disappears off frame left and you finish up with a close-up of her. And this would feel like some sort of sympathetic camera work because it would seem like... as if you, as him, want to be nearer to her. If instead of going straight into her, the camera clears round him and into her from his left what will happen on the screen is that there will be a scissors effect and the moment that happens you will know that there is a camera. You don't need to take a shot of the camera, you've done it without taking a shot of the camera. You have said this is outside these two people. We are looking at them".

I. "But the camera is still giving an unobjective image of what..."

V. "No, no, I think that it is objective image, it's not a sympathetic image to either of them".

I. "Yes but it's a thing that the camera man wants the audience to find the truth about".

V. "Ahh....yes. It's objective. I think this is the effect".

I. "When you are teaching people to use a camera do you have to actually teach people to... like you said about mounting tension you cut..."

V. "Well yes, I wouldn't try to teach them, all I can do is to tell them the language and languages that I've learnt and say, you know..."

- I. "That has been successful..."
- V. "That has produced this effect, this produced that effect and then... watch it.... you go to the cinema tonight and see if it still produces that effect or if things have changed. But they haven't changed all that much, the language hasn't changed all that much. It has changed slightly, you can through time whereas before you had to dissolve or fade out, but its not a wild difference".
- I. "I've just read a book by Worth and Adair when they gave cameras to Navajo students who've never seen films... and it's fascinating how they have used the cameras in a way totally different from the Western way (abridged here cos I rambled on for ages)"
- V. "Good stuff. I'm glad to hear that because once on a time, I'm very glad that I turned it down, but there was a possibility that I could go to Tehran to advise TV drama productions for their new TV station, and my initial reaction was that I simply couldn't do this, unless you give me at least six months to go and study Persian literature, Persian dramatic literature, and try to understand how it is that Persians, Iranians, expect a story to be told. Cos I have.....I... refuse to impose Western and American cinematographic cutting techniques on how to tell a story to Iranians. I mean I had no idea if they would make sense or not. I can't remember which anthropologist it is who has the famous story, the terribly old one of someone who took a sort of mobile cinema to a fairly primitive tribe in Africa. And...uhh...the moment the screen showed the head and shoulder shot instead of a full length shot the audience were very frightened because they had never seen a head and shoulders that talked and that moved about".
- I. "Quite...."
- V. "Very disturbing".

I. "You were saying that you were an actor at some time".

V. "Yes".

I. "What sort of things did you do?"

V. "Well, I started off with Theatre Workshop with Joan Littlewood. Doing...umm...partly Agit Prop...um...political stuff partly... umm...Theatre workshop, Littlewood's stuff that was partly a bridge between Theatre Guild, Living Newspapers and Brecht. It was a sort of amalgam and part of the development of that whole group. Frangheneheim I suppose had something to do with it in Germany in earlier part of the 30's. Theatre Guild certainly had a lot to do with it. Odette's sort of carried it through into the sort of traditional theatre in the States. I can't remember who wrote "One Third of the Nation" but that was the big Living Newspaper, that was done in the states in about the thirties, and we moved along that line, but we also did, what I think was the first production for god knows how long, a couple of centuries, a play by Lope de Vega called "The Sheep Run", we did that - in fact I was the school boy sort of on the fringe, unattached and helping out. That was done during the Spanish civil war which gave it a tremendous power, a tremendous amount of meaning, smashing play. You know the play?"

I. "....yes vaguely..."

V. "Who killed the.... they are all saying about the other who killed him.... and I er.... they were plays, what's the word I suppose some people would dismiss them all and say they were plays with messages. Miracle of Verdun was another one... good Soldier Shiek... and then these neo-documentaries, umm which were living newspapers... and then later on after I....tried....well they eventually became fashionable, the avant garde became the garde....

- I. "That's always the way isn't it, you break a convention then it becomes established as conventional".
- V. "Yes.... I mean "Oh What a Lovely War" was another sort of ... One of the wierd things about "Oh What a Lovely War", is that of, all people, Richard Attenborough - who directed the film, umm for my money in a personal choice as a spectator, of both Joan Littlewood's production at Stratford and then in the Little theatre, and then of Attenborough's film version, never mind what the hell happened, in the middle but what happened at the end, when you got to the end of the performance, the extraordinary thing is that Attenborough's... the films effect on the audience at the end was much closer to what Joan Littlewood should have wanted to have happened, than what happened in the theatre because what happened in the theatre performance was that everyone got... they went into a reprise of all the best songs, after the final curtain came down the curtain went up again, they did a reprise of all the best songs, everybody came out whistling the best songs, saying "Oh what a lovely show", and in the cinema the incredible.... all the rows of crosses upon crosses".
- I. ".....there wasn't a sound...."
- V. "I think that everybody walked out stunned without saying anything. It was very quiet. Joan seemed to have sold her own show up the river, and Attenborough got it right".
- I. "As you say it's strange considering the personalities of the directors....".
- V. "Yea"
- I. "When you say that you were doing with Joan Littlewood what you called a living newspaper, where did you get the scripts from then?"

V "We wrote them. Well, not we wrote them, Ewan McCall wrote them in fact..... his name at the time was Jimmy Miller, he's known now as Ewan McCall".

(Tape finishes; chat about actual emotion on stage, actors crying etc).

I. "How effective is it. I mean you've cited one instance where it wasn't really, where the whole theatricality of the thing got in the way?. Like that was a great performance wasn't it?, but you didn't bel...."

V. "Err it varied from audience to audience, and from performance to performance as it always does. Cos every performance is a one off... it's a different performance, there are different people, sometimes the actors know what they're doing, sometimes they're you know, fed up, sometimes its raining outside and the audience is fed up for the first three quarters of an hour, sometimes the theatre is draughty and cold and sometimes its the right temperature, there are so many variables and I don't believe you can beat them all. And again I still don't think the proscenium arch is the sort... of..."

I. "Ogre"...

V. "Great butchers cleaver that separates between one and another".

I. "Presumably you have all sorts of... you're saying that sometimes the audience is all sort of fed up cos they've just walked through big puddles and so on. Presumably you are then very sensitive to what's... the audience is thinking".

V "Oh yes".

I. "How do you get that sort of sensitivity? Presumably you're also trying to be incredibly caught in the fact that you're a man who

has just killed his wife or whatever".

V. "How do you tell when you're talking to somebody whether they're interested in what you're saying?"

I. "Then I'm giving my whole being to being interested in them, whereas you as an actor are trying to bring off a sort of double take aren't you?. You really respond to your co-actors..."

V. "And you've got eye to eye communication, but I'd be prepared to bet that if you had a conversation with me with your back to me that you would still form some opinion about whether you were holding my attention or not, now how would you be doing it. What antenna would you be using, you'd be using something".

I. "It's over to the psychologists I think..."

V. "I don't know...I doubt if they'd be able to tell you. I think that only you'd be able to tell you. You'd say, I've got my antenna and I'm sensitive. "

I. "But do you know, not have any anecdotes for how actors should control a rowdy audience, or an audience that are obviously not getting what they're meant to be getting out of it.

V. "Oh, I can tell you a very simple one, that I was told by a very old... by Robert Spate. When I was in a play in the Mercury theatre, and I think it was a February with a very coughy audience, I don't mean coff... I mean cough... a very coughing audience, and they were at it and I was sort of trying to get over the top of it this bloody row, and I came off and Robert Spate said ummm come and have a word with me... I hope you don't mind my telling you but when they get like that, you'd do far better to speak more quietly, and then they stop and lean forward and control their coughs, because...."

I. "They're missing the words..."

V. "Yes, and you re-establish the tension and... you know you make them reach forward instead and you know you can even do this with radio even, by sometimes you have a complex sequence in the radio with a lot of effects and if you're wanting to, if it's really necessary to establish tension, sometimes it works, it feels right, and it turns out to have worked that you purposely bring up the effects louder than most people would reckon was proper so that it's more difficult.... it's slightly too difficult for the audience to catch what's being said. Because it's slightly difficult they try harder and so they actually reach into you and this is like bringing them onto the stage and again the proscenium isn't really a part of it."

I. "And presumably the control that you have got over them there is that you have got a story and they want to..."

V. "Yea...."

I. "That's all you've got in a way isn't it".

V. "That's all you've got".

I. "How, when you say that you find out that bringing up the effects to mask speaking is effective, how in a radio show do you get the feedback necessary to say that you've done that. Do people write in or???"

V. "People write in, you talk to people in the pubs and you read the critics. And you do audience research....afterwards....from the transmission.

I. "So it's all a fairly nervy undertaking".

V. "It's all a wonderfully nervy undertaking yes. You put your head on the chopping block every time you do anything, but that's one of... that's partly why you do it cos you like putting your head on the chopping block. To prove that you can beat the executioner.

(laughs)

I. "Cos in a way it seems that very few people if you go on to the crits, or whatever have the ability, or the warrantability by society to say that this is good theatre or.... this isn't."

V. "Yea, sure, sure".

I. "Is that the way it works, are people afraid to say that this is a good play before the theatre crits have said so?"

V. "Err.... I think they.... most people inside the theatre- the makers- writers, actors performers everybody, I think you would probably find the majority make their own assessment quite independently of the critics. What the critic thought of it and it doesn't tell you anything about it. It tells you something about the critic and that's all and if he's got it wrong he's got it wrong. If you've got it wrong. But going back to the chopping block, and the err... the taking the risk I think there is an essential something about all performances and all creative acts whether its writing a novel or playing King Lear or ummm or directing a film and this is that, unless you put yourself at risk you achieve nothing. You must put yourself at risk."

I. "Why is that, is it because people see the arty guys continually put up with that sort of facer?"

V. "Well, let me put it a different.....because that sounded like an objective statement, you must believe that you are at risk, if you don't believe, if you believe that you're on a thousand to one odds on pay route, you can't really be doing much. You should be uncertain".

I. "Is this because you're using your whole personality..."

V. "I suppose so in a way, or you're....umm...you have to be vulnerable

and you have to you know you have to stand there naked and say I've committed myself, and there it is, that's all".

I. "Then you are very much at the whim of what people...that's your final court - what people say about it? You can only go so far, and the rest has to be done by the people who react to your performance".

V. "Yes, and yet it's a funny mixture. Umm... because, oh you know, you find yourself going down that infinitely long culdesac of, god save us, of saying whether something is a work of art or not. Ummm... you know is...umm...is an orchestral performance of Beethoven's seventh by an orchestra in the middle of the Sahara desert where nobody hears it, does this exist as a performance or not if nobody hears it? Does umm...is Turner a good painter at the time at which everyone is saying he is a lousy painter, seventy years before anyone has realised how good he was".

I. "Or the found work of art and all that?"

V. "Yes, all that. I think I abolish them..."

I. Do you..... (Laughs)

When you're doing rehearsals for any performance, how do you actually use the rehearsal? What it is you carry forward from the rehearsal to the actual performance?"

V. "I'll try to think of an analogy. An oversimplified analogy is that you rehearse a high wire performance on a wire that's only six inches above the ground. In rehearsals you know that if you fall off you can't possibly hurt yourself but the actions are absolutely indistinguishable from what will happen a hundred feet off the ground on the high wire, but the difference between the rehearsal and the performance is that the performance is on the high wire and the rehearsal is on a wire that is six inches off

the floor. And it is the fear of that hundred foot drop that produces the adrenalin which produces the actors sensibility which produces the extra vulnerability which produces the extra excitement...."

I. "And it's all that that goes into making a..."

V. "Yea, but I must say... but the somersaults and the balancing on the chair are still on a wire but there is nothing at risk in the rehearsal and there is everything at risk in the performance".

I. "But presumably you do use the other audiences and the director who are around at the rehearsal as a sort of monitor for what you do?"

V. "Oh yes.... in a sense you do. The actor uses himself and the director uses himself and nobody else really, he looks around to see if the stage manager is bursting into tears or being held, actors work in different ways. Leo Macam- a smashing actor to work with ... umm very good at... very controlled actor who, if he suspected that towards the end of the rehearsal that he's getting too near the real performance he'd send the rehearsal up rotten."

I. "Why?"

V. "Because he knew intuitively that he mustn't give the final performance in the rehearsal because...."

I. "Why, because you can only do the final performance once?"

V. "No, because you can only do it with an audience in the real situation, but there is an attempt to try and do it and if he found himself coming too near then he'd try and suddenly do a sort of wild presbyterian Scottish accent, anything".

I. "Yea, to bring it down again".

V. "Very funny, umm..."

I. "A bit annoying for you though if you weren't quite at the same stage as him".

V. "Oh, sure... but actors are full of surprises err.. I remember getting a tremendous shock the first time I worked with Nichol Williamson, during a Henry Livingston play, er and I'd never worked with Nichol and I thought, I know that he'll be marvellous, umm. I suspect he's a bit of a wild man and there's no doubt that we'll get a wild performance, and but we might get some fairly wild rehearsals as well, and I was absolutely.... astonished to find that he worked in rehearsal like, once upon a time would have been called in quotes, "a professional". In other words what happened was that the performance was slowly built brick by brick by brick, and what you got on Wednesday was exactly what you got on Tuesday plus.... fined off a bit, and on Thursday fined off a bit more, and everything exactly what you'd got the day before with an extra bit, but never a free run, never a completely different intuitive performance, which was something I hadn't been prepared for. You see they are full of surprises".

I. "So when he did it it was always in much the same way... once you've worked out how you're going to portray something do you more or less stick to that".

V. "Ummm, formally in the same way but with all the immeasurables quite unpredictable. Umm and what those immeasurables are are,... well they're immeasurables. How you can pin down exactly what they are, these are not things like timing, nothing as simple as how long is such and such a pause, umm... at what point does he turn round on somebody, at what point does he do anything at all. But these are the things that you sense with those antennae that

you have when you've got your back to me and I don't know what they are, which is very unhelpful" (laughs)

I. "Were you very much a Method actor and what would you say about the distinctions that people draw? You know, somebody who's trained at El5 and someone who's trained at RADA?"

V. "Ummm... that they're, its a pompous avuncular man talking now, umm... there are really only good actors and bad actors, or good actors, mediocre actors and bad actors. And good actors are good actors whether they have done it through Stanislavsky or RADA, or method. They won't have done it through anything. They'll do it right because they are intuitively good actors and intuitively good actors are basically.... who on a communications model good actors are actors who care about the recipient of the communication. And who are sensitive to the recipient even if they can't see him, even if they aren't there until, they aren't there until three weeks afterwards. Or two years after in the case of a film. Bad actors aren't even aware that this question arises. And you can say the same thing about teachers. It's the difference between communicating and broadcasting. Broadcasting, you're just transmitting messages..umm... and again still on the same model umm... if you're going to do radio transmissions in English using words, ere it wouldn't be very wise to use Chinese words. If you do it in Chinese then it won't stop you broadcasting, it won't stop the signal going out from the transmitter, but it will totally defy the standards of communication because nobody will know..there'll be no comprehension so you must know who you're broadcasting to."

I. "So you're setting up the idea of commitment to your audience ., as being a necessary thing that differentiates the actor from the, you know the..."

V. "Oh yea...."

I. "Well what would you call ham acting, how does one come to recognise, it's funny really that there's even such a notion of overacting isn't it?"

V. "Yes, I've seen ham acting in Theatre Workshop, I've seen ham acting that was not overacting, as opposed to ham acting. In other words acting that loses control.

I. "In what sense, in that the actor's too far in to it?"

V. "In the sense that the actor's too far into it. That the actor actually gets hysterical, and if the actor gets hysterical, then he's totally lost any control over the ... the situation".

I. "He's got to have a measure of objectivity then to act."

V. "He's got to have a governor umm... he's got to have a centripal governor somewhere that tells him where to ease back. Well it isn't necessarily to ease back but where to..."

I. "Challenge that energy in slightly different ways".

V. "Yes. Umm... I suppose, in one sense in the same way that a creative photographer, no, let's first say a creative painter is not aiming to give you a complete representation, he's not expecting you to look at the canvas and think that you are actually seeing a landscape, err. that's easy enough to understand with painting. He must, if he is creative, he must introduce an element of uncertainty, an element of doubt, an element of indefinition. And even a creative photographer must do the same thing, but err... the one thing the camera cannot do, and that is to tell the truth, it can only tell lies, but they must be the kind of lies that are a creative act. That set up a situation in which

the man who looks at the photograph asks himself questions, and provides himself with an answer. So the uncertainty must be there that allows for an infinite number of interpretations, from an infinite number of people. And I suppose what I am saying is that overacting is the same sort of thing".

- I. Yes, cos as a lay person you tend to think that when someone really cries on stage then, god, they must be a good actor. And yet..."
- V. "What was it I saw the other night ... that's right... an American film, an adaptation of Leon Ure's "Queens Bench Seven", and there was Edith Evans, playing a very small part in it, playing a Polish psychologist; who has two short scenes, one in which she's interviewed by the German at the Weitman Institute on whether she's working in Israel, and there's a point at which she breaks down and all she did was simply turn around away from the camera and make some curious sounds with her head in her hands, there was absolutely no question of her actually breaking down, but what she created was the poetic image that contained all of your conception of this woman breaking down and it was almost unbearable and she did very, very, little. And umm... this isn't again back to what is it that the audience believes happens which is the only meaning. The only thing that has any meaning."
- I. "For that reason would you say that it's easier to work in theatre than in television? Cos you've got your automatic judges?"
- V. "I'm not sure at all... I don't think that there's an overall answer. All you can do is to ask if its easier for you to work in theatre or TV. And the answer is to some degree dependent on who they're working with but you'll get as many answers as you ask people."
- I. "A thing that worries a lot of people in television is that when they do a number of takes... and again it depends on how they're setting

up the TV performance, is that they have to come on fifty times being cross... again they set up this idea of the director or someone being an artistic idiot."

V. "Yes... and not appreciating the ... you know to feel cross you've got to work up some sort of feeling, you can't walk on and do fifty takes and I suppose that is one thing. On the other hand I suppose again you can also say that in the theatre on each night for each audience, for any given audience, you're only given one chance. And if you get it wrong you don't have another chance, so it's six of one and half a dozen of the other.

that I've spoken to so far would you know, talk about when we were doing this show, they always pin it down to when I was in front of that audience. Obviously it is what makes it.

V. "Really... yes each performance is unique..."

I. "Because of the audience. Because even in long runs of things I would have thought that people would have talked about when I was doing Inspector Hound or something, but they don't they still talk of...."

V. "To that Tuesday night in March...."

I. "To 'do you remember when'..."

V. "Oh God actors are full of do you remember when aren't they, it goes on for ever. Have you come across the lovely Lynne Fontane?"

I. "Alfred Lunt--"

V. "Yes, Lunt and the story about the letter?"

I. "No, I've read a couple of interviews they've done."

V. "Well there's a lovely story which is not apocryphal as far as I know. Fontane was a bit of a grand dame in the theatre, and she insisted always that the illusion was everything and that there were things that one could not do artificially. And there was a play that they were doing in which there was a breakfast scene, between the two of them in which there is a letter for her which she opens and er... reads aloud and she insisted that this letter should be written out in full. There was no question of her learning these lines and after they'd been playing it for eight and a half months and she still insisted you know... that it must be written out cos otherwise it would be artificial, she mustn't really know what was in it. So Lunt bribed the stage manager and that evening it got to the point where she slit open the envelope with a knife, pulled out the piece of notepaper and it was blank, and without batting an eyelid, she said what's in the letter?, as was in the script, and she handed it across to him and said "read it to me darling I've left my glasses upstairs". (laugh)

I. "Talk about spontaneity... they sound quite a delightful couple actually".

V. "Yes".

I. "You always have anecdotes about how to get over some difficult part of..."

V. "Oh, yes, but these are only cloaks and masks aren't they?"

I. "How do you mean".

V. "They're not really telling you the truth".

I. "Well how would they tell me the truth then, how would it be any different".

V. "I don't think they'd be able to any more than I am".

I. "In what way? In that what you do when you do it, that just has to be done"

V. "Yes it just has to be done and the anecdotes are, you know statistical eggs of one. Which tell you nothing at all about the rest of the phenomena at all".

I. "Luckily in fact what I'll finally do it not to claim how it is that people do it but how they bring off talk about it".

V. "Or how people think they do it..."

I. "The fact that they can bring out so many recipes for carrying off doing this thing, that's the only thing as a sociologist I can ever get to. Because this is what's really in someone's head I would discount as what's in someones head is in there and never comes out in quite the same way".

V. "Yes... and there might even be an additional complication to you as a sociologist in that when you talk, it's the old scientific thing of the observational instrument interfering with the phenomena. You're the scientific instrument and what you get when you ask actors is what they would like you to believe of them, because they're actors for Christ's sake. They care about what you think of them. And so you've got a terrible infinite regression".

I. "Except do you think that if I just watch them and talk to them in groups. Rather than well now, it's a hell of a structured sort of thing, for me to sit down and put a black box in between us. But if you just watch people do you think I'll ever get round this"

V. "I think that if you just sat in on rehearsals, I think you'd learn..."

at least you'd cut out one link in the chain. Because you'd put your own interpretations, in fact you might watch rehearsals and make your own notes and then talk to them about what happened in rehearsals and then compare the two. What happened in the same rehearsals and compare them".

I. "Come and be a sociologist".

I've talked you off your feet just about..."

V. "No I don't mind prattling on... as long as its useful. Are there any other lead ins you'd like to give me?"

I. "I might just go to the loo and think about it..."

Contd.

I. "One thing I'm going to ask you is about the future of theatre, but another thing I want to ask you as an actor and director. Is the sort of play that you do, whether it's a surrealist one, whether it relies on Brechtian notions of realism or whatever, what sort of thing changes when you've got a totally naturalistic set - when you've got real grass and coffee pot and stuff and something that relies on more symbolic representation? Can the same actor do the same thing or what?"

V. "Assuming it's in the theatre?"

I. "Yes".

V. "Umm... some actors would be able to do both, some would only be able to do the first and not the second, the ones who could do the second would almost certainly be able to do the first. The ones who could be surrealist would almost certainly be capable of being realist, the ones who were capable of giving good naturalistic performances would not necessarily be capable of giving good surrealist"

- I. "Does that set up the surrealists as somehow better??"
- V. "Well its more demanding. Radio is a sort of surrealist, but its very much an essence of a performance. And the number of actors who can play well on radio is very much smaller than the number of actors who can play well in the theatre."
- I. "Is that true in fact?"
- V. "Oh yea..."
- I. "What is it that's going for them there, it's not just vocal cords is it?"
- V. "No it's not, by no means, umm this may sound like a load of guff but I'm quite certain that even though you may not put your finger on exactly what it is that's wrong, if you were to hear on radio a dialogue in which the person who is not speaking stops acting, you would know the difference between that and the one in which the person who is not speaking goes on acting inside their own head, even through... radio transmission and reception, somehow or another, because the other one is aware that he's stopped acting and this presumably is how you get the message, the other one is aware that he's not getting anything back through that hole in the top of his head, which you will hear. And the continued existence of the non-speaking person is either confirmed or denied".
- I. "When you were an actor on a radio play just using the voice, did you in fact play through in your head what fully acting i.e. moving, gesturing and so on as well as speaking would be like?"
- V. "In a sort of way. Umm... sometimes you actually need to gesture cos what happens to your body affects what happens to your voice, umm sometimes simply having inside your head what you are doing physically... there are some actors who can really do absolutely

anything with sound alone. I can think of a really marvellous lunatic example. A script that I was doing which was an adaptation of the Barron Munchhousen stories, and I had a smashing radio actor playing this mad character, it was the one about the Baron landing on the moon, and there is a crazy speech given by the admiral of the moons fleet. And halfway through the speech he begins to disintegrate, it says in the script and he finishes up a pool of liquid. And I said to the man who was playing this. Geoffrey Matthews. Geoffrey, I haven't the faintest idea what I'm going to do electronically with this. But what I have got to do somehow or another is to make..."

I. "Liquidize you..."

V. "Make you sort of start as a person and finish up as a pool of liquid. And Geoffrey said, well can I try it on my own. And I said, you know, be my guest. Whereupon he simply did it...."

I. "How did he in the end... with lots of globs and bubbles...?"

V. "No, no globs and bubbles at all... no sort of putting his face into a tumbler of water and slowly going from speaking to make blob blob fish noises. No he just liquified".

I. "That's a very hard thing to sort of imagine".

V. "I remember Peter Ustinoff doing something not unsimilar, I was doing a mad spoof programme, eons ago, which was a hundred birthday tribute to Sherlock Holmes. It was a mad take off of all the birthday tributes going on at the time. Everyone was doing eightyeth tributes to poet laureates. So I did the spoof one of the hundredth birthday of Sherlock Holmes. And it finished up with umm... a pre-electric recording of Moriarty. It was a parcel that had

arrived at Broadcasting House that morning, we had a... it was clearly very old and had been delayed, and it was postmarked Brightonback with a postmark of 1903 or something. And what was on this was a preelectric recording of Moriarty which finished up in a repeating groove. So the actor who was doing this...we gave him a megaphone, first we put in a distort circuit in the mic. and then we gave him a megaphone to use the wrong way round to sound even more distorted, all of this and then had a production assistant waiting for a repeating groove so that he had a piece of a cigarette packet so that he just flipped the needle on the gramophone at the requisite time and the bloke went back and we couldn't get it right, he just couldn't get this sort of thing, this voice coming through sort of sixty years of ether, and we kept on trying. And Ustinoff who was doing another piece and was sitting by the window, and he just sort of made a little wave and we opened his mic. and he said I wonder if I can help. And with no megaphone, with no distort, with nobody with a piece of card or anything, he simply did a preelectric recording of Moriarty.... (laughs) with a repeating groove, all on his own. Potty. One thing that is... that has some... tells me about a girl doing group simulation for social work dip. ed. she told him that one of the things she found most intriguing that when they play back one of the interviews which has been done by two students who are in the class who are watching it, that the class invariably refer to the social worker and the client. There's an immediate suspension of disbelief..."

I. "Instead of Mary and John ..."

V. "Yes, it's not Mary and John at all... ummm they willingly suspend disbelief without her asking them to and they simply, she suddenly noticed that they were doing this and was quite astonished".

I. "How does she use role-play in the...?"

- V. "She uses it in two ways, in looking in the actual recording of the problem and then in the discussion of the playback. So it had more than one function".
- I. "Just about the last question, do you see theatre now as lively as it used to be or..... A lot of people come out with theories that it's dead".
- V. "I think that it's just different... The West End Theatre is still... are.... basically middle class".
- I. "Furs and pearls".
- V. "Yes, furs and pearls and charabang trips too.... you know that's what keeps the Mousetrap going and the Whitehall and whether a promoter will put a play on or will keep a play on after the first week will depend on largely, how many advanced bookings he has got. From Keith Prowes and this depends on coach bookings. It hasn't changed much but it's slightly more titty than it was... Well not more, there's still two per female, and I don't think it's much of a difference just you can actually count them now".

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