THE SPECULAR STAGE:
ENVISIONING THE SELF THROUGH THE OTHER

BY

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Taking a phenomenological hermeneutic approach, this dissertation examines
Pirandello's, Gombrowicz's and Genet's respective formulations and theatrical
representations of the problem of intersubjectivity. This problematic has at its core
the critique of the subject defined in terms of *idem*-identity, or sameness, and its
dislodgment from the place it has traditionally occupied as a foundation, and it entails
a concomitant reconceptualization of how the literary work is constructed. In the
literary corpus of the three writers, this is effected by the dialectical engagement and
consequent displacement of this paradigm of subjectivity with one that considers the
other to be intimately involved in the constitution of selfhood (*ipse*-identity).

By reformulating intersubjectivity in terms of a multifaceted reversibility
relation (for which the specular instrument provides the paradigm) that places the
human being *qua* embodied subject at the locus of a key and semantically dense
interplay of the active and the passive and that attests to the inextricable presence
of alterity in subjective self-sameness, and by arguing that the ludic configuration of
mimicry, a performance situation *en abyme*, models this concept of subjectivity, the
notion of specular theatre is derived. Specular theatre envisages the dramatic world
as a constructed *Spielraum* or *topos* for a "mirror-play," which understands the subject
to be disclosed in its relationality with other entities in which it is mirrored. This

relationality is characterized as a "binding-freedom" or "expropriative-appropriating." Specular theatre functions in three ways: reflectively and reproductively, to show ourselves to ourselves; reflexively and hermeneutically, to bring ourselves to consciousness as to how we see ourselves, thus promoting self-examination and self-understanding; affectively, to potentially effect a refiguration on the audience's part.

The dramatic œuvres of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet represent three unique and fully realized variations of specular theatre: the interpretive, the interhuman and the interspecular, respectively. However, as is shown, already in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, playwrights were grappling with the problem of the construction of subjectivity in a situation of alterity. The postwar era, led by Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet, brought to the fore the negative implications—namely, deformation, victimization, destruction—inherent in intersubjectivity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"He is at the mercy of observers.
When he feels their eyes upon him,
he turns into everything they see."

(Elias Canetti)

INTRODUCTION

This study takes a phenomenological hermeneutic approach to examine how certain playwrights have engaged in and represented a revisioning in the way in which the human being and work of art are constructed. It focuses on Luigi Pirandello, Witold Gombrowicz and Jean Genet. These three writers were critical of the concept of a unique, unified, coherent and consistent subject, a concept that considers the subject in terms of *idem*-identity, or sameness; in response, each formulated an account of, or gave expression to, an intersubjectivity that hinges on a requisite implication of an other. Interestingly, across their œuvres, the particular mode of discourse in which each casts their understanding of the intersubjectivity of human experience is theatrical, where theatrical discourse can be defined as "the dimension of language in which we create and recreate ourselves in relation to the 'real' world around us and in which we use those imaginative or artistic events (originated by others or ourselves) to become new beings or *personae*" (Campbell 9). Their dramatic works, then, provide the natural medium in which to present their conception of not only the constitutive, but also the destabilizing power that various forms of alterity have on the subject.

Why take a phenomenological hermeneutic approach, which is not so much a prescriptive set of analytical tools as a method of interpretation consisting of

proposing a meaning that negotiates between the contexts of the work of art and the interpreter, to texts written for the theatre? What is it about the nature of the texts by the aforementioned writers that lends itself to this kind of approach? How, to reorient and focus this question, can the insights into the meaning and value of the intersubjectivity of human experience, and the resultant revisioning of the relation between self and other, subject and object, audience and art work, as one of mutual "affectability" that have been achieved by philosophers and literary theorists concerned with the investigation and development of phenomenology, elucidate the dramatic worlds of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet? Retrospectively, how can these insights, particularly as presented by the three writers, cast light on dramatic works written prior to this revisioning? Prospectively, how do they lay the groundwork for a contemporary avant-garde theatre or performance art that, as Philip Auslander declares, "accepts alterity as its condition of being" (81)?

These general questions inform and guide my inquiry into the dramatic works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz, Genet and other writers. Now foregrounded, then backgrounded, different aspects are considered in greater depth in the chapters to follow. At present, I address the questions in broad strokes, while acknowledging that I am eliding their complexities.

As some critics (e.g., Postlewait, States, Garner and Wilshire) have contended, theatre—or, more generally, the field of performance—puts into play a number of inextricably related issues that fall within the domain of phenomenological inquiry. One such issue that will resurface, particularly in my discussions of Shakespeare's

Troilus and Cressida and Pirandello's works, is perspectivism. Basically, phenomenology, which is grounded in the work of Edmund Husserl, is concerned with providing a descriptive analysis of the world as it appears to a perceiving subject. Any act of perception of necessity, then, is intrinsically perspectival. Phenomenological hermeneutics expands on this insight by considering the way in which the subject's interpretive foremeanings and prejudgments (that is, interpretive standpoints) condition and, moreover, are disclosed reflexively in the act of interpretation. Phenomenological hermeneutics, in short, posits a radical interconnection between subject and object—be these spectator and spectacle or audience and work of art. In its basic conception, theatre, in turn, provides a space given as spectacle, as perceptual object, to be interpreted and given meaning by a multiplicity of perceiving subjects, each having their own viewpoint on the staged event (see esp. Pavis, Languages of the Stage 83-87).

A related issue concerns the nature of the subject. As against a pure consciousness implied in Husserl's notion of a transcendental subjectivity, later phenomenologists, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, argue that perception of the world takes place through a consciousness that is always both mental and physical. They posit, instead then, an "embodied subject" who is "always already in the world." Theatre stages these embodied subjects and their interaction, both frontally and laterally, within a shared action space: first, through the said spectator-spectacle relation; second, through the literal incarnation of inscripted characters in the actors' physical and verbal gestures, in the actors' corporeality. Moreover, it is precisely this

condition of embodiment that playwrights—from Antonin Artaud to Sam Shepard—capitalize on by presenting the physical or "somatic" impact of the other on the subject as the visual index or manifestation of the ontological. Stanton Garner, Jr. links the two notions of perspectivism and the embodied subject within the theatrical realm: "[b]odied spatiality is at the heart of dramatic presentation, for it is through the actor's corporeal presence under the spectator's gaze that the dramatic text actualizes itself in the field of performance" (1).

In the present study, I am not concerned with theatre in general, but with a specific "phenomenological" variation of theatre known as self-reflexive (*phenomenology* is derived from *phenomenon*, meaning *appearance*, and *logos*, meaning *that which lets something be seen*). In self-reflexive theatre—for which Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet are key figures in the twentieth century—the above issues are highlighted. Since self-reflexive theatre has been dealt with from different perspectives by a number of critics,[1] here its relevance to the phenomenological

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[1] Historically, art, in general, and theatre, in particular, have long featured a tension between illusionism and reflexivity—the technique of pointing to the illusion, thereby inviting the audience of the work of art not to fall victim to a deception, but rather, to examine the very design and texture of the art work. For a historical overview of this tension, see Robert Stam's Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard (esp. the introduction). Specifically, metatheatre and metadrama, which fall under the rubric of self-reflexive works of art, have been the focus of a number of critical studies. The following list provides an overview of some of these books. Robert Nelson's Play within a Play: The Dramatist's Conception of His Art: Shakespeare to Anouilh (1958) aims, through the study of literary self-consciousness, first, to isolate a given dramatist's controlling conception of theatre, and second, to trace the major movements of Western literature as reflected in theatre. In Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form (1963), Lionel Abel would provide a new conception of dramatic form based on Shakespeare's Hamlet, "the first stage figure with an acute awareness of what it means to be staged" (57). Abel's thesis is that the major development in Renaissance and post-Renaissance drama results from theatre's recognition that the life it imitates is already theatrical. In The Theory and Analysis of Drama (originally published in German as Das Drama in 1977, English translation in 1988), Manfred Pfister offers a typology of one metadramatic structure that is key to my study—namely, the play-within-the-play, which he defines as the insertion of a second fictional level into the primary fictional level by means of which the dramatist duplicates the performance situation of the external

enterprise and, hence, as undergirding this study is laid out briefly. It should be

mentioned that the term, "self-reflexive theatre"—as opposed to self-conscious or

meta- theatre, as the phenomenon has been variously nominated—has been chosen

in order to emphasize a visual/cognitive convergence not immediately conveyed by

the other terms: that is, the *reflective* as a showing of ourselves to ourselves; the

reflexive as an arousing of consciousness of ourselves as (to how) we see ourselves.

Self-reflexive theatre is theatre that unveils itself as such, reveals its own

structure as play, "shows how theatre becomes theatre." This variation is, to use

Merleau-Ponty's term, "auto-figurative"[2]: before referring to anything outside itself,

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communication system on the internal level. Manfred Schmeling's Das Spiel im Spiel: Ein Beitrag zur Vergleichenden Literaturkritik (1977) undertakes an exhaustive and systematic structural and functional study of the history of theatre-in-theatre from the Baroque drama of England and Spain through the theatrical figurations of the magnified game and German romantic irony to Pirandello's metatheatrical works in the early twentieth century. June Schlueter's thesis in Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama (1979) is that metafictional characters ground modern drama's commitment to examining "the relation between the 'real' and the 'role' in human identity, a commitment which is integrally involved with the problematic relation of reality and fiction in both philosophical and artistic terms" (12). Schmeling's later study, Métathéâtre et intertexte: Aspects du théâtre dans le théâtre (1982), hermeneutic in its methodology, provides a useful morphology of the play-within-the-play and examines dramatic works diachronically (primarily, works of eighteenth-century harlequinade and romantic irony, and of twentieth-century avant-garde theatre) and synchronically (works in German, French, Italian and British English) with the intent of capturing the evolution of theatre through an interrogation of theatre's self-thematic forms and the related phenomenon of intertextuality. While Keir Elam's Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse: Language-Games in the Comedies (1984) is confined to a study of the self-consciousness of Shakespeare's discourse, by using Wittgenstein's theory of language games and the work of speech act theorists as a basis, it does provide a valuable methodology for analyzing language-games in other works. Finally, Patrice Pavis, in Voix et images de la scène (1985, rev'd ed.), explains his notion of *autotextualité*—which is similar to Anne Ubersfeld's notion of *autoréflexivité* in L'école du spectateur (296)—as the autotelic reflection of the text on itself, a structural mark of the text reflecting its procedures and game rules (289).

[2] The phrase, "how theatre becomes theatre," is an adaptation of Merleau-Ponty's statement about Cezanne's painting in "Eye and Mind": "[u]ltimately the painting relates to nothing at all among experienced things unless it is first of all 'autofigurative.' It is a spectacle of something only by being a 'spectacle of nothing,' by breaking the 'skin of things' to show how the things become things, how the world becomes world" (181). The translator, in his footnote to this quote, cites from Merleau-Ponty's 1961 lectures: "[t]he spectacle is first of all a spectacle of itself before it is a spectacle of something outside of it" (181).

it refers to, is about, represents or reflects back on itself, its own workings, its own constituting elements; these constituting elements, then, are turned into the horizon of the work's establishment, its world. Not insignificantly, given the preponderance of dramatic texts dealt with in this study that are structured overtly on the basis of performance situations, of which the play-within-the-play is but a highly conventional form, this definition of self-reflexive theatre has correspondences with performance, one purpose of which is "to deconstruct and demystify theatre" (Auslander 45): in the words of Josette Féral in "Performance and Theatricality," "[p]erformance explores the underside of theatre, giving the audience a glimpse of its inside, its reverse side, its hidden face" (cited in Auslander 45). Self-reflexive theatre, thus, participates in a key dialectic of appearances and maskings, disclosures and concealments. This dialectic falls within the domain of phenomenology, concerned as it is with the various "appearances" of objects (where "appearance" is a preliminary existential manifestation as a "showing" or "announcing" of the thing's presence)—that is, with presencing and veilings (see States 372) or with visibility and invisibility (Genet's terms).

Preserving the conceptual continuity with reflection, I call one manifestation of self-reflexive theatre, *specular theatre*, to account for the particularity of the dramatic worlds of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. As stated, the core concern linking these writers is the problem of intersubjectivity. Issues of perspectivism, the embodied subject, the dialectic of concealment and disclosure, among others (e.g., the formative power of the dialogic relation), constitute aspects of this overarching

problem.

Intersubjectivity, to outline its connection with theatrical representation, conceives of the subject as constituted and transformed within various matrices of alterity, in other words, within a situation of relationality with others (as *ipse-identity*). In <u>Oneself as Another</u>, Paul Ricœur explains: "otherness is not added on to selfhood from the outside, as though to prevent its solipsistic drift, but [...] belongs instead to the tenor of meaning and to the ontological constitution of selfhood" (317). Theatre provides a fertile milieu in which to examine this constitutive power of alterity. The reason is that theatre, bringing together both the original, invariable text and the repeatable, variable performance, engages various relations of alterity: the spoken and the visual, the inscribed and the mimetic, the written character and the live actor. The most fundamental and pertinent relation for my purposes exploits the performance situation, whereby the subject (actor), in representing the self as other (character) through the play-form of *mimicry* (role-playing, impersonation, incarnation or imitation), submits to a self-dispossession and expropriates and appropriates otherness as its own in its directedness towards others (audience, internal or external). In self-reflexive theatre, this process is foregrounded. In specular theatre, I argue, it functions ontologically by focalizing issues related to the construction of the subject, and reflexively in its potential to effect an *autoscopy*, or self-seeing on the part of the audience. This seeing has critical cognitive and affective dimensions.

The scope of this study needs to be further qualified. I am not dealing with

theatre *per se* nor am I examining nor describing specific performances and, by extension, actual audience responses (individual or collective) to a theatrical event. Rather, my object of study is the originary linguistic embodiment of theatrical activity—namely, the dramatic text. Theatre and performance come under scrutiny to the extent that they are inscribed in the text and foregrounded through the presentation of performance situations. The reason for focusing on the dramatic text is that it provides in itself a special model of the phenomenological hemeneutic project, a model that is explicitly acknowledged in a number of the works considered here. As Pirandello discusses and demonstrates in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (Six Characters in Search of An Author) and in Questa sera si recita a soggetto (Tonight We Improvise), a given scenic realization (based on the director's reading and scripting of the text in conjunction with the actors' input, that is, on a performance text) constitutes but one interpretive disclosure, or form, of the multiple possibilities embodied in and governed or, at least, directed by the text. Garner gives a phenomenological description of the dramatic text:

> [u]nlike a specific performance event (or its description), the dramatic text deals with the actual in its possible manifestations. The presence of what Roger Gross has called its "parameters" and "tolerances" allows the text to project the theatrical event (and its elements) as variable within essential boundaries [...]. In this sense, the dramatic text effects a version of the "epoche" or "reduction," whereby phenomenology suspends awareness of the object's actual existence in one place and one time in order to disclose this actuality in its own parameters and tolerances, its dialectic of the variable and the invariable. Drama in short presents "the thing itself" as a bounded (or floating) facticity, available to a variety of specific actualizations. (6)

The scenic actualization, then, is inserted once again into the potentially open-ended

hermeneutic process when given as spectacle for an audience, the members of which bestow their own readings on the performance, in effect, actualizing, concretizing or completing the performance anew in their own imaginations.[3]

In the first chapter, I provide a definition of and theoretical foundation for specularity in theatre. The theoretical foundation consists of two parts: philosophical and theatrical. In the philosophical part, I examine the notions of intersubjectivity and play, including the function of dialogue and perception as constitutive structures of the human subject. In doing so, I lay out, expand on and formalize the polysemic character of alterity to account for categories of otherness beyond that of the other person. The core theorists here are Mikhail Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricœur and Emil Benveniste. Then, using play as a transitional concept, I apply these insights into the nature of human existence to the realm of theatre by translating them into the very discourse of masks and role-playing employed by Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. As well, I open up the discussion onto the nature of the relation of audience to cultural artefact. The chapter is not intended as a general introduction to, or comprehensive analysis of, the problems of intersubjectivity and the mask. Rather, by analyzing certain central aspects of intersubjectivity and play (of which *mimicry* is but one dominant

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[3] Gombrowicz's novel, Ferdydurke (first published in 1937), provides a narrative gloss on this very process. In the work's final movement, the protagonist-narrator-author escapes into the world of the novel's readers. The author multiplies commentaries and exegeses, progressively unveiling the mysteries behind the work's fabrication and directly addressing and anticipating his readers, thereby pre-empting the reader's role of interpreting the text; however, the ultimate dependence on the reader of the configuration of the fictional world is made overt with the narrator's final flight into the world of his readers whom he bids make him a "new face," yet another face. The author, by constructing the readers in their role, while simultaneously being constructed within the readers' consciousnesses, engages the multitude of readers in a potentially infinite series of literary creations or realizations.

form or strategy), and by reformulating the notion of intersubjectivity in terms of a reversibility relation that places the human being *qua* embodied subject at the locus of a key interplay of the active and the passive, I would retrieve the theoretical context for understanding the theatrical representation of the way in which a multi-form other stands as a constitutive factor in the individual's search for identity, in the individual's struggle for self-representation or self-understanding. This struggle constitutes the defining thread in this study.

In the second chapter, I provide a historical contextualization of specularity in theatre by analyzing a selection of texts from the Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic, Modern and Postmodern periods vis-à-vis the theoretical filter set up in the first chapter. The texts are by Juan Luis Vives, William Shakespeare, Marivaux, Ludwig Tieck, Stanisław Witkiewicz, Peter Handke and Sam Shepard. The purpose of this chapter is to show that the problem of the construction of subjectivity in a situation of alterity that Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet were wrestling with in the twentieth century was being grappled with as early as in the 1500s. The postwar era, led by Witkiewicz and the three core playwrights, brought to the fore the negative implications—namely, deformation, destruction, victimization—inherent in the intersubjective relation.

These two chapters, then, theoretical and historical respectively, open up a dialogical horizon that allows for the disclosure and appropriation of the fundamental meaning of intersubjectivity as it appears in the dramatic works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. Each of the final three chapters examines a selection of

dramatic works by these three writers. Pirandello is the pivotal figure. He engages, discursively and demonstratively, in an explicit ontological inquiry into the very nature of identity, conceiving of the identity of the human being and that of the work of art (he draws an analogy between the two) as particular manifestations of an underlying process of cognition, the object of which is unfixable. He interposes the models *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity: on the one hand, for Pirandello, there is a private core of self-identity that remains to be discovered and uncovered; on the other, as will be pursued with greater vigor and consequentiality by Gombrowicz and Genet, the subject is constantly displaced from its traditional vantage as an originally given pole of experience and re-envisaged as a product of an ongoing, cumulative series of cognitional activities that abide in the realm of the interactive open in between subject and object, I and it, self and other.

For his part, Gombrowicz explores the constraining theatricality of the interhuman space as that which acts on us ceaselessly, on every level of our existence, creating and defining, but also deforming us. His formulation of intersubjectivity as *interhumanity (międzyludzkość)* gives to understand a strictly anthropological focus; however, by uncovering the back-and-forth dynamic of the in-between underlying intersubjectivity, and by establishing a structural analogy with both play and dialogue (Gadamer and Bakhtin are the key theorists here), I argue that the anthropological can be expanded to embrace and account for what happens on the linguistic and intertextual levels in Gombrowicz's texts. These levels, in turn, impinge radically on the subject for, to paraphrase Ślub's (The Marriage's) protagonist, "words speak us."

Genet's theatrical output represents another, even more extreme, presentation of subjectivity as intersubjectivity, one that collapses the distance between self and other into an identicalness and identity that forces identification as Genet plays alterities off against each other. Like Pirandello and Gombrowicz, Genet employs the discourse of the mask and role; however, because of the prevalent and multivalent appearance of the mirror image in his work (which does show up also in Pirandello's and Gombrowicz's œuvres), and the way in which it is bound, both metaphorically and functionally, to the constitution of identity, Genet's version of a relational epistemology can be formulated as *interspecularity*.

Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet present a self that is enacted and, therefore, discovered and transformed, splintered and multiplied, or deformed and destroyed in a situation of interaction with others. Michael Robinson, in his study of late nineteenth-century acting women, refers to a "performing self," by which he understands a self that is "multiple, duplicitous, unstable, and constantly changing" (9). The notion, drawn from August Strindberg's concept of character as articulated in his preface to Fröken Julie (Miss Julie),[4] is appropriate and applicable here, except that I would alter it somewhat and tag the self presented by the three playwrights as "performative." This is in order to designate, not strictly an activity as, a condition that encompasses the duality of performing (the active, processual mode of bringing to completion *through the form* of another) and being-performed (the passive mode

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[4] In his preface to Miss Julie, Strindberg calls his characters "characterless": "[m]y souls (characters) are conglomerates of past and present cultural phases, bits from books and newspapers, scraps of humanity, pieces torn from fine clothes and become rags, patched together as is the human soul" (54). Witkiewicz's Edgar is an example of just such a "character."

of being-affected by another, having a form bestowed from without) that is entailed by an intersubjective world view, in general, and for which specular theatre, in particular, provides the *topos*.

The contribution of this study lies in its clarification, refinement and formalization of the multifaceted and mutually affecting relation of self and other, subject and object, as it reaches presentation in certain texts written for the theatre, principally by Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. As is distilled from the discussions of intersubjectivity by Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Ricœur, Bakhtin and Benveniste, otherness does not apply simply to the otherness of another person. Indicative of an internal non-coincidence or bifurcation, it also applies to the self as other (e.g., self as both subject and object). In the theatre, this category of otherness is presented visually vis-à-vis the multiple masks, images or forms assumed by a dramatic figure, performatively vis-à-vis the plurality of character and theatrical roles played, and verbally vis-à-vis a doubling up of the dramatic voice. Other categories of otherness include those of a social or cultural world, of and in language, of other texts (the intertextual level) and of the receiver, individual or collective, of the art work (the hermeneutic level). Different relations of alterity are featured in the different dramatic works.

This study, thus, participates in discussions around two major and interrelated theoretical issues that have emerged in the twentieth century. The first issue is this conceptualization of subjectivity vis-à-vis alterity and, consequently, as temporal or transformative (in transition from one state to another) and situational (linked and

bound to others through interaction). Phenomenologists, of course, have not been the only ones to engage in this inquiry. Cultural anthropologists and psychoanalysts[5] (to whom Merleau-Ponty and Ricœur have links), among others, along with their adherents in the avant-garde theatrical community and theorists of postmodern performance have attempted to come to terms with and conceptualize how the other impacts on the self.

Here, let me mention just three theorists working on/in performance in some capacity. It should be noted that, by situating the present study in the broader discourse on the constitutive power of alterity that phenomenological hermeneutics inaugurated with its investigation into intersubjectivity, I am not arguing for influence, but rather indicating points of correspondence. Richard Schechner's *The Performance Group*, for one, played with a doubling of the identity of character and actor explored earlier in Pirandello's Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, Gombrowicz's Ślub and Genet's Le balcon (The Balcony): the self (actor) was not projected into the other (character) but preserved for the audience its dual ontological status. Specifically, then, it is Schechner's giving expression in the realm of theatre to the

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5 Sigmund Freud, for example, internalized the other in its irreducible alterity within the subject itself (the unconscious), while Jacques Lacan, positing a decentred subject, located the constitution of the subject in an *a priori* intersubjectivity. Lacan's key article in this respect is "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du 'Je'." See, for example, Elin Diamond's "The Violence of 'We': Politicizing Identification" for a brief discussion of Freud's and Lacan's variations on the identification process of self and other (395-96), and Gary Handwerk's "Irony as Intersubjectivity: Lacan on Psychoanalysis and Literature" (on Freud see 110-11). Handwerk argues that "Lacan's subject grounds itself in an original and fundamental intersubjectivity which permits a more nuanced and complete view of character than any ego-based, individualist philosophy could attain" (105). He continues: "Lacan's aim is the liquidation of the traditional subject whose origin he traces to the Cartesian ego, a liquidation [...] implying an abolition of that subject that will nonetheless permit its reconstitution elsewhere. The place where the subject is to be recovered will be the scene of an encounter with the other marking the radical provisionality of the subject" (107).

non-uniqueness, the non-self-containedness of the human being, and the resultant

opening up and pluralizing of identities, that connect him back to Pirandello,

Gombrowicz and Genet. In Between Theatre and Anthropology, for example,

Schechner, who regards the intrinsic structure of avant-garde theatre as

corresponding to that of primitive ceremony, emphasizes the "restorative" qualities

of performance, the principle underlying which is that the "self can act in/as another"

and that "the social or transindividual self is a role or set of roles" (52); restored

behavior, thus, "offers to both individuals and groups the chance to rebecome what

they once were—or even, and most often, to rebecome what they never were but

wish to have been or wish to become" (see 36-38). (The rite of re-aggregation which

Gombrowicz's Henryk would enact by [re-]making his father a king and himself a

prince in his desire to recover the past, and the role-playing in which Genet's maids

ritually engage in their desire to become their Mistress, could be viewed in light of

restored behavior.) And in "Invasions Friendly and Unfriendly: The Dramaturgy of

Direct Theatre," Schechner argues that people, during carnival, mask themselves "not

merely to disguise or embellish their ordinary selves or to flaunt the outrageous but

also to act out the multiplicity each human life is" (88). Henry Sayre similarly speaks

to this potential plurality, but from the perspective of deconstruction: he argues that

the self, as depicted in contemporary American avant-garde theatre, is processual and

volitional, even 'consumable' (my term), is actually "a series of possible selves that

we can choose among, act out, discard" (65). The works of Witkiewicz (already in

the 1920s) and Shepard that are studied here provide vivid demonstrations of such

"acting out." For Schechner and Sayre, then, contemporary performance art provides a vehicle for an existential condition in which being-in-alterity is a given, a condition with which Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet had already contended.

The third figure to be introduced in this context is Wolfgang Iser, whose roots are in Roman Ingarden's phenomenological aesthetics. In <u>The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology</u> (*FI*), where he considers the creative, productive and multiple "patterning and repatterning of human plasticity" to which literature generally gives expression (xi), he brings up the notions of disguise and staging in order to convey a fundamental ontological drive to gain shape, or toward configuration, where any shape can be only a provisional form of the self responding to changing situations (75). For Iser, staging

> is the indefatigable attempt to confront ourselves with ourselves, which can be done only by playing ourselves. Staging allows us, by means of simulacra, to lure into shape the fleetingness of the possible and to monitor the continual unfolding of ourselves into possible otherness. We are shifted into ourselves, though this transposition does not make us coincide with what we are able to observe; it simply opens up to us the perceptibility of such self-transposing. (303)

The important step taken here, and one that this study expands on, is the self-reflexive function to which staging oneself vis-à-vis the other is put—namely, the self-confrontation, the self-seeing that does not yet abolish the distance between seer and seen, between the self and the self-as-other-as-self.

The second and analogous issue concerns the relation of self and other at the level of the work of art. Among the playwrights considered here, Shakespeare, Pirandello and Gombrowicz draw an explicit parallel between the human subject and

the art work, between the ontological and the textual/performative. Just as phenomenologists revisioned the subject to account for the constitutive power of the other, so too did they reconceptualize the work of art: the work does not have a purely objective status, or intrinsic unity and autonomy; rather, as mentioned, the audience is implicated in its workings in that the audience's prejudgments condition and, furthermore, are disclosed reflexively in the act of interpretation. Iser, for example, gives this to understand in his performative theory of reading when he remarks that the reader is an essential component in the work of realizing the virtuality of the text: aesthetic semblance "takes on its form by way of the recipient's ideational, performative activity and so representation comes to full fruition only in the recipient's imagination" (Prospecting 243); furthermore, the reader's active participation involves her/him in a change in her/his own horizon by expanding her/his cultural repertoire. There is, in short, a radical and mutual implication of audience and art work that may function transformatively to effect a self-seeing and, furthermore, a self-understanding on the part of the audience. It is this issue, focalized in the literary works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet, that has moved into prominence, particularly in the last three decades.

In theatre, of course, the work's affect, negative or positive, on the audience is as old as Plato, who, in The Republic, grants dramatic poetry the formidable power to corrupt people (337-40), and Aristotle, for whom "catharsis"—the goal of the dramatic art—is psychogogic, that is, it has a beneficial or expanding effect on the soul. And, in the twentieth century, Antonin Artaud (to whom Witkiewicz and

Genet have links), positing continuity rather than division between life and theatre, picks up on the cathartic or therapeutic function that theatre fulfills for humanity: theatre, utilized in its highest, most difficult and exigent sense and having the power to influence the formation of things, can exercise against us. In prescriptive terms, the spectacle is to impact physically on the spectator—it is to derange the senses—by virtue of the fact that the spectator has an organism and has no choice but to react somatically to it (see The Theatre and Its Double 30-31, 81-83).

Conversely, more recently, it is the reciprocity—or in more extreme cases, the reversibility—of the relation of audience to art work that has been emphasized. That is, following from phenomenological hermeneutics, the focus has shifted to the audience's affect on the work. Sayre, for example, considers "the threat to the art object's authority and integrity which the audience's freedom to interpret presupposes" to be the critical issue in avant-garde art since the 1970s (19). He favours Jacques Derrida's term of "undecidability" over Marjorie Perloff's choice of "indeterminacy" to describe the postmodern scene since undecidability "locates the question of the [postmodern] work's contingency, multiplicity, and polyvocality in the *audience* rather than the work itself" (xiv). For his part, Kimberly Benston, while giving voice to this integral involvement of the receiver, does acknowledge the mutual affectability of audience and work—a mutuality that Genet and Handke, in particular, exploited—when he considers the way in which contemporary performance has shifted "from the stage to the auditorium of consciousness" by virtue of its intentional disorientation of its audience and its making of "vision a revisionary

process." Artaud's and Witkiewicz's theories reverberate decades later. Theatre, Benston sums up, becomes its cognate *"theoria* in the enactment of interpretation" (441).[6]

A word about translations. Where possible, I use existing English translations of the critical, theoretical and philosophical works; where unavailable, I provide my own translation, referencing the quote with the original title. With the exception of Vives' <u>Fabula de homine</u>, Plautus' <u>Amphitryon</u> and Strindberg's plays (cited in their English translation only), I use both the original and an English translation when citing either from the primary dramatic texts or from other texts written by a given playwright. In this way, I would make the works accessible to all the readers of this study, while ensuring that specific linguistic issues that may be raised in the original dramatic texts are brought out.

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6 *Theatre* is from the Latin, *theātrum*, and the Greek, θέᾱτρον, meaning *a place for seeing*, formed with -τρον, a suffix denoting place, and θέᾱ, meaning *sight, spectacle, contemplation* (Klein 2:1600). Theatre is linked etymologically to *theory* from the Latin, *theōria*, and the Greek, θεωρίᾱ, meaning *spectacle, contemplation, consideration* (1603).

CHAPTER ONE

THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SPECULARITY IN THEATRE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a definition of and theoretical justification for the term, *specular theatre*, one variation of self-reflexive theatre for which Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet are the core figures. After defining the term, by way of a theoretical foundation, I lay out some key discussions of intersubjectivity by Mikhail Bakhtin, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricœur and Emile Benveniste. The philosophical and linguistic discussions have been selected to highlight certain issues that appear foregrounded, though not exclusively, in the work of the three playwrights, including: the function of perception and dialogue as constitutive structures of the human subject; the recognition and formalization of the polysemic character of alterity; the nature of the relation of body to world, self to other, and audience to cultural artefact as *chiasmic*. The specular image serves as a model. Then, with *play* as a transitional concept, this nexus of philosophical concerns is recast into the theatrical discourse of role-playing, masking and enactment, these being the preferred terms of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet by which to present their vision of the human being. The philosophical and theatrical foundations serve as a generative, discursive matrix in which the playwrights' respective thematizations of subjectivity and intersubjectivity are inscribed in future chapters.

I.   SPECULAR THEATRE DEFINED

Specular theatre is a heuristic model for conceptualizing the dramatic world as

a constructed playspace (*Spielraum*) or *topos* (structure and place) for the "mirror-

play"[7] in which to present a particular understanding of the human being and

dramatic text. This notion hinges on a requisite relation to (*being with* and *toward*)

and implication of a multi-form alterity, that is, on an *a priori* intersubjectivity.

Theatre is a privileged milieu for this representation of intersubjectivity. The reason

has to do with the specific nature of theatre as engaging various relations of alterity,

primarily as a result of the fundamental activity carried out within this *topos*—namely,

mimicry. Mimicry is the patterning of play in which "the subject believes, makes-

believe or makes others believe that he is other than himself" (my translation,

Caillois 61), and is subject in turn to either *paidia* (free improvisation) or *ludus*

(controlled play).[8] In other words, in theatre, the subject (actor), in representing the

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[7] "Mirror-play" (*Spiegel-Spiel*) is Martin Heidegger's term from "The Thing" in <u>Poetry, Language, Thought</u>. It expresses, not the portrayal of a "likeness," but rather, the temporal "recoiling" or play in the disclosure of entities. Entities are disclosed through their relationality with (being-toward) other entities—namely, "earth and sky, divinities and mortals"—in which they are mirrored. Heidegger characterizes this relationality as a "binding-freedom" or an "expropriative-appropriating" (179). James DiCenso, in <u>Hermeneutics and the Disclosure of Truth</u>, discusses Heidegger's notion: "human existence is characterized by an intrinsic relationality, that is, by a being with others that requires some form of care. From this it follows that truth appears as a relational process. It involves a self-limitation and a compromise of one's limited standpoints based upon sensitivity and openness to other beings and to alternate modes of Being. 'All human actions and attitudes,' argues Macomber, 'involve an intrinsic reference to an *other.*' Freedom, therefore, does not exist in a vacuum but manifests itself within the context of a world in which the individual develops and gains understanding only in relation to others. This is why one frees oneself for a binding directedness. Freedom involves becoming aware of one's modes of relationality to others so that these are not locked within conditioned frameworks of disclosure" (60).

[8] "[I]t is theatrical representation that, providing the essential conjunction [between *ludus* and *mimicry*], disciplines *mimicry*, making it an art rich in diverse conventions, refined techniques, subtle and complex resources" (my translation, Caillois 82). Happenings and improv would provide the connection between *mimicry* and *paidia*.

self as other (character), submits to a self-dispossession, and expropriates and appropriates—or has imposed upon it—otherness as its own in its directedness toward others (audience). The theatrical notion of mimicry, in short, can be encompassed conceptually by, more, can stand as a model for, the definition of selfhood as constituted through alterity that is put forth by an intersubjective world view.

In self-reflexive theatre, this type of "expropriative-appropriating," to use Martin Heidegger's formulation, may be highlighted vis-à-vis the foregrounding or magnification of the performance situation, wherein dramatic figures engage in the ludic activity of role-playing in the presence of other figures who function, passively or actively, as audience. The play-within-the-play is but one highly conventional and popular form of such specular duplication on the internal level of the dramatic world. In specular theatre, which attends to the cognitive and potentially affective dimensions of performance situations, this expropriative-appropriating is put to the service of an ontological interrogation. On the one hand, the situation entails a radical cleavage of the subject into a for-itself and a representation-for-others: theatre is a boundary place where human beings can never coincide with themselves because they are always other than themselves and before others; the role or mask, then, provides a provisional form or image by which to present this state of non-coincidence, of being simultaneously in and out of oneself (see esp. Iser on Bakhtin, *FI* 74-84).

On the other hand, "expropriative-appropriating" may be put to the service of effecting an *autoscopy*, or "self-seeing," on the part of the spectator either internal

to the performance, who "stands in" for the spectator of the play, or (as in the dramatic works of Shakespeare, Marivaux, Genet and Handke treated here) external to the performance as the theatre audience is implicated in the workings of the dramatic piece. *Autoscopy* is not merely an ontic (i.e., physical, episodic) event as, say, in the body's reflection in the mirror. More, it is an epistemological and ontological event that is constitutive of the spectator's self in a fundamental way: seeing the self in the other and the resultant increase or "enlargement" in self-understanding potentially bring about a critical and reflexive transformation of the spectator's subjective modes of knowing and being. Autoscopy, then, is the condition for the possibility of a self-examination, or *autopsy*, which has the double meaning of "seeing-for-the-self" and "finding-for-the-self" (see Cassirer, The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau 119). This *autopsy*, self-reflexive and hermeneutical in nature, is effected through the other.

Specular theatre, therefore, presents the creation and disclosure of the human subject and dramatic work through alterity. Here, as mentioned, the cleavage of the subject into a for-itself and a for-others is expressed in theatrical terms: visually, in the donning of masks; verbally, in the doubling up of the dramatic voice; performatively, in the playing of a plurality of roles. Each mask, each role, each "form" (Pirandello's and Gombrowicz's term), each "image" (Genet's), each voice, moreover, stands for or signals a unique interpretive configuration of the self, intrinsically or extrinsically created. The human being's dual status as characterized by a "binding-freedom" (Heidegger's term) is represented as the ineluctable

intersubjective engagement of human beings in the give-and-take, the imposition-and-acceptance of masks, roles, forms, voices.

Before proceeding with the theoretical foundation, the choice of what is primarily a perceptual formula needs to be qualified. *Specular* is the adjectival form corresponding to the Latin, *speculāris*, meaning *like a mirror*, which is derived from *specul(um)*, meaning *a mirror; speculum*, in turn, derives from the Latin verb, *specere*, meaning *to look, to regard* (Webster's 1286). Two other possibilities were considered: ludic and dialogic. First, *ludic theatre* would stress the play-structure[9] of the works under consideration, as well as the idea of play as the essential nature of the human being. This latter notion, before being taken up and freed of its subjectivity by Gadamer, was set forth by Friedrich Schiller. In On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters, Schiller defined two drives, the active, determining *form-drive* (*der Formtrieb*) and the receptive *sense-drive* (*der sinnliche Trieb*), which cooperate in

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[9] "Play infrastructure" is Wolfgang Iser's term from "Staging as an Anthropological Category." "Ludic theatre" is John Orr's preferred term in Tragicomedy and Contemporary Culture: Play and Performance from Beckett to Shepard. Another study which has treated modern and contemporary drama in terms of play is Thomas Whitaker's Fields of Play in Modern Drama. Whitaker's thesis is that a dramatic work is shaped by the reciprocity (or more precisely, the exchanging of roles) of actor and witness, that "the whole play is a form of our shared acting and witnessing, a distinctive field of playing that we compose within the intersubjective field of play that makes it possible" (6). The notion of "play-structure," of which *mimicry, agōn, ilinx* and *alēa* are particular configurations, can be elucidated also from a historical perspective. In European Drama of the Early Middle Ages, Richard Axton, who argues for the existence of "a distinct 'idea of drama', as well as a body of forms and motifs and conventions for play-acting, which are entirely different from those of the better-known and more literary ecclessiastical drama" (11-12), reconstructs three separate traditions of secular drama, each having its basis in play: mimicry (the art of professional entertainment), combat (the predominant pagan form of drama among the folk of Northern Europe) and dance ("dramatic self-entertainment," which court society refined from popular models). See also Glynne Wickham's The Medieval Theatre for an explanation of the ludic basis of medieval theatre's legacy from Classical Antiquity, Byzantium and the Celto-Teutonic cults of Northern and Western Europe (2-7; 40-49): the *"raison d'être* of medieval *ludus"* is the "formal externalization by recourse to the playing of games, of moments of abnormal significance in recurrent patterns of daily life" (7).

the *play-drive* (*der Spieltrieb*).[10] This conjunction of the passive and the active, of goal and limit, is important to the formulation of an intersubjective view of the human being. Second, *dialogic theatre*, extrapolating from Bakhtin's work on the novel, would give weight to the speaking subject in the dramatic text and to the constitutive power of alterity at the level of language. Both the ludic and the dialogic are key concepts in this study. My choice of *specularity* does not imply that I favour the visual over the verbal and ludic paradigms; rather, for conceptual purposes, it is a heuristic schema that most clearly and concisely conveys an inherent self-reflexivity involved in a particular representation of the constitution of the subject.

Furthermore, specular theatre needs to be qualified as against more common associations that the term might invite. One is with psychoanalytic theory, specifically with Jacques Lacan's notion of the "mirror stage," which is a metaphor for a decentred subjectivity as presented in "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de 'Je'." Briefly, the "mirror stage" describes the beginning of identity formation, which is characterized as dualistic: the child's jubilation at recognizing its self-image is combined with an alienating sense of the otherness of the image; the originary core self perceives itself as divided in the mirror image of itself. Gary Handwerk has argued that Lacan reconstitutes the self in an *a priori* intersubjectivity (105-07), and

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[10] In his fourteenth letter, Schiller writes: "[t]he sense-drive wants to be determined, wants to receive its object; the form-drive wants itself to determine, wants to bring forth its object. The play-drive, therefore, will endeavour so to receive as if it had itself brought forth, and so to bring forth as the intuitive sense aspires to receive" (97). In his fifteenth letter, he counsels on behalf of "a bond of union between the form-drive and the material drive; that is to say, let there be a play-drive, since only the union of reality with form, contingency with necessity, passivity with freedom, makes the concept of human nature complete" (103). Schiller continues, "how can we speak of mere play, when we know that it is precisely play and play alone, which of all man's states and conditions is the one which makes him whole and unfolds both sides of his nature at once?" (105).

thus, the association is justifiable; however, I wish to go beyond the socio-psychological dimension of the problematic status of personality. Another association is with the mimetic mirror of the stage. "Theatre of mirrors"—a term which has been used in connection with the works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet because of the prominence of the motif of the mirror, literal and metaphorical—has implications of pure reflection. Though distorting and deforming, "theatre of mirrors," however, does not give to understand the important cognitive, affective and interpretive dimensions that the other brings to bear and that are involved in the notion of specular theatre. These associations, then, are somewhat restrictive for my purposes. Instead, exploring the tendency of the specular tradition to collapse the binarism of subject and object, I draw the term, specular theatre, primarily from Merleau-Ponty's work on the specular instrument—the mirror—as a special paradigm for the intersubjective relation of self and other, subject and object, body and world. This paradigm, *chiasmic* in structure, emphasizes the dual aspect of human being in which the reciprocal action of goal (the drive to determine) and limit (the state of being-determined) lays claim to the human being in a given situation.

II.   THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SPECULARITY

When phenomenologists inquired into the meaning and value of the intersubjectivity of human experience, their investigation led to a reformulation of the traditional metaphysical view of the human being as an original, self-contained unity (*idem-identity*) and a concomitant revisioning of the relationship between self

and other.[11] Intersubjectivity entails four broad considerations. First, selfhood is constituted within matrices of alterity, is *ipse*-identity: we come to know and be ourselves through active participation in relations with others in the world. Second, selfhood is itself an *embodiment*: our body is the place in and through which we interact with and effect change in both our physical and social life-worlds. Third, language (or, at its most basic level, gesturality) and sensibility link our relational selfhood and our embodiment. Fourth, when, consequently, the perceiving, conscious, meaning-conferring, form-bestowing other acts as an essential factor in the constitution of identity *qua* selfhood,[12] selfhood arises from a dialectic of being and being-given,[13] choosing and being-chosen.[14] In sum, our knowledge of ourselves and

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[11] The revisioning of the relationship of self and other in terms of intersubjectivity has an epistemological basis arising from phenomenology's critique of empiricist and rationalist theories of knowledge. While empiricist and rationalist theories treat the knowing subject and that which is known as isolated units, the distance between which must be bridged by the subject's mastering of the object, philosophers following in the phenomenological tradition consider them as aspects of a single relational phenomenon that together make up the activity of knowing. In On the Way to Language, Martin Heidegger, for example, speaks of a *relation* of word to thing which does not denote a "connection between the thing that is on one side and the word that is on the other. The word itself is the relation which in each instance retains the thing within itself in such a manner that it 'is' a thing" (66). In "The Problem of Understanding" from Philosophical Hermeneutics (*PH*), Gadamer argues, "the primacy that language and understanding have in Heidegger's thought indicates the priority of the 'relation' over against its relational members—the I who understands and that which is understood. [...] Just as the relation between the speaker and what is spoken points to a dynamic process that does not have a firm basis in either member of the relation, so the relation between the understanding and what is understood has a priority over its relational terms" (50).

[12] For example, in Art and Answerability (*AA*), Bakhtin considers the act of perception as an act of consummating (shaping) the other and refers to the "human being's absolute need for the other, for the other's seeing, remembering, gathering, and unifying self-activity—the only self-activity capable of producing his outwardly finished personality" (35-36).

[13] This dialectic can be traced back to the work of Edmund Husserl, for whom my finitude motivates me to posit others *qua* an indefinitely extended plurality of subjects to whom I can be given. For Husserl, the self and other, finitude and infinitude, are correlative concepts involved in a dialectic where each demands the other as its basis. The problem with Husserl's phenomenology of the intersubjective constitution of our social world is that it overlooks the dynamics of social interaction: it does not see intersubjectivity in the making through social interaction but only from the standpoint of a transcendental, *a priori* ego-logical monad. This, I think, lies at the heart of Ricœur's implicit critique

others is a function of our interaction with other people in the bodily and linguistic dimensions of our common life.

§1.   THE RELATIONAL SELFHOOD AS LOCATED IN EMBODIMENT

The site of the relational selfhood, by which the human being interacts with and effects change in the physical and social life-worlds, is corporeality. Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of the body-subject—which, to reiterate, is precisely what theatre stages—provides a useful touchstone.

In <u>Phenomenology of Perception</u> (*PP*), Merleau-Ponty elaborates his notion of the *interworld* (*l'entremonde*) in order to explain how our knowledge of our own selves and the human world cannot be inferred from the standpoint of an autonomous "I," but rather, emerges from a relation of reciprocity between ourselves and others.[15] This notion of the interworld arises from his understanding of the

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of Husserl: "[f]or my flesh appears as a body among bodies only to the extent that I am myself an other among all the others, in apprehension of a common nature, woven, as Husserl says out of the network of intersubjectivity—itself, unlike Husserl's conception, founding selfhood in its own way" (*OAA* 326).

[14] Merleau-Ponty expresses his version of self-making in <u>Phenomenology of Perception</u> (*PP*) when discussing the double status of the empirical human being as requiring an active appropriation (a choosing, which expresses self-projection toward a goal) of that to which the human being is already subjected (and hence the human being as chosen, which expresses coming up against a limit): "[e]verything in man is a necessity. [...] On the other hand, everything in man is contingency in the sense that this human manner of existence is not guaranteed to every human child through some essence acquired at birth, and in the sense that it must be constantly reforged in him through the hazards encountered by the objective body. [...] Human existence will force us to revise our usual notion of necessity and contingency, because it is the transformation of contingency into necessity by the act of taking in hand. All that we are, we are on the basis of a *de facto* situation in which we appropriate to ourselves and which we ceaselessly transform by a sort of *escape* which is never an unconditioned freedom" (170-71).

[15] "I must be the exterior that I present to others, and the body of the other must be the other himself. This paradox and the dialectic of the Ego and the Alter are possible only provided that the Ego and the Alter Ego are defined by their situation and are not freed from all inherence; that is, provided that philosophy does not culminate in a return to the self, and that I discover by reflection not only my presence to myself, but also the possibility of an 'outside spectator'; that is, again, provided that at the very moment when I experience my existence—at the ultimate extremity of reflection—I fall short of

human subject as embodied: the body is the fulcrum point which situates the human being in the world with respect to time, space and physical objects. According to Merleau-Ponty, human existence and nature are part of a relational field which is created when "body-subjects," who share the common fact of being linguistic (i.e., gestural) subjects, interact and their phenomenal fields "intersect and engage each other like gears" (*PP* xx). From the outset, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates, consciousness and the body (in the strict sense of subjectivity), the self and other (in the strict sense of intersubjectivity) are aspects of a single relational phenomenon. Each is necessary to complete the other: "[b]etween my consciousness and my body as I experience it, between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of a system" (352). In short, we experience ourselves and others as bodily situated in an interworld.

§2.   THE SPECULAR MODEL FOR THE REVERSIBILITY RELATION

The relationship of self to body is the ontological prerequisite for the internalization of otherness that underlies intersubjectivity. More precisely, this relationship serves as a prototype for considering intersubjectivity in terms of

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the ultimate density which would place me outside time, and that I discover within myself a kind of internal weakness standing in the way of my being totally individualized: a weakness which exposes me to the gaze of others as a man among men or at least as a consciousness among consciousnesses. [...] For the 'other' to be more than an empty word, it is necessary that my existence should never be reduced to my bare awareness of existing, but that it should take in also the awareness that *one* may have of it, and thus include my incarnation in some nature and the possibility, at least, of a historical situation. The *Cogito* must reveal me in a situation, and it is on this condition alone that transcendental subjectivity can, as Husserl puts it, *be* an intersubjectivity. [...] The world, which I distinguished from myself as the totality of things or of processes linked by causal relationships, I rediscover 'in me' as the permanent horizon of all my *cogitationes* and as a dimension in relation to which I am constantly situating myself" (Merleau-Ponty, *PP* xii-xiii).

reversibility. The reversibility relation considers the dual belongingness of the human being to the orders of subject and object, and it has been conceptualized in a number of ways: in terms of affectivity (Ricœur), sensibility (Merleau-Ponty), dialogicity (Bakhtin, Gadamer and Benveniste) and play (Gadamer). Each is an important aspect of specular theatre. The specular image, on which I model my notion of specular theatre, for which Genet's theatrical output represents the fullest expression, is the exemplar. I begin, then, with this paradigm and, after, elaborate the other ways in which the reversibility relation has been rendered.

In The Visible and the Invisible (*VI*), Merleau-Ponty derives the specular image from the body-world relation on the basis of a structural analogy. He uses the metaphor of two mirrors facing one another to stress that all forms of sensibility are fundamentally self-reflexive:

> [t]here is vision, touch, when a certain visible, a certain tangible, turns back upon the whole of the visible, the whole of the tangible, of which it is a part, or when suddenly it finds itself *surrounded* by them, or when between it and them, and through their commerce, is formed a Visibility, a Tangible in itself, which belong properly neither to the body qua fact nor to the world qua fact—as upon two mirrors facing one another where two indefinite series of images set in one another arise which belong really to neither of the two surfaces, since each is only the rejoinder of the other, and which therefore form a couple, a couple more real than either of them. (139)

The *relation* (conceived, significantly for my discussion of Genet's works, as a "couple") between subject and object, self and other, is conveyed in terms of a key back-and-forth process—i.e., commerce—that occurs between, and takes precedence over, the relational members. Consequently, Merleau-Ponty continues here, focusing

on the visual aspect,

> since the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision. And thus, for the same reason, the vision he exercises, he also undergoes from the things, such that, as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things, my activity is equally passivity—which is the second and more profound sense of the narcissism: not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen from the outside, to exist with it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen. (139)

In the adhesion of the seer and the visible that produces vision, the objects we see reflect back to us an image of ourselves. "Man is mirror for man," to use Merleau-Ponty's aphorism in "Eye and Mind" (168). That is, what we perceive already contains an imprint of our own consciousness. The confrontation with living beings—i.e., other persons—constitutes but the decisive advent for the reversibility of seeing-being seen, and by extension, touching-being touched. To re-emphasize, then, the more profound understanding of *narcissism* is not the *self-seeing* of the external body, as in the reflection in a pond or mirror, but rather, the passive state of *being-seen* by others, the desirability of which has to do with a being-desired and being-admired. By thus interpreting the body and gestures of the other as a mirror of ourselves, Merleau-Ponty means that we internalize the experience behind the physical appearance of the unknown other and rebuild the other in our own image, thereby establishing a sameness between the otherwise heterogeneous—a sameness though that can never abolish difference (the mirror image is the same but reversed).

The real significance of the metaphoricity of the mirror for my purposes, then,

lies in its functioning as a model that clearly presents, not only the preservation of difference in sameness, but also the notion of a process that takes place in between subject and object, self and other, and by extension to the theatrical situation, spectator and spectacle/spectated. Merleau-Ponty explains in "Eye and Mind":

> the mirror arises upon the open circuit [that goes] from seeing body to visible body. [...] The mirror appears because I am seeing-visible [*voyant-visible*], because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity. [...] The mirror itself is the instrument of universal magic that changes things into spectacles, spectacles into things, myself into another, and another into myself. (168)

Hence, intersubjectivity can be formulated as interspecularity to express the unremitting alternation of the back-and-forth, coincident and non-coincident, interplay of reflexivity vis-à-vis human beings and the world. In its extreme, this interplay functions to promote the interchange between self and other, subject and object. The specular image, in short, presents a preeminent exemplar of the reversibility relation.

I now turn to the other formulations which elaborate various facets of the intersubjective relation entering into my discussion of the dramatic works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet.

§3.   FLESH AS SITE OF A CHIASM: THE AFFECTIVE AND PERCEPTUAL PARADIGMS

Ricœur predicates his conceptualization of the reversibility relation on affectivity. In Oneself as Another, he examines the "enigmatic nature of the phenomenon of one's own body" (319), understood as one "figure of passivity-otherness":

> [t]he flesh is the place of all passive syntheses on which the active syntheses are constructed, the latter alone deserving to be called works (*Leistungen*): the flesh is matter (*hulē*) in resonance with all that can be said to be *hulē* in every object perceived, apprehended. In short, it is the origin of all "alteration of ownness." From the above, it results that selfhood implies its own "proper" otherness, so to speak, for which the flesh is the support. (324)

Here, he acknowledges the double belongingness of the body to the orders of subject and object and the resulting introduction of alterity into the definition of selfhood. Furthermore, *flesh*, for Ricœur, as for Merleau-Ponty, mediates between the self and the external world (322). These two points merge when Ricœur discusses Husserl's injunction of making *flesh* part of the world (*mondaneiser*). He explains that this process "consists in an authentic intertwining (*Verflechtung*) by which I perceive myself as a thing in the world" (333): in an "ecstatic" movement, the I-as-subject, seeing itself-as-object, undergoes a transformation into one of the things in the world. What is *flesh* for the self is *body* for others. Since *flesh* is the site of both the *acting* (*affecting*) and the *suffering* (*affected*) selves, then, affecting and affected are one.[16]

For the purposes of this study, which deals with the constitution of the subject in a situation of alterity, the important point to be garnered from this discussion is that the embodied subject is constructed in part from the "work" or "performance"

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[16] Ricœur cites three levels of passivity-activity in the body, from the internal to the external (i.e., body-world relation), as formulated by Maine de Biran: "[o]n the first level, the body denotes resistance that gives way to effort. [...] The relational structure of the self itself is wholly contained here, effort and resistance forming an indivisible unity. [...] A second degree of passivity is represented by the coming and going of capricious humors—impressions of content or discontent. [...] A third degree of passivity is marked by the resistance to external things; it is through active touch, in which our effort is extended, that things attest to their existence as indubitably as our own. Here, existing is resisting" (*OAA* 321).

(*Leistungen*) of others. It is subject to an interpretive act by the other in the sense that, similar to the text, the other's performative activity is required to complete, concretize or configure what otherwise might be sheer virtuality.

Whereas Ricœur bases his conceptualization of the reversibility relation on *affectivity*, Merleau-Ponty, as is apparent from the discussion of the specular image, predicates his on the senses. In "Eye and Mind," he examines the human body, which perceives and is perceived, touches and is touched:

> [t]he enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize, in what it sees, the "other side" of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; it touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. [...] There is a human body when, between the seeing and the seen, between touching and the touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand, a blending of some sort takes place. (162-63)

For Merleau-Ponty, the body is *voyant-visible*, is *flesh*.

Merleau-Ponty delineates the ontological import of the perceptual reversibility of subject and object introduced in <u>Phenomenology of Perception</u> and "Eye and Mind" in <u>The Visible and the Invisible</u>. Here, he refers to the embodied person as one who, by virtue of being both inside and outside the body, faces and acts simultaneously in two dimensions.[17] He sketches this concurrency of *intro-spection* and *pro-spection*:[18] "[t]he flesh = the fact that the visible that I am is seer (look) or,

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[17] In "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," Merleau-Ponty explains: "[t]he visible can fill me and occupy me only because I who see it do not see it from the depths of nothingness, but from the midst of itself; I the seer am also visible" (*VI* 113).

[18] This is the perceptual equivalent of what Merleau-Ponty refers to as "projection-introjection" (*VI* 263).

what amounts to the same thing, has an *inside*, plus the fact that the exterior visible

is also *seen*, i.e., has a prolongation, in the enclosure of my body, which is part of its

being" (*VI* 271). Because visibility requires the contact of seer and seen, they must

be of one flesh:

> fundamentally [the body] is neither thing seen nor seer only, it
> is Visibility sometimes wandering and sometimes reassembled.
> [...] If one wants metaphors, it would be better to say that the
> body sensed and the body sentient are as the obverse and the
> reverse, or again, as two segments of one sole circular course
> which goes above from left to right and below from right to left,
> but which is but one sole movement in two phases. (137-38)

This two-fold definition of flesh as sensing-sensed implies that the self is not entirely

coincident with itself; rather, it has a dual adherence to the orders of subject and

object, of the for-itself and the in-itself. Therefore, as in Ricœur's explication of

flesh, alterity is introduced into the definition of subjective self-sameness: the

presence or trace of the other in the subject's own selfhood is the means by which

the subject is for itself an other.

Our own body, then, prefigures its contact with and divergence from other

bodies in the common world.[19] In "On the Phenomenology of Language," Merleau-

Ponty focuses on the phenomenon of the gaze as a reversibility relation and accords

a double status to the body-subject as both constituting and constituted. In a manner

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[19] Richard Calverton McCleary succinctly explains this point in his preface to Merleau-Ponty's Signs: "[s]uppose, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, that my left hand begins to touch my right while my right is touching it. Through the 'sort of reflection' effected in this carnal self-perception, the operating intentions of my body as perceiving motor power (the right hand constituting the left as a perceived thing) are suddenly 'encroached' upon by the constituting intentions of my left hand, which set about in turn to constitute my perceiving body. My body has become a 'subject-object' or 'perceiving thing,' an experience of the constituting and the constituted which provides me with a sort of premonition of a common world in which my self and others are embodied as reciprocally perceiving and perceived" (xii).

that is echoed strongly by Genet in his essay on Rembrandt, he explains that Husserl

considered perception as a "way of behaving" (*Gebaren*) that reverses the quotidian

subject-object relationship:

> [i]t happens that my gaze stumbles against certain sights (those
> of other human and, by extension, animal bodies) and is
> thwarted by them. I am invested by them just when I thought
> I was investing them, and I see a form sketched out in space
> that arouses and convokes the possibilities of my own body as
> if it were a matter of my own gestures or behavior. Everything
> happens as if the functions of intentionality and the intentional
> object were paradoxically interchanged. The scene invites me
> to become its adequate viewer, as if a different mind than my
> own suddenly came to dwell in my body, or rather as if my
> mind were drawn out there and emigrated into the scene it was
> in the process of setting for itself. I am snapped up by a second
> myself outside me; I perceive an other. (94)

In the presence of other human beings, the constituting subject sees itself as

constituted at the same time, sees itself, metaphorically, as situated in the scene set

before itself, becoming its own spectacle.

Both Merleau-Ponty and Ricœur refer to this dual existence that the

reversibility relation points up as an *intertwining* (*entrelacs*, in Merleau-Ponty;

Verflechtung, in Ricœur) or *chiasm*—the relevant definition of which is the coming

together or intersection of, at least, two separate entities. More so than for Ricœur,

the *chiasm* or *intertwining* comes to serve Merleau-Ponty as the fundamental

paradigm for understanding the subject-object relation in perception, and,

furthermore, the I-Other relation, in terms of reversibility.[20]

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[20] Merleau-Ponty describes the basic model of the chiasm in The Visible and the Invisible: "the chiasm is that: the reversibility—/ It is through it alone that there is passage from the 'For Itself' to the For the Other—In reality there is neither me nor the other as positive, positive subjectivities. There are two caverns, two opennesses, two stages where something will take place—and which both belong to the

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that reversibility does not necessarily imply the symmetry, reciprocity or substitutability of subject and object, the for-itself and the in-itself. Rather, as pointed out in the discussion of the specular image, reversibility preserves differentiation from things in a particular manner: "[t]here is no coinciding of seer and visible. But each borrows from the other, takes from or encroaches upon the other, intersects with the other, is in chiasm with the other" (*VI* 261).[21] This dual movement of appropriation and encroachment, which makes productive use of, but does not abolish, difference, is crucial for understanding the intersubjective constitution of the mask that is central to specular theatre.

In his formulation of the reversibility relation in terms of the gaze, Bakhtin is similarly careful to preserve the otherness of the other person in order to avoid reducing difference to absolute identity. In the process, he raises a point important for the theatrical works considered under the rubric of specularity—namely, the insufficiency of the self for itself, the necessary presence of the other for self-understanding, for self-knowledge.

Bakhtin, more so than Merleau-Ponty, opens up the discussion onto the key hermeneutic dimension. In Art and Answerability, he uses the gaze to convey this

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same world, to the stage of Being./ There is not the For Itself and the For the Other. They are each the other side of the other. This is why they incorporate one another: projection-introjection—There is that line, that frontier surface at some distance before me, where occurs the veering I-Other Other-I" (263).

[21] Ricœur explains Husserl's notion of *appresentation* as the maintenance of difference between self and other, or the ultimate inassimilability of alterity: "Husserl gave the name 'appresentation' to this givenness in order to express, on the one hand, that unlike representations in signs or images, the givenness of the other is an authentic givenness and, on the other hand, that unlike the orginary [sic], immediate givenness of the flesh to itself, the givenness of the other never allows me to live the experiences of others and, in this sense, can never be converted into originary presentation" (*OAA* 333).

insight:

> [w]hen I contemplate a whole human being who is situated outside and over against me, our concrete, actually experienced horizons do not coincide. For at each given moment, regardless of the position and proximity to me of this other human being whom I am contemplating, I shall always see and know something that he, from his place outside and over against me, cannot see himself: parts of his body that are inaccessible to his own gaze (his head, his face and its expression), the world behind his back, and a whole series of objects and relations, which in any of our mutual relations are accessible to me but not to him. As we gaze at each other, two different worlds are reflected in the pupils of our eyes. It is possible, upon assuming an appropriate position, to reduce this difference of horizons to a minimum, but in order to annihilate this difference completely, it would be necessary to merge into one, to become one and the same person. (22-23).

The activity of contemplating, then, has a double aspect: seeing (a perceptual act) and knowing (a cognitive act). This dual aspect allows Bakhtin to use the gaze as the model for conceptualizing the process by which human beings are constituted in their outward appearance, situated in their environment, known by others and, thence, come to know themselves more fully by the reflection of their environing world in the eyes of the other. The other, in short, through an "excess of seeing" that derives from the particularity of her/his horizonal situatedness, completes or *consummates* the human being precisely in those ways in which s/he cannot complete her/himself.

The act of perceiving, then, for Bakhtin, is not passive, but rather, constructive: "[t]he excess of my seeing is the bud in which slumbers form, and whence form unfolds like a blossom" (*AA* 24). Underlying this view of perception is, I think, an understanding of the work of the productive or creative imagination,

primarily as formulated by Immanuel Kant.[22] Briefly, in <u>Critique of Pure Reason</u>, Kant demonstrates that perception is never "bare" but always subject to a certain formation and as such is always formed perception. It is the pure imagination which supplies the rule of formation. Kant's theory of the imagination is elaborated in connection with his understanding of the mind's synthetic activity.[23] For Kant, the mind receives impressions according to its categories and shapes them into patterns which do not conform to the external world, but rather, to the nature of the mind; we know only what our mind shapes and molds. Accordingly, it is impossible to divide the sensory and the intellectual into two distinct spheres, each with its own self-sufficient mode of reality: mere sensation—i.e., sensory quality without form or order—is not a fact of immediate experience, but a product of abstraction. Perception, therefore, already contains a reference to the monogram of the imagination. That is, as Gombrowicz would emphasize by rendering compulsive the spontaneously formative activity of perception (<u>Dziennik</u> 3:107; <u>Diary</u> 3:82), perception already contains a formal element. Form lies *a priori* and *in potentia* in seeing ("seeing is the bud in which slumbers form") and, therefore, is given immediately in the act of perception ("whence form unfolds like a blossom").

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[22] For a general discussion on Bakhtin's roots in Kant and Neo-Kantianism, see Michael Holquist's introduction to <u>Art and Answerability</u> (xi-xxvii).

[23] For Kant, the imagination has a mediational character: its role is to synthesize the unlike, to bring together otherwise disparate elements of knowledge—the three being the sheer, sensuous manifold, pure forms of intuition (forms of space and time) and understanding (131-38). This mediation is found in the transcendental schema, where schema is the rule or procedure for the production of images. The imagination produces and is the bearer of schemata, and is conceived as the medium power or faculty between understanding and sensibility. Through schemata, the pure productive imagination arrests the chaos of phenomena by imposing on it forms of time and space, an arrestation which permits intellectual synthesis by making possible the application of the mind's categories (see 111-12).

The importance of this to a theory of specular theatre is clear. In order to realize this form *in potentia* with respect to another human being, an essentially hermeneutic act on the part of the gazer's form-bestowing activity needs to take place:

> [b]ut in order that this bud should really unfold into the blossom of consummating form, the excess of my seeing must "fill in" the horizon of the other human being who is being contemplated, must render his horizon complete, without at the same time forfeiting his distinctiveness. I must empathize or project myself into this other human being, see his world axiologically from within him as *he* sees this world; I must put myself in his place and then, after returning to my own place, "fill in" his horizon through that excess of seeing which opens out from this, my own, place outside him. I must enframe him, create a consummating environment for him out of this excess of my own seeing, knowing, desiring, and feeling. (Bakhtin, *AA* 24-25)

In this hermeneutic act—in this *fusion* (though not elimination) *of the horizons* of self and other[24]—the gazer comes, first, to understand the other human being through the empathetic exchanging of positions with the other (the experience of *in-sight* arising from the activity of *in-forming* the self by stepping outside the self) and, second, to complete the other (the activity of *per-forming*). In other words, this process can occur only through the *a priori* establishment of a reversibility relation in which the gazer, in order to overcome (though not completely assimilate) the absolute alterity of the other (object of the gaze) and transform the other into something familiar to the gazer, comes to be governed by the claims of the other; then, the

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[24] I am borrowing Gadamer's term. Briefly, *horizon fusion (Horizonverschmelzung)* involves (1) the overcoming of the strangeness (difference) of the phenomenon to be understood, and (2) its transformation into an object of familiarity in which the horizon of the phenomenon and that of the interpreter become united.

gazer/interpreter bestows a "consummating form," where to accomplish *through form* is to *per-form*.

§4.   THE VERBAL PARADIGM OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY: TOWARDS A DIALOGIC SELF AND TEXT

The reversibility relation also structures the verbal medium of the interpersonal world and the dramatic text—namely, dialogue. Merleau-Ponty captures this extended applicability: "[t]he chiasm, reversibility, is the idea that every perception is doubled with a counter-perception (Kant's real opposition), is an act with two faces, one no longer knows who speaks and who listens. Speaking-listening, seeing-being seen, perceiving-being perceived circularity (it is because of it that it seems to us that perception forms itself *in the things themselves*)—*Activity = passivity*" (*VI* 264-65).[25] While Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Bakhtin and Benveniste all regard dialogue as a model for intersubjectivity, it is in the work of Bakhtin and Benveniste that the view of subjectivity as an intersubjectivity and constituted through the linguistic encounter with a *thou* comes to the forefront in a formalized way, and it is in the dramatic works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz, Genet, Handke and Shepard especially that the constitutive and affective powers of the dialogical relation are staged.

Merleau-Ponty, when expanding the intersubjective character of social life, and Gadamer, when discussing the ontological nature of language and its structural correlation to play, conceptualize dialogue in a similar way. Dialogue is, respectively,

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[25] Merleau-Ponty's indebtedness to Heidegger is apparent here. See Heidegger's re-conceptualization of the relation of speaking and listening as one of identity rather than of opposition in <u>On the Way to Language</u> (123-24).

a and *the* paradigmatic situation of intersubjectivity: speech arises from our

corporeality (the voice) and mediates between the self and the external world in the

goal of understanding.[26] In the interworld,[27] each partner is exposed to an

alterity—i.e., to aspects of language beyond subjectively-intended uses and to thinking

beyond subjectively-circumscribed horizons. This exposure functions reflexively to

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[26] In the dialogical conception of understanding, then, speaking is listening, questioning is answering. Merleau-Ponty writes in "On the Phenomenology of Language": "[t]o the extent that what I say has meaning, I am a different 'other' for myself when I am speaking; and to the extent that I understand, I no longer know who is speaking and who is listening" (97). In "On the Problem of Self-Understanding," Gadamer explains his dialogical model of the reflexive hermeneutic encounter between the interpreter and the otherness of the text, the goal of which is self-understanding, in a way that echoes Merleau-Ponty: "[t]o understand a text is to come to understand oneself in a kind of dialogue. This contention is confirmed by the fact that the concrete dealing with the text begins to find expression in the interpreter's own language. Interpretation belongs to the essential unity of understanding. One must take up into himself what is said to him in such a fashion that it speaks and finds an answer in the words of his own language" (*PH* 57). The dialogical model of hermeneutics has been challenged by Ricœur. While he agrees with Gadamer on the point that interaction with cultural texts provides a dynamic basis for reflexive and disclosive forms of understanding, Ricœur does not consider the personification of the text as a conversational partner as an adequate representation of this process. In Ricœur's view, once discourse becomes a text (once it is codified, thus having conferred upon it a historical dimension and making it accessible across time and space), the receptor of the text becomes radically distanced from the event of writing, such that there is no longer a common context to provide the referential matrix for interpretation (see his Interpretation Theory 25-44).

[27] Merleau-Ponty expands on the intersubjective nature of dialogue: "[i]n the experience of dialogue, there is constituted between the other person and myself a common ground; my thought and his are interwoven into a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of discussion, and they are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. We have here a dual being, where the other is for me no longer a mere bit of behaviour in my transcendental field, nor I in his; we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world. In the present dialogue, I am freed from myself, for the other person's thoughts are certainly his; they are not of my making, though I do grasp them the moment they come into being, or even anticipate them. And indeed, the objection which my interlocutor raises to what I say draws thoughts from me which I had no idea I possessed, so that at the same time that I lend him thoughts, he reciprocates by making me think too" (*PP* 354). He uses the metaphor of a "woven fabric" to accommodate his conception of dialogue as opening a "common world" in which the two partners in interlocution participate. Similarly, Gadamer acknowledges the intersubjective over against the subjective nature of language as manifested in dialogue. Characterizing one of the essential features of language as an "I-lessness," he argues that "speaking does not belong in the sphere of the 'I' but in the sphere of the 'We'" (*PH* 65).

provoke an expansion and enhancement of the self's understanding[28] when what we listen to begins to find voice in our own words, our own speech (the incorporation of alterity into ourselves): listening becomes speaking, questioning becomes answering—though, as Pirandello demonstrates, this particular reversibility relation has a negative potential when one does not respect the fact that others may understand and use words otherwise, and attempts to impose one's own view of the other on the other as authoritative.

Furthermore, essential for both Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer is that dialogue constitutes a governing relation of active reciprocity in which the two members are mediated to, rather than separated from, one another. Gadamer argues that in order for the give-and-take of dialogue to take place, what is required is the preliminary establishment of a particular relation in which one partner in interlocution adapts her/himself to the other (*PH* 57). That dialogue is conceived as a governing relation is further significant, especially with respect to Gombrowicz's works, wherein the dramatic figures are "possessed by language" intersubjectively manifested: in the back-and-forth dynamic of interlocution, one utterance provokes and generates another with the result that the conversation may follow a particular drift, but not a pre-established plan or pre-determined purpose. Upon entering into the shared experience of dialogue, therefore, the members are carried along with the flow, such that subject matter, and not individual will or intentionality, governs the particular

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[28] "There is, then, a taking up of others' thought through speech, a reflection in others, an ability to think *according to others* which enriches our own thoughts" (Merleau-Ponty, *PP* 179).

direction.[29] The main point is that the speaker, as it were, is spoken.

Benveniste's linguistic descriptions of the functioning of pronouns, adverbs and other deictics in the constitution of subjectivity provide a pragmatic complement to Merleau-Ponty's and Gadamer's conceptualizations of dialogue as a model of intersubjectivity, and to Bakhtin's analysis of speech genres and theory of the dialogic self, as well as a useful means for locating and following the intersubjective movement in the literary genre that most overtly transcribes and presents the situation of enunciation, the ever-unique context of interlocution—namely, drama. In The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama, Keir Elam explains that by creating the context of utterance, this deictic matrix in fact generates the dramatic world: "[a] central position is occupied by those deictics relating to the context-of-utterance (I-you-here-now), which serve as an indexical 'zero-point' from which the dramatic world is defined. In particular, it is on the 'pronomial drama' between the I-speaker and the you-listener/addressee that the dramatic dialectic is constructed" (142).

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[29] Merleau-Ponty writes: "[t]here is no speaker, there is a flow of words set in motion independently of any intention to speak" (PP 175). Gadamer explains: "[w]hen one enters into dialogue with another person and then is carried along further by the dialogue, it is no longer the will of the individual person, holding itself back or exposing itself, that is determinative. Rather, the law of the subject matter is at issue in the dialogue and elicits statement and counterstatement and in the end plays them into each other" (PH 66). This adaptation to the other requires an a priori submission to the dialogic relation itself, which implies a more fundamental subjugation to language. Gadamer explains: "[l]anguage is not one of the means by which consciousness is mediated with the world. [...] Language is by no means simply an instrument, a tool. For it is in the nature of the tool that we master its use, which is to say we take it in hand and lay it aside when it has done its service. That is not the same as when we take the words of a language, lying ready in the mouth, and with their use let them sink back into the general store of words over against the world and, as it wore [sic], grasp after a tool of understanding in a wordless condition. Rather, in all our knowledge of ourselves and in all knowledge of the world, we are always already encompassed by the language that is our own" (PH 62). Wilhelm von Humboldt expresses this tension: "[b]y the same process whereby he spins language out of his own being, he ensnares himself in it; and each language draws a magic circle round the people to which it belongs" (cited in Cassirer, Language and Myth 9).

Certain dramatic works, such as Marivaux's <u>La Dispute</u>, Handke's <u>Publikums-beschimpfung</u> (<u>Offending the Audience</u>), Genet's <u>Les bonnes</u> and <u>Le balcon</u> and Gombrowicz's three, as we shall see, even play with the intersubjective contract created by these markers in order to interrogate the problematic nature of the constitution of self-identity.

In <u>Problems of General Linguistics</u>, Benveniste demonstrates that it is in and through the intersubjective phenomenon of speech that human beings are constituted as subjects. He sums up the ontological status of human being: "[w]e can never get back to man separated from language and we shall never see him inventing it. We shall never get back to man reduced to himself and exercising his wits to conceive of the existence of another. It is a speaking man whom we find in the world, a man speaking to another man, and language provides the very definition of man" (224). He establishes a relation of identity between the human being and language; this relation entails the human being's *a priori* situatedness in an intersubjective world.

Benveniste expands on this conception of language by demonstrating that the assumption of subjecthood takes place linguistically through the concrete use of deictic markers and pronouns.

> It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a *subject* [...]. The "subjectivity" we are discussing here is the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as "subject." [...] Now we hold that that "subjectivity," whether it is placed in phenomenology or in psychology, as one may wish, is only the emergence in the being of a fundamental property of language. "Ego" is he who *says* "ego." That is where we see the foundation of "subjectivity," which is determined by the linguistic status of "person." (224)

The subject is constituted by the subject's uttering "I." On the linguistic plane, the speaker's capacity of self-designation is connected to the here-and-now of the speech situation: the speaking subject defines everything in terms of her/his own spatial, temporal and evaluative position in the world. However, self-designation can be realized only through the experiencing of an other, who is designated as "you"—i.e., who is posited by the "I" and constituted as person in her/his role as "you."[30] The "I-you" dialectic is the central one in the speech situation. Subjective discourse is intersubjective.

> Yet it is a fact both original and fundamental that these "pronomial" forms do not refer to "reality" or to "objective" positions in space or time but to the utterance, unique each time that contains them, and thus they reflect their proper use. The importance of their function will be measured by the nature of the problem they serve to solve, which is none other than that of intersubjective communication. Language has solved this problem by creating an ensemble of "empty" signs that are nonreferential with respect to "reality." These signs are always available and become "full" as soon as a speaker introduces them into each instance of his discourse. [...] Their role is to provide the instrument of conversion that one could call the conversion of language in discourse. (219-20)

Through the use of these "empty forms" or shifters—forms that can be enunciated by different speakers and adapted to ever-new situations, forms that always have, therefore, different referents and a specific significance—this central I-you dialectic is defined by the principle of interchangeability. The interchanging of

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[30] According to Benveniste, only the first and second person pronomial forms ("I" and "you") can legitimately be indicators of persons, whereas the third person ("he, she, it") is "the verbal form whose function is to express the *non-person.*" "I" and "you" are characterized by "oneness" and "reversibility." In the plural, "we" is a "*junction* between 'I' and the 'non-I,'" where the non-I is either "you" or "they" (see 197-204).

the I-you carries with it the implication of an ever-renewed relation between subjects and so indicates the movement of intersubjectivity. Benveniste describes the situation in which the I-subject-addresser becomes you-object-addressee of the you's I in turn, in a way that reproduces in verbal terms—the "echo"—the visual reversibility of the specular image:

> [c]onsciousness of self is possible only if it is experienced by contrast. I use *I* only when I am speaking to someone who will be a *you* in my address. It is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of *person*, for it implies that reciprocally *I* becomes *you* in the address of the one who in his turn designates himself as *I*. [...] Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse. Because of this, *I* posits another person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to "me," becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me. This polarity of persons is the fundamental condition in language, of which the process of communication, in which we share, is only a mere pragmatic consequence. [...] This polarity does not mean either equality or symmetry: "ego" always has a position of transcendence with regard to *you*. Nevertheless, neither of the terms can be conceived of without the other; they are complementary [...] and [...] reversible. (224-25)

When the I-you, self and other-than-self, relation is conceived in terms of reversibility and interchangeability, the absolute polarity of subject and object and, along with it, the argument over which of the two members has primordial status, are abolished. Neither member occupies the place of a foundation; rather, both are defined by the other. Hence, Benveniste continues, it is "in a dialectic reality that will incorporate the two terms and define them by mutual relationship that the linguistic basis of subjectivity is discovered" (225).

Similarly, for Bakhtin, dialogue, rather than being a paradigmatic situation of

intersubjectivity, becomes, as an intersubjective phenomenon in which the self and other are implicated intimately, the formative principle of the self. His conceptualization implies that the nature of human being is characterized by an essential unfinalizability. Here, alterity is no longer delimited to the partner in interlocution; rather, it becomes a feature of language in general and, hence, opens up directly onto the nature of textuality.

An analysis of the discussions of dialogue in <u>Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics</u> (*PDP*), <u>The Dialogic Imagination</u> (*DI*) and "The Problem of Speech Genres" (*SG*) reveals that Bakhtin conceives of dialogue in a two-fold manner: (1) as a *description* of how language *does* function, and (2) as a *prescription* for how it *should* function. It should be noted here that there is a subtle yet important distinction running through Bakhtin's work between his conception of *dialogue qua interaction* of two autonomous subjects in separate discourses, and his notion of *dialogism qua implication* of the subject and other in a single, doubled discourse. It is this opposition that grounds his own distinction between, and consequent exclusion of, dramatic discourse from the realm of *dialogism*[31] despite the fact that, first, dialogue is the basic verbal matrix of the dramatic text, second, in drama, it is the speaking

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[31] Bakhtin's exclusion of drama from the realm of dialogism takes the form of a two-fold critique. (1) In compositional terms, there is no overarching authorial voice in dramatic discourse with which the voices of the characters are dialogically engaged and, consequently, drama consists of the reproduced or objectified (re. monologic) discourse of the author (see *DI* 266, 332; *PDP* 188). (2) Drama has a monolithic structure in which the specific thrust of action is toward the resolution of all dialogic oppositions: "[a] true multiplicity of levels would destroy drama, because dramatic action, relying as it does upon the unity of the world, could not link those levels or resolve them. In drama, it is impossible to combine several integral fields of vision in a unity that encompasses and stands above them all, because the structure of drama offers no support for such a unity" (*PDP* 17). (These are precisely the views that Pirandello takes to task in <u>Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore.</u>)

subject (the one to whom is ascribed the ability to designate the self and you-addressee) which constitutes this verbal matrix and, third, drama projects many voices deployed as characters originating from a single voice (see esp. Pirandello's Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore and Gombrowicz's Ślub). As is well known, although this is by no means an unchallenged position,[32] for Bakhtin, the novel is the dialogic genre *par excellence*[33] because, in its *ideal form*, it is characterized by the doubling of the narrative voice with respect to other voices in the narration (vertical stratification); dramatic dialogue, in contrast, consists of the one-dimensional speech of characters engaged in a horizontally-flowing dialogue. In adapting Bakhtin's theory to the study of dramatic discourse, it is essential, first, to recuperate the basic conception of dialogue as involving both an actively responsive relation of addresser to addressee[34]—a conception underlying *dialogism*—and an awareness of the

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[32] See Marvin Carlson's "Theatre and Dialogism" and Anne Ubersfeld's Lire le théâtre (130, 240-43, 249-50, 258-65).

[33] Bakhtin considers the novel to be the genre most capable of representing the dialogic character of language and, by extension, given the linguistic basis of the human being, the dialogic character of human life. Human language is characterized by a constitutive alterity in that it contains a variety of discourses derived from different sources: "[i]n the novel, literary language possesses an organ for perceiving the heterodox nature of its own speech. Heteroglossia-in-itself becomes, in the novel and thanks to the novel, heteroglossia-for-itself: languages are dialogically implicated in each other and begin to exist *for* each other (similar to exchanges in dialogue). It is precisely thanks to the novel that languages are able to illuminate each other mutually; literary language becomes a dialogue of languages that both know about and understand each other" (*DI* 400).

[34] Bakhtin's emphasis on the speaking subject makes his exclusion of dramatic dialogue from the realm of dialogism all the more surprising. There are other reasons why this is so in addition to the aforementioned. First, as Ubersfeld points out in Lire le théâtre, dramatic discourse is by nature an interrogation of the status of speech: who speaks to whom? under what conditions? (240). Second, in dramatic works, the quotation marks of narrative (as that which marks the speaking subject) are lifted and the scenic situation and dialogue between actors who embody characters are directly presented. Third, what dramatic dialogue mimics is the essential question-answer structure of all conversation—that is, the need to address and respond to another speaker—and it is through this interactive dialogue, as Andrew Kennedy notes in his study of dramatic dialogue, that a transformation in the speakers can result from the transference of values, attitudes, worlds (19). This latter point especially echoes

otherness of language and, second, to consider dramatic discourse—as one of the *uses*

or applications of utterance, or what Bakhtin calls a "secondary (or complex) speech

genre"[35]—in terms of a greater or lesser degree of monologicity or dialogicity.[36]

Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic self.

[35] Bakhtin emphasizes that the dialogic model of communication is applicable not only to the quotidian realm but also to the literary. In "The Problem of Speech Genres," he both distinguishes and points out the correlation between primary (or simple) and secondary (or complex) speech genres: the primary take the form of "unmediated speech communication" and are absorbed into the secondary; the secondary include modes such as artistic and scientific. "In most cases," he writes, "genres of complex cultural communication are intended precisely for this kind of actively responsive understanding with delayed action. Everything we have said here also pertains to written and read speech, with the appropriate adjustments and additions" (69). He applies the dialogic model to the relation between quotidian and literary language. In The Dialogic Imagination, Bakhtin discusses this relation as agonistic and mutually affecting: "dialects in this new context lose, of course, the quality of closed socio-linguistic systems; they are deformed and in fact cease to be that which they had been simply as dialects. On the other hand, these dialects, on entering the literary language and preserving within it their own dialectological elasticity, their other-languagedness, have the effect of deforming the literary language; it, too, ceases to be that which it had been, a closed socio-linguistic system. Literary language is a highly distinctive phenomenon [...]; within it, intentional diversity of speech [...] is transformed into diversity of language [raznojazycie]; what results is not a single language but a dialogue of languages" (294).

The tendency to use quotidian discourse as a basis for an analysis of literary discourse is a highly tempting (though highly qualified) enterprise, especially when dealing with dramatic dialogue. Manfred Pfister, while acknowledging the methodological problem of connecting ordinary and dramatic discourse in that the latter is more semantically complex than the former, notes that the connection between them lies in their context-bound or situational nature (103)—a point that Bakhtin was ever-vigilant to emphasize (see esp. Vološinov Part II, chapter 2). As Pfister points out, dramatic discourse deviates from ordinary discourse in a number of ways, primarily in its employment of an "aesthetically functionalised language" which distances it from everyday speech—i.e., synchronic deviation; as well, it may deviate from established conventions of dramatic language—i.e., diachronic deviation (104). For his part, Kennedy, acknowledging the cardinal features (cumulative discourse, counter-speech, acting and reading signals) that make dramatic discourse distinct from ordinary, takes as a departure point Peter Szondi's work in Theory of Modern Drama, wherein dramatic dialogue is considered as the most significant verbal vehicle of the interpersonal world.

[36] Dialogism, for Bakhtin, is a specific phenomenon potentially present in discourse and functioning at different levels: (1) a word among other words; (2) an utterance among others' utterances inside a single language (primordial dialogism of discourse); (3) among different social languages within a single national language; (4) among different national languages within the same culture (see *DI* 275). In giving form to dialogism, Bakhtin considers "double-voiced discourse." He relates such discourse to the specific structure of dialogue that acknowledges two interacting locutors, each representing a different world view: "[i]n such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they—as it were—know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized. [...] A potential dialogue is embedded in them, one as yet unfolded, a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages" (*DI* 324-25). While various forms of double-

For my purposes, two important points emerge from an examination Bakthin's

notion of dialogue at the level of utterance, a notion that arises from his re-

evaluation of *communication*: the relation of reciprocity between addresser and

addressee and the polysemic character of alterity. In <u>Marxism and the Philosophy</u>

<u>of Language</u> (Part I, chapters 3 and 4), <u>The Dialogic Imagination</u> and "The Problem

of Speech Genres," Bakhtin opposes to the typical model of a one-way vectorial flow

of speech from active speaker to passive listener/understander, a dialogic model in

which the listener plays a more actively responsive role, in which understanding

comes to fruition only in the response.[37] As in Merleau-Ponty's and Gadamer's

conception, so in Bakhtin's model, the listener engages the utterance—something

which has an affect on the listener's subsequent speech or behavior and which, in

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voiced discourse (such as irony and parody) are structured as dialogue in which the exchanges between the partners (or voices) are aware of and responsive to one another, the important qualification Bakhtin makes is that two voices and accents intersect within a single utterance—namely, the author's/narrator's and the speaker's. In other words, he never completely effaces the essentially dialogic structure inherent in his concept of utterance; instead of splitting the reciprocal roles of addresser and addressee between characters, he transposes them into a single utterance. Dialogism, therefore, is discernible in discourse when the speaker wants the listener to hear words as though spoken in quotation marks (two voices are contained within a single grammatical structure). The second voice is incorporated deliberately into the intentionality of the speech and sounds as part of the architecture of the utterance so as to be perceived by the listener.

[37] Bakhtin, speaking *descriptively*, makes the same point about the dialogic orientation being the natural one of any living discourse in <u>The Dialogic Imagination</u>: "[t]he dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of *any* discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse. On all its various routes toward the object, in all its directions, the word encounters an alien word and cannot help encountering it in a living, tension-filled interaction. Only the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object. Concrete historical human discourse does not have this privilege: it can deviate from such inter-orientation only on a conditional basis and only to a certain degree" (279). He continues, discussing the "internal dialogism of the word": "[t]he word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation of any living dialogue" (280).

turn, is expected on the part of the speaker. In other words, Bakhtin considers every

utterance as "a link in the chain of speech communication" (*SG* 94), a complex, two-

sided act, a product of a *reciprocal relation* between addresser and addressee.

Utterance, then, is a term that incorporates the dual roles of speaker and listener:

it is both "backward-" and "forward-looking." That is, it is determined both by the

already spoken (and, therefore, reverberates dialogically) and by the anticipated

response. It enacts (1) *addressivity*, "not only to its own object, but also to others'

speech about it" (*SG* 94), (2) an awareness of the otherness of language in general,[38]

(3) an awareness of the otherness of given dialogic partners in particular.[39] Bakhtin

explains:

> [t]he utterance is filled with *dialogic overtones*, and they must be
> taken into account in order to understand fully the style of the
> utterance. After all, our thought itself—philosophical, scientific,
> and artistic—is born and shaped in the process of interaction
> and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot but be
> reflected in the forms that verbally express our thoughts as well.
> (*SG* 92)

Dialogue, therefore, is characteristic of all speech because no discourse exists in

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[38] "But any utterance, when it is studied in greater depth under the concrete conditions of speech communication, reveals to us many half-concealed or completely concealed words of others with varying degrees of foreignness. Therefore, the utterance appears to be furrowed with distant and barely audible echoes of changes of speech subjects and dialogic overtones, greatly weakened utterance boundaries that are completely permeable to the author's expression" (Bakhtin, *SG* 93).

[39] "But from the very beginning, the utterance is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions, for whose sake, in essence, it is actually created. As we know, the role of the *others* for whom the utterance is constructed is extremely great. We have already said that the role of these others, for whom my thought becomes actual thought for the first time (and thus also for my own self as well) is not that of passive listeners, but of active participants in speech communication. From the very beginning, the speaker expects a response from them, an active responsive understanding. The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response" (Bakhtin, *SG* 94). (Compare with Merleau-Ponty, *PP* 354.)

isolation but is always part of the context of the *a priori* language world.

Alterity, then, conceived either in terms of the natural character of language or as other people, is a constitutive element of discourse and renders thought and language interactive and agonistic. This process of interaction and struggle also characterizes human existence, which is linguistically determined. Bakhtin explains his notion of the dialogic self, stressing its interactive character. Dialogue, he writes, "is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the already-made character of a person; no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is—and, we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. To be means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends" (*PDP* 252). According to this view, language is constituted intersubjectively as a social phenomenon and logically precedes subjectivity. Inner self-expression, which takes place through the medium of language, requires this dialogic interaction. Furthermore, as Marivaux, Gombrowicz and Handke exquisitely demonstrate, dialogue is formative because there is no pre-formed character existing prior to the socio-linguistic operation of dialoguing with the other. Dialogue, therefore, has a creative, formative function since it is only through intersubjectivity that human beings come-to-be.

Because of the human being's participation in an intersubjective world and her/his constitution through the interactive process of dialogue, and because, to quote Bakhtin, language "is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speakers' intentions [but ...] is populated—'overpopulated'—

with the intentions of others" (*DI* 294),[40] the coming-to-consciousness of the human

being involves an agonistic process of creating a unique language (a unique self) from

within a pre-established language system. Our entry into the world is marked by our

immersion into a multi-dialect linguistic system that we are required to master

through creative and transformative "assimilation":

> the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and
> developed in continuous and constant interaction with others'
> individual utterances. This experience can be characterized to
> some degree as the process of *assimilation*—more or less
> creative—of others' words [...]. Our speech, that is, all our
> utterances (including creative works), is filled with others'
> words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-
> own-ness," varying degrees of awareness and detachment.
> These words of others carry with them their own expression,
> their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-
> accentuate. (Bakhtin, *SG* 89)

We assimilate more voices as "authoritatively persuasive" and learn to accept some

as "internally persuasive"—i.e., the equivalent to "retelling a story in one's own

words" (Bakhtin, *DI* 342). In a linguistic version of "binding-freedom" or "expropria-

tive-appropriating," human coming-to-consciousness is conceived, thus, as a constant

struggle between these two types of discourse: the attempt to assimilate more into

our own system involves, at the same time, the attempt to free our own discourse

from the systematizing and restrictive authoritative word or from earlier persuasive

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[40] Similarly, in "Problems of Speech Genres," Bakthin writes that language *qua* social phenomenon is never neutral or unaddressed, but necessarily incorporates the designs of others into its structure such that any utterance always exists in relation to another (69).

words that are no longer meaningful.[41] The creation of the self, therefore, involves a process of selecting one internally persuasive speech from the many voices learned; furthermore, if this process is pursued *authentically* (this is the *prescriptive* function), the resultant voice is not static, but keeps changing. For Bakhtin, just as the unity of language—as a result of the tensile situation created by the centrifugal and centripetal tendencies in language—can never be given (дань) but must be posited (заданъ) over and over again, so it is this "unfinalizability" (незавершенность) that defines the genuine state of the human being.[42]

The human being is constructed within and through engagement with and by linguistic alterity—be it conceived as the voices of actual dialogic partners or as the natural status of language. Because we always speak a multitude of languages derived from various sources, the type of self achieved can never be private or autonomous; rather, the single, unitary, monologic voice of the subject is fractured and a dialogic relation to the self instituted in its place. The result is a fundamental non-coincidence of the self with its self having the effect that the self must engage not only others, but its own self (the internalized voices of others) in its struggle for self-representation.

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[41] Bakhtin explicates the polemical nature of language and human existence in terms of a constant struggle between two opposing tendencies: (1) the centrifugal tendency, which seeks dissolution and disperses us to a greater variety of voices; (2) the centripetal tendency—that centralizing or canonizing force striving for coherence and preserving us from overwhelming fluidity and variety. To the latter belongs what Bakhtin calls "official discourse," or discourse which presumes legitimacy and exercises social control; to the former, utterance, which exploits the natural polysemy of language to suit the individual speaker.

[42] For a discussion of the interrelated issues of (1) the relation of the individual ego to intersubjectivity, and (2) the connection between thought and language in Bakhtin's work, see Gerald Pirog's "The Bakhtin Circle's Freud: From Positivism to Hermeneutics."

On the linguistic level, the implications for specular theatre, which explores how the other impinges on the subject vis-à-vis the ludic configuration of mimicry, and which accounts for the fracturing of dramatic figures who of necessity incarnate the voices of others (character in actor, author in characters), are obvious. Each of us is a "we" and not an "I." Each of us is a site radically implicated in a network of other voices.

As has been developed by certain literary critics and as is directly relevant for some of the dramatic works considered here, Bakhtin's notion of dialogism has implications for textuality, on both the productive and the receptive sides. Briefly, Roland Barthes, for example, echoes Bakhtin's insight into the make-up of the human subject from others' voices at the hermeneutic level when considering the reading process and the repertoire of cultural texts with which each reader necessarily approaches another text. The reader, that is, is not an autonomous, uninvolved subject, is not a primordial "Adam": "*I* is not an innocent subject, anterior to the text, one which will subsequently deal with the text as it would an object to dismantle or a site to occupy. This 'I' which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost)" (10).

Similarly, Bakhtin's notion of a dialogic self that comes to be only through an *a priori* relationality with others has been adapted by Julia Kristeva to account for the productive side of the equation: the text is an intertextual configuration. The autonomous, closed structure of the literary text—i.e., "the hard tactility of the well-

wrought text"—shatters and reveals itself as a "shimmering horizon of citations" (Benamou 4), the dynamic site of rich network of references and allusions to other works, to the textualized voices of others. Kristeva summarizes this transposition of Bakhtin's formulation of intersubjectivity into an intertextuality: "the entire text is constructed as a mosaic of citations, the entire text is the absorption and transformation of another text. In place of the notion of intersubjectivity is installed that of *intertextuality*, and the poetic language is read, at least, as *double*" (my translation, 146). In such a text, at least two types of discourses are present in an ever-shifting relation to one another, each affecting how the other is read. As a result, a given text is continually reformed by other texts which, in their turn, are also reformed, thus transforming the text into an fluid site of constant production. However, Iser emphasizes in Prospecting, where he takes both the productive and receptive sides into account, it is so only in relation to a receiver to whom it addresses itself and who, serving as the next link in the chain of speech communication, realizes the virtuality of the text as other, allowing it to "explode into its plurivocity" (see 237-38).

Bringing together the two threads of (1) the self as composed of others' voices and (2) the text as an intertextual site, what is important to my notion of specularity here is that the intertextual basis of certain works (e.g., Witkiewicz's Kurka Wodna [The Water Hen]), and in particular those based on an obvious paradigmatic text, legend or myth (e.g., Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida or Jean Anouilh's Antigone), may function to interrogate and undermine the ontological status of the human being as a self-making, free agent, and to conceive of the human being,

rather, as pre-determined by the external world of otherness (here, a previously written text, script, legend).

§5.   THE REVERSIBILITY RELATION AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HUMAN BEING

What emerges from these various discussions of the intersubjective nature of human existence and the intertextual nature of the literary work is an awareness that the subject and text are not autonomous, self-contained and fixed. Instead, the self—an embodied subject—and text—a polyphonic site—are constituted, at least in part, through a multi-form alterity, through the conscious, perceiving, form-bestowing, dialogic activities of others. The concept of the "other," as we have seen, submits to a re-examination to include categories of otherness beyond the other person. The self-other relation as intersubjectivity thus obtains between the following: different modalities of the self's being, the basis of which is the definition of the embodied subject as belonging to the orders of subject and object; self and another person (the primordial intersubjective relation); self and a social or cultural world, where world signifies "the *a priori* nexus of relations which as a context, must not be confused with any thing within the world nor with things taken as a whole" (Shufreider, cited in DiCenso 178); worlds; words; types of discourse; texts; the human being and her/his voice(s).

The common concern in all these discussions is the elaboration of intersubject-ivity in terms of a reversibility relation in which the subject, acceding to both intrinsic and extrinsic determination, is situated at the locus of the active and the passive. That is, the subject is the site of a chiasm of seeing-being seen, touching-being

touched, speaking-being spoken, acting-suffering. The breakdown of the subject-object binarism that this reversibility relation entails is represented perfectly by the specular image, whereby in the presence of the other who functions as mirror, the constituting subject comes to see itself as constituted, sees itself as situated in a scene set before itself, thus becoming its own spectacle.

Such an elaboration of intersubjectivity points to a dual potency of creativity (or formation) and annihilation (or deformation) inherent in the situation of alterity. For the most part, there is a tendency to focus on the former potency and posit the I-you relation as founding the human world. The tendency to elevate the interhuman is encapsulated in the following statement by Bakhtin where he discusses the necessary pre-condition of the existence of an other in the production of the self's "outward personality": "[t]his outward personality could not exist, if the other did not create it: aesthetic memory is *productive*—it gives birth, for the first time, to the *outward* human being on a new plane of being" (*AA* 35-36).

However, as playwrights throughout the ages, but in particular in the postwar period, have explored (see Malkin; Kennedy 62-105), intersubjectivity is also invested with a negative potency. To give a brief overview, in Pirandello's Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore, Father and Step-Daughter mutually torment one another in their respective attempts to represent their own stories, their own selves. In Jean-Paul Sartre's Huis clos (No Exit), Garcin, Inez and Estelle are locked for eternity in the hell that is the other's gaze, a gaze that constantly re-makes them by undermining all attempts at self-representation. In Genet's Les bonnes, the maids enact a reciprocal

sado-masochistic game which leads to the murder/suicide of one and the imprison-

ment of the other. In Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party, Stanley is subjected to a

verbal brainwashing session by Goldberg and McCann. And, in Peter Handke's

Kaspar, the prompters teach Kaspar how to be a functional, conforming member of

society through speech torture. Foregoing a discussion of whether or not viewing the

other person as an object is an insincere modality of otherness[43] or unavoidable fact,[44]

the basic argument goes as follows: to the extent that I exist as an object for the

other-as-another-subject, I cease to "be" for myself; my representation for the other,

which makes of myself an object, constitutes a denial of the self. In other words, my

very need for others poses a threat to the existence of the self. In "The Human

Being as the Subject Matter of Philosophy," Ricœur, exploring the conflictual

structure of human action as interaction, which has an asymmetrical dialogical

structure, pushes the implications and explains the potency in terms of an ethical

injunction:

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[43] Ricœur, discussing Husserl, explains the injunction against viewing the other as object: "I have always known that the other is not an object of thought but, like me, a subject of thought, that he perceives me as other than himself, that together we intend the world as a common nature" (*OAA* 332). In Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty argues that to consider the other as object is to submit the other to an "inhuman gaze," to deny the humanity of the other (360-61). One particular manifestation of the self-other relation in which this insincere modality can be observed is that of the master-and-slave, into which the sexual dialectic of shame and immodesty fits (see Merleau-Ponty, *PP* 166-67): while, on the one hand, the slave, reduced to the status of an object, accords the looker the status of subject, the fascinated slave-as-object, denied freedom, is deprived of the legitimacy, from the point of view of the subject, to so valuate the subject. Contained within the act of perception is the potential for violence: the gaze—a structure of author(iz)ing—in treating the other as an object, (1) situates the other so as to be appropriated, (2) can annihilate the self.

[44] Bakhtin explains: "[i]t is only in the other human being, in fact, that a living, aesthetically (and ethically) convincing experience of human finitude is given to me, the experience of a human being as a delimited empirical object. The other is given to me entirely enclosed *in* a world that is external to me; he is given to me as a constituent in it that is totally delimited on all sides in space. [...] The other human being exists for me entirely *in* the object and his *I* is only an object for me" (*AA* 36-38).

by acting, someone exerts a power over somebody else; thus interaction does not merely confront agents equally capable of initiative but agents and patients as well: it's this asymmetry within action as interaction between agents and patients which gives way to the most decisive ethical considerations. Not that power as such implies violence; I say only that the power exerted by someone on somebody else constitutes the basic occasion for using the other as an instrument, which is the beginning of violence, murder, and still more torture, this being the extreme. (99-100)

The active modality in the intersubjective relation contains within it a potency to objectivize and instrumentalize the other. The passive modality, as a result, includes the experience of "victimization": "the passivity of the suffering self becomes indistinguishable from the passivity of being the victim of the other (than) self" (Ricœur, *OAA* 320). Our unavoidable involvement in an intersubjective world is the condition for the possibility of having either a productive or destructive relation with others.[45]

§6. PLAY AS PARADIGM FOR THE REVERSIBILITY RELATION

The concept of *play*, the final paradigm for the reversibility relation, facilitates the transition between the philosophical and theoretical issues that stem from a discussion of intersubjectivity and its revisioning of the self-other relation in terms of the reflexivity of mutual affection, and the thematizations of subjectivity and intersubjectivity inscribed in the dramatic works that are the focus of this study. While there have been several studies of play from philosophical, culturo-anthropo-

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[45] Bruce Wilshire, in "Theatre as Phenomenology: The Disclosure of Historical Life," expresses the predicament in the following way: "we both need others and are threatened by them, and we are threatened precisely because of our need. We need others to approve us and authorize us, and we are threatened by them either because they can withhold this, or because they approve at the cost of engulfing and smothering us" (361).

logical[46] and literary[47] perspectives, I limit the present discussion to the philosophical and aesthetic approach by Gadamer in order to elucidate the precise nature of the intersubjective bond as well as the dynamic that is set up between the players in the specular *topos*.

According to Gadamer—who establishes a series of analogies based on a structural correlation between understanding, dialogue and play—play, like dialogue as aforementioned, by embracing the person playing or whatever plays, can be viewed as a *governing relation*. This point should be expanded on now. Relation here implies mediation—that is, the oscillation between, for example, two partners or forms, such that the act of mediation, which subsists independently, itself makes possible the communication without fusion of two opposites. Mediation is, then, the movement both "reconciling these opposites" and "becoming part of their unity" (Nédoncelle 42). For Gadamer, in other words, play is a dynamic process that takes place in between individuals, person and thing (e.g., text); furthermore, as mediation,

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[46] Johann Huizinga's Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture inaugurates an anthropology of play by systematically establishing relationships between various, seemingly unrelated, human activities, whose common denominator is the play-element. Roger Caillois bases his study, Les jeux et les hommes: Le masque et le vertige, on Huizinga's and establishes a typology of play—namely, the four categories of *agôn* (competition), *aléa* (chance), *mimicry* (role-simulation) and *ilinx* (vertigo)—which in turn is subject to another classification—namely, the continuum running from *ludus* (controlled play) to *paidia* (spontaneous play). Other culturally- or anthropologically-based studies are Richard Schechner and Mady Schuman, eds., Ritual, Play and Performance: Readings in the Social Sciences/Theatre and Michel Benamou and Charles Carmello, eds., Performance in Postmodern Culture.

[47] See, for e.g., Elizabeth Bruss's "The Game of Literature and Some Literary Games," Ross Chambers' "Rules and Moves," Jacques Ehrmann's Game, Play, Literature, which includes selections from Bakhtin's Rabelais and His World, Wolfgang Iser's Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology (esp. chapter 12, where Iser transposes Caillois' typology into literary terms and where he considers the literary text as a playground between author and reader on the three levels of structure, function and interpretation) and "Staging as an Anthropological Category," and Thomas Reisner's "Game Universes and Literary Scenarios."

it "represents a reciprocal behavior of absolute contemporaneousness" (*PH* 54) on .the part of the playing members—a point, as we shall see, that is crucial to understanding the movement from the agonistic play of difference through mimetic being like to being the other (or the shattering of private, fixed self-identity) that is effected in Gombrowicz's and Genet's works. Play, in short, can be considered as a specific manifestation of intersubjectivity.

More precisely, Gadamer and Iser after him (Prospecting 253), defines play as the formation of a special type of movement: a self-renewing to-and-fro movement that has an existence apart from the player's consciousness and that requires corporeality (of the player or the work of art) as a medium for it to come to presentation. With respect to the notion of the game, as Gadamer so aptly expresses, "something that obeys its own set of laws gains ascendency" so that "[w]hatever is brought into play [intentionally by the player] or comes into play [by chance] no longer depends on itself but is dominated by the relation that we call game" (*PH* 53). In other words, that which is brought or comes into play and the player are rhythmicized and formalized by the entry. As a result, there occurs a key loss of self—what David Tracy refers to as "an experienced relational releasing mode of being" (114)—as the player effectively relinquishes autonomy over her/his own will and either conforms or subjects her/himself to the game. Play, then, has "an unconscious teleology" (Gadamer, *PH* 54) that subordinates the player to itself. In effect, Gadamer sums up, "all playing is a being-played" (*TM* 106).

There are three points that need to be made. The first has to do with the

submission to the dynamic back-and-forth movement of play: in a situation where the player is simultaneously subject and object of the play, both acting and suffering, the subjectivity-objectivity dualism is nullified.[48] Second, and this is especially significant for the further discussion of mimicry, is what is subsequently entailed by the engagement of the player in and by the game—namely, the self-*dis*possession (i.e., the loss of self-possession or self-having) and the transformation into another appropriate to the particular game being played. Play, therefore, entails a simultaneous collusion of the active and passive, freedom and constraint: the active acquisition of another self is, at the same time, the passive acceptance (being-imposed upon) of this other self in keeping with the nature of the game. Third, extrapolating from this and anticipating the further discussion, play provides the link between the involvement of the other in self-representation that emerges in the intersubjective relation and the representation-of-self-as-other *to* or *for others* (mimicry) which belongs properly to the domain of theatre. That is, the concept of play opens up the discussion onto the one *for whom* play is brought to presentation through the *corpus* of the player or the work of art—namely, the audience. The audience, in short, becomes an essential component, especially when play becomes a play.

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[48] Ehrmann explains this point in "Homo Ludens Revisited" by drawing an analogy between play and dialogue: "[t]he player, like the speaker—that is, each of us—is at once the subject and the object of the play. The pronouns I, you, he are the different modes of the play structure. The subjectivity-objectivity dualism is abolished because it is inoperative" (56).

III. THE THEATRICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SPECULARITY

How do the insights into the nature of human existence that arise out of these broader discussions of intersubjectivity and play impact on the study of theatre? How, specifically, are the ontological entailments of a *Weltanschauung* that considers the other to be a primary constitutive factor in the individual's search for identity, in the individual's struggle for self-representation, played out? Of what significance for theatre are the various formulations of intersubjectivity as a reversibility relation—a relation which places the human being *qua* embodied subject at the locus of a complex interplay of seeing and being-seen, speaking and being-spoken, affecting and being-affected, playing and being-played? How is the resultant bifurcation of the self into a dual adherence to the orders of subject and object, the for-itself and the in-itself—a bifurcation that, signalling a fundamental non-coincidence of the self with itself, thereby enables the self to be other than itself—worked out in the conventions and terms of theatre? Of what significance is the conceptualization of intersubjectivity as a reversibility relation for the relation of audience to work of art (performance or text)?

§1. THE CLEAVAGE OF THE SUBJECT

What develops from the acknowledgment of the relational nature of human experience is the notion of a dual character of human being, which calls into question the self-contained unity of the speaking and spectating subjects, these being the two primary forms in theatre. Introducing alterity into the definition of subjective self-sameness results in a fundamental non-coincidence of the self with itself: the subject

is ceaselessly for-itself (self-making) and for-the-other, where the for-the-other has the potential to be transformed into an in-itself (existence in which one acts or *is acted upon* as a mere existing thing). This conceptualization of identity as a doubling up (as Iser writes, "being oneself means being able to double oneself" [*FI* 81]) or, more radically, cleavage into a subject-for-itself and a representation-for-others provides a means of getting beyond solipsistic theories of the closed world of the ego—namely, the theory that no reality exists other than one's own self or consciousness—and into an interactive world in which the self is communicable to and affected by others. It also provides the condition for the possibility of the self to be other than itself, for the unfolding of the self into multiple possibilities arising from the variety of situational patternings into which one finds oneself constantly cast and recast. In the theatre, the dramatization of this duality functions to interrogate the very conception of character as person, as *idem*-identity.[49]

As indicated earlier, three traditionally theatrical notions, then, both contained within the ludic form of mimicry, are implied by this cleavage. The first is masking: the assumption of multiple masks is the visual appearance, or semblance, of the cleavage of identity. Another is role-playing, which is the performative dimension: the role is, as Iser states, "the means of enabling the self to be other than each

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[49] John Orr makes the following observation: "[i]n the theatre, identity is a construction of performance, the stage an arena of illusion. Often the word 'persona' seems more precise than the word 'character' with its echoes of the complete and observed 'person.' Indeed if we continue to call players characters it is precisely because we have fallen prey to their vibrant powers of illusion. They embody the passing illusion of a self-contained life. For all characters are actors who perform, who don metaphorical masks, whose job is usually to realise the persona of someone else's invention. The emerging identity of that persona is a balancing act between the actor's self, the character that is performed and what might be accepted by the audience as reality in the world beyond the stage" (10).

individual role" (*FI* 81). Moreover, in certain dramatic works (e.g., those by Gombrowicz and Genet), this cleavage can be located, verbally, in an explicit fracturing of the monologic dramatic voice into at least two voices. In the more self-reflexive dramatic works, it is dramatized by the opening up of a breach between, for example, character and actor (typological or vertical fracturing), or character and various fictional roles played (quantitative or horizontal fracturing).

§2.   THE HERMENEUTIC FUNCTION OF THE MASK: IDENTITY AND THE MASK

The ontological implications of the theatrical notions of masking and role-playing are explored in the œuvres of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. Here, the mask is not merely an appendage or theatrical convention donned, to reiterate Schechner's apt remarks on the carnival mask, "merely to disguise or embellish [the wearers'] ordinary selves or to flaunt the outrageous" ("Invasions" 88); instead, it becomes a means of interrogating the problematic status of the human subject. In precursory terms, throughout Pirandello's œuvre, there is expressed a fundamental ambivalence about, and dissolution into uncertainty of, the ontological status of subject as either *idem*-identity or *ipse*-identity. This ambivalence is conveyed through the establishment of such, by now common, discursive oppositions as life and form, playing and existence, role and persona, character and actor, truth and illusion. The œuvres of Gombrowicz and Genet, in what might be viewed as a recuperation and re-valuation of the mask as a formative principle, present the fundamental transformation of character into role, of face into mask or image, of life into form, as a tangible result of the interhuman situatedness of the individual. In Gombro-

wicz's works, the self is enacted and discovered in a situation of interaction with the result that the human being becomes an artificial construct formed and deformed by others. In Genet's plays, the desire to cast off the self and assume the role of the other leads to self-voiding (i.e., death, "little" or literal) once it is realized that only the *image* of the other can be appropriated. For all three writers, the actor serves as paradigm for the human being. For all, the self that is staged is performative— that is, both performing and performed.

The specific relation of self to mask grounding the conceptualization of the human subject in the works of the three playwrights is revealed in the etymological link of identity or continuity between mask and person, in Latin, and between mask and face, in Greek. In Latin, person comes from *persona*, meaning *mask*: (1) role, part, character, person represented by an actor, (2) in general, the part which anyone plays, (3) a personality, individuality, character, and hence (4) person as a human subject and the philosophical notion of human identity (Cassell's New Latin Dictionary 442). Similarly, though with a different emphasis, the Greek word, *prosōpon* (*pros*, meaning *to, toward, at*; *ōpa*, meaning *face, eye*) means (1) manifestation or figure, and (2) mask, dramatic part, person, face (Origins 938). The significance of this etymological link is that it points out the limitation of the tendency to dis-join person or face (as a primary means of identifying another) and mask (as a form of disguise).[50] In fact, an inherent paradox, exploited by Pirandello,

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[50] A. David Napier, in Masks, Transformation, Paradox, argues, especially appropriately for Pirandello's and Gombrowicz's plays, that disguise "is, in the study of humankind, the foremost example of how we articulate the problems of appearance in the context of change. [...] Because the human face is the primary means of our recognizing, and thus identifying, one another, it deserves special attention

Gombrowicz and Genet, resides in the human mask: it serves, schematically, to
reveal certain aspects of the individual's personality—that is, to make appear or make
present in a specific form; it functions, speculatively, to provide the means for the
individual to be other (which is also a form of *concealing* [parts of] the self).
Furthermore, as is the case in the intersubjective constitution of the human being,
the mask subjects its wearer to a "binding-freedom": it both entraps or restricts and
liberates. Iser explains the ontological implications of the mask/role in a manner that
sheds light on the appearance and function of the mask in the works of the three
core writers:

> [w]e have seen from the relationship between the present and
> the absent that the disguise brings out particular aspects of the
> person, who is fragmented in accordance with the needs of the
> situation. The person directing the masking suffers a constant
> self-division that turns into a dynamic process in which any
> particular operation of the mask may be canceled, but only by
> adopting another disguise. The protagonists are therefore
> present neither as mask nor as person, but as interplay between
> the two [...]. The person may be trapped in the disguise, but he
> will free himself again because his imprisonment is conditioned
> only by the requirements of the situation. This rhythm of
> trapping and liberating permeates not only the relationship
> between person and mask but also that between person and
> person, and that between mask and mask. The mask is, of
> course, a restriction of the person, but it is also his extension,
> for the person must fictionalize himself as something else in
> order to reach beyond himself. The mask, then, reflects the
> double movement of restriction and derestriction in a process

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in a study of appearances and their ambiguities. And because a mask is itself not merely the most direct
but the most widespread form of disguise, the function of illusion in change may be most directly
explored through an analysis of masks and masking conventions. Masks exhibit this function more
directly than other facial embellishments such as make-up or tatooing because masks themselves are not
only illusory, but are as well the most uncompromising and simple devices for analyzing the relation
between illusion on the one hand and the recognition and integrity of a human face on the other. Masks
are hypothetical and make-believe. They are paradoxical" (3-4).

> of reciprocal decomposition. The same applies to the person: he may withdraw his disguise, but only in order to reprogram it. The person becomes present through the effacement of the mask, but he must also force himself back into it in order to be able to act. There is, then, a continuing switch between constructing and deconstructing impulses that springs from neither the mask nor the person but from the play of difference. (*FI* 76-77)

By way of summation, for the purposes of this study, the key points that are raised here are the governing relation of play as a back-and-forth dynamic ("play of difference"), the dialectic of freedom and enslavement, the self-division or cleavage of the self to which the mask gives expression, the function of the mask to enable the self to be other than itself, and the inextricable and ineluctable engagement of the human being in an unending theatre of masks.

With respect to its revelatory aspect, the human mask has an explicitly hermeneutical function. That is, *hermeneutics* (*hermēneia*)—being linked to *Hermes*, the messenger between, or go-between of, the gods and human beings who is entrusted with the task of transmuting "what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp"[51]—generally, is "the process of bringing a thing or situation from unintelligibility to understanding" (Palmer 13),[52] or from

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[51] Plautus' Amphitryon uses Hermes' Roman counterpart, Mercury, in an explicitly and manifoldly hermeneutic (and travestied) way. Just as Mercury was the messenger between the gods and human beings who was given the task of explaining the message of the gods, so in this play, Mercury (Jove's go-between in affairs of the heart) serves as the prologue, who functions to explicate the play's plot to the audience. Furthermore, Mercury explains that he is dressed in a new garb (that of a servant) in order to explain an old story, just as a textual or oral embodiment of tradition of necessity is transmitted from the past into the present in ever-new ways: appropriations never confer upon, say a story, a fixed identity or interpretation.

[52] Heidegger explains in On the Way to Language: "[t]he expression 'hermeneutic' derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*. That verb is related to the noun *hermeneus*, which is referable to the name of the god Hermes by a playful thinking that is more compelling that the rigor of science. Hermes is

concealment into a state of unconcealment. The human mask, then, like the flesh,

mediates between the intimacy of the self and the externality of the world of others.

This conception of the mask as intermediary is a traditional one in theatre,

although the focus or rather the two members involved in the mediation, may have

changed in the transition from the sacred (gods and human beings)[53] to the profane

(self and other human beings) worlds.   In "L'art sublime du comédien," Ross

Chambers explains the manner in which the mask functions in the profane world as

compared to in the sacred world in hermeneutical terms: "the mask, a kind of

receptacle serving as a body for a transcendental power and permitting it to be

manifested to human beings, appears from now on as a surface which is no longer

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the divine messenger. He brings the message of destiny; *hermeneuein* is that exposition [laying open of something] which brings tidings [the message] because it can listen to a message. Such exposition [laying-open] becomes an interpretation [laying-out] of what has been said earlier by the poets who, according to Socrates in Plato's *Ion* (534e), *hermenes eisin ton theon*—'are interpreters [messengers] of the gods'" (29).

[53] In Jeux de masques, Lucienne Serrano, who considers theatrical representation to be "the microcosm which reveals in a symbolic fashion the fundamental relations existing in a given epoch between man, others and the perception that man has of his destiny" (my translation, 9), explains this mediational function with respect to ancient Greek theatre. In the ancient Greek world, the mask served as an instrument of the sacred world, enabling a *tête-à-tête* between human being and god: "the mask, instrument of the sacred world, is necessary for man to address a divinity. Because he wishes to establish a dialogue with God, man attempts to hide his weakness, his fear, his nudity, and interposes the mask between himself and God. [...] Having simultaneously exteriorised and sublimated human weakness, the mask affirms man in the cosmos. For man reassured of his cosmic and social status and of his personality, the idea of the mask is a solution to the problem of 'who I am' and makes possible a face-to-face with the divinity" (8-9). In Amphitryon, again, the function of the mask to fix human identity is travestied: Mercury dons the face (identity) of Amphitryon's servant, Sosia, so that Jove can assume Amphitryon's (face) identity and sleep with Amphitryon's wife. When Sosia (whose name means double) comes face-to-face with his double, Mercury-as-Sosia, it is the face which establishes to Sosia Mercury's identity as Sosia and causes Sosia's confusion (though never permanent disavowal) as to his own identity and later to double himself. Sosia, at the height of his confusion, says, "So help me, when I look at him *I recognize all my features*, there's no doubt about it! I've seen myself in the mirror lots of times, and he's exactly like me. [...] He's my spitting image!" and "Where did I lose myself? Where did I get changed over? Where did I drop my looks? Did I forget myself and leave myself at the pier? Because this fellow here's got hold of the exact same looks I used to have" (emphasis added, 23).

turned toward the unknown, but toward the immanent world: it is given for human beings to see and admire as in a mirror which reflects their lives" (my translation, 192-93). Thus, in the sacred world, the mask served as a *receptus* for the divine (or the unknown) to appear to human beings; in the profane world, the mask allows the human being to make the self appear (in a certain form) and, in this way, to be given to the other. Appearance, here, signifies a showing or announcing of the god's or self's presence. Furthermore, in the profane world, the mask functions reflexively and self-reflexively: it permits the "inner world" *to be seen* and *to be admired* by others (Merleau-Ponty's definition of narcissism); it serves as a reflecting surface in which to show (make appear) to the audience certain aspects of the audience's existential condition.

§3.   THE INTRA- AND INTER-SUBJECTIVE CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN MASK

The human mask, thus, is created when we become conscious of projecting an appearance to others (the representation of our being for others). Similar to the constitution of the human being in the world of intersubjectivity, the human mask as—to use a term by Bakhtin that echoes one of Genet's (esp. in Les paravents [The Screens])—the "outer shell of the self's image" (*PDP* 120), is constituted vis-à-vis aesthetic convention and accedes to both intrinsic and extrinsic determination.

With respect to intrinsic determination (self-making, self-fashioning), the self imagines its own identity, which is then reflected in and made perceptible through its corporeality. "[T]he imaginary is lured into form" (Iser, *FI* 3). Form or image (as the outer limit on a given phase of existence or as a particular interpretive

construct) and essence (as the fund of possible disclosures), therefore, exert a modifying influence on each other. From their convergence, an ontologically novel possibility emerges.

In the process, the subject may appropriate or have imposed upon it certain aspects from the external world—e.g., other people—such that the final form arises vis-à-vis intersubjectivity. According to Bakhtin, for whom the constitution of the "outwardly expressed image" of the human being is possible only through the enabling act of *consummation* (*shaping, finishing off, authorizing*) performed by the other, in order for the self to become visible, it must undergo a radical restructuration which results from its being founded in and affirmed by and for the other (*AA* 30). That is, as was discussed with respect to Bakhtin's formulation of the reversibility relation in terms of the gaze, the other *completes* the individual precisely in those ways in which s/he cannot complete her/himself. In Le paradigme inquiet, Krysiński describes this dual intra- and inter-subjective constitution of the human mask: "[t]he mask is a sort of soft and supple petrification of our consciousness by others. It constitutes the active translation of others' existence into our own. [...] But the petrification of the mask begins in ourselves, from our own vanity of appearance" (my translation, 166-67).

Transposing the insights arising out of the discussion of intersubjectivity into the terms of the mask and role appropriate for the specular theatre of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet, therefore, the reversibility relation can be formulated as follows: the person is only a mask or a series of masks, roles, forms, images; we

affect the other's mask and the other affects ours (a relation of mutual affecting) for, in the world of intersubjectivity, the other's form-bestowing (performative) activity serves as a constituting factor in the creation or shaping of our objective image. Consequently, the human being is composed of a multitude of potential identities, of which each semblance, form or mask is but a particular interpretive configuration arising from a certain situation of relationality. This implies the unfinalizability of human being.

§4.   THEATRE AS SITE OF THE INTERSUBJECTIVE CONSTITUTION OF MASKS

Having pointed out the ontological relation between identity and mask, and having explicated the intra- and inter-subjective constitution of the mask and the implications for the human being, I now collate these discussions with that on play, and transpose them directly into the theatrical realm by bringing out the speculative function of the mask and role as providing the means for the individual's being other. In the process of bringing together these strands from the various theoretical discussions, the notion of specular theatre, defined above, is rounded out.

Two aspects of alterity arise from Caillois' definition of mimicry (61). The first is the subject's appropriation of otherness through the *make-believe* (*faire-croire*) of mimicry ("the subject plays at believing [...] that he is other than himself"): mimicry is the overt means of enabling the self (actor) to be other than itself (character). This active gaining of another self is the point raised earlier with respect to play: play entails self-*dis*possession and the transformation into another appropriate to the game being played. Genet's comments on the actors' make-up in

a letter to Roger Blin (222) are particularly apt here. Similar to Bakhtin's notion of the carnival mask in <u>Rabelais and His World</u> (*RW*) as enabling a rejection of "conformity to oneself" and as permitting the subject to draw a line between official, serious life and carnival life (40), Genet emphasizes that the purpose of the actors' make-up is to permit the transgression of quotidian boundaries or social orders by making the actor into an other.

The original duality produced by the autonomy of the actor from his role (or the non-coincidence of the actor with his role), moreover, can be multiplied when the character adopts yet another mask—a situation that enables the mirroring of the duality of actor-character on the internal level of the play. Serrano explains what is fundamentally an expression of the unfinalizability of the human being when examining the capacity of the theatrical mask in the profane world to unbind: "[t]he mask, which in other times emphasized the limits of human being, becomes a liberating instrument; it permits one to fashion being so as to attain to multiple 'appearances'" (my translation, 11). When the actor controls the means of creating a semblance, Serrano continues, the "face can thus multiply in an unlimited fashion, the 'I' becomes an other" (11). The proliferation of the face, the mark of identity (to recall the etymology), through play marks a transformation in identity (selfhood) through alterity. There is an oscillation between play and ontology that can be clarified by appropriating Ricoeur's French title, <u>Soi-même comme un autre</u>, and the double meaning behind *comme*: oneself as *similar to* another (mimicry *qua* imitating

another) is transformed into oneself *inasmuch as being* another.[54] The works studied

here by Vives, Gombrowicz and Genet provide excellent demonstrations of this shift,

though Jean de Rotrou's 1647 play, <u>Le véritable St. Genest</u>, in which the actor, in a

spectacular conversion, is transformed into the very saint he is playing, is perhaps one

of the best examples. Semblance multiplied, in short, is "being" in a constant state

of re-funding itself.

The second point arising from Caillois' definition is particularly pertinent

when play becomes a play and is presented and performed in a place for seeing and

contemplation (to recall the etymology of *theatre*). It has to do with the representa-

tion of self as other *to others* (*faire croire aux autres*), or the "directedness" of the self-

representation and make-believe towards an audience, which brings the representa-

tion to completion.[55] In specular theatre, this spectator-spectated/spectacle relation

is foregrounded as reversible and reflexive.

Both Gadamer and Wilshire explain that, in this relation, the partners actively

consummate one another in their respective roles. This consummation is founded

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[54] Underlying this oscillation between ontology and play, and of particular significance with respect to the dramatic works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet, is the notion that reality and play are not purely distinct realms; rather, they can be considered as modalities of one another. Ehrmann explains this point in "Homo Ludens Revisited": "[p]lay is not played against a background of a fixed, stable reality which would serve as its standard. All reality is caught up in the play of the concepts which designate it. [...] At the methodological level, play and reality, being inseparable, can only be appre-hended globally and in the same movement. [...] In other words, the distinguishing characteristic of reality is that it is played. Play, reality, culture are synonymous and interchangeable" (56).

[55] "This point shows the importance of defining play as a process that takes place 'in-between.' We have seen that play does not have its being in the player's consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him. This is all the more the case where the game is itself 'intended' as such a reality—for instance, the play which appears as presentation for *an audience*" (Gadamer, *TM* 109).

on the more radical exchanging of functions between spectator and spectated referred to in the discussion of the perceptual model of reversibility. Wilshire writes: "[t]he actor's challenge is to disclose the other incorporated in him *as* other, as character, but he can do so only in the presence of others for whom he is another who mimetically enacts their common life" (358). He continues by noting that the "excess of seeing" (Bakhtin's phrase) that actors and audience each have in relation to the other functions specularly: by contemplating or regarding the other, each, first, is provided with the means by which to complete the other in their respective environments; second, each is given an insight into their own situation.

> Usually unsuspected by the audience [...], the actor is listening to the sounds *they* make. [...] The actor's mimetic tendencies are such only relative to other persons, but the actor cannot see his own body and face when he is actively with and for others, and he must rely upon the audience to signal him when he is onto something telling and essential. Nor can he hear his voice as it really is—a voice mimetically with and for others—unless others let him know what they hear. Not realizing that they are being heard and followed, and thinking that it is only a fiction to which they are responding, they in the audience are not on guard, and so reveal themselves deeply as beings who are mimetically with others. [...] The centrifugal force of the enacted other, the fictional character, breaks down our delusive centeredness—our habitual engulfment in others, and others in us. Thrown into the periphery through the force of the fiction, one senses as in a dream a likeness into which one fits. One becomes aware of what one's body already is: an other which is with and for others mimetically. (358)

The self transformed into the other through mimicry provides an insight into the otherness of the self, that is, into the constitution of the self in a situation of being-with and being-toward others, and hence, as mediated by alterity. For his part, Gadamer focuses on the spectator: "[a] complete change takes place when play as

such becomes a play. It puts the spectator in the place of the player. He—and not

the player—is the person for and in whom the play is played" (*TM* 109). Just as the

player is subject to the governing relation of the back-and-forth movement of play,

so the spectator submits to and is constituted through and by the play. Pfister

expresses this awareness of the mutual affectability of spectator-spectated in terms

of the verbal medium of the intersubjective world: "[t]his means that to all direct

participants of the dialogue there is added another participant, silent but important,

for everything which is said in a dramatic dialogue is oriented towards him, toward

affecting his consciousness" (103).

Of particular importance to the model of specular theatre is that the

hermeneutic encounter between playworld and audience world[56] may engender a

fundamental transformation on the part of the audience (the focus of theorists from

Plato and Aristotle through Artaud and Brecht to those dealing with contemporary

performance art). DiCenso, discussing the transformative power of the work of art,

explains this reflexive relation:

> [a]rt provides the vision whereby repressed and unknown
> aspects of reality are unveiled, and this acts reflexively upon
> established world of meaning. [...] Artistic vision is not simply
> a cosmetic gloss upon reality. Rather, artistic transformation of
> things reveals the constricted and distorting effects of practical
> everyday modes of interpretation.
>   The "sharable" character of the world disclosed by art
> indicates that it "extends into the interpersonal" and gives rise

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[56] Of course, there are many different conceptions of the nature of the audience-performance relationship in terms of varying degrees of identification and distanciation. Ronald Pelias and James VanOosting, in "A Paradigm for Performance Studies" (226-27), discuss four levels of audience participation: the inactive (audience as receiver); the active (audience as respondent); the interactive (audience as co-producer); the proactive (audience as producer).

to "a world inhabited by human beings and constituted as such by meanings accessible to their minds." Artistically disclosed worlds are not mere abstractions but relate to the existential worlds in which we live out our lives. As culturally produced, existential worlds share with artistic worlds an origin in human relational activity. (68-69)

In short, because art is a relational process, that which is disclosed through the audience's encounter with the work of art affects self-understanding (by bringing to light the closed and distorting paradigms governing our existential modes) and in turn impacts on the audience's lifeworld (see, for e.g., the works by Shakespeare, Tieck, Witkiewicz and Handke treated here).

Ricœur expands on the reflexive relation of affected self and affecting other in the milieu of reading—appropriately, as I am dealing with dramatic *texts*. According to Ricœur, it is through the disclosure and analysis of cultural worlds (an analysis that undertakes the three hermeneutic tasks of understanding, explanation and application), it is through, in short, the encounter with the alterity of the literary work that self-understanding and self-transformation (defined as the transcendence of previously fixed boundaries of knowing and being) are effected. He refers to this process as *appropriation*.

Ricœur explains that the reader must endeavour to think in accordance with the orientation of the text: the reader, in a fundamental act of self-distanciation, must give her/himself over to the text and appropriate, through its structures and forms, its delineated world which s/he applies ultimately to her/his own life situation.

Where the "mode of being of appropriation" is play[57] and where appropriation implies "a moment of dispossession of the narcissistic ego," he continues, only "the interpretation which satisfies the injunction of the text, which follows the 'arrow' of meaning and endeavours to 'think in accordance with' it, engenders a new *self-understanding*" ("Appropriation" 97). The response to the text, thus, becomes a commentary rooted in self-understanding: the reader is not to project upon the text her/his own prejudices (these come to critical self-consciousness in the process), but rather, as in play, must submit to self-dispossession in order to let the subject-matter be. Ricœur, in short, conceives of the literary work as a work—i.e., a transforming experience which the reader undergoes and which conditions her/his understanding of her/himself and the world. The reflexive encounter that occurs between the self and the otherness of the text, as a result, "enlarges" the self by disclosing its relational and dependent nature: "[b]eing-affected in the fictive mode is [...] incorporated into the self's being-affected in the 'real' mode" (Ricœur, *OAA* 330) as the confrontation with the otherness of the text forces the audience to interrogate its own prejudgments. Reading becomes being-read in the attainment of a provisional sense of identity that (as in Iser's and Bakhtin's notions of the human mask) must submit in turn to a re-evaluation and re-configuring.

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[57] Ricœur, like Gadamer, draws an analogy between play and the hermeneutic act of appropriation. Proposing *play* as the "mode of being of appropriation," Ricœur considers the reader as a playful figure who must enter an "alien work," divest her/himself of the "earlier 'me' in order to receive, as in play, a self conferred by the work itself" ("Appropriation" 94).

In my analysis of play, the transitional concept between the philosophical and theatrical foundations of specular theatre, I focused on one element—namely, play as a reversibility relation that subjugates the player to itself, such that all playing becomes a being-played. On the basis of a structural analogy, and following Gadamer's lead, I linked this concept of play to intersubjectivity, which considers the subject as constituted in a situation of mutual interaction and affectability—that is, in a situation of alterity. In other words, the subject does not only constitute (or affect) others, but, in turn, is constituted (or affected) by them in a way that may be either productive or annihilative to itself, and that points up the potency lodged in the intersubjective relation for the self to be either aggressor or victim of the other. Then, I transposed this discussion into theatrical discourse, maintaining a relation of identity between person/identity/face and mask/role in order to argue that the constitution of the human mask, like the constitution of the human subject, is determined intrinsically (by the concrescence of form and essence) and extrinsically (through intersubjectivity) in a potentially unfinalizable way. The basis of the transposition to mimicry was the implication that intersubjectivity involves a fundamental destabilization of the subject into a subject-for-itself and a representation-for-others by the incorporation of a multi-form alterity into the definition of subjective self-sameness.

The fracturing of the self in the intersubjective relation finds its privileged milieu for representation in a theatre that stages the construction of the subject *through-form* and in a situation of alterity—namely, specular theatre. Here, the

speaking and spectating subject, experiencing itself as constituting others and the world around it, comes in turn to be constituted by others, is itself turned into a spectacle for others' author(iz)ing gazes, a receptacle for others' voices, a work shaped and performed by others, and, hence, subject to an empathetic or aggressive (de-)formative act by others. Specularity, then, comprehends the expropriation and appropriation of otherness in the production of a situational and transformational semblance of the self. In the theatre, it gives to understand theatre as a *Spielraum* or *topos* for the "mirror-play" in which to present the unremitting back-and-forth, coincident and non-coincident, activity of reflexivity as manifested in terms of the intersubjective engagement of human beings in the give-and-take, the imposition-and-acceptance of roles, masks, forms, voices.

In specular theatre, this intersubjective engagement opens up onto the relation between audience and art work. As Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet demonstrate, the playwright effectively ensnares the audience, implicating it as the other gazing at the spectacle. Theatre is transformed into a *jeu de glaces*, the presentation from which spectators become aware that they have been looking into a mirror, have themselves become the spectacle. The transposition of the intersubjective world view into specular theatre thus opens up an interspecular world in which the audience is profoundly implicated and affected.

CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF SPECULARITY IN THEATRE

As discussed, specular theatre is one manifestation of the self-reflexive variation of theatre. It is a model for viewing the dramatic world as a *topos* for the "mirror-play" in which to present a particular conception of the subject as the site of a complex of reflexive and self-reflexive processes involving a necessary relation to and implication of a multiform alterity—that is, as cast into an intersubjective world.

The intent of this study is not to tread the well-trammeled path of critics dealing with metatheatre and metadrama. Nor is it the intent of this chapter to provide a comprehensive diachronic treatment of dramatic texts featuring self-reflexive procedures. If either were the case, the selection of paradigmatic texts would have been different, in some instances, and expanded. Instead, texts have been deliberately chosen for their presentation of the nexus of problematics that I have elaborated under the category of specularity and that have to do with the subject's struggle for self-representation in the intersubjective world. Since my concern is primarly with the theatre of the twentieth century, and in particular, that of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet, here I provide a brief overview of four works from the Renaissance, Baroque and Romantic periods in which these issues make their appearance. As well, I examine four works of contemporaries of and successors

to the three core playwrights in order to sketch out further variations which the issues undergo. Consequently, the chapter does not treat thoroughly any of the exemplar texts, writers or periods; nor, given the historical and cultural spectrums covered, does it make any claims to homogeneity of intentionality behind the works. My hypothesis, rather, is that certain procedures and/or themes in Renaissance, Baroque and Romantic theatre, retrospectively speaking, may benefit from an elucidation of specific issues as they crystallize in the work of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet, and more generally, by interpretive approaches brought to light in the twentieth century by phenomenological hermeneutics, while still retaining the particularity of the historical and cultural contexts in which they arose. Or prospectively speaking, they anticipate certain procedures and/or themes in Modern and Postmodern theatre. The intent of the chapter, therefore, is to construct a historical contextualization allowing for a more in-depth analysis of the issues as they come to the fore in the works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet.

The works covered are the following. From the Renaissance is <u>Fabula de homine</u> (<u>A Fable about Man</u>) by the Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives. The document presents the idea of theatre as a symbol of human life through the fable of Jupiter's creation of the world as stage and of man as actor possessing the protean power of unlimited self-transformation. Thus, while not a dramatic work *per se*, it does serve parabolically as a useful touchstone for initiating the discussion at hand.[58]

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[58] Vives was not the first to conceive the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*. As Nancy Lenkeith points out in her introduction to <u>A Fable about Man</u>, it had been developed by the Stoics and the Neo-Platonists (385). Before the rise of the great theatres in England, Spain and France, the analogizing of life and theatre became established as one of the Renaissance's signature tropes, as Machiavelli's <u>Il</u>

William Shakespeare's <u>Troilus and Cressida</u> (1601-02) straddles the cusp of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, while Marivaux's <u>La Dispute</u> (1744, <u>The Dispute</u>) is located in the ethos of the Rococo period in France. Both works feature the theme of inconstancy in love; however, I think that sexual inconstancy serves merely as a starting point for examining the ontological question of self-inconstancy—an issue which appears already in Vives' work—and the possibility of establishing a fixed self-identity. In <u>Troilus and Cressida</u>, this interrogation is carried out through the presentation of various performance situations with results that are radical to, and potentially eradicative of, the self. In <u>La Dispute</u>, the self-reflexive dramatic form of the play-within-the-play is employed to demonstrate the constitution of the self in a primordial situation of relationality with others and, specularly, for Rococo society to place itself on view. From the Romantic period, in its early German phase, is Ludwig Tieck's <u>Die verkehrte Welt</u> (1798, <u>The World in Reverse</u>). This work stages a contemporary Enlightenment audience confronted with a Romantic play. Through a series of plays-within-plays, and through the consequent confusion and destruction of various self-contained levels of fictional reality, the procedure of representing the self as other functions specularly as a self-seeing (seeing the other as the self) with the goal of effecting a self-understanding and transformation in behavior, or refigura-

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principe (1513, <u>The Prince</u>) demonstrates: the Prince's essential *Kunst* is the art of theatrical perfor-
mance—namely, the ability to be completely convincing in a number of assumed roles. Later, the
Baroque capitalized on the metaphor. As Jean Rousset explains in <u>La littérature de l'âge baroque en</u>
<u>France</u>, "[t]he world is inside out or shaky, ready to tip over, on the point of inversion: reality is
unstable or illusory, like the theatre decor. And man also is in a state of disequilibrium, convinced that
he will never be that which he appears to be, hiding his face under a mask which he plays so well that
he is no longer certain where the mask is, and where the face. [...] *Man is disguise in a world which is
theatre and decor*" (my translation, 28).

tion, on the part of the target spectator.

Moving into the twentieth century, we find a decided preoccupation with the negative power inherent in the intersubjective relation. To reiterate, from the active side, it is manifested as the potency to objectivize and instrumentalize the other; from the passive side, it includes the experience of victimization. Often, this negative power is explored through the presentation of couples or threesomes locked in a relation of mutual torment. From Pirandello's Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (1921, Six Characters in Search of An Author), Jean-Paul Sartre's Huis clos (1944, No Exit), Genet's Haute surveillance (1948, Deathwatch) and Les bonnes (1947, The Maids), to Samuel Beckett's Fin de partie (1957; Endgame, 1958), Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1963) and Gombrowicz's overarching vision of a world in which "one mask torments the other" in Operetka (1966, Operetta)—the deformative, destructive, annihilative potency invested in the other (of which dialogue and the gaze are the means of either constituting or conveying this relation) is brought to the fore. Here, I consider four works by three writers who explicitly take up, within the theatrical realm, the problem of the constitution or performance of the self in the intersubjective situation: Stanisław Witkiewicz's Kurka Wodna (1921, The Water Hen), Peter Handke's Publikumsbeschimpfung (1966, Offending the Audience) and Kaspar (1967), and Sam Shepard's The Tooth of Crime (1974).

I.   JUAN LUIS VIVES' FABULA DE HOMINE: HUMAN ACTOR, DIVINE SPECTATOR

Juan Luis Vives' (1492-1540) Fabula de homine (c. 1518, A Fable about Man)

is an allegorical fable about the creation of the world and the nature of humanity

which mixes classical Roman mythology with Biblical Genesis and the Christian

doctrine of Incarnation. Vives revises Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's creation myth

as presented in Oration on the Dignity of Man.[59] In doing so, he presents, within the

allegorical framework of the world as theatre, a conception of the human being as

inconstant, as intrinsically self-determined by the protean, performative activity of

appropriating the form of otherness as its own. It is this conception that is echoed

in the works examined in this chapter.

In Oration on the Dignity of Man, Pico della Mirandola re-evaluates tradi-

tional views of the uniqueness of human beings with respect to other living creatures

and proposes that the true distinctiveness of human beings lies in their "indetermi-

nate nature" (224). There are two things to be understood by this characterization:

first, that God granted human beings the "free will" to determine whatever "form"

they may take, whatever "functions" they may wish to fulfill;[60] second, accordingly,

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[59] Vives' indebtedness to Pico della Mirandola's Oration on the Dignity of Man is noted by Nancy Lenkeith in her introduction to A Fable about Man (385), and by Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Randall, Jr. in their general introduction to The Renaissance Philosophy of Man where both works appear (16).

[60] God tells Adam, "'Neither a fixed abode nor a form that is thine alone nor any function peculiar to thyself have we given thee, Adam, to the end that according to thy judgment thou mayest have and possess what abode, what form, and what functions thou thyself shalt desire. The nature of all other things is limited and constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us. Thou, con-strained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. We have set thee at the world's center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that *with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker*

that, having "no semblance that is inborn and his very own but many that are external and foreign to him" (226), human beings share in the properties of all other creatures.[61]

Significant for my purposes are what Vives extrapolates from Pico della Mirandola—namely, the latter's characterization of the "chameleon," "self-transforming" (225) or "inconstant nature" (227) of human beings, as symbolized by the figure of Proteus[62]—and how he revisions this view of humanity in his own terms. Vives basically transposes Pico della Mirandola's passing comment likening the world to a stage (223) into the basis of an allegory of the creation and dignity of humankind. In A Fable about Man, the world is presented as an "amphitheatre" created by Jupiter, who assumes the triple role of maker, director and interpreter[63] for the entertainment of the gods. Man is an actor, not prescribed or imposed any particular form by Jupiter, but granted the protean ability to play any number of roles, assume any form of mask of his choosing, which he does by taking the shape of plants and

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and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine" (emphasis added, Pico della Mirandola 224-25).

[61] "Are there any who would not admire man, who is, in the sacred writings of Moses and the Christians, not without reason described sometimes by the name of 'all flesh,' sometimes by that of 'every creature,' inasmuch as he himself molds, fashions, and changes himself into the form of all flesh and into the character of every creature?" (Pico della Mirandola 226).

[62] "Proteus" is referred to by both Pico della Mirandola (225) and Vives (389). Proteus is the multiform god of metamorphosis and symbolizes change, disguise, inconstancy, movement. He became a dominant figure in the Baroque period (see Rousset 182-83).

[63] "Since he was the maker, [Jupiter] ordered everything and explained it to all that they might understand. Lest something be done differently from what he himself liked, he prescribed to the company of actors the entire arrangement and sequence of the plays, from which not even by the breadth of a finger, as they say, should they depart" (emphasis added, Vives 387-88).

animals and even the very god-spectators themselves. Since human nature is thus determined as both inconstant and as participating in the nature of all other creatures, it is the performative dimension of incessantly assuming the form of another that determines being:

> man, peering oft through the mask which hides him, almost ready to burst forth and revealing himself distinctly in many things, is divine and Jupiter-like, participating in the immortality of Jupiter himself, in his wisdom, prudence, memory, sharing so many of his talents that it was easy to know that these great gifts had been bestowed upon him by Jupiter from out of his treasury and even from his own person. (Vives 388-89)

The repertoire of masks (which function both to conceal and to reveal) assumed by man climaxes when he transforms himself into the perfect replica of Jupiter himself. With this mimicry, man earns the reward of the immortality of the body and soul, here presented as his being invited to sit with the gods, to exchange his role of actor for that of divine spectator.

While acknowledging that Vives, partaking in the humanist tradition's glorification of human liberty, focuses on intrinsic determination (in that Jupiter does not impose a form and that man is alone, he is Adam) to the exclusion of extrinsic so central to an intersubjective world view (the impact of which on the primordial and lone human being is explored in Marivaux's La Dispute and Gombrowicz's Ślub), I think that A Fable about Man contains certain ideas seminal to the discussion at hand. These ideas focus on the function of mimicry and of the specular relation established between actor and spectator.

Man's consummate miming of the very spectator of his mime (the gods and

Jupiter) has a dual significance. First, the portrayal of the gods in the amphitheatre of the world is presented, through the specular metaphor, in narcissistic terms as a self-seeing which provokes rumination on the part of the gods contemplating the spectacle:

> [t]he gods were gazing at these and other things, as yet sateless; just as those who contemplate their beautiful reflection in a mirror take delight in these things and willingly tarry on, so the gods, seeing themselves and Jupiter their father so well portrayed in man, wished to look more and more at what they had already beheld, inquiring about one thing after another. (392)

Second, when, as a result, man is invited to exchange his place on the stage (and, hence, his status as object of the spectacle) for a seat with the gods, he is transformed from actor into spectator, more, into divine spectator, pure contemplator. Modifying observations made by Harry Berger, Jr., William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden explain that, in Pico della Mirandola's Oration on the Dignity of Man, it is as though "[e]mulation diminishes *unapproachable* otherness" (120). In A Fable about Man, emulation does not merely reduce alterity, but rather, *almost* eradicates it. The dissolution of physical distance, accompanied by man's divestment of his stage costume and donning of the gods' vestments, symbolizes the dissolution of ontological distance: the gods "were charmed by their brotherly guest or fellow-citizen, who, refreshed by heavenly victuals after the toil of the plays, wrapped like the other gods in the purple *praetexta* and bearing the crown, went forth to watch the spectacle" (Vives 392-93).

In sum, then, A Fable about Man presents, in seminal form, issues that will be raised again and foregrounded in the work of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet:

self-inconstancy; the transformation of the self into the other (self-fashioning) and the corresponding nullification of radical alterity through imitation; the exchanging of roles between spectated object and spectating subject.

II.   WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S THE HISTORY OF TROILUS AND CRESSIDA:

"You are such another"[64]

William Shakespeare's (1564-1616) so-called "problem play," Troilus and Cressida (1601-02),[65] is set during the seige of Troy and traces the legendary lovers' courtship, the consummation of their love and Cressida's ultimate betrayal of Troilus. Using the strategies of the performance situation[66]—buttressed by the dramatic figures' "self-histrionicism"[67]—and the textualization and intertextualization of the

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[64] Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida 1.2.275. All citations are from the Arden edition and referenced as ([*TC*] act.scene.line).

[65] Troilus and Cressida's designation as one of the "problem plays" has been due, in part, to the controversy it has engendered with respect to the fixing of a date, genre categorization (tragedy, comedy, history) and its evaluation as a well or poorly written literary work.

[66] Several of Shakespeare's plays present performance situations by incorporating deception and disguise motifs whereby figures play other roles in the presence of other figures who may function as commentators. One example, which is exploited in Troilus and Cressida, is the eavesdropping scene. The eavesdropping scene may show an innocent victim being observed and commented on by a group of initiated spectator figures (e.g., Twelfth Night 2.5), or the conspirators acting out a scene that they ensure is being witnessed by their victim (e.g., Much Ado About Nothing 2.3, 3.1). Pfister discusses these motifs: "[i]n such cases, the spatial arrangement of the groups of figures reminds us of the performance situation in the play-within-the-play and, in addition, the preparation, performance and retrospective discussion of the deception often make use of theatrical terminology. The fictionality of drama thus becomes a metaphorical model for the falseness of the game of deception and theatre metaphors refer implicitly to the inherent fictionality of drama as a whole which is thus exposed" (230).

[67] To borrow Linda Charnes' coinage in "'So Unsecret to Ourselves': Notorious Identity and the Material Subject in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida": "Walter Benjamin has suggested that Brechtian actors 'show themselves showing themselves.' The actors in Troilus and Cressida, like the actors who 'play' them, also 'show' or 'play' themselves *within* the world of the play: self-histrionicism or theatricality is built into their 'texts'" (419).

dramatic figures' *corps*, Shakespeare takes the play's theme of sexual inconstancy as a pretext for examining the ontological question of *self*-inconstancy[68] and the impossibility of establishing a stable, coherent self-identity in a world in which traditional moral and ideological value structures are continually subverted and cancelled in a movement toward "a vision of universal whoredom."[69] That is, the world of Troilus and Cressida is conceived as a "universal marketplace" where the value of anyone or anything is a function of the need and judgment of the buyer on a given day (Kerrigan 45). Here, then, value is not an absolute for-itself but a relative for-others. When who one is or what one is deemed worth is reflected in the eyes of the other, identity, of consequence, must be a constantly changing thing dependent on the other who is also constantly changing. To recast this statement into theatrical terms, given the shifting audience perspectives in the myriad performance situations, the self as a representation-for-others[70] cannot remain fixed, but must surrender constantly to

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[68] Rousset explains that the common Baroque theme of inconstancy in love signifies psychological and ontological fluidity or mobility whereby being is captured only in the elusive reflection of its appearances (43).

[69] Kerrigan and Braden's coinage (45).

[70] The notion of identity-constitution as requiring the necessary presence of the other is not unique to this Shakespeare play; however, I think that Troilus and Cressida examines it most fully in its thematic and functional aspects. In A Midsummer Night's Dream (1594-96), for example, the formation of one person by another assumes a patriarchal cast, the family being an institution requiring strong paternal control. Theseus says to a recalcitrant and rebellious Hermia: "To you your father should be as a god,/One that composed your beauties; yea, and one/To whom you are but as a form in wax/By him imprinted and within his power/To leave the figure or disfigure it" (emphasis added, 1.1.46-51). Also, the mischievous Puck—who, in eavesdropping on Bottom's rehearsal, declares himself to be not only "auditor" but "actor too" (3.1.80-81)—"translates" (3.1.120) Bottom into an ass by placing the animal's head on him, thus harnessing the power of the mask to effect a transformation. This active imposition on, or transformation of, a figure by another as a means of directing the course of events, is likened in this play to the formative and hermeneutic power of the poet's creative imagination, which "[t]urns [...] into shapes" the "forms of things unknown" (5.1.14-17). Hamlet (1600-01) is stocked with dramatizing figures who attempt, in directorial fashion, to impose upon others a particular way of behaving or a specific role, such as the Ghost's transformation of Hamlet into an avenger figure. The pinnacle of

the call for an encore performance.

Troilus and Cressida's basic concern with issues of identity is evident in the unusually numerous requests for identification and the circumscriptions of a dramatic figure. The instances reveal that identity is either uncertain or dual. First, the seemingly conventional solicitations for self-identification actually betray the elusiveness of identity by demonstrating a pervasive inability to put name to famous face.[71] For example, Cressida asks her man, "Who were those went by?" (*TC* 1.2.1), failing to recognize her queen, Hecuba, and the face that "launch'd above a thousand ships" (2.2.83), Helen. Aeneas, sent as envoy to the Greek camp, inquires of Agamemnon as to the whereabouts of Agamemnon: "How may/A stranger to those most imperial looks/Know them from eyes of other mortals?" (1.3.222-24), and "Which is the high and mighty Agamemnon?" (1.3.231). Achilles gives to understand that there is a discrepancy between the face on view and the face imaged by reputation ("imperial looks"), and implies that Agamemnon's authority is not evident in his appearance. Perhaps the most amusing episode takes place between Cressida and her uncle, Pandarus. While watching the parade of famous warriors returning from battle, Pandarus, who at times does not seem so sure of the heroes himself, names the valiant for Cressida, who is unable to recognize any:

CRESSIDA: Who's that?

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director figures is, of course, The Tempest's (1611-12) Prospero, who orchestrates a host of island dwellers and castaways in his play-within-the-play before acceding his magical power to the audience—that is, before enslaving himself to the very audience he sought to fascinate.

[71] Charnes attributes to this "eclipse of the face" by "notorious identity" "the failure of 'reputation' to anchor, secure, and more simply, to render visible, an authorized identity" (433).

PANDARUS: That's Helenus—I marvel where Troilus is—that's Hele-
nus—I think he went not forth to-day—that's Helenus.

[...]

CRESSIDA: What sneaking fellow comes yonder?

(*Enter Troilus [and passes over].*)

PANDARUS: Where? Yonder? That's Deiphobus—'Tis Troilus!
There's a man, niece! Hem! Brave Troilus, the prince
of chivalry! (see 1.2.183-232)

Whether feigned or ingenuous, the failure on the part of the dramatic figures to

recognize one another is not, as in a play like Twelfth Night, the result of disguise;

rather, such questions as "who is" and "which is" intimate a gap between the face

imaged by fame and the face on view, and point to an underlying doubtfulness as to

identity *per se*.[72]

Moreover, the numerous attempts to define or fix who or what someone is

reveal a doubleness and divisiveness at work. For example, in a scurrilously comic

interlude, the identity of a figure as a for-itself is circumscribed in terms of an in-

itself, more a *for-others*:

ACHILLES: [...] Come, what's Agamemnon?

THERSITES: Thy commander, Achilles: then tell me Patroclus, what's
Achilles?

PATROCLUS: Thy lord, Thersites: then tell me I pray thee, what's
thyself?

THERSITES: Thy knower, Patroclus: then tell me Patroclus, what art
thou?

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[72] In John Kopper's view, "the endless confusions of identity in Troilus and Cressida have
broader ramifications. The characters in the play [...] live in a world where the correspondence of thing
and name no longer holds" (157).

PATROCLUS: Thou mayst tell that knowest.

ACHILLES: O tell, tell.

THERSITES: I'll decline the whole question. Agamemnon commands Achilles, Achilles is my lord, I am Patroclus' knower, and Patroclus is a fool.

[...]

THERSITES: Agamemnon is a fool, Achilles is a fool, Thersites is a fool, and, as aforesaid, Patroclus is a fool.

ACHILLES: Derive this; come.

THERSITES: Agamemnon is a fool to offer to command Achilles, Achilles is a fool to be commanded of Agamemnon, Thersites is a fool to serve such a fool, and this Patroclus is a fool positive. (*TC* 2.3.46-67)

With the exception of the fool-absolute, Patroculus, a given figure's nomination as "fool" is determined by his relation in the master-slave relationship.

The rhetorical strategy here that most effectively conveys duality and ambiguity is the paradox. A bawdy debate between Cressida and Pandarus about whether Troilus or Hector is the "better man" (1.2.67-98) "make[s] paradoxes" (1.3.184). In the exchange, the initial logical relations of identity—"Troilus is Troilus" (1.2.67) and "each [...] is himself" (1.2.70)—and non-identity—"[Troilus] is not Hector" (1.2.68) and "Hector is not Troilus" (1.2.69)—are subtly undermined by the ambiguous and contradictory declarations that "[Troilus is] not himself" (1.2.76) (where "himself" *ostensibly* refers to Hector, but might just as well refer self-reflexively to the subject, Troilus) and that Troilus' face is "brown and not brown" (1.2.97). When something both is and is not at the same time, alterity is introduced into subjective self-sameness, resulting in a fundamental cleavage of the self which marks many of the

dramatic figures.

Cressida is the prime example of, what Kopper calls, the "figures of heterology" (158). Her sexual inconstancy is couched in terms of ontological inconstancy. Cressida's prediction of her sexual infidelity to Troilus expresses, first, that she is a divided figure, and, second, that her perception of her own self is dependent on others, especially other men (Troilus and Diomedes): "I have a kind of self resides with you;/But an unkind self, that itself will leave/To be another's fool" (*TC* 3.2.146-48). Her lack of a non-relational self follows upon Pandarus' uncertain retort where he defines Cressida in terms of absolute alterity: "You are such another" (1.2.276). It, further, prepares the way for two scenes. The first is her introduction into the Greek camp during which her flirtation with the Greeks causes a split in others' perceptions of her, with Nestor commenting that she is "A woman of quick sense" (4.5.53) and Ulysses declaring her a "wanton" (4.5.56). The second is the assignation scene when Troilus witnesses her betrayal with Diomedes. The resultant shock to his reason leads him to comment: "This she?—No, this is Diomedes's Cressida" (5.2.136). His perception of Cressida as she relates to another leads to the paradoxical conclusion springing from his own riven reason: "This is, and is not, [his own] Cressid" (5.2.145). Echoes of this kind of relational defining will be heard in Witkiewicz's Kurka Wodna, Pirandello's Cosí è (se vi pare) (It *Is* So! [If You Think So]), Gombrowicz's Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda (Princess Ivona) and Genet's Les bonnes.

I agree with Richard Snyder's assessment that Troilus and Cressida is "cen-

trally concerned with the radical alternation of personality as it is perceived and as it perceives itself under radically altered circumstances" (211); however, I would push his statement by proposing that this unfixedness of identity opens the crack for otherness to destabilize further and even re-constitute the self. This is accomplished by foregrounding the performative aspect of human being within a variety of theatrical situations, such as pageants, staged scenes and "private showings," complete with actors, audience and director.[73] In these performance situations, everyone either, actively, attempts to impose a role or mask on the other or, passively, submits to being "paint[ed]" (*TC* 1.1.91), "pageant[ed]" (1.3.151), "read" (4.5.238), "form'd in the applause" (3.3.119), "s[u]ng" (5.2.10) or "dress[ed] up in voices" (1.3.382) by the other. This interplay of the active and the passive can be demonstrated by focusing on the two key aspects of this study of spectacle and textuality.

In a game of show-and-tell, Shakespeare sets up demonstrative and discursive performance situations that give play to changing audience perspectives and show the consequences for the formation of the subject. These situations present dramatic figures either gazing at, or subjected to the interpreting, authorizing, formative gaze of, the other. Furthermore, the gaze assumes a specular function: by turning a dramatic figure into a spectacle, the gaze provokes self-reflection, even self-knowledge on the part of *either* the spectated object (who narcissistically sees himself being seen) *or* the spectator (who sees himself in the other).

The first sequence of performance situations begins with Ulysses' description

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[73] See Richard Snyder's "Discovering a 'Dramaturgy of Human Relationships' in Shakespearean Metadrama: Troilus and Cressida" for a typology of metadramatic scenes.

of Patroclus' travestied verbal and gestural mimicry of Agamemnon, Nestor and the
other Greek generals for Achilles' private entertainment (1.3.146-84). Ulysses' verbal
description, which hinges on the basic gesturality of language in the theatre, is
demonstration, is itself a performance that functions reflexively: the goal of Ulysses'
verbal re-enactment (mimicry) of a travesty (mimed enactment) of the Greek leaders
is to demonstrate to the object of the original travesty and the spectator/listener of
the verbal re-enactment (the Greek leaders), the rampant anarchy in the Greek camp
that has been aggravated by their dis-regard and so, in making them re-gard, to put
them *en garde* and prompt them to act.[74]

This scene stands as precursive to the one in which Ulysses, relinquishing his
role as actor, directs those Greek generals to pass by and pretend to ignore Achilles,
after which he, in the guise of interpreter, will explain to Achilles that which was
shown him. Ulysses tells Agamemnon:

> Achilles stands i' th' entrance of his tent.
> Please it our general to pass strangely by him,
> As if he were forgot; and, princes all,
> Lay negligent and loose regard upon him.
> I will come last. 'Tis like he'll question me
> Why such unplausive eyes are bent, why turn'd on him.
> If so, I have derision medicinable
> To use between your strangeness and his pride,
> Which his own will shall have desire to drink.
> It may do good: pride hath no other glass
> To show itself but pride; for supple knees

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[74] Charnes calls Achilles' tent the "site of subversive theatre," because it is the "space where
legendary texts are transgressed by performance and mime" (430). Elizabeth Freund makes the apt
point that, in this scene, given the vaunting by the Greek generals, we are not really certain if "the
mimes cite, or quote, the characters of Nestor and Agamemnon, or [if] the characters playing these
figures cite the mimes" (31). That is, Patroclus' travesty may not be a travesty at all, but an accurate
mimicry.

Feed arrogance, and are the proud man's fees. (*TC* 3.3.38-49)

The intent behind this rather juvenile display of arrogance on the part of the legend-
ary warriors is, via the specular function of the gaze, to make Achilles cognizant that
he has grown arrogant and, in his arrogance, slothful. In a strategy similar to one
that Tieck will use in <u>Die verkehrte Welt</u>, Ulysses, by thus turning a mirror onto
Achilles, would provoke the lapsed hero to an encore heroic performance.

A discursive exchange between Ulysses and Achilles follows the show put on
by the generals. The exchange employs the visual and verbal metaphors of reflection
(mirror, echo), just as Ulysses uses the discursive (explanation) to buttress the
generals' visual display. The key theme is the necessary presence of others to provide
the means by which one may see, know and/or affirm one's self-identity:

ULYSSES: A strange fellow here
Writes me, that man, how dearly ever parted,
How much in having, or without or in,
Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
Nor feels not what he owes but by reflection,
As, when his virtues aiming upon others
Heat them, and they retort that heat again
To the first giver.

ACHILLES: This is not strange, Ulysses.
The beauty that is borne here in the face
The bearer knows not, but commends itself
To others' eyes; nor doth the eye itself,
That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself,
Not going from itself; but eye to eye opposed
Salutes each other with each other's form;
For speculation turns not to itself
Till it hath travell'd and is mirror'd there
Where it may see itself. This is not strange at all.

ULYSSES: [...]
That no man is the lord of anything,

> Though in and of him there be much consisting,
> Till he communicate his parts to others;
> Nor doth he of himself know them for aught,
> Till he behold them form'd in the applause
> Where th'are extended; who, like an arch, reverb'rate
> The voice again; or, like a gate of steel
> Fronting the sun, receives and renders back
> His figure and his heat. (3.3.95-123)

The basic argument of this exchange is that it is the confrontation with other persons that constitutes the decisive advent for self-seeing in the dual sense of perception and cognition. The gaze, then, functions to conceptualize the process whereby human beings are constituted in their outer appearance and inner possessions or worth, and, in thus being known by others, come to know themselves more fully. To recall the previous discussion on Bakhtin and the gaze, this exchange shows that the activity of informing the self about the self can only take place by the "excess of seeing" on the part of the other-gazer, who completes or affirms the self through the bestowal of a "consummating form."

The significance, then, of Ulysses' "Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back" speech (3.3.145-89) is elucidated. When who or what one is is reflected in the eyes of the other, identity, of consequence, must be a constantly changing thing dependent on the other, who is also constantly changing. Similarly, reputation—or how one is known and valued by others—is not instrinsic and static, as Achilles believes it is and as Shepard's Hoss (The Tooth of Crime) will realize only too well. Ulysses, thus, calls for the constant performance of heroic actions, as only "Perseverance/Keeps honour bright" (3.3.150-51).

The second sequence in which the spectator-spectated interplay functions

specularly is the assignation scene wherein Cressida betrays Troilus with Diomedes (5.2). Here, Shakespeare sets up an intricate grid of represented-representer which, in a scene anticipating Madame Irma's final address to the audience in Genet's Le balcon, ultimately implicates the spectators of Troilus and Cressida. Unbeknownst to Cressida and Diomedes, Troilus has convinced Ulysses to escort him into the camp, and the two look on the scene and comment on the action. Unbeknownst to Troilus and Ulysses, Thersites has followed them and similarly comments on both the assignation and Troilus' reactions to the scene. Shakespeare effectively puts the spectator in motion in order to achieve multiple viewpoints on a given subject matter: the different positions of the eavesdroppers create a variety of degrees of judgments about Cressida, in particular, and involvement with the stage action, in general. Where Douglas Sprigg regards this system functionally as "a series of mutually informing plays within plays, each with its own drama of reference" in order to ensure "that the slightest response from the upstage couple (Cressida and Diomedes) will be magnified by a chain reaction of responses from the series of eavesdroppers" (cited in Shurgot 49), Richard Snyder interprets this situation as a "satire on audience reaction itself"—from Thersites' "seething cynicism" to Ulysses' "bland worldly acceptance" and Troilus' "untested naiveté and self-righteousness" (205).

While these assessments are sound and justifiable, I think that a slightly different focus is needed, one that takes into consideration the play's overall concern with the value/identity of an individual as a function of the other. In Toward a Philosophy of the Act, Bakhtin explains that "a value-judgment about one and the

same person that is identical in its content ('he is bad') may have different actual intonations, depending on the actual, concrete center of values in the given circumstances" (63). In other words, the attempt to cast Cressida in varying colorations of falsity reveals more about the prejudgments and values of the interpreters than about the object of the interpretation—namely, Cressida, a self-acknowledged self-divided figure who comes to exist solely in the condition of the performer, as a multiplicity of representations for others. As a consequence, Cressida—a precursor of Pirandello's Signora Ponza, Gombrowicz's Iwona and Genet's Leïla—comes to stand, first, as a blank slate, overlaid with the individualized and concrete features of others, variously constituted by others as false; second, as a glass which reflexively rebounds back onto the interpreter.

If, as is done here, the performer is constituted as a whore, then the spectators are voyeurs, her "merchants" (*TC* 1.1.100-05), who set her price on a given market day. The assignation scene, by implicating the spectator in the interpretation of the actions of the performer-prostitute, is linked to Pandarus' final address to the audience wherein he implicates the viewers in this universal flesh market: the pandar refers to the audience in terms of himself as "Good traders in the flesh" (5.10.46) and "Brethren and sisters of the hold-door trade" (5.10.52) and would "bequeath" to them his "diseases" (5.10.57), no doubt sexually contracted.

Another way in which the play explores the interplay of the active and the passive in the constitution of identity is by invoking the "other" to the visual and the mimetic of theatrical production—namely, the textualization and intertextualization

of the dramatic figures. Shakespeare thematizes both the productive (writer-written) and receptive (reader-read) aspects of textuality through his dramatic figures.

According to Ricœur in Interpretation Theory, writing is the shaping of discursive matter into textual or scriptive form: "[t]here is production when a form is applied to some matter in order to shape it. When a discourse is transferred to the field of production it is also treated as a stuff to be shaped" (33). In Troilus and Cressida, Troilus serves, chiasmically, as both writer and written text. He treats himself as "stuff to be shaped" into scriptive form, setting himself up as "truth's authentic author to be cited" (TC 3.2.179) by others. After witnessing the encounter between Cressida and Diomedes, Troilus reiterates his dual status: "To make a recordation to my soul/Of every syllable that here was spoke" (5.2.115-16). In making a commemorative account to his "soul"—in fixing in his memory the discourse spoken by Cressida and Diomedes—Troilus effectively writes himself into a text which can be read and quoted, just as he cites himself (3.2.167; 3.2.180).

While Troilus treats himself as an authoritative text, even bestowing on himself the authority of autobiographer, Cressida is examined as a text. She is predetermined to be written, read and interpreted by others. Her features, gestures and voice are replaced by material marks. Troilus describes her thus: "Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice;/Handlest in thy discourse—O—that her hand,/In whose comparison all whites are ink,/Writing their own reproach" (1.1.54-57). Ulysses, badly trounced by the witty Cressida, reads Cressida as a "wanton" "tablet," who titilates her readers (4.5.55-61).

Cressida is not the only one to submit to being written and read by others, though she is the only one whose ontological status is determined purely in the object. Later in this scene, for example, there is an exchange between Achilles and Hector in which the two, gazing upon one another, transform each other metaphorically into a text to be read and re-read, quoted and (in)adequately interpreted by the other:

ACHILLES: [...] Now, Hector, I have fed mine eyes on thee;
I have with exact view perused thee, Hector,
And quoted joint by joint.

HECTOR: Is this Achilles?

ACHILLES: I am Achilles.

HECTOR: Stand fair, I prithee; let me look on thee.

ACHILLES: Behold thy fill.

HECTOR: Nay, I have done already.

ACHILLES: Thou are too brief. I will the second time,
As I would buy thee, view thee limb by limb.

HECTOR: O, like a book of sport thou'lt read me o'er;
But there's more in me than thou understand'st.
Why dost thou so oppress me with thine eye? (4.5.230-42)

Achilles and Hector have a double status, not accorded Cressida, of reader and read. Moreover, Hector understands that while the text (that is, his self) contains more than can be comprehended by a reader on the first, even second, reading, the other (gazer/reader) can still pose a threat ("oppress me with thine eye"), which is precisely the Father's dilemma in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore. In other words, just as the text has a subjective realization in the reading process as well as an objective status,

which is a call to multiple readings and more refined interpretations, so the human being participates in this dual ontological status of the for-itself and the in-itself which of necessity becomes a for-others.

The dramatic figures are also the site of an intertextual network. Like Ajax, they are all "dress[ed...] up in [the] voices" of others from the beginning (1.3.381), having been scripted by authors past. The intertextual situation is set up by Shakespeare's explicit transformation in the prologue of the epic narrative—through the invocation of the epic convention, "Beginning in the middle" (26)—into the dramatic mode ("To what might be digested in a play" [29]). Shakespeare takes figures that already resonate with meaning by using pre-established mythic narrative texts and works of medieval chivalry, such as Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Caxton's Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, Homer's epic and tales of chivalry.[75] Also, the figures make explicit allusions to Roman mythology (1.1.94; 5.2.87; 5.2.148-49) and cite from Aristotle (2.2.165-67) and Christopher Marlowe (2.2.83).

I will not discuss the details of Shakespeare's appropriation of other texts. Rather, I raise this issue in order to point up that this intertextual basis establishes a certain tension, not only in the text, but in the figures as well. On the one hand, as in the interplay between tradition (the sedimented paradigms) and innovation (the actual works) that is part of the production of a work of art (see Ricœur, Time and Narrative 1:68), so here, Shakespeare introduces a disjunction between his character and the legendary paradigm in order to interrogate various moral and ideological

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[75] See the introduction to the Arden edition of Troilus and Cressida for sources (22-38).

assumptions and values based on the chivalric code and to which the paradigmatic texts may subscribe.[76]

On the other hand, because the dramatic figures have legendary status, they are predetermined to act in a certain way. The most instructive scene is the one in which the Trojans discuss the wisdom of pursuing war: Hector rationally agrees with Cassandra in not pursuing war; yet, as if fated to ignore her, and despite his reasoning, he capitulates to Troilus' preferred course of action. Thus, just as Cressida is predetermined in the condition of being false, so personal agency is done away with, revealing an explicit teleology which subverts the notion of the dramatic agent as a free and indeterminate being who must choose her/his own being when confronted with certain necessities. If the essence of being a self-conscious agent lies in choice, in having other possibilities (self-making), then here there occurs a loss of self, as the characters are locked into a legendary role from which they cannot escape. The ultimate senselessness of the Trojan debate poignantly demonstrates that the dramatic figures, being characters in a play, are subject to a pre-written script.

In such a situation, all acting becomes simultaneously a being-enacted, and all performing, a being-performed. When dramatic figures, self-divided, are already other to themselves, extrinsic determination (by other persons and texts) begins to

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[76] Lawrence Green examines the discussions of chivalry by the characters and concludes that "[w]hatever else Shakespeare may be doing here [1.3], he is trying to bring before the audience the chivalric code by which all these warriors claim to live. [...] The purpose is not to measure the activities of the individual characters against a known standard, but to examine the stances and the code itself. [...] The disjunction in Troilus between ideals and behavior lays bare two major problems in the notion of chivalry itself. The first is the absence of any accepted standard for measuring value. The second is that Renaissance chivalry, for all its postures and glory, is basically dishonest" (35-37).

play an increasingly important role in the formation of the subject. The works

discussed here that are written in the twentieth century in particular attest to this

crucial, strengthening power of the other over the self.

III.   MARIVAUX'S LA DISPUTE: EDENIC SPECULATION, SPECTACLE, SPECULARITY

The theatre of Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux (1699-1763) straddles

two divergent traditions in eighteenth-century France: *la Comédie-française* and *le*

Théâtre italien, as the *commedia dell'arte* was known in France. It is Marivaux's link

with the latter of the two traditions that positions the playwright as precursor to

Ludwig Tieck and Pirandello.[77]

La Dispute (written in 1744, The Dispute) takes up the same thematic concern

as Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida—namely, inconstancy in love. Moreover, this

theme functions similarly as a premise for the exploration of the constitution of

selfhood through alterity. However, whereas in Troilus and Cressida, inconstancy

becomes a virulent structural principle that subversively cuts through the multiple

layers of the text to question the very notion of a stable personal and textual identity,

in La Dispute, where inconstancy in feeling is *equated* with inconstancy in being, it

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[77] Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, in "Il aura fallu près de trois siècles...," argues that Marivaux wrote less for his time than for posterity's sake. Jacques Scherer, in "Marivaux et Pirandello," researches Marivaux's modernity vis-à-vis the ideas shown in Pirandello's theatrical works. In "Pirandello et le théâtre français," Bernard Dort, explains the significance of Marivaux for modern theatre in terms of a pre-pirandellianism: "one could rediscover such forms in works anterior to Pirandello's. It would suffice for example to go back to the dramatists of the eighteenth century, to those close to the *commedia dell'arte*, and notably to Marivaux. Did not one of his characters in The Constant Players say: 'We pretend in order to pretend'—a phrase which is like an echo, almost two centuries earlier, of 'What is a stage?—You see... It is a place where one plays at playing for real. One plays the comedy of Six Characters'" (my translation, 111-12).

is passed through the filter of the Rococo and presented as a societal issue to be resolved by the mise-en-scène of the literal beginning of the interhuman world. In reconstructing the Edenic conditions of the first lovers, Marivaux provides a paradigm for a series of different, but mutually-informing, types or levels of representation: scientific, theatrical, cultural, social and ontological.[78] Fundamentally a play about about observation and the alternating relation between the subject and object of observation, La Dispute places the subject matter of anthropological speculation *en abyme* and transforms it into specularity: Marivaux shows Rococo society putting humanity, itself and the self on view.

The scientific premise is "une épreuve" ("an experiment")[79] set up by the Prince's father, who had built a facility in order to raise boys and girls in isolation from one another and the outside world, their only companions being their caretakers, an older, black couple named Carise and Mesrou. The intent of the experiment was to settle a dispute in the court over the question of whether it was man or woman who had committed the first infidelity in love. Eighteen or nineteen years later, the Prince brings his fiancée, Hermiane, to an observation gallery overlooking the garden facility on the day that the children (Églé and Azor, Adine and Mesrin) are to meet for the first time in order to witness the awakening of love.

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[78] Patrice Pavis, in Marivaux à l'épreuve de la scène (Marivaux), considers La Dispute as a game of representation, of which he specifies three types—scientific, social and theatrical—and where representation is the *mise en jeu* of action, trial and experimentation (381).

[79] La Dispute 2.7. All citations from Marivaux's La Dispute are referenced as ([*LD*] scene.line) and are taken from volume 2 of Théâtre de Marivaux. All English translations of Marivaux's works are mine.

The intent of the scientific experiment, couched in terms of an interrogation of nature itself (1.47-50), was to provide the opportunity for anthropological speculation. Speculation can be defined, according to Eugen Fink, as "a conceptual formula for the world deriving from a part of the world used as a model for the whole. [...] Wherever the laws, structure and plan of the universe repeat themselves symbolically *within* the world, this marks a philosophical key-phenomenon that can serve as the foundation of a speculative formula for the universe" (29). The closed, bracketed-off facility was designed to recreate "le premier âge du monde" (*LD* 2.22) ("the first age of the world") by the construction of a microcosmic locale, a veritable garden of Eden. The Prince's father reconstructed the conditions allowing for a simulation of, temporally, "[le] commencement du monde et de la société" (1.55) ("the beginning of the world and of society")—i.e., the pristine moment when primitive beings first emerge from their "womb" (2.19) to enter the social world— and, spatially, "le lieu du monde le plus sauvage et le plus solitaire" (1.1-2) ("the most wild and solitary of places in the world"). In this "organized ensemble, which is *closed*, but which, strangely, is representative of all the rest [in that it] possesses its symbols, its equivalents for everything that is not itself" (Merleau-Ponty's definition of world [*VI* 223]), the ultimate in absolute, unprecedented events will be presented—namely, Adam and Eve's awakening to themselves, new worlds, new persons, new loves. The couples, then, are to represent, in retrospect, the beginning of humanity. Moreover, as in the speculative construct, whereby the whole is represented in the part, they are to represent all of humanity. The placing on view of a speculative experiment is to

provide an incontrovertible answer ("décider la question sans réplique"[*LD* 1.48-49]),

and will, in leaving nothing to be desired (2.7-8), satisfy, as Pavis expresses, the

court's "desire to know" (Marivaux 381). This desire, however, is not satisfied in the

end as both sexes fail the test and the dispute continues.

Thus, from the perspective of La Dispute's audience, theatre is transformed

into a laboratory for nature. From the perspective of the Prince and Hermiane, the

natural or primordial state of humanity is presented as "un spectacle très curieux"

(*LD* 1.10) ("an unusual spectacle"), as theatrical representation. Play is given to the

double understanding of representation, as explained by John Caputo in Radical

Hermeneutics (139): first, as a "re-presenting of a prior presence" (the re-presenta-

tion of an original Edenic event); second, as "the enabling condition of possibility,

as a code of iterable, repeatable signs, which generates presence" (as in theatrical

representation where each performance is a repetition of an original script that,

nevertheless, in each variation, brings to presence something new). The Prince

explains the experiment in terms of theatrical improvisation arising out of the very

tradition in which Marivaux was grounded—namely, the *commedia dell'arte*,[80] which

was not so much an art of total invention and new expressivity as an art of

variation:[81] "les hommes et les femmes de ce temps-là vont reparaître à nos yeux tels

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[80] Strictly speaking, La Dispute was staged for *la Comédie-française* and not *le Théâtre italien*.

[81] See Pavis, Dictionnaire du théâtre 86. In the *commedia*, a cast of stock characters would not follow a preset script but would be given only a broad outline of the action, the details of which would be improvised and, therefore, subject to variation. In this play, the children may represent the same characters (Adam and Eve), but, as in improvisation, they enact of variation of a given event following only broad cues by Carise and Mesrou as to entering and exiting, all the while Hermiane (and the court), vis-à-vis the Prince, are provided with the basic outline of the plot.

qu'ils étaient, ou de moins tels qu'ils ont dû être; ce ne seront peut-être pas les mêmes aventures, mais ce seront les mêmes caractères; vous allez voir le même état de cœur, des âmes tout aussi neuves que les premières, encore plus neuves s'il est possible" (*LD* 1.57-64) ("the men and the women of that time will reappear before you as they were, or at least, as they must have been; these may not be the same events, but they will be the same characters; you will see the same state of the heart, souls as new as the first, even newer if that is possible").

The scientific representation, moreover, from the perspective of La Dispute's audience, is structured specularly as a play-within-the-play: both the internal (the interactions in the garden of Eden) and external plays (the interaction between Hermiane and the Prince) take up the theme of sexual infidelity. As did both Vives and Shakespeare and as will Tieck in Die verkehrte Welt, Pirandello in Ciascuno a suo modo (Each In His Own Way) and Genet in Le balcon, Marivaux explicitly treats the internal play as a spectacle to be watched and judged by the viewers. The Prince remarks: "on peut regarder le commerce qu'ils vont avoir ensemble comme le premier âge du monde; les premières amours vont recommencer, nous verrons ce qui en arrivera" (2.21-24) ("you can watch the commerce they will have with each other as it was in the first age of the world; the first loves are about to begin again, we will see what happens").

Marivaux thus sets up a structure for a series of observed observers: the theatre audience regards the action presented in a gallery from which Hermiane and the Prince observe the childrens' interaction. Such seeing, as Pavis explains in

Languages of the Stage, "gives an image of the *theatrical relationship* of the onlooker

[...]. Each gaze leveled on the other person encloses him in a play-within-the-play,

and in a relationship from which he can escape only by leveling his own gaze on

someone else" (89). This structure, moreover, is repeated in the internal play itself,

making the audience's gaze penetrate into the fictional world: first, through the

establishment of a series of eavesdropping scenes (*LD* 5, 9, 14);[82] second, by the

explicit lateral posing of the gaze of one internal character on another (the boys are

observers-desirers to the girls' observed-desired). Both the internal and external

plays end abruptly when the spectators' "desire to see" (Pavis' phrase) is fulfilled:

Hermiane categorically declares, "je n'en veux pas voir davantage" (20.1-2) ("I don't

want to see anymore"); Dina (who partners Meslis to make the ideal couple of

constancy) states disparagingly, "Tout est vu; allons-nous en" (20.27) ("Everything has

been seen; let's go").

The reconstruction of a representative garden of Eden and the employment

of the self-reflexive dramatic form of the play-within-the-play by which the concerns

of contemporary society are placed *en abyme* inform the third level of representation:

cultural, specifically, eighteenth-century French Rococo. At both the scientific and

the theatrical levels, the predominant Rococo technique of miniaturization, character-

ized by scaling down and representative reduction, is employed. Miniaturization can

be viewed as a form of specular duplication.

In La Dispute, the Rococo preoccupation with reflectional phenomena and

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[82] See William Trapnell's book, Eavesdropping in Marivaux (esp. 66-69).

miniaturization can be seen in the play's thematic concern with love, which during this period, as George Poe explains, was depicted by the figure of a narcissistic Venus, "frequently captured admiring herself or arranging her charms before a mirror (a recurring rococo motif) or pond" (28). In this play, Églé, shown in various situations either admiring herself or being admired by others, is this Venus figure. In fact, in the internal play, Marivaux employs a range of representations in miniature: the reflection in a stream, the discovery of which passes from pleasure and contemplation to self-love (*LD* 3.28-32); the reflection in the "doux" "regards" of another person (4.6); the miniature portrait, which is a "copy" (6.108) or representation (6.105) of a person; the reflection in a mirror (6.119); the "portrait" of the beloved held in the mind (6.116); the verbal descriptions of Églé by Adine, which paint a picture of her in reverse, that is, as ugly (12.36-50), and by Azor (13.36-37). Marivaux presents the multiple ways by which the image of a person is reflected and miniaturized, and stresses the link between the image and the desire either, in the women's case, to be seen by others, or, in the men's case, to see others. This type of proliferation of the image and its narcisssistic function predate Genet's apotheosis of the reflection and his presentation of various procedures for multiplying images (see esp. Le balcon); however, as I show in the fifth chapter, even though in Genet's works reflectional phenomena similarly convey a desire to be seen, they have a different ontological significance in that the image is related ultimately to death of the self, and not *only* to its constitution.

In La Dispute, the diverse reflectional phenomena spiral the audience's gaze

inward. At the same time, in a movement that Tieck, Pirandello and Genet will also make, there is a directedness outward, back toward the audience, here, the onlooking Rococo society.[83] This is the junction of the cultural and social levels of representation. George Poe makes the following observation: the "swirling scrolls of the shellwork" forming the basis of the Rococo aesthetics are, actually, "'open-ended' structures." He, then, raises the question: "do they manifest a perpetual and abysmal turning-in upon themselves, or are they spinning themselves out into infinite space?" (18). In other words, the representation does not only turn the gaze inward on the representation, but also turns it back outward, onto the world to which the gaze belongs.

It is Hermiane who provides both the focal and view points at this level: she represents the court in the external play and is to judge the dispute revolving around the issue of inconstancy. All eyes focus on her standing in the observation gallery as she (an active, interpreting spectator) focuses on the scene before her. Moreover, Hermiane has a correlate in the internal world—namely, Églé.[84] Hermiane is the point of chiasm between the internal and external worlds. As Pavis points out in Marivaux, the specularity between these worlds is made evident in two ways (411): the children were taught the speech of the court members (LD 2.20); the children

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[83] George Poe argues that Marivaux's "works are meant to be literal reflections of—and for—his own age. [...They are] subtle examinations of particular men/women representative of a specific societal sector, and contemporary theatergoers and readers surely recognized themselves in our author's work and were narcissistically gratified thereby" (224).

[84] This correlation is conveyed by the similarity in their discourse at the beginning of the play. As she is led into the new world by Carise, Églé's opening lines repeat the descriptive manner, the questioning and explicatives of Hermiane's speech as the Prince introduces her to the experimental facility.

are encouraged to take the servants, who cross between the inner and outer worlds, as an example of constancy (6). In short, the spectacle in the internal play is the specular image of the social world; the observed object is a reflection of the observers.

The last level of representation explored in La Dispute is ontological. The play's theme of inconstancy in love, which fuels the social dispute and provides the premise for a scientific experiment, is treated as ontological inconstancy. Feeling is equated with being. To Carise's warning that Azor and Églé will stop feeling that they are charming to one another if they see too much of each other, Églé retorts with, "qu'est-ce qui nous empêchera de le sentir, puisque nous le sommes?" (6.62-63) (literally, "what will prevent us from feeling it, since we are it?"). The verbal assertion against infidelity and of constancy—first by Azor's "Églé sera toujours Églé" (6.64) ("Églé will always be Églé") and, then, reiterated and buttressed by Églé's "Azor sera toujours Azor" (6.65) ("Azor will always be Azor")—is expressed in the ontological terms of *self*-constancy, *self-identity*. Of course, the assertions are destined to fall by the wayside, the reason being, as George Poulet explains, "[i]n a world in which everything is reduced to being only what one feels, and for only just as long as one feels it, there is no true permanence: no fidelity is possible to oneself or to others" (24).

More fundamentally, La Dispute stages the birth of primitive beings from

"leur enceinte" (*LD* 2.19) ("their womb"), from their enclosed and solitary worlds.[85]

Upon their emergence into an intersubjective world, they begin to take shape with respect to themselves and the other. This process takes place, under the tutelage of Carise and Mesrou, through instruction on how to recognize sameness and difference, resemblance and otherness—a knowledge that is enabled by specular phenomena and the visual faculty. Marivaux's employment of a multitude of specular phenomena (the reflection in the stream, the reflection in the eyes of the other, the mirror) and miniaturizations (the pictorial and verbal portraits), then, does not simply have significance as a cultural indicator; these phenomena, furthermore, are carriers of ontological import.

Églé begins to become aware of herself only when she sees herself for the first time as a reflection in a stream. In what amounts to an "ontological catastrophe,"[86] she sees herself as another person and in the object, and then comprehends her reflection as an other who is constantly there (that is, as not requiring her presence for its continued existence) (*LD* 4.60-61).[87] In other words, "pure seer" (in scene 3,

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[85] Despite the fact that the children were cared for by Carise and Mesrou, and so were not actually alone, the Prince makes clear that the choice of *black* servants was intended to ensure that the children would be more astonished on seeing other *white* people (*LD* 2.13-18).

[86] This is Merleau-Ponty's term: "this has no meaning for man taken as pure vision: he does indeed have the conviction of going unto the things themselves, but, surprised in the act of seeing, suddenly he becomes one of them, and there is no passage from one view to the other. Pure seer, he becomes a thing seen through an ontological catastrophe, through a pure event which is for him the impossible" (*VI* 83).

[87] Lacan's concept of the "mirror stage" might prove elucidating here. According to Lacan, the infant (which is basically what Églé is) upon seeing its image in the mirror as a coherent whole, misrecognizes itself as a completely autonomous other. Identity, then, is always narcissistic: the perceived other is always a version of the self, in rivalry (the two young women define each other in terms of how the other is lacking compared with the self) or desire (the self is the point of departure for recognizing the otherness of the other sex).

emphasis is on Églé's wonderment at the sights in her new world and on her gazing at her reflection), Églé, through an act of seeing, undergoes a transformation into "pure seen."

ÉGLÉ (*regardant*):
Ah! Carise, approchez, venez voir; il y a quelque chose qui habite dans le ruisseau qui est fait comme une personne, et elle paraît *aussi étonnée de moi que je le suis d'elle*.

CARISE (*riant*):
Eh! non, *c'est vous que vous y voyez*; tous les ruisseaux font cet effet-là.

ÉGLÉ:
Quoi! *c'est là moi*, c'est mon visage!

CARISE:
Sans doute.

ÉGLÉ:
Mais savez-vous bien que cela est très beau, que cela fait un objet charmant? Quel dommage de ne l'avoir pas su plus tôt!

[...]

ÉGLÉ:
Comment, belle? admirable! *cette découverte-là m'enchante. (Elle se regarde encore.)* Le ruisseau fait toutes mes mines, et toutes me plaisent. Vous devez avoir eu bien du plaisir à me regarder, Mesrou et vous. Je passerais ma vie à me contempler; *que je vais m'aimer à présent*! (emphasis added, 3.15-32)

(ÉGLÉ [*looking*]:
Carise, come here, come and see! There is something living in the stream which is made like a person, and *it seems as surprised of me as I am of it.*

CARISE [*laughing*]:
Eh! No, *it's yourself you're seeing.* All streams do that.

ÉGLÉ:
What! *That's me there?* That's my face?

CARISE:
Without a doubt.

ÉGLÉ: But do you know that it's very beautiful. Yes, it is a
         most enchanting object! If only I'd known that before!

[...]

ÉGLÉ: What, beautiful? Ravishing! *That discovery there en-*
         chants me. [*She looks at herself again.*] The stream
         makes all of my expressions and they all appeal to me.
         You and Mesrou must have been very happy to look at
         me. I could spend my whole life looking at myself. Oh,
         I'm going to love myself from now on.)

In this initial act of self-recognition, the physical, episodic event of the body's

reflection in the stream is the ontic pretext for an ontological event of *autoscopy*, or

self-observation. Églé's cognition and constitution of herself as "un objet *charmant*"

are underscored in the passage's verbal play: in "c'est *vous* que *vous* y voyez," the

subject-"vous" sees the object-"vous," a repetition enhanced by the use of the same

word for both the subject and the emphatic object pronoun; in "c'est là moi" and

"cette découverte-là," the subject displaces herself from herself in the object. The

experience of the reflection in the stream, then, in provoking an attitude of self-

seeing, creates a specular image (or the image of the self) as charming. Merleau-

Ponty explains the process in the following way in "The Child's Relations with

Others": "the visual image [the child] acquires of his own body (especially from the

mirror) reveals to him a hitherto unsuspected isolation of two subjects who are facing

each other. The objectification of his own body discloses to the child his difference,

his 'insularity,' and, correlatively, that of others" (119).

The process implicates two forms of narcissism. The first is that seeing her

own face leads to an awareness that she has been being-seen by the caretakers, which

must have caused the positive affective response of pleasure in them. Merleau-Ponty

explains: "to feel one's body is also to feel its aspect for the other," to anticipate "the other's effective perception" (*VI* 245). Or, in Lacanian terms, to recognize her image in the mirror means to learn there can be a viewpoint taken on her. Because the gaze here modalizes the object as desired, the second form of narcissism is self-admiration or auto-eroticism ("que je vais *m*'aimer"). The link between feeling and being is reinforced.

This situation is revelatory of the progression of the primordial constitution of selfhood from a system of mirrors and admiring gazes, from the presence of the other in the intersubjective world. It is this basic situation that threads through this study, culminating in Genet's Les paravents. In La Dispute, the initial conception of the individual is as something neutral, indeterminate, undifferentiated—a person, an object, a figure, a species (*LD* 9.1-9). At first, the children are unable to differentiate between the abstract notion (person, man, woman) and the concrete individual that appears: "le cher Azor! le cher homme!" (5.20-21) ("Dear Azor! Dear man!"); "Azor, mon Azor, venez vite, l'homme" (5.25) ("Azor, my Azor, come quickly, man"). Nor can they distinguish between the proper name of a person and the type s/he represents: "ce n'est pas là un Azor. (*Elle se regarde dans son miroir.*) C'est encore moins qu'une Églé" (9.4-5) ("that is not an Azor. [*She looks at herself in a mirror.*] It's not even an Églé"); "c'est une Églé" (12.36) ("it's an Églé"). The boys and girls both use the feminine form designating person (*la personne*) for both sexes. For example, Églé says of Azor, "Qu'est-ce que c'est que cela, une personne comme moi?" (4.2-3) ("What is that, a person like me?"). After a short exchange, Églé

continues: "*Elle* obéit; venez donc tout à fait [...]. (*Il vient.*) Ah! *la* voilà, c'est vous; qu'*elle est bien faite*! en vérité, vous êtes aussi *belle* que moi" (emphasis added, 4.21-23) ("[The person] *She* obeys; well then, come here [...]. [*He approaches.*] Ah! There *she* is, it's you; how *well made she is*! Truly, you are as beautiful [in the feminine] as I am"). When "il" ("he") is used for the first time with respect to Azor, it is in reference to Azor as "un objet" (5.12-16).

From this state of undifferentiatedness, the self begins to take shape pre-eminently through commerce with others and through a recognition of various forms of alterity.[88] Or, from an initial insight into resemblance or sameness, there is the growing realization of difference or otherness, as captured in this early exchange:

ÉGLÉ:	[...] *nous nous ressemblons* en tout.
AZOR:	Oh! *quelle différence*! tout ce que je suis ne vaut pas vos yeux; ils sont si tendres!
ÉGLÉ:	Les vôtres si vifs!
AZOR:	Vous êtes si mignonne, si délicate!
ÉGLÉ:	Oui, mais je vous assure qu'il vous sied fort bien de ne l'être pas autant que moi; je ne voudrais pas que vous fussiez autrement, *c'est une autre perfection; je ne nie pas la mienne; gardez-moi la vôtre.* (emphasis added, 4.38-47)
(ÉGLÉ:	[...] *we resemble each other* in all things.

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[88] Bernard Dort explains in "À la recherche de l'Amour et de la Vérité: Esquisse d'un système marivaudien": "[a]fter having been born to the world and herself, Églé is born for the other and the other for her. This surprise surpasses all the others. She founds a new way of being: Églé and Azor will return to their forest no more. This single instant effaces the eighteen or nineteen years that have passed: they now know that they have not yet lived. [...] In this 'moment-éclair' [Poulet] of surprise, the marivaudien character is discovered. He sees himself and he sees the other. He recognizes the other as himself and perceives himself as the other" (my translation, 41-42).

AZOR:	Oh, no, *there's such a difference*! All that I am cannot compare to your eyes; they are so soft.
ÉGLÉ:	Yours are so lively!
AZOR:	You're so pretty, so delicate!
ÉGLÉ:	Yes, but I assure you it wouldn't suit you to be as pretty as I am. I wouldn't want you to be any different from the way you are. *It's another kind of perfection. I don't deny mine, but you must keep yours.*)

Alterity is specified according to the following criteria, elaborated by both Pavis and

Michel Deguy,[89] by which the children gradually learn to distinguish and define others

and themselves: sex (male and female: "L'un est l'homme, et l'autre la femme" [*LD*

6.6] ["One is the man and the other the woman"]); race (Églé says to Mesrou and

Carise, "cela peut vous être bon à vous autres qui êtes tous deux si noirs" [6.30-31]

["that might be good for you, you two are so black"]; Azor tells Mesrin that he does

indeed know persons, "deux noires et une blanche" [13.14] ["two black and one

white"]); power relations that are either sexual (Églé says of Azor, "je ne suis donc

pas la maîtresse?" [15.53-54] ["am I no longer the mistress?"]) or social (when Carise

attempts unsuccessfully to assert authority over Mesrin by saying that she and Mesrou

are the children's masters, Mesrin revolts by asking what a "master" is [16.5-8]); age

(young and old); beauty, which is denied to blacks (6.30-33) and to the rival (9, 10).

Most significant is the determination of the individual as either spectating or

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[89] In Marivaux, Pavis argues that each character-subject is defined by a double: woman versus man; master versus victim or guinea pig; sister versus brother; desirer versus desired (373). Michel Deguy, in La machine matrimoniale ou Marivaux, specifies four types of difference: numerical (self and other), sexual (desire, male and female), social (master and servant), generational (children and parents) (see 179-193).

spectated, and, concomitantly, given the modalization of the gaze, as desiring subject

or desired object. For example, when Azor and Églé first look at one another, they

paint a verbal picture of the other in turn, thus consummating the other to the other

and constituting the other for the audience: Églé in her softness and Azor in his

vitality, each of which is highly desirable to the other.[90] Merleau-Ponty explains the

process whereby the gaze of the other, who is conceived metaphorically as a reflec-

tion of the self (as specular image), helps to complete the individual in those ways

in which the individual cannot complete the self:

> the other's body which I see and his word which I hear, [...] *do*
> *present to me in their own fashion what I will never be present to*,
> what will always be invisible to me[...—...]a certain absence and
> a certain difference in terms of dimensions which are from the
> first common to us and which predestine the other to be a
> mirror of me as I am of him [...]. It is perhaps all that that is
> meant when it is said that the other is the x responsible for my
> being-seen. But then it would be necessary to add that he can
> be this only because I see that he looks at me, and that he can
> look at me—me, the invisible—only because we belong to the
> same system of being for itself and being for another. (*VI* 82-
> 83)

The spectator, then, does not remain passive, but becomes a constitutive part of the

spectated's selfhood. Azor's softened gaze confirms and buttresses what Églé, in

becoming other to herself, suspected when looking in the stream—namely, her

desirability to others.

Moreover, this position of being-looked at, being-*admired*—i.e., regarded with

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[90] Here is a verbal demonstration, effected through the gaze, of Marivaux's conception of the interhuman relation as expressed in "Cinquième feuille" from Le Spectateur français: "à cela près que nous vivons et que nous pensons, nous sommes tous des tableaux, les uns pour les autres" (134) ("inasmuch as we live and think, we are all paintings/slates, each for the other").

pleasure and approval, mixed with wonder—becomes the desired and expected one in the male-female relation for both women. This is important, as where Genet will broaden the scope of the admirer-admired relation, Gombrowicz will invert and re-valuate it in <u>Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda</u>. The situation is complicated when the two women meet alone, both expecting their beauty to charm the other, in other words, to be the one admired by the other:

ADINE: Mais n'êtes-vous pas charmée de moi?

ÉGLÉ: De vous? C'est moi qui charme les autres.

ADINE: Quoi! vous n'êtes pas bien aise de me voir?

ÉGLÉ: Hélas! ni bien aise ni fachée; qu'est-ce que cela me fait?

ADINE: Voilà qui est particulier! vous me considérez, je me montre, et vous ne sentez rien! C'est que vous regardez ailleurs; contemplez-moi un peu attentivement; là, comment me trouvez-vous?

ÉGLÉ: Mais qu'est-ce que c'est que vous? Est-il question de vous? Je vous dis que c'est d'abord moi qu'on voit, moi qu'on informe de ce qu'on pense; voilà comme cela se pratique, et vous voulez que ce soit moi qui vous contemple pendant que je suis présente! (*LD* 9.16-29)

(ADINE: But aren't you charmed by me?

ÉGLÉ: By you? I am the one who charms others.

ADINE: What? You're not overjoyed to see me?

ÉGLÉ: Neither overjoyed nor displeased. Why should I care?

ADINE: This is very strange. You consider me, I show myself, and you feel nothing! You must be looking somewhere else: contemplate me with a little more care. Now. How do you find me?

> ÉGLÉ: But what are you? Are you even at issue? I tell you
> that I'm the one who is gazed upon, I'm the one who's
> told about what one thinks of me. That's how it is. And
> you want me to contemplate you while I am here!)

Whereas when Azor and Mesrin meet for the first time, there is only camaraderie, here a dispute arises as to which one deserves to be admired, to be gazed upon and spoken to, which is the one who is enchanting (10.5-10, 30-32; 12.25-50). When Adine's hostile, unadmiring gaze shakes Églé's self-certainty, it is the mirror that confirms to Églé her own desirability that was evident in Azor's eyes and the stream (*LD* 9.67-68): it replaces the gaze and voice of the absent other (Azor) with her own image.[91] For her part, Adine rushes to have her desirability affirmed by Mesrin.

La Dispute is concerned fundamentally, then, with the dynamic interplay and interchange between spectating subject and spectated object, an interplay which comes to expression through the construction of a specular world. In staging the constitutive and interpretive aspects of the gaze and specularity, Marivaux demonstrates that each, in turn, gazes and is gazed at, studies and is studied by, the other.[92] Marivaux sums up this interplay in the intersubjective world in his essay, "Réflexions sur l'esprit humain à l'occasion de Corneille et de Racine": "[c]'est la société, c'est toute l'humanité qui en tient la seule école qui soit convenable, école toujours ouverte, où tout homme étudie les autres et en est étudié à son tour; où tout homme

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[91] See Pavis' full discussion in Marivaux of the functions to which the mirror is put (409-12).

[92] Or, as Harold Schaad succinctly sums up in Le thème de l'être et du paraître dans l'œuvre de Marivaux: "[i]n the marivaudien universe, the character gazes at someone who gazes at him. The play of exchanged gazes does not remain simple play. It becomes more refined: the gaze becomes more penetrating, scrutinizing and interpreting of what takes place before it. The marivaudien spectator does not remain passive, s/he becomes a spectator and interprets" (my translation, 19).

est tour à tour écolier et maître" (476) ("[i]t is society, it is all of humanity which keeps the only suitable school, a school which is always open, where each person studies the others and is studied in turn; where each person is in turn pupil and teacher"). It is this reversibility of spectator and spectated functioning to promote a self-seeing on the spectator's part, and the concomitant coming of the self to awareness attained through a commerce with others by which one learns to recognize sameness and difference, that are central in this study of specularity in theatre.

IV.   LUDWIG TIECK'S DIE VERKEHRTE WELT: SELF-AS-OTHER, OTHER-AS-SELF

Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) is an important figure in this constructed historical contextualization of specular theatre. In line with writers such as Shakespeare and Cervantes, influenced by the *commedia dell'arte* as it came to Germany via the eighteenth-century France of Marivaux and by the German folk tradition of the *Hanswurst*, and grounded in the intellectual climate of early German Romanticism, his work anticipates the self-reflexive strain in modern drama. In particular, his masterpieces, Der gestiefelte Kater (1797, Puss 'n Boots) and Die verkehrte Welt (1798, The World Upside Down), which satirize contemporary Enlightenment literary, moral and political attitudes by the mise-en-scène of societal representatives as audience to a Romantic play,[93] and which present the interpenetration of diverse levels of fictive reality and the simultaneous playing of multiple roles, announce

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[93] For example, in Der gestiefelte Kater, there is an attempt by a group of players to present a play based on the fairy tale, while a fictive audience comments on and interrupts the play. The internal audience's naive reading of the play-within-the-play, which is based upon the ruling conventions and expectations of the time, becomes the object of satire.

Pirandello's questioning of the relationship between reality and illusion in his theatre trilogy,[94] Gombrowicz's radical fracturing of the human being into myriad masks and Genet's intertwining of spectacle and spectator.

Tieck belonged to the influential Jena School of early German Romanticism (1799-1801), which counted among its members the critics, Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel. Tieck's plays can be viewed as the elaboration in the poetic and visual realm of philosophical discourse, in particular, the transcendental turn that hermeneutic thought, fuelled by Kant's Copernican Revolution—i.e., the radical *turning away from* the thing-in-itself (*das Ding an sich*) as the object of cognition and *turning toward* the subject and the subject's mode of knowing objects[95]—underwent at the time.

Without going into a lengthy exposition of the aesthetic and philosophical program of the early German Romantics or becoming embroiled in the debate on the (in)appropriateness of applying their theories to Tieck's work,[96] and at the risk of

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[94] Pirandello's familiarity with the work of Tieck and the German Romantics, possibly a result of his studies in Bonn, is made explicit by his reference to Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel in his essay, "L'umorismo": "l'ironia: cioè quella forza—secondo il Tieck—che permette al poeta di dominar la materia che tratta; materia che riduce per essa—secondo Frederico Schlegel—a una perpetua parodia, a una farsa transcendentale" (22) ("irony: that is, that power which—according to Tieck—permits the poet to master the material he treats; material which through it—according to Friedrich Schlegel—he reduces to perpetual parody, to transcendental farce" [my translation]). Later in this essay, Pirandello also discusses Schlegel's take on Schiller's notion of *Spieltrieb* (24).

[95] "I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*" (Kant, Critique of Pure Reason 59). Kant's basic argument is that we can never know the thing-in-itself prior to its synthesis by the various forms of intuition.

[96] On this score, I would agree with Roger Paulin's assessment in Ludwig Tieck: A Literary Biography: "[i]t would, however, be possible, and more reasonable also, to imagine a coincidence of ideas from the now converging areas of poetry and criticsm, with Tieck's poetic utterance, by nature reducing critical insight to essentials and at the same time expanding it in figure and image" (86). In

eliding complex issues, I limit myself to a few remarks that I think are pertinent to

the work at hand.

In their own turn away from nature and toward the human being,[97] the early

German Romantics laid the groundwork for harnessing the power of the reflexive

faculty to the goal of attaining a new level of self-understanding. In literary and

theatrical works of art, the turn toward the subject entailed a revisioning of the

concept of art away from the notion that it should produce only a complete illusion,

and toward a duality involving an interplay between the creation or affirmation of

illusionism, and its destruction or negation. In other words, there was an understand-

ing that poetic discourse should, through its representations, also represent or reflect

back on itself.[98] It should include its own theory, its own critique.[99] Glossing

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particular, the appropriateness of applying Friedrich Schlegel's theory of romantic irony to Tieck's work has had its adherents and detractors, the former arguing for the convergence of ideas and their professional and personal association in the late 1700s, the latter arguing, chronologically, that F. Schlegel's work on romantic irony in Anthenaeum was published in the early 1800s, a few years after Tieck had already written Der gestiefelte Kater and Die verkehrte Welt.

[97] "The clarity, the emphasis, the abundance, and manifoldness in which the universe mirrors itself in a human mind, and in which this mirroring mirrors itself in him, determines the degree of his artistic genius and enables him to form a world within the world." The principle of imitation of nature turns into its contrary: "[i]n art, the human being is the norm of nature" (August Wilhelm Schlegel, Kritische Ausgabe der Vorlesungen 1:259; cited in Behler 86).

[98] In #110 of the Anthenaeum Fragments, August Wilhelm Schlegel writes: "[i]t is a sublime taste always to like things better when they've been raised to the second power. For example, copies of imitations, critiques of reviews, addenda to additions, commentaries on notes" (31).

[99] Friedrich Schlegel writes in #238 of the Anthenaeum Fragments: "[b]ut just as we wouldn't think much of an uncritical transcendental philosophy that doesn't represent the producer along with the product and contain at the same time within the system of transcendental thought a description of transcendental thinking: so too this sort of poetry should unite the transcendental raw materials and preliminaries of a theory of poetic activity—often met with in modern poets—with the artistic reflection and beautiful self-mirroring [...]. In all its descriptions, this poetry should describe itself, and always be simultaneously poetry and the poetry of poetry" (50-51). Azade Seyhan explains that the Jena Romantics, especially Friedrich Schlegel, "define the status of literature as a representation of philosophy, an aesthetic reflection of a concept." They consider the literary work "to be inscribing onto itself the

Friedrich Schlegel's comment in <u>Discourse About Poetry</u> that the "inner representa-

tion [*Vorstellung*] can become clearer to itself and quite alive only through the

external representation [*Darstellung*]," Azade Seyhan explains that, for the Romantics,

the figural or representational form (*Darstellungsform*) became "the medium of the

reflective function" and, through this, "the medium of knowledge constituted in

reflection" (8). The Romantics thus incorporated a critical praxis in the work of art

with the goal of, first, reflexively, making the audience conscious of the *Schein* or

Spiel and, second, self-reflexively, promoting self-understanding.

In #116 of the <u>Anthenaeum Fragments</u>, Friedrich Schlegel defines Romantic

poetry in a way that suggests a structural link with the particular form of the perfor-

mance situation of the play-within-the-play, especially as employed by Tieck in <u>Die</u>

<u>verkehrte Welt</u>:

> [Romantic poetry] alone can become [...] a mirror of the whole
> circumambient world, an image of the age. And it can also—
> more than any other form—hover at the midpoint between the
> portrayed [*Dargestellten*] and the portrayer [*Darstellenden*], free
> of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflec-
> tion, and can raise the reflection again and again to a higher
> power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors. It is
> capable of the highest and most variegated refinement, not only
> from within outwards, but also from without inwards; capable
> in that it organizes—for everything that seeks a wholeness in its
> effects—the parts along similar lines, so that it opens up a
> perspective upon an infinitely increasing classicism. (31-32)

Three major points are made here: first, the representational power of Romantic

poetry to hold a mirror up to the contemporary world; second, the inscription within

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condition of its own production and producing its own truth." As a result, Seyhan continues, "literature
creates its own theory as its being written" (8), something that we will see again in the work of
Pirandello and, most certainly, Witkiewicz.

129

the representational form of a critique or reflection on it; third, in terms of structure, the repetition of a given content of the whole in the parts (specular duplication).

Fritz Strich discusses the connection between this definition of Romantic poetry and Tieck's version of the play-within-the-play :

> [t]he spectators experience themselves as doubled and become their own spectator. The spectators cast their own gaze upon themselves and not upon the space. This reflexivity [Spiegelung] can be multiplied at will. In Die verkehrte Welt, a theatre play is played out once more within the play-within-the-play: the reflected image [Spiegelbild] is reflected one more time in a mirror [Spiegel]. It is like Friedrich Schlegel's formula: the Romantic spirit implies an infinite reflexion [Reflexion], an infinite reflexivity [Spiegelung] of reflected images [Spiegelbild]. (my translation, 295)

Strich appropriately focuses on the effect of the mise-en-abyme structural form, not only to draw the spectators into the theatrical space by the internal representation/duplication of the audience, but more importantly, in a reflex, to reflect back onto the spectators themselves and hence—as was the case in Troilus and Cressida and La Dispute—in the specular move, occasion a self-seeing.

Here, I focus on one sequence (3.5) in which, through the play-within-the-play performance situation, the schema of duplicating identity as difference and of doubling the self through the creation of what Schmeling in Das Spiel im Spiel calls Personenkonstellation, or "character-constellations" (167), for the purpose of achieving an insight into the self, is repeated ad infinitum. The dramatic situation is as follows. Die verkehrte Welt tells the story of how the comic actor, Skaramuz (Scaramuccio), overthrew the serious character, Apollo, and how Apollo, along with the audience,

tried and failed to regain possession of the theatre.[100] This is the play-within-the-play

(or second-degree play), for which the first-degree play is the audience composed of

Scävola, initially Grünhelm and then Pierrot, Wachtel and others representing

Enlightenment society. In this second-degree play, Skaramuz-as-Apollo has forbid-

den Melpomene (his tragic muse who, before assuming this role, was called Caroline)

to leave Parnassus and marry her (Caroline's) lover, the Stranger. Along with some

guests, he sits down to watch a masquerade staged by Melpomene and the Stranger,

with help from Grünhelm and Thalia (the comic muse), all the while the audience

of the first-degree play watches and comments. The intent of this third-degree play

is to represent their own situation so as to affect Skaramuz-as-Apollo and have him

change his decision about keeping Caroline-as-Melpomene. So, Caroline-as-Melpo-

mene and the Stranger assume the roles of others (those of Emily and the Young

Man) in order to play themselves while someone else plays the Father who repre-

sents Skaramuz-as-Apollo. As in the three previously discussed texts, where the

spectator watches her/himself being staged, here, Skaramuz-as-Apollo watches himself

being represented. The parallel between Skaramuz-as-Apollo and the Father of the

third-degree play is made abundantly clear when it is mentioned that the play being

staged on both levels is to honour the respective patriarchs' birthdays.[101] That is, the

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[100] As in the mirror image which repeats but reverses the subject, so the *coup de théâtre* effected by the comic figure sets about a reversal in the dramatic world which echoes through the multiple layers of the work: structural (the inversion of the epilogue and prologue), actional (the exchange of roles between the spectator, Grünhelm, and the actor, Pierrot) and thematic (the inversion of the master-slave relation in all its permutations [4.1, 4.2]).

[101] Die verkehrte Welt 314. Subsequent citations from this text are referenced as ([DVW] page). The translations in English are mine.

Stranger-as-Young Man and Caroline-as-Melpomene-as-Emily stage a fourth-degree play in a small theatre to entertain Emily's father and a group of guests on the occasion of the Father's birthday. In this fourth-degree play, the Stranger-as-Young Man plays Fernando, and Caroline-as-Melpomene-as-Emily plays Laura. The fourth-degree play is directed toward the Father for the purpose of affecting him so that they can confess their love for one another to him. The Stranger-as-Young Man lays bare their strategy as being to represent their own situation to the Father who, in being enlightened, will give the children his blessing: "Wir wollen ihm durch ein Schauspiel Freude machen, und wir benutzen dieses Schauspiel, uns und unsre Situation darzustellen" (315) ("With this play we wish to give him pleasure, and we use this play to represent us and our situation"). So, again, while the Father watches on, the lovers represent themselves by playing the other, while the Father is represented by another, here Claudio. This fourth-degree play, a poetic drama, actually is composed of two analogous and self-reflecting parts: first, a pastoral, in which a shepherd and shepherdess confess their love for one another; second, Laura's and Fernando's tragic situation of a cruel father who forbids them to marry. This portrayal of the father figure, Claudio, causes the Father of the third-degree play to say that, were he Claudio, he would give his consent to the lovers. The Father permits Emily and the Young Man to marry, an act with which Skaramuz-as-Apollo (in the second-degree play) agrees, though his reasoning is less self-enlightened than self-serving, as he is hungry. At the end of this sequence, Skaramuz-as-Apollo too allows Caroline-as-Melpomene to leave the theatre (Parnassus) and marry the

Stranger.

On the one hand, the audience is presented with the turning in of the specta-cle on itself vis-à-vis the specular duplication of structural, thematic, figural and situational elements belonging to the respective outer play in the inner. On the other, there is a turning back outward of the spectacle onto the spectator. This outward movement is effected by shattering the frames of the plays-within-plays when the characters of one play level cross over to the next outer level—what Schmeling, in Das Spiel im Spiel (160), calls Aus-der-Rolle-Fallen ("falling-out-of-the-role"). So, at the critical point, Fernando (fourth-degree character) tells the third-degree character, Emily (and not his corresponding fourth-degree lover, Laura), to beg, not the Father (third-degree character), before whom Emily has already fallen on her knees and who would give the children his blessing, but Skaramuz-as-Apollo (second-degree character).

The staging of analogical situations functions self-reflexively to promote self-understanding by reflexively demonstrating the very process of attaining self-under-standing. In other words, in the second- and third-degree plays, a change in the target spectator (respectively, Skaramuz-Apollo and the Father) is effected by showing the spectator a representation of himself: the spectator, watching himself-as-another, comes to see the other as a representation of himself. By reflecting on the the *Spiel*, and through the self-reflexivity occasioned by difference, the target specta-tor appropriates otherness as his own and gains understanding (namely, that he has been behaving like a tyrant).

By analogy, given the series of satirized audiences represented in this sequence, this turning back on the target spectator involves all the spectators in a seemingly infinite self-reflexivity. The spectators experience themselves, first, as multiplied numerically in the multiple representations of spectators to the plays-within-plays and, second, as ontologically doubled, being not only subject but also object of the spectacle. This situation is made explicit in the course of the third act when the first-degree spectators comment on the dramatic form of the play-within-the-play of which they are a part and which is the very strategy used in Die verkehrte Welt:

SCÄVOLA:	Leute, bedenkt einmal, wie wunderbar! Wir sind hier die Zuschauer, und dorten sitzen die Leute nun auch als Zuschauer.
PIERROT:	Es steckt immer so ein Stück im andern. (*DVW* 314)
(SCÄVOLA:	People, just think, how wonderful! Here we are spectators, and there sit people who are also spectators.
PIERROT:	A play always has another one inserted in it.)

At the end of the sequence, the first-degree spectators provide a further gloss on what has just taken place on stage in a way that points outward toward the theatre audience of Die verkehrte Welt and begins to destablize the final barrier between the fields of play and reality, thereby anticipating Genet's treatment of the matter in Le balcon:

SCÄVOLA:	Es ist gar zu toll. Seht, Leute, wir sitzen hier als Zuschauer und sehn ein Stück; in jenem Stück sitzen wieder Zuschauer und sehn ein Stück, und in jenem dritten Stück wird jenen dritten Akteurs wieder ein Stück vorgespielt.

WACHTEL: Ich habe nichts gesagt; aber um nur zur Ruhe zu kom-
men, hätt ich mich gern aus meinem jetzigen Zuschauer-
stande in die letzte versifizierte Komödie als Akteur
hineingeflüchtet. Je weiter ab vom Zuschauer, je besser.

DER ANDRE: Nun denkt euch, Leute, wie es möglich ist, daß wir wie-
der Akteurs in irgendeinem Stücke wären, und einer
sähe nun das Zeug so alles durcheinander! Das wäre
doch die Konfusion aller Konfusionen. Wir sind noch
glücklich, daß wir nicht in dieser bedauernswürdigen
Lage sind; denn es wäre nachher kaum möglich, sich auf
gelinde Weise wieder in seinen allerersten vernünftigen
Zustand zurückbringen zu lassen; ich fürchte, man
müßte mit Pulver wieder hineingesprengt werden.

SCÄVOLA: Man träumt oft auf ähnlich Weise, und es ist erschreck-
lich; auch manche Gedanken spinnen und spinnen sich
auf solche Art immer weiter und weiter ins Innere hin-
ein. Beides ist auch, um toll zu werden. (323-24)

(SCÄVOLA: This is nuts. Look, here we are spectators, sitting watch-
ing a play; in this play, spectators sit watching a play,
and in that play again spectators sit watching yet another
play.

QUAIL: I haven't said anything; but to get some peace, I wish I
could have escaped from being a spectator and turned
actor in that last poetic drama. The further I can run
from being a spectator, the better.

OTHERS: Say, could it be that we too are actors in that play, and
that somebody saw the whole thing tangled up together.
Wouldn't that be the confusion of confusions. We're
lucky that we haven't sunk to such a deplorable state for
it would have been barely possible for us to return to
our former rational state; I fear it would have taken
nothing less than gunpowder to bring us back to normal.

SCÄVOLA: There are such fearful dreams. And such thoughts that
spiral and spiral deeper and deeper inward. And such
dreams and such thoughts can drive you mad.)

Though here the spectator's "ontological catastrophe" is averted, being held up only

as a negated possibility, this exchange makes the theatre audience aware that, by reflecting on an other, it, as Seyhan explains, may view "its own presence as representation" (9).

Though the respective foci may differ, the performance situation in A Fable about Man, Troilus and Cressida, La Dispute and Die verkehrte Welt is used as a heuristic model by which the conceptualize the hermeneutical relation between play and audience. Each play shows theatre as a relational process that takes profound account of alterity: exploiting the autoscopic potency of mimicry, the works present situations in which otherness becomes an instrumental factor in the constitution or transformation of the self; the transforming experience which the spectators may undergo is to condition their understanding of themselves and their world, and to influence or change the spectator's acting in her/his own world. The playwrights begin to implicate their audience as the other gazing at the represented spectacle, transforming theatre into a specular playspace, the presentation from which spectators become aware that they have been looking into a mirror, have themselves become the spectacle. Echoes of the spectators' anxieties in Die verkehrte Welt reverberate through the twentieth century in the work of Pirandello, Gombrowicz, Genet and onward to The Writer in Woody Allen's God: A Comedy in One Act (1975):

> It's bizarre, isn't it? We're two ancient Greeks in Athens and
> we're about to see a play I wrote and you're acting in, and
> they're from Queens or some terrible place like that and they're
> watching us in someone else's play. What if they're characters

in another play? And someone's watching them? Or what if nothing exists and we're all in somebody's dream? Or, what's worse, what if only that fat guy in the third row exists? (10)

V.   STANISŁAW IGNACY WITKIEWICZ'S KURKA WODNA:

"I don't really know who I am yet"[102]

Polish writer, photographer, painter and philosopher of aesthetics and meta-physics,[103] Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939)—or Witkacy—is one of the most innovative artistic figures of the twentieth century. His avant-garde theatre, which aspired to being anti-illusionistic, anti-naturalistic, anti-cathartic and anti-psychological, polemicized with the great movements of the time,[104] as he sought to erect a non-mimetic theatrical form, as Janusz Degler explains in his introduction to Witkiewicz's Czysta Forma w teatrze, without relying on the dramaturgical conceptions of Symbolism, the directorial experimentation of the Great Reform or the unusual scenic effects of Expressionism (19). The works of his contemporary, Pirandello, in Witkiewicz's opinion, despite their inventiveness, were still ensnared in a decadent realism

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[102] Stanisław Witkiewicz, The Water Hen 57. All passages from The Water Hen are taken from Daniel Gerould and C.S. Durer's translation, and referenced as (*WH* page). In Polish, the line reads, "ja dziś doprawdy nie wiem, kim jestem" (1.455). Hereafter, citations from the Polish are referenced as (*KW* act.line).

[103] In his memorium to Witkiewicz, "Wspomnienie o Witkacym," Roman Ingarden points out that Witkiewicz's philosophical concerns differed from those on which Polish philosophy focused at the time, and regards him an existentialist long before the movement appeared in France (see 173-75).

[104] This polemic is stated in Witkiewicz's introduction to his theory of Pure Form in theatre: "[n]ienawidząc współczesnego teatru we wszystkich jego odmianach i nie mając kompetencji w kwestiach teatralnych, nie mamy zamiaru podać tu jakiejś teorii opartej na fachowej znajomości rzeczy" (Czysta Forma w teatrze 55) ("[d]espising contemporary theatre in all its variants and not having any competence in theatrical matters, we do not intend to present here some theory based on professional expertise" [my translation]) (see also 58-59).

(Czysta Forma 43); yet, though Witkiewicz considered the relativism to which he felt Pirandello subscribed a sham, the two do meet on the level of the valorization of the individual up against the mechanism of social conventions, constraints and oppressions. Considered a precursor of Antonin Artaud's metaphysical Theatre of Cruelty,[105] and through Artaud to Genet, he anticipates Gombrowicz's preoccupation with the formal impulse,[106] while his overt recycling of past texts predates the postmodern bricolage of cultural forms as presented in, for example, Sam Shepard's creation of *dramatis personae* as polyphonic sites composed of diverse cultural texts.

In his attempt to create an autonomous theatre, Witkiewicz developed an aesthetic theory which had an anthropological base—the theory of Pure Form (*Teoria Czystej Formy*). As Krysiński appropriately summarizes, this theory appears both as the "referential 'distortion' [...] of empirical reality, and as the self-referent of the self-reflexive spectacle" ("Poland of Nowhere" 154). In other words, like early German Romanticism, which required the incorporation of a critical dimension in its poetry, Witkiewicz's theory of Pure Form is both the particular methodology of artistic production and the object of discourse within the work.

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[105] See the following for a discussion of the shared theatrical visions of Witkiewicz and Artaud: Alain van Crugten's St. Witkiewicz aux sources d'un théâtre nouveau (142-45); Andrzej Falkiewicz's "Witkacy, Artaud, awangarda"; Andrzej Mencwel's "Artauda zwycięstwo i klęska"; Jan Kott's foreword to the Witkiewicz collection, "The Madman and the Nun" and "The Crazy Locomotive" (xiii-xvi). Briefly, the similarities between Witkiewicz and Artaud are as follows: the denial of psychology; the return to a metaphysical source; a focus on non-literary elements of theatre; an incongruity between the theory and the theatre they write.

[106] In "Revolution in Witkacy and Gombrowicz," Louis Iribarne succinctly articulates how both writers deal with the problematic of intersubjectivity: "[b]y his affirmation of the 'sacred human church,' Gombrowicz is able to overcome Witkiewicz's dilemma of reconciling the conflict between the individual and the collective, between the 'I' and the 'thou,' and declare himself on the side of the human continuum" (73).

Witkiewicz's underlying assumption is that modern humanity had lost the capacity to have metaphysical feelings. In theatre, this loss was translated into the inability to perceive theatre as a ritual art. Works of art constructed on the principle of Pure Form, which Witkiewicz derived from Cubist painting and atonal music, were to serve as a corrective to this spiritual malaise (or the "mechanization" of life) by provoking, on the receptive end, the rebirth of metaphysical feelings. By metaphysical feelings, Witkiewicz meant the experience of "the secret of existence" ("Tajemnica Istnienia") as the "unity in plurality," or the "one in the many" ("jedność w wielości") (Czysta Forma 57).

This central philosophical problem functions on two levels.[107] The first is strictly existential and takes the form of the task of reconciling the individual's participation in the social world with the notion of the individual as a self-sufficient unity. Stated otherwise, the individual's responsibility for self-making is impinged upon by the external world and others.[108] I will return to this point shortly. The second is the aesthetic level, though it has an ontological dimension. Here the problem of "unity in plurality" takes the shape of the task of imposing a cohesive form on a diversity of elements. In the theatre, which is composed of a complex of elements (e.g., words, actors, movement, gestures, scenic space, music), unity was to

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[107] Daniel Gerould, in his introduction to The Witkiewicz Reader, argues that the philosophical problem of the "one in the many" functions on *three* levels: existential, aesthetic and *personal*. "On a personal level, a multiplicity of selves impishly subverted his quest for self-definition and identity, which he sought within the fluid construct" (2).

[108] See also Krzysztof Pomian's "Filozofia Witkacego" on the existential formulation of this problem (esp. 279-80).

be found in the purely formal linkage of the disparate dynamic elements into a harmonized whole. While the dramatist's task was to "defamiliarize" the theatrical experience and disorient the audience using the method of Pure Form (e.g., by distorting conventional narrative sequences), it was the (hermeneutic) responsibility of the receiver to give unity to or configure the diverse elements, "to make of vision a revisionary process" (to recall Benston's comments on postmodern theatre). To borrow the language of his friend, Roman Ingarden, the audience was to concretize a cohesive aesthetic object. Going beyond Ingarden, in the confrontation with the otherness of the aesthetic work, the resultant "configuration"—being the "direct symbol" of the structure of being (namely, "the secret of existence")—should promote a "refiguration" or transformation in the receiver's quotidian selfhood (Ricoeurs' terms). Consequently, the receiver, who upon leaving the theatre should feel as though s/he has "awakened from a dream," would be able to look anew at her/himself and the world.

Witkiewicz himself admitted the difficulty of achieving Pure Form in the theatre: since theatre is a syncretic art, it can never escape reality (Czysta Forma 73-74). Still, Kurka Wodna (1921, The Water Hen) is one of the more successful executions in that the play evokes the sought-after defamiliarization. In formal terms, for example, there are revivifying corpses, suddenly materializing landscapes, unusual colour and light effects. In hermeneutic terms, the characters, and through them the audience, are unable to establish definitively the meaning of anything that happens; the play is invested with indeterminacy. In ontological terms, the play

presents the impossibility of establishing a coherent self-identity in a world which pits the solitary individual in a quest for selfhood against an external world of otherness that, in constantly imposing itself on him, deforms and destroys him—a situation that moves into prominence in the dramatic works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz, Genet, Handke and Shepard. For now, I consider the ontological issue, which has to do with the formulation of Pure Form in terms of an existential problem of the "one in the many," by focusing on the main protagonist, Edgar Wałpor (Edgar Valpor).

As in Troilus and Cressida, in Kurka Wodna, there is expressed both a doubtfulness and duality (at least) with respect to a character's identity. And, as in Troilus and Cressida, in Kurka Wodna, this indeterminacy is due in part to the nature of the world into which the dramatic figures find themselves thrown: while Shakespeare thrusts his figures into a universal marketplace where value/identity is a constantly changing thing, Witkiewicz locks his into a closed, artificial world, with no past and no future,[109] in which human beings are forced, at every moment, to manufacture themselves,[110] just as every morning Edgar must begin again and create, not a *new* life, but *another* life ("inne życie") (*KW* 1.255-56, 1.464; *WH* 51, 57), which

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[109] Edgar says to the Water Hen as he contemplates life without her, "Jakaś nuda i męka, kolista, nieograniczona, a skończona i zamknięta w sobie na wieki" (*KW* 1.43-44) ("Boredom and suffering—a vicious circle, endless and self-contained and closed in upon itself forever" [*WH* 46]). Later, Edgar tells Tadeusz, "Nic się nie dzieje, nic. Myślałem, że coś się stanie, a tu nic—ten sam spokój i ziemia cicho obraca się dookoła osi. Świat jest pustynią bez sensu" (*KW* 1.212-14) ("Nothing happens, nothing. I thought that something would happen, but there's no change—the same silence everywhere, and the earth silently revolves on its axis. The world is a desert without meaning" [*WH* 50]).

[110] Tadeusz tells everyone, "Tak. Obudziłem się nareszcie ze snu i zrozumiałem wszystkie wasze kłamstwa. Robienie sztucznych ludzi, sztuczne zbrodnie, sztuczne pokuty, sztuczne wszystko" (*KW* 3.129-31) ("Yes. I've finally awakened from my dream and seen through all your lies. Manufacturing artificial people, artificial crimes, artificial penance, artificial everything" [*WH* 73]).

turns into *an other's* life (*życie innego*). In an statement that will be echoed, more affirmatively if not any less devastatingly, by Handke's *Kaspar* some forty-six years later, Edgar expresses his own doubt as to what or who he should be, or even if he is at all: "Widzisz, to było tak: ja miałem być czymś, ale nigdy nie wiedziałem czym, to jest kim. Ja nawet nie wiem dokładnie, czy jestem, chociaż to, że cierpię okropnie, jest na pewno rzeczywistością" (*KW* 1.182-85) ("You see, it was like this. I should have been somebody, but I never knew what, or rather who. I don't even know whether I actually exist, although the fact that I suffer terribly is certainly real" [*WH* 49-50]). Doubt regarding identity is *internalized*; self-certainty is shaken. Essentially undelimitable, "czymś bez formy i bez konturów" (*KW* 1.50) ("something without form and without contour" [*WH* 46]), Edgar can only define himself negatively in terms of what he is *not*—namely, without profession and without a future (*KW* 1.54-58; *WH* 46).

As a result of this impotence to self-circumscription, when Edgar comes up against the external world of otherness, one of two possible scenarios occurs. One, he is in perpetual conflict with others as to the roles he is to play. For example, the Water Hen would make Edgar fulfill his desire to be great by compelling him to commit the seemingly unrepeatable act of murdering her, while his Father tries to mold him into a great artist. Two, he submits passively to having roles, by which he can then define himself, imposed on him by others. These roles, moreover, have a fluid nature: first, they are defined strictly by a relationality to others; second, Edgar's fittedness for the role is cast constantly in doubt. So, when Tadeusz (Tadzio)

suddenly crawls (is born) into the world from behind a mound after Edgar "ejacu-

lates" bullets into the Water Hen, the Water Hen tells him to go to his father, much

to the surprise of Edgar:

KURKA (*stojąc*):
    Idź do tatusia, Tadziu.

EDGAR (*odwraca się, spostrzega Tadzia, mówi niechętnie*):
    Ach, znowu jakaś niespodzianka.

TADZIO: Tatusiu! tatusiu! Nie bądź zły!

EDGAR: Ja nie jestem zły, moje dziecko, tylko chciałem trochę odpocząć po tym wszystkim. A ty skąd się wziąłeś?

TADZIO: Nie wiem. Obudziłem się od strzałów. A ty jesteś mój tatuś.

EDGAR: Mogę być i tatusiem. Widzisz, mój mały: mnie wszystko jedno. Mogę być nawet twoim ojcem, chociaż nie cierpię dzieci. (*KW* 1.112-21)

(WATER HEN [*standing*]:
    Go to your papa, Tadzio.

EDGAR [*turns around, notices Tadzio, and speaks with reluctance*]:
    Oh, more surprises!

TADZIO: Papa, Papa, don't be angry.

EDGAR: I'm not angry, my child, I only want a little rest after all this. Where did you come from?

TADZIO: I don't know. I woke up when I heard the shots. And you're my papa.

EDGAR: Who knows? Maybe I'm a father, too. You see, my young man, it's all the same to me. For all I know, I might even be your father, although I can't stand children. [*WH* 48])

Named father, even though paternity remains uncertain, Edgar comes to accept this

role and so begins "another life." Similarly, the Father and Alicja (Alice) arrange that Edgar become husband to Alicja (the wife of his late friend, Edgar, the Duke of Nevermore). Ultimately, however, this is a negative self-definition. He is defining himself in terms of a family which is not really his: "Żona przyjaciela—syn kochanki. Nareszcie stworzyłem sobie rodzinę" (*KW* 1.473-74) ("My friend's wife—my mistress's son. At last I've created a family for myself" [*WH* 57]).

Edgar's identity is bestowed from without in another way—namely, by the textualized voices of others. Edgar becomes an intertextual site, composed of a mosaic of allusions to established writers and literary characters. In this way, he is doubled, many times over. In "Witkiewicz i jego sobowtóry," Daniel Gerould lays out Edgar's literary doubles (157-58). One allusion is to the figure of Robinson Crusoe: in the first and third acts, Edgar is dressed in the garb of the three bound men in the illustrated version of <u>Robinson Crusoe</u>; he feels as though he were alone on a desert island (*KW* 2.405-06, 2.411; *WH* 69). Witkiewicz transforms the situational solitude of Defoe's creation into an pre-existential angst. Another intertext is August Strindberg's <u>Dödsdansen</u> (<u>The Dance of Death</u>). Strindberg's Captain Edgar is Edgar Walpor-cum-Nevermore's namesake (as the Captain's wife is Alicja's). Edgar Walpor mimics Captain Edgar's line with respect to the torments of married life: Witkiewicz's Edgar tells Alicja, "Będziemy jak skazańcy wlec się dalej, aż do śmierci" (*KW* 2.433) ("Like condemned prisoners we'll drag on and on until death" [*WH* 69]); Strindberg's tells his wife, "A silver wedding it'll be! [...] (*rises*) Cross it out and go on!—That's it! We'll go on!" (164). A final allusion is to another Ed-

gar—namely, Edgar Allan Poe, whose literary offspring, <u>The Raven</u>, appears in two contexts in <u>Kurka Wodna</u>: first, in Edgar's offspring's, Tadeusz's, reference to shooting crows with a birdgun (*KW* 1.174; *WH* 49); second, in the transposition of the Raven's declaration of "Nevermore" into a place and title-name, which Edgar himself appropriates from his like-named friend, Edgar Nevermore. Edgar, in short, like Strindberg's "characterless character conglomerates," is a recycled protagonist, partially indebted for his existence to previous writers, literary characters, even the utterances of others.

Edgar's creation by the external world of other people and of other texts means that he can have no autonomous self-identity. This state of passivity becomes the topic of his own discourse. Edgar is an existentialized version of the marionette, itself a variant of the mask, animated and manipulated by a puppeteer. He expresses his subjection to the external world of otherness: "Zawsze wszystko robią za mnie wypadki i ludzie. Jestem manekinem, marionetką. Zanim zdołam coś stworzyć, to właśnie to samo dzieje się już samo i nie przeze mnie" (*KW* 1.479-82) ("It's people and circumstances that have always made me what I am. I'm a manikin, a mario-nette. Before I can create anything, everything happens all by itself exactly the way it always has, and not because of anything I've done" [*WH* 57]).

There are several points of correspondence between Edgar and the marionette figure, the nature of which has been analyzed by Annie Gilles in <u>Le jeu de la marionette: l'objet intermédiaire et son métathéâtre</u>. Just as the marionette implies the dependency of the object in relation to the human being, the manipulator (Gilles

20), so Edgar is an instrument, an extension of a tool to be used or manipulated by the Water Hen, his Father, Alicja or an unknown power.[111] Just as the marionette is fabricated, often from the most unexpected objects wrested from their habitual contexts (Gilles 21), so Edgar is synthetic, constructed not only by other "people," but also from the Western cultural rubbish heap by bits of literary figures, motifs and utterances wrenched from their original contexts. Just as the marionette (a double of the human being) remains a "simulacrum" of and "coarse substitute" for the human being (Gilles 25), so Edgar is but a double and stand-in for Alicja's husband and Tadeusz's unknown father, and as such is easily re- and dis-placeable by his look-alike, Alicja's lover, Korbowski (whose "real name," Maciej *Wiktoś*, as Gerould points out in "Witkacy i jego sobowtóry," implies that he is one of Witkiewicz's doubles). Finally, just as the marionette is in the ambiguous position of being the focal point between the puppeteer and the spectator and, therefore, is both shown and looked at, inert and animated, a substitute for and extension of the human being (Gilles 32), so Edgar partakes of the double ontological status of the marionette when he comes to see himself as a projection on a screen, both seeing and looked at, moving yet without governance over those movements (*KW* 2.211-14; *WH* 63).

Edgar's condition of being-determined, and the experience of victimization of

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[111] For example, Edgar points out to the Water Hen that she considers him but an extension of the shotgun with which she wants him to shoot her (*KW* 1.29-30; *WH* 46). In marrying Alicja, Edgar is doubled by himself (assuming his friend's, Edgar's, role), which is imaged as the creation of another internal skeleton; however, he realizes that he does not possess the power of self-doubling, for the real creators of his second self are his Father and Alicja (*KW* 2.217-20; *WH* 64). Then, Edgar declares himself to be "pajacem w rękach niewiadomej siły—jestem wielki jako marionetka" (*KW* 2.231-33) ("a buffoon, a plaything of unknown forces. I'm great—like a marionette" [*WH* 64]).

which this is the condition for the possibility, culminate in a grotesque self-torture, where Edgar perversely attempts to become master of his own fate.[112] By becoming both torturer (in that he gives the orders to the actual handlers of the torture machine, who thereby become his own extension and the extension of an instrument) and victim of the torture, he would embody the dual ontological status of subject and object and the very interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic determination. Edgar's flesh, thus, focalizes the broader interpersonal predicament of reconciling the task of self-making with the impingement on the self of the external world within the particular *Weltanschauung* that comes to the fore in the modern period—namely, the world as one of mutual torment. This *Weltanschauung* is expressed, first, vis-à-vis the appropriation of the sentiment uttered by Strindberg's Captain Edgar and his wife, and second, vis-à-vis the metaphor of an elastic band between the mutually harassing pair of Edgar and the Water Hen that stretches but never breaks (*KW* 1.19-22; *WH* 46)—an image that reappears reformed as a thread of saliva between two mouths in Genet's <u>Les paravents</u>. However, even here, it is as though the revivified Water Hen, who glances on and laughs with glee, has managed, once again, to work her will through Edgar.

Edgar's (subverted) attempt to self-determination through self-torture pre-figures his self-inflicted death by means of the instrument with which he had just killed the Water Hen for a second time. Having lost, first, the struggle for self-representation, then, everything that was not really his to begin with (his maybe-son

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[112] Gombrowicz's Henryk (<u>Ślub</u>), Genet's Claire (<u>Les bonnes</u>) and Shepard's Hoss (<u>The Tooth of Crime</u>) try similar resolutions.

runs away, his friend's wife leaves him for her lover, his mistress is shot), when the externally imposed roles are removed one by one, and having no self-identity to fall back on, he commits the unrepeatable, and hence great, act of suicide. Acting (affecting) and suffering (affected) are one.

Kurka Wodna, therefore, presents a problematic central to this study—namely, the inability to fix an identity in a world in which one is constantly subject to the imposition of a role, mask or voice by the external world of alterity. I think that this problematic is applicable also to the realm of textuality in this play, in particular given the demands Witkiewicz places on the receiver to impose a unity upon the many elements composing a theatrical work of art and thereby to acquire a trans-figured self.

Within the play, the characters are unable to establish definitively the meaning of anything that happens. So through them, the play's audience is confronted with a host of unresolvable questions converging on the title figure of the Water Hen: Just who is the Water Hen? Is she Tadeusz's mother or not? Was she the Duke of Nevermore's lover or not? Like her titled counterparts in the other bird plays whose fate she shadows—Henrik Ibsen's Vildanden (1884, Wild Duck) and Anton Che-khov's Чайка (1895, The Seagull)—and like her correlates, Signora Ponza in Così è (se vi pare), L'Ignota in Come tu mi vuoi (As You Desire Me) and Iwona in Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda, the Water Hen is invested by others with various meanings. Here, they all play on her elusiveness: she represents variously Edgar's guilty con-science (KW 1.99-100; WH 47), a "make-believe mother that certain men feel they

need" (*KW* 2.338-39; *WH* 67), a "phantom" and an "imagined value" (*KW* 2.345; *WH* 67) who exists only by lying.

That she is an enigma has an impact on the text, on its subsequent indeterminacy of meaning. It is Tadeusz's hermeneutic dilemma throughout the play, which is precisely the audience's, that encapsulates this indeterminacy: he constantly oscillates between the attempt, vis-à-vis the process of questioning, to understand the meaning of that which is happening around him, and the belief that he has configured a meaning, bestowed a unified form upon (that is, interpreted) the multiplicity of elements and, hence, understands all. Tadeusz expresses this oscillation in keeping with Witkiewicz's theory of Pure Form and in terms that recall yet another bird play—namely, Maurice Maeterlinck's L'oiseau bleu (first staged in 1908, Bluebird), in which the children must enter a dreamworld which defamiliarizes the quotidian in order that they may be able to see their own world anew. In Kurka Wodna, Tadeusz always feels as though he were awakening from a dream which, in clarifying the meaning of what happens around him in a given moment, negates all that he had understood before, and rearranges the shattered "unity" into yet another unity.[113] The attainment of insight, as a result, can be only a transient state. In a version of the hermeneutic spiral, we are given to understand that—more, shown how—the process of meaning production is but a provisional achievement based on and configured from the information presented to date and a call to further questioning.

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[113] At one point, Alicja says sarcastically of Tadeusz, "Ten się budzi z jakiegoś snu i zaczyna wszystko rozumieć. Ileż to razy już wszystko zrozumiałeś? Ile jest sztuk tego wszystkiego?" (*KW* 3.133-35) ("This one is always waking up from some dream or other and beginning to understand everything. How many times now have you come to understand everything? What's the grand total?" [*WH* 73]).

As Alicja advises Tadeusz, so may she well advise the work's audience: "Nie o wszystkim można wiedzieć, czemu jest takie, a nie inne. Można się pytać tak dalej, bez końca, i nigdy nie znaleźć odpowiedzi" (*KW* 2.2-5) ("No one knows why things are the way they are and not some other way. You can ask such questions endlessly and never find any answers" [*WH* 58]).

In the post-war period, the dramatic works of Gombrowicz and Genet bring to the fore the issue of the relation between (1) language and the gaze, (2) identity and (3) interpersonal struggle already locatable in the work of Witkiewicz and Pirandello in a way that places greater emphasis on the real and potential violence in language and the gaze. This issue crystallizes in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the work of Peter Handke (an Austrian living in Germany) and Sam Shepard in the United States. The primary focus in Handke's <u>Publikumsbeschimpfung</u> (written in 1965, published in 1966, <u>Offending the Audience</u>) and <u>Kaspar</u> (1967) and in Shepard's <u>The Tooth of Crime</u> (first performed in 1972, published in 1974) is the aggressive function of language. In these works, self-conscious and self-referential language is employed, within an explicitly theatrical forum—i.e., a stage which represents nothing but itself or which is but one fold in an ever-expanding game-space—to demonstrate the central position of language in the formation and destruction of personal identity in the interpersonal context. Jeanette Malkin's claim, in <u>Verbal Violence in Contemporary Drama</u>, that Handke rings a warning bell is an accurate and apt one:

> [i]t is only in postwar drama that language becomes the active antagonist, the dramatic locus of social coercion and conformity. Language is presented as possessing a will of its own, outside of the control of the individual, to which the unaware individual can only bend or break—"PARIER oder KREPIER!". We are thus called to awareness, warned of potential danger to autonomy and the meaning which lurks in an uncritical subservience to language. (37)

However, my qualification is that Gombrowicz's scenic demonstrations of the creative and destructive power of language in the interhuman context, primarily in Ślub though already in prewar Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda, sounded the bell long before Handke did.

VI.   PETER HANDKE'S PUBLIKUMSBESCHIMPFUNG AND KASPAR: STAGING THE (SELF AS) OTHER

"I want to be someone [...] else"

Peter Handke (1942-) has stated the didactic intention behind his theatrical works on a couple of occasions. In "Bemerkung zu meinen Sprechstücken," he explains: "Sprechstücke sind verselbständigte Vorreden der alten Stücke. Sie wollen nicht revolutionieren, sondern aufmerksam machen" (201) ("[s]peak-ins are autonomous prologues to the old plays. They do not want to revolutionize, but to make aware" ("Note on Offending the Audience and Self-Accusation" 7). In an interview with Artur Joseph, he qualifies this statement somewhat and relays the basic idea behind his plays as being the following: "[d]iese Dramaturgie besteht im Bewußt-seinmachen der Theaterwelt. Nicht von Außenwelt, nicht von der Welt außerhalb des Theaters" (34) ("[t]his dramaturgy consists in making people aware of the world

of theatre. Not of the external world, not in the world outside of the theatre" [my translation]). Taking the two statements together, I think that Handke's project, as presented in Publikumsbeschimpfung and Kaspar, can be understood as a two-step reflexive process which takes advantage of the intersubjective contract binding the I and the you, and which has the goal of increasing self-understanding on the part of the audience. This process hinges on the transformation of theatrical space into a verbal space where certain types of language games,[114] or *Wortspiel* (Handke's term), are played out.

The first step is the rupture with traditional uses of theatre and the formulation of a new use by the creation of a completely autonomous world, stripped of any referentiality to anything outside of it, stripped even of its representationality. So, for example, in Publikumsbeschimpfung, the audience is told, "Diese Bühne stellt nichts dar. Sie stellt keine andere Leere dar. Die Bühne ist leer"[115] ("This stage represents nothing. It represents no other emptiness. This stage *is* empty"[116]). And, in Kaspar: "Die Zuschauer sehen das Bühnenbild nicht als Bild eines woanders gelegenen Raumes, sondern als Bild von der Bühne. Das Bühnenbild stellt die

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[114] A not uncommon way of treating the function of language in Handke's plays is by using Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of the "language game." However, in Image et écriture dans l'œuvre de Peter Handke, Arlette Camion argues that it would be more accurate to say that Handke was not influenced directly by Wittgenstein, but rather, by the Vienna Group, which he greatly admired and which had much in common with Wittgenstein—in particular, a belief in the ability of the linguistic order to impact on the social order (21).

[115] Handke, Publikumsbeschimpfung 22. All subsequent citations from this play will be referenced as (P page).

[116] Offending the Audience 16. All citations in English are from Michael Roloff's translation and will be referenced as (OA page).

Bühne dar"[117] ("The audience does not see the stage as a representation of a room

that exists somewhere, but as a representation of a stage. The stage represents the

stage"[118]). By verbally laying bare the devices and conventions natural to theatre,

Handke exposes their unnaturalness, their artifice—what he calls, in his interview

with Joseph, "das Gemachte des Theaters" (27) ("the producedness of theatre"). As

Michael Hays explains in "Peter Handke and the End of the 'Modern'," Handke does

not present a passive audience with a "coded picture" of an external reality; rather,

"he forces the audience to become an active participant in the discovery of the

formal principles which have generated fictions on stage" (352). I would go even

further and state that, in being shown the artifice of theatre, the audience is gradually

brought to a realization of its own presuppositions with respect to the theatre, the

way in which it formalizes the aesthetic experience and constructs theatrical mean-

ing—what Witkiewicz was exploring already in his theory of Pure Form. Second, this

theatrical lesson has broader ramifications. The theatrical realm provides a context

for an analysis and presentation of the various social, linguistic and gestural forms

that function to constitute the individual; in this way, the audience members may be

sensitized and awakened to their own "producedness."

The first step of this self-reflexive process of increasing awareness on the part

of the audience is presented in the provocation piece, Publikumsbeschimpfung. In

this Sprechstücke, theatre is stripped to its basics by focusing on the dialogical relation

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[117] Kaspar 104. All subsequent citations from Kaspar will be referenced as (K page).

[118] Kaspar 12. All subsequent citations from Roloff's English translation will be referenced as (KAS page).

between actor and audience. The audience is confronted with a verbal barrage of pseudo-logical, dialectical—that is, proceeding by way of affirmation and negation—formulations. After ordering the audience members into a "unit" ("Einheit"), then into a "pattern" ("Muster"), and laying bare the very fact that audiences have expectations upon entering the theatre, the speakers then proceed to negate these expectations by deconstructing[119] every aspect of the formal principles and conventions for producing theatrical fictions, as well as the roles in and functions of traditional theatre. Theatre is turned around on itself: the traditional spectator-spectacle relation is inverted as it is the audience—its presuppositions, its gestures, its behavior, its role as eavesdropper, theatre-goer, watcher and listener—that becomes "das Thema" or the "subject matter" of the play (*P* 24; *OA* 18).

This inversion is effected by refocusing the traditional addresser-addressee, spectator-spectated relationships.[120] First, the direct address of we-you, or *wir-Sie*, is initiated, not laterally between the actors on the stage, but between the actors and the audience; moreover, in the formation of an intersubjective bond between the *wir* and the *Sie*, the *Sie* (audience) is coopted and interchanged into the *wir* (actors), an interchange and reversal that culminates in the actors applauding the spectators for the latter's performance (*P* 20; *OA* 14). Second, the gaze of the actors is not directed laterally amongst themselves while the audience's gaze cuts at right angles

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[119] I take this in the Heideggerian sense of *destruction* (*Destruktion*), defined in The Basic Problems of Phenomenology as "a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn" (23).

[120] Genet effected this type of reversal a few years earlier in Les nègres (The Blacks).

to the actors, but rather, as we already saw in <u>Die verkehrte Welt</u> in the process of

Aus-der-Rolle-fallen, it is turned back on the audience: it is the audience which is

seen, and which, in becoming conscious of this fact, sees itself as being-seen.

Viewing rebounds reflexively back onto the audience. In so becoming the object of

attention of the actors, the audience can no longer remain a passive receiver of an

action that unfolds on the stage. Instead, it "is played"[121] by the actors: audience

members are made uncomfortably aware of the way they sit, every movement and

reflex of their body, the very rhythm of their breathing, what they think and how they

are made to think, how they process the theatrical experience, including the revela-

tion of the audience's primary role in concretizing the spectacle and interpreting

theatrical meaning. Thus, the audience's integral role in the completion of the play

as such is turned back and around and brought centre-stage: "Sie sind die Spiel-

macher" (*P* 26) ("You are the play-makers" [*OA* 20]). In the final sequence, it is the

audience that, in turn, is applauded for its performance and heckled—that is,

subjected to a rhythmic verbal onslaught of invectives by the actors. The spectator,

in a specular movement, becomes the real player for and in whom the *Wortspiel*

comes to presentation. In harnessing the power of invective to effect a transforma-

tion, the actors act upon the audience: the actors' verbally aggressive activity on the

audience is to provoke the audience to act back by sensitizing the members to their

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[121] "Sie spielen nicht mit. Hier wird Ihnen mitgespielt" (*P* 21) ("You are not playing along. You are being played with here" [*OA* 15]).

theatrical participation pre- and post-fact.[122]

The second step of this self-reflexive process of increasing awareness on the part of the audience is represented in <u>Kaspar</u>. In this play, theatre provides a formal context to present a theoretical model for and demonstration of the human being's *Versprachlichung*—or her/his being rendered into a speech object. We are shown the way in which a unique and personal utterance—"Ich möchte ein solcher werden wie einmal ein andrer gewesen ist" ("I want to be someone like somebody else was once")—comes up against and is destroyed by the restrictive and systematizing forces of a pre-formed, public language system. Concurrently, through this linguistic demonstration, we are shown the way in which the subject, first, is deprived of his individuality—becoming a *tabula rasa*—and, then, is re-formed in and by the voices of others (the Prompters or *Einsager*). (Hoss, in <u>The Tooth of Crime</u>, undergoes a strikingly similar transformation.) These Prompters, in teaching Kaspar language models, teach him how to create order in the world around him and the behavior necessary to be a model member of society. The self, thus, appears as a social construct or mask, formed from systems of (here primarily linguistic) conventions.

As has been noted by critics (e.g., Stewart 309; Camion 57; Malkin 14) and Handke himself,[123] Kaspar is a composite figure created from both the historical

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[122] "Dieses Stück ist eine Vorrede. Es ist nicht die Vorrede zu einem andern Stück, sondern die Vorrede zu dem, was Sie getan haben, was Sie tun und was Sie tun werden. Sie sind das Thema. Dieses Stück ist die Vorrede zum Thema. [...] Dieses Stück ist Welttheater" (*P* 42) ("This piece is a prologue. It is not the prologue to another piece but the prologue to what you did, what you are doing, and what you will do. You are the topic. This piece is the prologue to the topic. [...] This piece is world theatre" [*OA* 34]).

[123] See, for example, Handke's interview with Joseph (35-37) and his introduction to <u>Kaspar</u> (*K* 103; *KAS* 11).

person, Kaspar Hauser, and the traditional *Kasperl*, or clown. The "mask of astonish-
ment" worn by Kaspar visually manifests the innocent wonderment of a being born
into and trying to come to terms with the strangeness of the phenomenal world, a
situation reminiscent of Tadzio's. This birth is presented theatrically by Kaspar's
emergence onto the stage through a slit in the curtain. Kaspar, in gesture and word,
becomes pupil and victim of four Prompters who gradually, rhythmically, brutally,
initiate him into a state of obedient *Ordnung*—the ordering, not of "any concrete
social model," as Corbet Stewart explains, but of "any form of civilization which
coerces the individual into its network of social imperatives" (309). Pedagogy crosses
into torture. *Ordnung* becomes intertwined with terror: the seductive repetition of
verbal images conjuring up a torture chamber or interrogation room (scenes 26-27)
acts like torture and subjugates Kaspar. Kaspar's resultant breakdown, the disinte-
gration of his selfhood, is signalled by the tautological, self-mirroring statement of
self-identity, "Ich bin, der ich bin" (*K* 152)—that is, "I am the one I am" (*KAS* 58).

Thus, like the language models he learns to repeat and use, Kaspar, too,
becomes well-ordered and integrated into the system. The semantic content of
Kaspar's original sentence—"Ich möchte ein solcher werden wie einmal ein andrer
gewesen ist" ("I want to be someone like somebody else was once")—potentially
subversive in its individuality (just as the figure of the clown embodies the subversive
power to negate all pre-existing systems by introducing an emptiness into the cohe-
sion of the established order [Starobinski 141-44]) and, consequently, deconstructed
by the Prompters, is realized: Kaspar does indeed become (like) the other(s); he

loses his self and is formed and ordered by and into the others. As Rainer Nägele

sums up, "[t]his sentence pronounces the function of language: to subsume and

assimilate the individual within the general" (333). After the intermission, Kaspar's

subsumption and assimilation by and into the other are illustrated verbally and

visually: first, through the donning of the mask of contentedness; second, through

the on-stage multiplication of Kaspars, all wearing this same mask; third, through his

movements, which gesturally reproduce the Prompters' dictum of order; fourth,

through his speech, ostensibly a self-portrait or self-representation, during which his

voice imitates that of the Prompters (scene 62); fifth, in reverse, through the verbal

imitation by the Prompters of what Kaspar says (scene 63). In the end, Kaspar

becomes confused, his language is deranged, until complete madness sets in, as

signalled by his repetition of a phrase by another madman, Othello: "Ziegen und

Affen" (K 197-98), "Goats and monkeys" (KAS 98-99).[124] Preceded by the realization

of his "sprecherische Einkreisen" or "encirclement in language"[125] as expressed in

"Schon mit meinem ersten Satz bin ich in die Falle gegangen" (K 194) ("Already

with my first sentence I was trapped" [KAS 96]), his final act is simultaneously an act

of rebellion—the rejection of the logic of language—and his own breakdown.

The theory proposed here is that we experience the world and the people and

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[124] June Schlueter, in "'Goats and Monkeys' and the 'Idiocy of Language': Handke's Kaspar and Shakespeare's Othello," comments: "just as Iago implanted these words in Othello's mind, suggesting Desdemona's infidelity and watched them profoundly affect Othello's perception of reality, so the Einsager (Prompters) use language to alter radically Kaspar's relation to both external and internal reality" (26).

[125] To borrow Handke's phrase from his interview with Joseph (33).

things in it through a conceptual grid imposed on us by language. In other words, we order the world around us on the basis of an *a priori* language system into which we are ourselves ordered. Kaspar's realization of his entrapment within language—an entrapment which Gombrowicz already powerfully demonstrated in his first two plays—then, is to serve as a call to awareness on the audience's part. That this reflex is cast back onto the audience is made evident when, during the intermission, sections of, not only the Prompters', but also other types of public speeches, are piped in over the loudspeaker. The audience, thus, is implicated in the play, unable to escape the verbal torture/droning, suffering the same fate as Kaspar. The second step in the process of self-understanding is herein represented: the audience becomes sensitized and awakened to the way in which social, linguistic and gestural forms function to constitute, order and form the individual.

VII.   SAM SHEPARD'S THE TOOTH OF CRIME:

"I believe in my mask—The man I made up is me"
(Crow's Song)[126]

Sam Shepard (1943-) continues the exploration of the relation between selfhood and language in the intersubjective realm, casting it in the mythos of America. From the quest for an image in a world devoid of selfhood in The Tooth of Crime (1974) and Curse of the Starving Class (1976) and for a way of being with others in Action (1975), to the questioning, (non-)recognition and interchangeability

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[126] Shepard, The Tooth of Crime 232. All citations from The Tooth of Crime will be referenced as ([*TTC*] page).

of identity in The Tooth of Crime, Buried Child (1979) and True West (1981)—various permutations on this central theme appear in his dramatic corpus. While his plays, which feature dramatic figures playing or being-played within the play, stem directly from Shepard's collaboration with Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre,[127] I think that they can be located in the current emerging out of the theatrical investigations by Pirandello, Genet and Gombrowicz into the reflexive and self-reflexive processes involved in the constitution of the subject. Moreover, within the circumscription of this chapter, Shepard takes up issues already raised in Troilus and Cressida, such as the discrepancy between the face on view and the face imag(in)ed from legends told (Buried Child), and the relationship between fame and performance (The Tooth of Crime). In broad strokes, then, the lineage can be traced as follows: in Pirandello's formulation,[128] the dilemma of the subject as a for-itself and a representation-for-others and the consequent indeterminacy and/or relationality of identity and truth;[129] in Witkiewicz's formulation, the unresolved conflict between the individual and the external world of alterity; in Gombrowicz's formulation, the oscillation, within a

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[127] See Richard Gilman's introduction to Sam Shepard's Seven Plays (esp. xiii) where he notes the connection with Open Theatre and the possible influence of playwrights like Jack Gelber and Ronald Tavel. See also Christopher Innes's Avant Garde Theatre: 1892-1992 (esp. 218).

[128] According to Bonnie Marranca, the "Pirandellian character wears a mask which allows him to reflect the philosophical viewpoint of the playwright, formalized in the 'play-within-the-play' structure. Shepard's characters, having been influenced by both Pirandellian theatricalism and the narrative acting of the Brechtian character, though not Genet's social perspective, is free to remove his mask. He knows he is a performer, and takes the opportunity whenever he wants to, to leave, mentally and in another time frame, the play and verbalize or act out his emotional responses to events around him. There is no such thing as illusion vs. reality, only shifting realities. In Shepard's work there is not the play-within-the-play, but *play within the play*. His plays are written from the point of view of the actor, and so incorporate the notion of performance" ("Alphabetical Shepard: The Play of Words" 34).

[129] On this point, there are correspondences between Buried Child and Cosí è (se vi pare!).

ludically structured world, between the human being as role-player (the situation sets the scene) and performer (the individual sets up the situation),[130] which is based on the Polish Romantic tradition's notion of a transformational self; in Genet's, the desire to appropriate the image of the other for oneself and the interchange of mutually dependent roles; in Handke's, the constitution and destruction of the individual by social, linguistic and gestural forms; in Shepard's formulation, the concept of a "fluid" self—that is, as Bonnie Marranca defines it in "Alphabetical Shepard," the "potential for changing into someone else (making yourself up)" (35).

The Tooth of Crime synthesizes the issues raised by these playwrights. It is a demonstration of the tragic consequences to which a "fluid" or "transformational" self potentially succumbs when cast in an intersubjective realm. The play examines, within the structure of an ever-expanding game patterned on the *agôn*, the displacement of the self and the valorization of the mask, the image, the *persona*.

The dramatic world of The Tooth of Crime is conceived as a game of competition, complete with its own set of rules and regulations, a system of points' tabulation, judges and referees. The human beings in it are competitors motivated by the pursuit of fame—i.e., the desire to be known by others. These competitors, thriving or dying on the play-field, either play within the limits prescribed by the rulemakers or go against "the code," not in order to break out of the modality of play and into that of reality, but rather, to institute yet another game.

Within this game universe, a confrontation is set up between the reigning rock

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[130] The definitions of role-playing and performance are taken from Marranca's "Alphabetical Shepard: The Play of Words" (35).

king (the Marker, Hoss) and his challenger (the Gypsy, Crow). In mythic terms, it is the eternal battle between an aging and increasingly "[i]mpotent" king/father who, because of his success and fame, has become insulated from the outside world, "[s]tuck in [his] image" (*TTC* 224), and a vital changeling of an aspirant/son. Hoss emphasizes this father/son relationship when describing Crow as "a kid who's probably just like me. Just like I was then. A young blood" (224). Moreover, it can be viewed as the clash between two generational worlds in a sense broader than age and youth. Hoss and Crow are symbolic representatives of certain cultural genera-tions: the world of "ranchers, cowboys, open space" and that of "packs" and "gangs" and "Low Riders" (219). As such, they represent two different temporalities, or temporal "directednesses." Malkin explains: "historical memory and nostalgia for the past" are set against "futuristic jargon and unmemoried faith in the 'now'" (203). Or in broader cultural terms, as Leonard Wilcox views this battle, it is the "allegorical confrontation" between modernism and postmodernism.[131] These formulations can be understood as the symbolic dimension of the duel.[132] Within the pragmatic dimension, various configurations of *agōn* specific to American culture are verbally and/or gesturally invoked, some discarded, in the search for the appropriate form by which to carry out this duel: a nineteenth-century Western-style showdown, a 1950s game of chicken (car race), a gangland-style fight with "shivs" (knives), a boxing

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[131] In "Modernism vs. Postmodernism: Shepard's The Tooth of Crime and the Discourse of Popular Culture," Wilcox argues that Hoss, who "affirms the modernist ethos of artistic mastery and the sense of history and tradition" (564) comes up against Crow, a "young punk rocker with no sense of history and no time for nostalgia" (565).

[132] See also Innes for a description of the various levels on which this duel functions (219-220).

match complete with NBA referee. The elected form is a duel between verbal styles which, like the boxing match whose language it in part employs, impacts physically on the opponents and transforms theatre into an agonistic, linguistic play-space.

The transformations of *personae* are played out within this agonistic situation. Using improvisation scenes—wherein characters are asked suddenly to switch scenarios and, hence, to assume a new role—Shepard focuses on the transformative power of gesturality. The dramatic figures abruptly switch linguistic registers, thereby engaging other voices and changing roles. The pre-duel scene is a good illustration. In it, Hoss converts from his "normal" mode of speaking into that of a cowboy—a mode whose foreignness makes Crow uneasy—then, at Crow's instigation, into that of a 1920s gangster and, finally, back into his own mélange of rock-and-rumble-and-hot-rod-talk (*TTC* 230-31). Both Hoss and Crow show themselves to be superb improvisors, capable of spontaneously generating variations on the main scenario within which they are constrained, concurrently creating a shifting sense of self. Hoss underscores this malleability when he narrates an incident from highschool—a class-based fight between some rich kids and him and his two outcast friends, Moose and Cruise: "The three of us had a brotherhood, a trust. Something unspoken. Then one day it came to the test. I was sorta' *ridin' between 'em*. I'd *shift my personality from one to the other* but they dug me 'cause I'd go crazy drunk all the time" (emphasis added, 223). While Hoss uses this incident to illustrate the gap between his past facility with shifting his personality and his current fixedness in his image, nevertheless, even within this fixedness, he retains a capacity for extemporaneity. As Hoss

had been in his youth, so Crow is "a master adapter. A visionary adapter" (249) who is able to "cop" Hoss's "patterns" and walk (222)—to imitate and, through imitation, to appropriate the gestures and styles of the other.[133]

In The Tooth of Crime, gestural style assumes an ontological value. As Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet had demonstrated already, the donning of a new verbal or visual mask or role signals a fundamental change in the person wearing it. In The Presence of the Actor, Chaikin explains this ontological transformation: "[i]n former times acting simply meant putting on a disguise. When you took off the disguise, there was the old face under it. Now it's clear that the wearing of the disguise changes the person. As he takes the disguise off, his face is changed from having worn it" (6). In this play, there is no self per se to be changed by the donning of a new disguise. Hoss tells Becky, "Ya' know, you'd be O.K., Becky, if you had a self. So would I. Something to fall back on in a moment of doubt or terror or even surprise" (TTC 225). Instead, there is only a succession of masks donned and discarded, self-created through improvisation or imposed by the other. Becky relays how they capitalized on Hoss's malleability, forming him into the successful image that he is: "That's what we saved you from, your nature. Maybe you forgot that. When we first landed you, you were a complete beast of nature. A sideways killer. Then we molded and shaped you and sharpened you down to perfection because we saw in you a true genius killer. A killer to end them all. A killer's killer" (207).

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[133] Gary Grant sums up this concept of a fluid self: this is a "post-Freudian concept of personality built up through reactions to the succession of circumstances one finds oneself in, and always in a transformational state of potential energy" (563).

Crow, a "self-made man," identifies the self with the self-created mask as he extolls the surface image: "But I believe in my mask—The man I made up is me" (232).

Language functions here, through the change in verbal styles, to effect the transformations in masks. This transformation may be self-induced, as when Hoss restores his shaken confidence and composure by singing "I'm a cold killer Mama" (208) or through his dialogized monologue with the "old man" (225). Conversely, the transformation may be coerced by the other by engaging the various rhythmical verbal patterns that make up the American linguistic experience. For example, in round two of the duel, Hoss begins by "talking like an ancient delta blues singer" and, "growing physically older," "becomes a menacing ancient spirit. Like a voodoo man" (238): he inflicts a magical incantation upon Crow by incarnating the origins of American rock music. Michael Earley argues: "[w]hen you move through the competing register of the language duel in The Tooth of Crime [...] you can see how Shepard's characters float into focus and then out, how the essential perception of the self which makes up the conflict of the play lives and dies on the field of language" (131).

Language, then, functions on an affective level: it is wielded intersubjectively between the duelling rockers as an instrument, more, as a weapon with the power not only to create, but to maim as well. Jeanette Malkin takes up this issue when she notes that "[v]erbal mastery is equated with physical prowess" (162). For example, Crow's verbal assault on Hoss is converted into the terms of a physical assault: "Good clean body punches. Nice left jab. Straight from the shoulder. Had you

rocked on your heels two or three times. No doubt about it" (*TTC* 237); meanwhile, Crow lies flat on his back, physically exhausted from the verbal exertion. Through incantory phrases, the repetition of words and sounds, of perfect and imperfect rhymes, Crow evokes verbal images of punishment, self-flagellation, impotence, cowardice (235). Shaming Hoss, Crow effects the ritual degradation of the reigning rock king, eventually delivering a technical knock-out (241) and winning the duel. Every utterance becomes a potential or real act of aggression.[134]

The subject, therefore, is not only constituted in and through the dialogical relation; the subject may also be destroyed in and through language wielded intersubjectively. In either case, what is expressed is a consequent unfinalizability that denies, not only the possibility of selfhood, but even that of a stable mask. At the end of the duel, Hoss realizes that he has been "pulled and pushed around from one image to another" and that "[n]othin' takes solid form. Nothin' is sure and final. Where do I stand! Where the fuck do I stand!" (243). Defeated by Crow, outlawed for having killed the referee and thus going against "the code," he begs to be reconstituted in terms of the new reigning discourse—Crow's. An inversion in the power relation and an exchange of roles between Hoss and Crow is effected. Crow, having played Hoss

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[134] Focusing on this affective dimension, but bringing to light the musical foundation of dialogue, Bruce Powe explains the relationship between music, language, being and power: "[o]ne observes, too, the use of colloquialisms and jargon—hard, cutting words that exist in the characters' mouths like savage, affective things. Characters hurtle the words as if they were notes from a sax or a guitar; they project them, perform them. Employed in this way, words are *dangerous*. They have power precisely because they are alive as sound. Thus, the complex relationship between music and the spoken word, rhythm and pacing, performing and acting and being, is explored in this exchange" (22). Wilcox, citing Gilles Deleuze, makes a similar point: "the words in this essentially grim narrative of struggle and displacement, become carnivorous, savage affective things whose consonants 'act directly on the body, penetrating and bruising it'" (563).

"just right" (243), appropriates Hoss's turf and title—everything that Hoss "is"—just

as earlier he had copped Hoss's "style." Hoss, now pupil to Crow's teacher, desires

to be taught the turfless Gypsy's talk and walk, to engage the other in an attempt at

a new self-representation:

> CROW: You wanna be like me now?
>
> HOSS: Not exactly. Just help me into the style. I'll develop my
>   own image. I'm an original man. A one and only. I
>   just need some help. (241)

The first step in the reinvention of Hoss is the dissolution of what remains of

his original style. Like Kaspar, he needs to become a *tabula rasa*.

> CROW: We gotta *break yer patterns down*, Leathers. Too many
>   bad habits. *Re-program the tapes*. Now just relax. Start
>   breathin' deep and slow. *Empty your head*. Shift your
>   attention to immediate sounds. The floor. The space
>   around you. The sound of your heart. Keep away from
>   fantasy. *Shake off the image*. No pictures just pure
>   focus. How does it feel? (emphasis added, 245)

Under Crow's pedagogical method of demonstration and imitation (repetition), Hoss

re-invents a new identity for himself by donning a younger, more dangerous version

of himself (i.e., Crow). He appropriates the "form" of the other:

> CROW: [...] Start with a clean screen. Are you blank now?
>
> HOSS: I guess.
>
> CROW: Good. *Now vision him comin'*. Walking towards you
>   from a distance. Can't make out the face yet. *Just feel
>   his form*. Get down his animal. Like a cat. Lethal and
>   silent. Comin' from far off. Takin' his time. Pull him
>   to ya'. Can you feel him?
>
> HOSS: I think so. It's me. He's just like me only younger.
>   More dangerous. [...] No doubt. No fear.

CROW: Keep him comin'. *Pull him into ya'. Put on his gestures.*
         Wear him like a suit a' clothes.

HOSS: Yeah. It *is* me. Just like I always wanted to be. [...]
         Mean and tough and cool. Untouchable. A true killer.
         Don't take no shit from nobody. True to his heart.
         True to his voice. [...] Lives by a code. His own code.
         [...] Pitiless. Indifferent and riding a state of grace. It
         ain't me! IT AIN'T ME! IT AIN'T ME! IT AIN'T
         ME! (emphasis added, 246-47)

However, Hoss's monologue is only a pastiche of recycled concepts of the rebel hero

living by his "own code." For an original, this realization of the derivative nature of

his new identity—a realization which hits him when he "see[s his] self from the

outside" (248)—is damning.[135]

Like Witkiewicz's Edgar, consequently, Hoss contemplates the one gesture

that cannot be "taught or copied or stolen or sold" (249), and hence is the only

authentic one—namely, suicide. Hoss, ever formed and deformed, dissolved and

reconstituted by the external world of alterity, shifting from one image and voice to

the next in a dissolution of selfhood, takes control of his life in his death by recover-

ing his originally suicidal nature and melding it with what Becky, Cheyenne and

Starman molded him into: "A killer to end [...] all" killers (207). He becomes his

own killer. The active and the passive synchronize: affecting and affected coincide

in the self-cannibalization of the *corps*.

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[135] The barbershop quartet glosses the exchange: "I saw my face in yours—I took you for myself/I took you by mistake—for me/I learned your walk and talk—I learned your mouth/I learned the secrets in your eye/But now I find the feelin' slips away/What's with me night and day is gone" (*TTC* 247-48).

The intent of this chapter has been to reconstruct, through an analysis of selected texts, a historical context that would allow for a more in-depth treatment of the theoretical issues around specularity in the theatrical works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. Each of the works discussed here, either by foregrounding the performance situation or by having dramatic figures play within the play, can be viewed in terms of the phenomenological variation of theatre that, in turning to itself, reveals its own play-structure. Furthermore, each engages seminal issues dealing with the constitution, transformation and destruction of the subject through alterity. The way in which this process is presented varies: one represents oneself as another or the other is represented as the self (Vives, Tieck); otherness is imposed on the self, thus becoming a constituent and constituting element (Shakespeare, Witkiewicz, Handke, Shepard); the presence of the other is the condition for seeing, consummating or affirming the self (Shakespeare, Marivaux, Tieck); otherness is appropriated as one's own (Vives, Tieck, Witkiewicz, Shepard). Each work, then, in some way, introduces alterity into the definition of subjective self-sameness.

These works extend the specular relation of self and other to the audience-performance relation. In Vives' A Fable about Man, man-the-actor, as a result of his consummate "emulation" of the divine spectators, is invited to exchange his status as spectacle for that of divine spectator, pure contemplator—an exchange that symbolizes both the near effacement of absolute alterity of the gods with respect to human beings and the "glorification" of humanity. In Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, through the presentation of a multiplicity of performance situations

thematizing and demonstrating the power of the gaze to provoke self-reflection, the audience is enfolded into the action as voyeur. In Marivaux's La Dispute, where the primordial constitution of the self within a system of desiring and admiring gazes is staged in order to resolve a social dispute on the question of sexual inconstancy, the contemporary Rococo audience, in a narcissistic reflex, sees itself represented in the play, sees itself put on view. In Tieck's Die verkehrte Welt, the series of representations of the self as another, or of identity in terms of difference, functions specularly in the goal of leading the spectators to gain an understanding of either themselves or a given situation in their own world: by reflecting on the posited spectacle, and through the self-reflexivity occasioned by difference, the spectators appropriate otherness as their own and come to see their own presence as representation. In Witkiewicz's Kurka Wodna, where the receiver of a work constructed on the principle of Pure Form is given the task of configuring a cohesive theatrical form from a multitude of elements with the goal of effecting a refiguration in the quotidian selfhood, the audience is given to understand that such a configuration (interpretation) can be only a provisional attainment: meaning, like identity in this world, is indeterminate. In Handke's two plays, the audience takes centre stage: by taking advantage of the intersubjective contract binding the I and the you, and by transforming theatre into a verbal space in which language-games are played out, his works have the goal of increasing self-understanding on the part of the audience as to the way in which the audience formalizes the aesthetic experience and constructs theatrical meaning, and, furthermore, the way in which the various social, linguistic and

gestural forms function to constitute and mold the individual. Finally, in Shepard's The Tooth of Crime, the audience, confronted with the often disorienting verbal styles that vie with one another in the style match, is forced into the same constantly improvised, destabilizing mode in which Hoss and Crow must struggle in their pursuit of fame, in their attempt to be known by others.

These issues crystallize in the work of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. In their respective œuvres, the three playwrights systematically and consequentially interrogate the metaphysical view of the human being as a self-contained unity by casting their human beings into an interhuman world in which the other is not only creative, but also destructive, of the subject. Simultaneously, in their works, the specular model of being vis-à-vis alterity, of seeing the self through the other, explicitly implicates the audience in its roles as theatre-goer, on-looker and inter-preter of the performance.

CHAPTER THREE

PIRANDELLO: THE HERMENEUTIC PARADOX

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) stands as the pivotal figure in this current of specular theatre—wherein intellectual issues such as the involvement of the other in the construction or transformation of the self and the subsequent destabilization of private, fixed self-identity within an interactive forum, or shared action space, come to the fore (i.e., being-with-one-another takes the form of having-an-influence-or-affect-on-one-another); wherein this constitutive power of alterity is demonstrated within the field of performance vis-à-vis the play-form of mimicry, by which the self is represented as other than itself, or the other is represented as the self in a directedness toward others; and whereby mimicry, by promoting corporeal mimetic identification, is put to the self-reflexive hermeneutic service of promoting self-examination and self-understanding (the function of revealing) with the goal of potentially affecting or effecting (a transformation in) acting on the part of the internal or external audience.

Primarily, though not exclusively, in his dramatic works, Pirandello engages, discursively and demonstratively, in an explicit ontological inquiry into the very nature of identity. He conceives of the identity of the human being and that of the work of art as particular manifestations of an underlying process of *cognition*, the object of which is unfixable, evades any categorical determination. He interposes the models

171

of *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity: on the one hand, for Pirandello, there is a private

core of self-identity that remains to be discovered and uncovered, and whether or not

it can be or is does not negate the "fact" of its existence; on the other, as will be

pursued with greater vigor and consequentiality by Gombrowicz and Genet, the

subject is constantly displaced or unseated from its traditional, privileged vantage as

an originally given pole of experience and re-envisaged as a product of an ongoing,

cumulative series of cognitional activities that abide in the realm of the interactive

"open" in between the subject and object, I and it, self and other. Pirandello, then,

is concerned fundamentally with a theory of knowledge,[136] which critics have tended

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[136] Among the studies dealing with this aspect of Pirandello's thought, the most significant are the following. Józef Kelera, in "Pirandello widziany z Polski," opening with an insightful comparison of Pirandello and Witkiewicz, departs from the traditional critical approach to Pirandello's so-called relativism by stressing the need to address it from the cognitive point of view—that is, as a theory of knowledge—rather than simply from its socio-psychological dimension and from the perspective of the problematic status of personality (190-91): "Pirandello is going to analyze and demonstrate the mechanisms of social conventions, social constraints and oppression that impose roles and masks on the human individual in the theatre of life. Truth, if it exists—of course, personal, private, intimate—is buried very deeply and often is not voiced or does not allow itself to be articulated; it is crushed, even destroyed altogether, by the role and mask. [...] But the mask also fulfils a defensive function and shields the truth from external aggression. [...] Just because the mask hides the truth, it does not follow absolutely (or at least always) that some kind of intimate, personal truth [...] does not exist at all. [...] Keeping in mind the dominant function of roles and masks in this theatre, the questions need to be asked: Does personality exist at all for Pirandello? Does it exist as a constant? Does it exist beyond the role and mask? [...] Perhaps this is an open problem. [...] If we agree, however, to accept [...] only the initial hypothesis—namely, the valorization of the individual—logically, we should also accept that there exists something that Pirandello wishes to defend against all the mechanisms of imprisonment, external oppression and aggression, estrangement, adaptation, uprooting [...]. This 'something' that he wants to defend is perhaps fluid, processual, fleeting. It is perhaps even intangible. Nevertheless it exists" (my translation, 191-93). In a similar vein, Donatella Stocchi-Perucchio, in "Il fu Mattia Pascal as a Game of 'Guardie e Ladri': An 'Experiment in Poetic Philology'," considers Pirandello's novel as dramatizing the "transition from positivistic (pre-Copernican) confidence in unproblematic distinctions and stable identities to post-Copernican (post-modern) skepticism about the possibility of ever establishing either identities or differences." The transition rests on the change from a cognitive model based on the principle of causality to a model based on the principle of specularity (24). Wladimir Krysiński, in Le paradigme inquiet, acknowledges that Pirandello is searching for the "existential, interhuman and intersubjective meaning of truth posed as the problematic goal of human relations" (my translation, 18). Glauco Cambon, in his introduction to Pirandello: A Collection of Critical Essays, argues that Pirandello "*does* explode the notion of a 'fixed personal identity' and *does* create the effect of trying to dissuade human beings from taking themselves and one another for granted. The illusive reality of personal

to articulate, not entirely correctly, in terms of "relativism" or "perspectivism": presenting the critical interaction of multiple apprehensions of reality, Pirandello inquires into an existential truth that is forced to take account of the finitude and contingency of human experience, and that must attend to the interpretive nature of perception and judgments. This interpretive dimension of existence links modes of being to modes of disclosure—that is, to the manner in which the other (be it person or work of art) is revealed.

As a result, Pirandello's literary works give expression to a pair of hermeneutic paradoxes. First, the impossibility of rendering a fixed identity or authoritative interpretation of the other, on the one hand, demands a constant re-interpreting, which stems from an indeterminacy, and results in a multiplicity, of identities; on the other, it calls for an ethical injunction against violently imposing a form on, or forcible seizure of, that which is to be known. Second, picking up from Shakespeare, Marivaux and Tieck, the interpretation or construction of the identity of the unknown other (x) functions dialectically by casting back self-reflexively on the subject of the interpretation (a), such that the interpretation of x by a is actually the disclosure of a vis-à-vis x. The presentation of "contingency, multiplicity, and polyvocality" on the part of the audience as inscribed in a number of Pirandello's texts speaks to a

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existence impinges on our awareness precisely because it is felt to be inaccessible to ready-made definitions" (9). Finally, in more general methodological terms, Catherine Arturi Parella, in A Theory for Reading Dramatic Texts: Selected Plays by Pirandello and García Lorca, treats Pirandello's plays from the perspective of hermeneutics, demonstrating how select dramatic texts foreground the dialectical relations of reader and text, text and subtext, the process of consistency building and the process of internal staging, and make of the reader an "imaginative director," allowing us to witness our "deciphering capabilities" (11).

pervasive undecidability (to recall Sayre's articulation of the distinction between undecidability and indeterminacy [xiv]).

Here, primarily on the basis of Pirandello's novel, Uno, nessuno e centomila (1926, One, None and A Hundred Thousand), and play, Questa sera si recita a soggetto (1930, Tonight We Improvise), as well as selected short stories and essays, I briefly examine the nexus of interrelated terms that Pirandello introduces in order to provide, not so much an in-depth analysis of the writer's aesthetic and philosophical program, which have been dealt with to varying degrees by any number of critics (e.g., Bassnett-McGuire, Firth, Paolucci, Pearson, Sogliuzzo, Dort in "Pirandello et le théâtre français," Krysiński in Le paradigme inquiet), as a framework for discussing Pirandello's plays from the perspective of the intersubjectivity of human experience. The relevant notions are form and life, *costruirsi*, the mask and the specular image. Afterwards, I analyze a representative cross-section of his plays.

There are two reasons for focusing on his dramatic pieces. The first has to do with Pirandello's view of theatre as a privileged aesthetic medium by which to demonstrate the union of art and life as "form in movement"—a phrase that is echoed by Gombrowicz and inverted by Genet, who speaks rather of a movement toward fixity and rigidity in form or image. In Questa sera si recita a soggetto (Questa sera), Professor Hinkfuss articulates this foundational concept: "Non si vuole intendere che il teatro è sopratutto spettacolo. Arte sí, ma anche vita. Creazione, sí, ma non durevole: momentanea. Un prodigio: la forma che si muove!" ("I don't mean that theatre is above all else spectacle. Art yes, but also life. Creation, yes,

but not permanent: momentary. A wonder: form that moves!").[137] The second reason

has to do with the nature of theatre as providing the appropriate venue for represent-

ing Pirandello's conceptualization of the human being, a conceptualization which,

hinging on theatricality, finds reverberations in the writings of Gombrowicz and

Genet. That is, in a variation on the Baroque "the world is a stage" metaphor, it is

generally acknowledged that theatre for Pirandello, "prima d'essere una forma

tradizionale della letteratura, [è] un'espressione naturale della vita" (Pirandello, "Se

il film parlante abolirà il teatro" 1031) ("before being a traditional literary form, [is]

a natural expression of life"). As such, it is an "eternal and innate" activity for the

human being (my translation, Tuscano 269) and, for his characters, it constitutes an

"ontological choice" (my translation, Puppa 66). Finally, theatre "provides the means

of accommodating the chaos of the divided or fragmented self" (Stewens 67) that is

Pirandello's main object of inquiry.

The three dramatic texts selected here crystallize certain unique aspects of

specularity in theatre. Così è (se vi pare) (1918, It Is So! [If You Think So]) counter-

poses different concepts of the self (*idem*-identity versus *ipse*-identity) within a

hermeneutical, or question-and-answer, context of an ultimately inconclusive attempt

to know an unknown; in doing so, the play tests various paradigms of truth, such as

empirical, verificative and testimonial. Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (1921, Six

Characters in Search of an Author) creates a space for interpretation by theatricaliz-

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[137] Pirandello, Questa sera si recita a soggetto 269. All quotations from this play are taken from the first volume of Pirandello's collected plays, Maschere nude, and are referenced as ([QS] page). The dramatic works analyzed here are from this volume and referenced with page number. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Pirandello's works are mine.

ing the fundamental tension between the subject's capacity for self-presentation and the subject's construction by others through the ultimately failed attempt to stage the story of six characters. A specular relationship is established between the actors who assume the roles of the six characters and translate the latters' story onto the stage, and the characters watching this performance of themselves—a situation which gives rise to agreements and disagreements with the Manager and actors about particular staging choices. Ciascuno a suo modo (1924, Each in His Own Way) focuses on the reception side of theatre and considers the hermeneutic process on two levels. The play-within-the-play turns on the highly volatile attempt to understand the self in a situation where others (here, notorious public opinion) are constantly forming and re-forming the self through their judgments. Within the play, beyond the represented and multifarious critiquing of the performance by theatre critics and audience members, the work thematizes and presents the way in which that which is represented in the play-within-the-play leads to self-understanding on the part of specific audience members on whom the second degree play is based. The theatre audience is shown play imitating life and, in a reflex, life imitating play. Each of these plays, then, hinges on the attempt to know an unknown and/or the way in which the attempt to fix another in a form casts back self-reflexively on the inquirer.

I.   THE HERMENEUTIC PIRANDELLO

One of Pirandello's most explicitly hermeneutical statements on art is located in Questa sera. This play explores the boundary between playing and being vis-à-vis

the dramatic form of the play-within-the-play, by means of which the impact of the fictional role on the live actor is presented. Anticipating Paul Ricœur's hermeneutics, according to which the work of art (e.g., literary text) interrupts the possibility of a direct dialogue between author and audience, thus doing away with absolute authorial authority,[138] Professor Hinkfuss, the director of the play-within-the-play, in a direct address to the audience, expounds on (1) the parallel relationship of (a) the work of art to its author, and (b) the work of art to its audience, and (2) the status of the work of art as an in-itself and a for-others, or the engagement of the audience in the formation of the work of art. Hinkfuss discusses, specifically within the context of the director's role in intepreting a play text and staging a playscript, how the finished, invariable work of art—"una forma dell'organamento delle immagini" (Pirandello, "L'umorismo" 134) ("a form of the organizing imagination")—is disengaged from author's intentionality and the immediacy of the culturo-historical context. Subsequently, because the work relates itself differently to varying interpretive standpoints and matrices of understanding, it is taken up by different directors who, bestowing on it their own variable readings by negotiating between the "parameters" (constraints) and "tolerances" (freedoms) of the dramatic text (see Garner 6), transform

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[138] Briefly, Ricœur's hermeneutics aims at synthesizing structuralist concerns about textual autonomy with hermeneutical concerns about the contextual character of interpretation. This synthesis attempts to avoid the psychologism inherent in the Romantic notion that the author, as subjective creator of his work, is sovereign, and the accompanying notion that the reader, through the work, "understands" the author. Ricœur makes appropriation (the goal of interpretation) depend on a response to the intrinsic demands of the text. As Ricœur would have it, hermeneutics recognizes the intersubjective meaning of the text as opposed to the subjective intention of the author, which historicist criticism claims. Once created, the text qua work (the result of labour) is essentially separated from its author, becoming a semantically autonomous entity. Then it is inserted into the reading process at an alienating distance from its reader (see esp. Ricœur, Interpretation Theory 71-100).

it into a unique scenic creation.

It soon becomes apparent that this explanation is but a specific instanciation of a larger phenomenological concern with the mode of existence of the work of art, and hermeneutic concern with the audience's understanding of itself when confronted with the work. These concerns are couched in the simultaneously opposite and correlative terms of life and form, and of fixity and movement.[139] Hinkfuss expounds:

> L'unico responsabile sono io.
> Ho preso una sua [Pirandello's] novella, come avrei potuto prendere quella d'un altro. Ho preferito una sua, perché tra tutti gli scrittori di teatro è forse il solo che abbia mostrato di comprendere che l'opera dello scrittore è finita nel punto stesso ch'egli ha finito di scrivere l'ultima parola. [...]
>
> In un altro teatro, con altri attori e altre scene, con altre dispos-

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[139] Henri Bergson is the philosopher to whom critics tend to appeal in order to gloss the concept of dynamic form. See, for example, Auréliu Weiss's "'The Remorseless Rush of Time'" (36), where the critic quotes from Bergson's 1907 work, Creative Evolution: "[l]ife is evolution. We concentrate a definite period of this evolution in a stable image which we call form and, when the change has become substantial enough to shake the happy inertia of our perceptions, we say the form has changed. But in reality the form changes at every instant. I should rather say that there is no form since form is immobile and reality is constant change. The constant change of form is reality: form is but an instant during a transition." There is, however, a problem in indiscriminately applying Bergson's dichotomy of form (as essentially a limitation or fixity) and life (as essentially boundlessness or movement)—a dichotomy which makes form adversarial to life—to Pirandello's thought, even though the terms may be the same. Ernst Cassirer, in volume three of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (PSF), provides a useful critique of Bergson: "[l]ife cannot apprehend itself by remaining absolutely within itself. It must give itself form; for it is precisely by this 'otherness' of form that it gains its 'visibility' if not its reality" (39). This interdependency is stressed throughout Pirandello's work, usually as a paradox. For example, in "'Foglietti' Inediti," Pirandello writes: "[l]a vita è l'essere che vuole sé stesso. Che si dà una forma. È dunque l'infinito che si finisce. In ogni forma c'è un fine e dunque una fine. In ogni forma è una morte. Dunque l'essere s'uccide in ogni forma, o si nega. [...] Perché l'essere vivesse bisognerebbe che s'uccidesse di continuo ogni forma; ma senza forma l'essere non vive. Ecco l'eterna contradizione" (1275-76) ("[l]ife is being which wills itself. Which gives itself a form. And so the infinite which finishes itself. In each form, there is a goal and thus a conclusion. In each form there is a death. Therefore, being kills itself in each form, or negates itself. [...] Because being lives it is necessary that it kill itself constantly in each form; but without form being cannot live. This is the eternal contradiction"). Life, to quote Cassirer from his fourth volume of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, "possesses and grasps itself in the imprint of form as the infinite possibility of formation, as the will to form and the power to form. Even life's limitation becomes its own act; what from outside seems to be its fate, its necessity, proves to be a witness to its freedom and self-formation" (19).

izioni e altre luci, m'ammetterete che la creazione scenica sarà
certamente un'altra. E non vi par dimostrato dello scrittore
(unica nel suo testo), ma questa o quella creazione scenica che
se n'è fatta, l'una diversa dall'altra; tante, mentre quella è una?
[...]
Per levare a quello ch'io dico ogni aria di paradosso, v'invito a
considerare che un'opera d'arte è fissata per sempre in una
forma immutabile che rappresenta la liberazione del poeta dal
suo travaglio creativo: la perfetta quiete raggiunta dopo tutte
le agitazioni di questo travaglio. [...]

Ma a questo patto soltanto, signori, può tradursi in vita e tor-
nate a muoversi ciò che l'arte fissò nell'immutabilità d'una
forma; a patto che questa forma riabbia movimento da noi, una
vita varia e diversa e momentanea: quella che ciascuno di noi
sarà capace di darle. (230-33)

(I am the only person responsible for this.
I have taken one of his [Pirandello's] novellas, though I could
have chosen any work by any other writer. I preferred Pirandel-
lo's because, of all the writers for the theatre, he is perhaps the
only one who has shown that he understands that the writer's
work is finished the moment he has written the last word. [...]

In another theatre, with other actors and other sets, other
directions and other lighting, you would have to grant me that
the scenic creation would certainly have been different. And
does this not prove to you that what one judges in the theatre
is never the work the writer had in his head but this or that
scenic creation that had been made of it, each one different
from the other, many in fact, whereas the writer is unique? [...]

To lift from what I am saying the appearance of paradox, I
invite you to consider that a work of art is fixed forever in an
immutable form that represents the liberation of the poet from
his creative labour: the perfect stillness reached after all the
agitation of this labour. [...]

But only on this condition, ladies and gentlemen, can that which
art has fixed in the immutability of form be brought to life, and
in turn, move—on the condition that this form receives its
movement from us who are alive; a life that is various and
diverse and momentary, whatever each of us is capable of giving
it.)

As touched upon in the introduction, elaborated on in first chapter to this study and articulated in this passage, the "staging" of any work of art—theatrical being but an exemplary case—is infinitely variable (within certain constraints): the work of art, in interaction with the performative, interpretive activity on the part of its audience, assumes a unique actualization—takes on its form in a unique "aesthetic semblance" (Iser's term)—within the audience members' imaginations, according to the temporal, spatial and existential situatedness of each different interpreter, and even by the same interpreter at different times. The original form is re-formed and transformed in concernful appropriation from the various vantages and through different ages.

Uno, nessuno e centomila (*UNC*) already pushes the hermeneutic implications that the audience's freedom to interpret presupposes. Echoing sentiments uttered by the Father in Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (87), in this novel, a discussion about indeterminacy of meaning provides a semantic analogue at the lexical level to the intersubjective configuration of the work of art. The protagonist, Moscarda, surmises that a successful dialogue—namely, one that has the goal of mutual under-standing—is impossible because, as linguistic beings, over time we laden the language we are born into with our own experiences and prejudices that go into creating our own context of understanding and that other persons do not and cannot bring to bear. That is, to quote from Mario Valdés' examination of the classical problem of meaning in "Post-Modern Interpretation and the Dialectic between Semiotics and Hermeneu-tics," though "collectively generated," language is, nevertheless, an "individually realized [...] mode of living" (186). Moscarda reflects:

voi [...] non saprete mai, né io vi potrò mai comunicare come si traduca in me quello che voi mi dite. [...] Abbiamo usato, io e voi la stessa lingua, le stesse parole. Ma che colpa abbiamo, io e voi, se le parole, per sé, sono vuote? [...] E voi le riempite del senso vostro, nel dirmele; e io nell'accoglierle, inevitabil-mente, le riempio del senso mio. Abbiamo creduto d'intenderci; non ci siamo intesi affato. (*UNC* 769)

(you [...] will never know, and I shall never be able to tell you, how what you say to me is translated inside me. [...] We both employed [...] the same language, the same words. But is it our fault, yours and mine, if words in themselves are empty? [...] You fill them with your meaning, as you speak them to me; while I, in taking them, inevitably fill them with my own. We thought we understood each other; we did not understand each other at all. [*ONHT* 59-60])

Thus, as Pirandello realized anticipating the post-structuralist unmooring of all fixed determination of meaning (see, for e.g., Valdés 186-89), language is not transparent in its meaning, is not univocal; rather, it is polysemous and, like the work of art, tends to a multiplicity of interpretive disclosures. Wilhelm von Humboldt's analysis of language in <u>Einleitung zum Kawi-Werk</u> (176) is useful to gloss this early awareness of a subjective meaning, or imprint, beyond the pure objectivity of a correspondence between sign and referent: "the difference in the interpreting mood gives to the same sound a different intensity of meaning; in all expression, something not absolutely determined by the words seems as it were to overflow from them" (cited in Cassirer, *PSF* 3:50-51). Of significance here is that speaking is ineluctably an act of self-representation, but that awareness of this fact can come only through the intersub-jective dialogical encounter.

This articulation of the constitutive power that the audience possesses with respect to the work of art, a power that makes of the work a dynamic event config-

ured differently according to the temporal and existential situatedness(es) of the

particular subject, and the comment about the anisotropic or polysemic nature of

language, then, are indicative of a larger concern with the nature of truth or reality

as interpreted and, moreover, with the revelation of the interpreting subject. Piran-

dello's view—basically an extension of verism[140] and a critique of the positivist

presumption which holds that reality is fixed and directly observable, uninfluenced

by the observer, and that it is possible to distinguish facts from values—has been

commonly explicated in terms of relativism[141] or perspectivism. His own term, which

appears in works such as Uno, nessuno e centomila, Il piacere dell'onestà (1918, The

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[140] James Biundo's premise in Moments of Selfhood: Three Plays by Luigi Pirandello is that the "generating influence on the major characters is a search for selfhood in a world which has lost the point of equilibrium" (1). He discusses Pirandello's extension of verism (a term coined after Giovanni Verga, who pioneered the naturalist movement in Italy, and signifying the acceptance of "the plurality of life, situations and expressions of truth") to "questions of the extent to which impressions are perceptions and how these relate to the persons or objects about which one is having the impression or perception" (10).

[141] For example, Alvin B. Kernan, in Classics of Modern Theatre, writes: "[r]elativism, the view that nothing, neither space nor morals, is absolute, finds its theatrical voice in the characters of Pirandello who try futilely to explain to others their personal sense of themselves, while the others interpret those explanations according to their own particular sense of things" (3-4). Pirandello, in "Arte e scienza d'oggi" (1893), uses the term to express the world into which human beings find themselves thrown: "[n]essuna conoscenza, nessuna nozione precisa possiamo aver noi della vita, ma un sentimento soltanto e quindi mutabile e vario [...]. Simuliamo con certa boria discreta indifferenza per tutto ciò che non sappiamo, e che pure in fondo sapere, e ci sentiamo come smarriti, anzi perduti in un cieco, immenso labirinto, circondato tutt'intorna da un mistero impenetrabile. Di vie, ce ne son tante: quale sarà la vera? Va di qua e di là la gente in fretta, e ognuno si dà l'aria di capirci qualche cosa [...]. Crollate le vecchie norme [...], è naturale che il concetto della relatività d'ogni cosa si sia talmente allargato in noi" (897-900) ("[w]e can have no precise knowledge/consciousness, no notion of life, but only a feeling, which is therefore changeable and variable [...]. With a certain arrogance, we pretend to have a certain indifference to all that we do not know and that perhaps cannot be thoroughly known, and we feel as if we were waylaid, indeed lost, in an immense, blind labyrinth, surrounded on all sides by an impenetrable mystery. Of lives, there are so many: how to know which is the real one? People rush here and there, and each one gives the impression that he understands something [...]. The old norms are collapsing [...], and naturally the concept of the relativity of each thing grows in us").

Pleasure of Honesty)[142] and Come tu mi vuoi (1930, As You Desire Me),[143] though is not his exclusive conceptual domain, is *costruirsi* (*to [self]-construct*).

Within the intellectual current traced out in the first chapter of this study, constructivism can be related to Kant's work on the schematizing and synthesizing power of the productive imagination. To recap briefly, according to Kant, the mind receives impressions according to its categories (i.e., the pure forms of intuition, which are space and time) and shapes them into patterns which conform, not to the external world, but rather, to the nature of the mind; as a result, we know only what our mind shapes and molds. Constructivism, as Rachel Hare-Mustin and Jeanne Marecek explain, thus asserts that we do not directly *discover* a reality already out there, but rather, we select, order and organize elements of it, "actively construct[ing] meanings that frame and organize our perceptions and experiences" (52). In other words, we know only that to which we ourselves give form, and this is extended to knowledge of self.

Form itself, then, is an ontic *mode* of apprehension. It is *formazione*. More precisely, it is an *id quo cognoscitur* (that *by* which [something] is known)—or the "horizon through and in which things are known"—as opposed to an *id quod cognoscitur* (that *which* is known)—or the "direct object of knowledge" (Hart 304). Form, in other words, functions as a speculative construct with respect to Being, which may

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[142] The line by Baldovino is "noi ci costruiamo" ("we construct ourselves") (622). Baldovino goes on to explain constructivism in terms of the form taken in relationality to others.

[143] In this play, Pirandello draws an explicit analogy between the construction of the house and the construction of a person.

never be known in itself. Our particular understanding of reality, therefore, can only be a representation (a standing-for), not an exact replica (standing-there), of what is "out there." (This distinction is crucial for understanding the true nature of the conflict between the characters and the theatrical troupe in <u>Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore</u>.) Moreover, this representation, this form, of necessity, cannot be a fixed thing but, as one of many modes of manifestation, submits to a constant revisioning, animated in various, sometimes incompatible ways by existential and contextual variables.

Moscarda, for example, comes to realize that knowledge comes only through active formation on the part of the knower. He uses the analogy of the construction of a house and the construction of a person (by self and by others) that Pirandello would elaborate on in <u>Come tu mi vuoi</u>.

> L'uomo piglia a materia anche se stesso, e si costruisce [...] come una casa.
> Voi credete di conoscervi se non vi costruite in qualche modo? E ch'io possa conoscervi, se non vi costruisco a modo mio? E voi me, se non mi costruite a modo vostro? Possiamo conoscere soltanto quello a cui riusciamo a dar forma. Ma che conoscenza può essere? È forse questa forma la cosa stessa? Sì, tanto per me, quanto per voi; ma non così per me come per voi: tanto vero che io non mi riconosco nella forma che mi date voi, né voi in quella che vi do io; e la stessa cosa non è uguale per tutti e anche per ciascuno di noi può di continuo cangiare, e difatti cangia di continuo.
> Eppure, non c'è altra realtà fuori di questa, se non cioè nella forma momentanea che riusciamo a dare a noi stessi, agli altri, alle cose. La realtà che ho io per voi è nella forma che voi mi date; ma è realtà per voi e non per me. [... E] per me stesso io non ho altra realtà se non nella forma che riesco a darmi. E come? Ma costruendomi, appunto. (*UNC* 778-79)

(Man takes even himself as material, and builds himself, [...] like

a house.

Do you think you can know yourself, if you do not in some fashion build yourself up? Or that I can know you, if I do not build you up after my own fashion? We can only know that to which we succeed in giving form. Yet what can there be in the way of knowledge? Can it be that this form is the thing itself? Yes, as much for me as for you, but not for me as it is for you; so true is this that I do not recognize myself in the form which you confer upon me, nor you yourself in that which I confer upon you; the same thing is not the same to all; and even for any one of us, it may constantly change, and in fact does constantly so change.

And yet, there is no reality beyond the one which lies in that momentary form which we succeed in conferring upon ourselves, upon others, upon things. The reality that I hold for you lies in the form that you confer upon me, but it is reality to you and not to me. [... A]nd for myself, I have no other reality than that which I succeed in conferring upon myself. And how is that? Why, by building myself up, that is all. [*ONHT* 75-76])

There is a key and reciprocal constructing at play: each of us bestows a form on the other and even on the self (in order to make the self appear to ourselves and others). In the inevitable non-coincidence of our self-constructed form and the form bestowed on us by others lies the potential for deformation.

Reflecting on this philosophically, Moscarda consequently recognizes (a few years after Bakhtin articulated this insight in <u>Toward a Philosophy of the Act</u>) that, in an intersubjective world, there can be no definitive facts, only a series of valuations or value-laden interpretations:

l'essere agisce necessariamente per forme, che sono le apparenze ch'esso si crea, e a cui noi diamo valore di realtà. Un valore che cangia, naturalmente, secondo l'essere in quella forma e in quell'atto ci appare. [...A]lla fine siamo costretti a riconoscere che non sarà mai né questo né così in nessun modo stabile e sicuro [...] perchè una realtà non ci fu data e non c'è, ma dobbiamo farcela noi, se vogliamo essere: e non sarà mai una per tutti, una per sempre, ma di continuo e infinitamente

mutabile. (*UNC* 800)

> (being necessarily acts through forms, which are the appearances that it creates for itself, and to which we assign the value of reality. A value, naturally, that changes in accordance with the form and act in which the being becomes visible to us. [...I]n the end, we are constrained to recognize the fact that there will never be a this or a thus that is in any way stable or secure. [...] For reality is not a thing conferred upon us or which exists; it is something that we have to manufacture ourselves, if we will to be; and it will never be one for all, one forever, but continuous and subject to infinite mutations. [*ONHT* 108-09])

Any disclosure of "reality" or "Being," as Così è (se vi pare)'s Signora Ponza poignantly demonstrates, is never total or unambiguous, and every appearance or form so constructed and valuated by ourselves or others according to the "interpreting mood" is, paradoxically, simultaneously a covering up of truth in its inexhaustible fullness. When analyzing the nature of representation, Cassirer makes a point that is similar to, though more radical than, Pirandello's and that is useful for pointing up a fundamental tension in the Italian writer's works:

> representation, as presence, is at the same time actualization: what stands before us as here and now, what is given as this particular and determinate thing, announces itself also as the emanation and manifestation of a power which is not wholly exhausted in any such particularity. Though it may hide itself in a thousand forms, it remains its identical self in them all: it possesses a fixed nature and essence which in all these forms is captured mediately—that is, "represented" in them. (*PSF* 3:108-09)

The fact that *idem*-identity may not be knowable or known does not negate the fact of its existence.

Pirandello's critique of positivism vis-à-vis constructivism, therefore, is extended to the human being, which is conceived as composed of a multiplicity of alterities.

In <u>Enrico IV</u> (1922, <u>Henry IV</u>), the protagonist suggestively proposes to his ex-lover, Mathilde, an alternate way of being to self-sameness. His comment actually casts back on his own situation, on his own awareness that he is not as he makes himself appear to be to others: "A voi non è mai avvenuto, Madonna? Vi ricordate proprio di essere stata sempre la stessa, voi?" (147) ("Has it never happened to you, my Lady? Do you remember yourself as always having been the same?"). Or, in another example, Moscarda, subjected to a violent ontological assault, attains self-splitting self-consciousness and becomes other to himself: "presto l'atroce mio dramma si complicò: con la scoperta dei centomila Moscarda ch'io ero non solo per gli altri ma anche per me, tutti con questo solo nome di Moscarda [...,] tutti dentro questo mio povero corpo ch'era uno anch'esso, uno e nessuno ahimè" (*UNC* 751) ("[m]y atrocious drama speedily grew more complicated, with the discovery of the hundred-thousand Moscardas that I was, not only to others, but even to myself, all with the single name of Moscarda [...,] all of them lodged within this poor body which was likewise I, one and none" [*ONHT* 29]).

This conception of the self as composed of a multiplicity of not always compatible alterities is usually explicated in the performative terms of role-playing and the visual terms of the mask. Often, the mask and role in Pirandello's work are interpreted as a metaphor for his concept of a dynamic human personality or as an expression of the delusive character of an essential self (e.g., Pearson 36, Sogliuzzo 10, Bassnett-McGuire 47, Fisher 22). As I have argued all along, it is an oversimplification to state categorically and unqualifiably that "the mask is all" for Pirandel-

lo—even given the writer's statement in "L'umorismo" that the human being is "[s]empre mascherato, senza volerlo, senza saperlo, di quella tal cosa ch'egli in buona fede si figura d'essere" (153) ("[a]lways masked, without wanting it, without knowing it, with that which we in good faith imagine ourselves to be").[144] I would refocus this approach, then, and consider the role or the mask in the same hermeneutic light as I have Pirandello's notion of form—namely, as a specific (though by no means conclusive, absolute or fixed) ontic mode of apprehension by the self of the self, or by the self of the other.

Pirandello, as does Gombrowicz to a more limited degree, actually puts into play two models of identity: *idem*-identity (in-itself) and *ipse*-identity ([be]for[e]-others). Neither is sufficient in itself to articulate the dynamic of *costruirsi* in his œuvre. Though he hedges toward the model of *ipse*-identity in his writings, which manifest a translation of *relativity* or *relativism* into *relationality*, Pirandello has not fully cast off the model of *idem*-identity, or self-sameness, which continues to wield a restraining influence. He addresses this interplay in various permutations in a number of works. Already in the 1896 essay, "Il momento" ("The Moment"), Pirandello acknowledges a dual orientation at work in the creation of the self: "[i]o, per me, so che la mia coscienza non mi basta affatto. Mi basterebbe forse, se potessi riuscire a concerpirmi isolatamente, se essa cioé non fosse per sua natura aperta agli altri e non esistesse in lei *una relazione essenziale tra me che penso e gli altri esseri ch'io penso*" (emphasis added, 912) ("I myself know that my own consciousness does not

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[144] These words are echoed by Enrico IV: "Ci mascheriamo di ciò che ci par d'essere" (368) ("We mask ourselves with what it seems to us we are").

suffice me. It would suffice me were I able to conceive of myself in isolation, that is, were I not by nature open to others and if there did not exist *an essential relation between the me that thinks and the others about whom I think*"). The knowing (thinking) subject and known (thought) object are not isolated units, but aspects of a single relational phenomenon. The human being, then, is not a completely self-sufficient entity, but rather, cast into an intersubjective world, must take account of that situation of alterity: as Pirandello acknowledges in "Teatro e letteratura," "[c]iascuno in realtà crea a sé stesso la propria vita: ma questa creazione, purtroppo, non è mai libera, [...] perché soggetta a tutti le necessità naturali e sociali che limitano le cose, gli uomini e le loro azioni e li deformano e li contrariano fino a farli fallire e cader miseramente" (1021) ("[e]ach in reality creates one's own life for oneself: but this creation, unfortunately, is never free, [...] because it is subject to all the natural and social necessities that limit things, human beings and their actions, and deform them and oppose them until they fail and fall miserably").

In "'Foglietti' Inediti," Pirandello tackles the problem of the certainty of the existence and nature of the other. He argues that we can never know what people are in themselves. The other, for ourselves, is a reflection or projection, and, hence, duplication, of our own being: "[g]li altri non sono che attuazioni di possibilità d'essere che sentiamo e riconosciamo in noi, perché ciò che gli altri sono realmente per sé noi non lo sappiamo" (1275) ("[o]thers are only actualizations of the possibility of being that we sense and recognize in ourselves, because that which others are really

in themselves we cannot know").[145] The other, in other words, is a specular image of ourselves.

Pirandello often makes use of the specular image, literal and metaphorical, as a visual paradigm in tandem with the gaze to conceptualize the act of *costruirsi* and, further, the hermeneutic process of seeing and finding (for) the self. In the 1919 play, Il giuoco delle parti (The Rules of the Game), for example, Silia Gala comments: "Questo maledetto specchio, che sono gli occhi degli altri, e i nostri stessi, quando non ci servono per guardare gli altri, ma per vederci, come ci conviene vivere... come dobbiamo vivere..." (544) ("This cursed mirror that other people's eyes are, and our own, when we are using them not to look at others but to see ourselves, how we ought to live, how alas we are obliged to live"). Other people are not, then, simply a reflecting instrument; more, and this is the dimension which I confer on my notion of specularity, they function cognitively as a horizon through which one can know oneself. This knowledge may impact on one's own lifeworld.

In the 1901 short story, "Con altri occhi" ("With Other Eyes"), the heroine, Anna, comes to the realization that her prejudgments on a given subject (namely, her husband's first wife, who was forced to take her own life after her husband found out she was committing adultery) and, vis-à-vis, her own marital situation have been somewhat lacking and wrongly critical. This self-understanding takes place through

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[145] Note the similarity with Theodor Lipps in Die ethischen Grundfragen (16): "[t]he other psychological individual is [...] made by myself out of myself. His inner being is taken from mine. The other individual or ego is the product of a projection, a reflection, a radiation of myself (or of what I experience in myself, through the sense perception of an outside physical phenomenon) into this very sensory phenomenon, a peculiar kind of reduplication of myself" (cited in Cassirer, *PSF* 3:83).

examinations of the portrait of the first wife which provoke a process of questioning-and-answering, or establish a structure of interrogation, of portrait (other) and self. By disturbing and realigning the questioner's presuppositions, the examinations collapse the initial (temporal) distance and ("temperamental") difference and dissimiliarity between the first and second wives. The portrait (a representation of the other who belongs in the past) comes to function as a mirror for the present that permits a self-examination: through the contemplation of the eyes of the suffering other (though is this merely a projection of Anna's own self?), Anna gains an insight into her own sacrifice and the coldness and emptiness of her conjugal relations. The "mirror of self-examination," to use Douglas Radcliffe-Umstead's formulation (40), reverberates in the quotidian selfhood as it forces the looker to step outside herself, to see herself living (*vedersi vivere*) the painfulness of her married life.

The tension, sometimes clash, between the two models of self-same identity and identity as determined in part by others is presented in various permutations in a number of Pirandello's dramatic and narrative works. Uno, nessuno e centomila demonstrates the impossibility of any person's being to others what s/he is to her/himself. In Il giuoco delle parti, Leone Gala shows Guido Venanzi, his wife's lover, that Guido has constructed for himself an image of Silia based on his singular viewpoint, but that this image by no means is the only possibility: "E forse tu non sai tutta la ricchezza che è in lei... certe cose che ha, che non parrebbero sue, non perché non siano, ma [...] perché tu la vedi sempre e solamente a quel modo che per te è vero suo" (554) ("You probably don't know all the riches there are in her, certain things

that she has, that would not seem to be hers, not because they are not, but [...] because you see her always and only in a certain way which for you is your own truth"). The 1910 short story, "Non è una cosa seria" ("It's Not To Be Taken Seriously"), contains the clearest articulation of a dual orientation, of the gap between a core self and the mask (here, "fictitious interpretation") which is offered to others and which must take the other into account: "[s]apeva bene Perazzetti, per propria esperienza, quanto in ogni uomo il fondo dell'essere sia diverso dalle fittizie interpretazioni di esso, che ciascuno se ne dà spontaneamente, o per inconscia finzione, per quel che siamo, o per imitazione degli altri, o per le necessità e le convenienze sociali" (114) ("Perazzetti knew clearly, from his own experience, how different the basic essence of every man is from the fictitious interpretations of that essence that each of us offers himself either spontaneously, or through unconscious self-deceit, out of the need to think ourselves or to be thought different from what we are, either because we imitate others or because of social necessities and conventions" [115]).

Pirandello explores the consequences of such a view in "Illustratori, attori e traduttori" ("Illustrators, Actors and Translators"). He borders on issuing an ethical injunction against the potentially negative power of the other to impose a definitive form on the self—that is, to assume a mastering, objectivizing attitude—as he cautions on behalf of a phenomenological method of "to the things themselves." When approaching the other, we must allow ourselves to be governed by the claims of the other.

Bisogna innanzi tutto non presumere che gli altri, fuori del nostro io, non siano se non come noi li vediamo. Se cosí presumiamo, vuol dire che abbiamo una coscienza unilaterale; che non abbiamo coscienza degli altri; che non realizziamo gli altri in noi, per usare un'espressione di Josiah Royce, con una rappresentazione vivente e per gli altri e per noi. Il mondo non è limitato all'idea che possiamo farcene: fuori di noi il mondo esiste per sé e con noi; e nella nostra rappresentazione dunque dobbiamo proporci di realizzarlo quanto piú ci sarà possibile, facendocene una coscienza in cui esso viva, in noi come in sé stesso; vedendolo com'esso si vede, sentendolo com'esso si sente. ("Illustratori, attori e traduttori" 221)

([W]e must never assume that other people, outside themselves, are only as we perceive them to be. If we do assume that, it means we have a unilateral consciousness, that we have no consciousness of others, that we do not realise the others in ourselves, to use Josiah Royce's expression, with a living expression both for others and for ourselves. The world is not restricted to the ideas we have of it; outside us the world exists in its own right, alongside us and therefore in our representation we have to try to realise it as best we can, creating a consciousness in which it can live as itself in us, and see it as it sees itself, feel it as it feels itself. ["Illustrators, Actors and Translators" 74])

The unavoidable implication of alterity in the construction of the self, then, demands an empathetic response on the part of the other.

Failing to heed this demand results in violence being done to the self, even by the self. For example, in a comic vein reminiscent of Gombrowicz's Ferdydurke is "Non è una cosa seria": the love Perazzetti feels for other women molds him ("foggiarselo") into the man that a given woman and her family want him to be; with each successive engagement, he is made increasingly more dumb and idiotic. He usually sobers up (i.e., attains consciousness of himself and his situation), and then flees in order to liberate himself from the constraining and deforming influence of

the other. Finally, in the 1904 short story, "Una voce" ("A Voice"), the attempt on

the part of the heroine to create a self to fit the image that the other (the blind

Marchese) has of her and that she has had a part in creating leads to her forced

departure and personal downfall:

> si sforzava dinanzi allo specchio di somigliare a quell'imagine
> fittizia di lei, si sforzava di vedersi com'egli nel suo buio la
> vedeva. E la sua voce, ormai, per lei stessa non usciva più dalle
> sue proprie labbra, ma da quelle ch'egli le imaginava; e, se
> rideva, aveva subito l'impressione di non aver riso lei, ma d'aver
> piuttosto imitato un sorriso non suo, il sorriso di quell'altra se
> stessa che viveva in lui. ("Una voce" 56)

> (in front of her mirror she made every effort to resemble that
> fictitious image he had of her, every effort to see herself the way
> he saw her in his darkness. And by this time, even for her, her
> voice no longer issued from her own lips, but from those he
> imagined she had; and if she laughed, she suddenly had the
> impression of not having laughed herself, but rather of having
> imitated a smile that was not hers, a smile of that other self who
> lived within his mind. ["A Voice" 57])

Upon realizing the Marchese will regain his sight and be shocked by the disjuncture

between the beautiful image he has of her in his mind's eye and the reality, she too

flees, leaving behind only an image of herself incanted in the region between her

voice and his darkness.

II.   COSÍ È (SE VI PARE): TRUTH AS RELATIONALITY

The dramatic action of Cosí è (se vi pare) (Cosí è) centres on a family of new

arrivals—Signor and Signora Ponza, and the former's mother-in-law, Signora Frola—

whose hometown had been destroyed by an earthquake. The family has set up, what

in the general opinion, is a rather unusual living arrangement—namely, Signor Ponza

has installed his mother-in-law in a centrally located apartment while he and his wife inhabit a tenement on the outskirts of town. The only contact that mother and daughter have with one another is mediately by letter and by seeing one another from a distance. Moreover, much to the dismay and disapproval of the townsfolk, the family keeps to itself, refusing to receive any callers. Curiosity turns to outrage when Ponza and Frola, forced to explain their situation, offer contradictory, though in themselves coherent, consistent and credible, versions. The situation only serves to compel the townsfolk to locate "the Truth." This "Truth" hinges on the correct identification of Signora Ponza as either Signor Ponza's second wife, Julia, or Signora Frola's daughter (Signor Ponza's first wife), Lena.

Pirandello sets up a traditional, Aristotelian dramatic pattern in Così è (*CE*): there is a movement towards knowledge (*anagnorisis*) through interviews with witnesses and the search for and through documents. More precisely, the author stages a basic hermeneutic situation, the object of which is to know an unknown. This situation is initiated vis-à-vis the introduction of an alterity—namely, the Ponza family, described as "foreign" ("forestiero")—into a familiar realm. The dramatic action, then, can be traced via the development of a series of questions, which assumes the form of a tribunal: Why do the Ponzas live as they do? Which person, Signor Ponza or Signora Frola, is telling the truth? What is the true relationship of Signora Ponza to Signora Frola? How can we find out the truth? Who is Signora Ponza? The epistemological quest for truth is transformed into an ontological inquest into identity that forces the respondents into an elementary theatrical condition of

self-representation precursive of the theatre trilogy—that is, into a situation wherein

they must perform themselves before and in response to an audience that is some-

times curious, sometimes hostile, sometimes sympathetic, sometimes indifferently

cruel.[146]

However, it is not the final founding of an indisputable truth that is at issue

here; rather, as each explanation serves only to open up more questions, as the

identity of Signora Ponza is never determined unequivocally and absolutely—in short,

as final knowledge constantly is displaced—what is at issue is the process of truth-

finding. "Truth" does not take a propositional character, but rather, an interrogative

character. As Laudisi, the play's protagonist and *agent provocateur*, comments early

on, "Che possiamo noi realmente sapere degli altri? Chi sono... come sono... ciò che

fanno... perché lo fanno..." (*CE* 1037) ("What can we really know about others? Who

they are... how they are... what they do... why they do what they do...").

In each of the three acts, Pirandello highlights a certain paradigm of truth-

finding. Each paradigm hinges on the notion of truth as final and apodictic. Each

is undermined or shown to be inadequate through a dialectical encounter with a

paradigm of truth as a mode of participatory disclosure; this self-reflexive paradigm

takes into account the diversity of the "interpreting mood" which imprints on the

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[146] Ettore Catalano, in La maschera dimenticata: Pirandello e il plurale del teatro, also considers the tribunal to be the fundamental structure in this play and appropriately relates this structure to the question of (self-)representation in the theatre, an analogy that would become prominent in Pirandello's works: "the form of the interrogation and of the inquest into the past (typical of the dialogical texts of bourgeois drama since Ibsen) is doubled with the transfer from the tribunal of the 'domestic' bourgeoisie to the hell of a parlour-backdrop that already establishes in advance the space fit for use by persons on the road to a rapid transformation into character (the theatre)" (my translation, 22-23).

thing to be known a particular, never re-iterable form. In other words, set against these various paradigms of truth is an existential truth that is forced to take account of the finitude and contingency of human experience and to attend to the interpretive nature of perception and judgments—something that will continue to be foregrounded in the works considered here. This dialectic of paradigms structures the attempt to establish an unknown person's identity: Pirandello gives voice to the paradox that *idem*-identity, while existing, is unknowable; while each individual appearance of the person does represent the person, because it is a particular originating in the knower's or observer's situatedness (*ipse*-identity), the appearance can never truly coincide with the person; only the for- and through-others are truly knowable.

At the end of Act I, the empirical model of truth based on naive realism is debunked. This model is grounded in the belief that perception (here, vision and touch) grants the first and truest access to reality. What we know is that which is given to us through the data of sensation: experience is the starting point for knowledge, and truth is a matter of obtaining a correct vantage point in order to let the object stand in its proper position. Truth, then, is a function of the "empirical verification hypothesis"—i.e., that which can be asserted as true is that which can be derived ultimately from an experiential ground.

The first act is replete with references to "seeing." The perceptual act forms the basis of judgments about the Ponzas (both in terms of what the public sees and whom Signora Frola does not or is not allowed to see) and the method of verifying the judgment on the part of both the judgers and the judged. Everyone has seen the

tenement where the Ponzas are living:

DINA:	[...] L'hai veduto? Dico, di dentro?
LAUDISI:	Sei forse andata a vederlo, tu?
DINA:	Sí, zietto! Con la mamma. [...] Tutti sono andati a veder-lo. (*CE* 1034)
(DINA:	[...] Have you seen it? I ask you, on the inside?
LAUDISI:	I suppose you went to see it?
DINA:	Of course, Uncle! With mama. [...] Everyone has gone to see it.)

Ponza never brings his wife to see her mother (1035). The mother is allowed to visit

with ("andare a vedere") and see her daughter from a distance ("vederla da lontano")

(1035; see also, 1037, 1045, 1046, 1050, 1051, 1052). Dina and Amalia were unable

to see Signora Frola when they went to visit her (1040). Signor Ponza explains that

his dilemma started when Signora Frola saw him and his second wife in passing ("mi

vide passare per via"), and believed she "saw again" her daughter in the woman

("rivedere in lei, viva, la sua figliuola") (1051). Signora Frola sees, in the way others

look at her, that they believe Signor Ponza's story that she is mad (1054). Sight is

the measure of truth.

What happens to the empirical model when the community of questioners is

presented with irreconcilable explanations by Signora Frola and Signor Ponza of the

Ponza family story? These explanations, it should be noted, hinge on a particular self-

representation that arises in the dialogical encounter. So, Signora Frola, through

guarded responses to leading questions proffered by the others, constructs for herself

the mask of *mater dolorosa* who would protect her son-in-law from the taint of negative gossip while simultaneously giving to understand that she has nobly resigned herself to the unreasonable demands of an overly possessive son-in-law. Signor Ponza, constructed by the others in consequence as "monster," adopts for himself the mask of a deliberate or self-conscious madman who feigns exaggerated jealousy (he would keep his wife to himself) in order to preserve his ex-mother-in-law, whom he constructs in turn as a madwoman unable to come to terms with the death of her daughter, from the final blow to her fragile psyche. At her re-entrance, Signora Frola represents herself as a deliberate madwoman who would shield her son-in-law, who is mad and believes his wife had died. Though coherent in themselves, when set against each other, these explanations call for a constant and inconclusive re-positing, re-evaluation and clarification of the "why" behind the actions of the strangers. Does Signor Ponza refuse to allow Signora Frola to see her daughter because he is jealous? Cruel? Selfish? Is Signora Frola mad or not? By the end of the first act, after the two have been seen and heard, it becomes clear that the empirical model is not a sufficient means by which "chiarire questo mistero, di venire a sapere la verità" (1042) ("to clear up the mystery, to come to know the truth").

Laudisi critiques the empirical model. Early on, he attempts to dissuade the others from thinking that things are as we see them by "saying and showing" that bare sensation (touch and sight) preceding all formation is but an empty abstraction, that the given must always be taken in a definite aspect, from the individual viewpoint of the observer and so apprehended as something that is subject to change:

LAUDISI: [...] Perchè io sono realmente come mi vede lei.—Ma ciò
            non toglie, cara signora mia, che io non sia anche real-
            mente come mi vede suo marito, mia sorella, mia nipote
            e la signora qua—

SIGNORA CINI (*suggerendo*):
            —Cini—

LAUDISI (*Cini*):
            —che anche loro non s'ingannano affatto.

SIGNORA SIRELLI:
            E come, dunque, lei cambia dall'uno all'altro?

LAUDISI: Ma sicuro che cambio, signora mia! E lei no, forse?
            Non cambia?

SIGNORA SIRELLI (*precipitosamente*):
            Ah no no no no no. Le assicuro che per me io non
            cambio affatto!

LAUDISI: E neanch'io per me, creda! E dico che voi tutti v'ingan-
            nate se non mi vedete come mi vedo io! Ma ciò non
            toglie che non sia una bella presunzione tanto la mia,
            quanto la sua, cara signora.

SIRELLI: Ma tutto codesto arzigogolo, scusa, per concludere che
            cosa?

LAUDISI: Ti pare che non concluda? Oh bella! Vi vedo cosí
            affannati a cercar di sapere chi sono gli altri e le cose
            come sono, quasi che gli altri e le cose per se stessi
            fossero cosí o cosí.

SIGNORA SIRELLI:
            Ma secondo lei allora non si potrà mai sapere la verità?

SIGNORA CINI:
            Se non dobbiamo piú credere neppure a ciò che si vede
            e si tocca!

LAUDISI   Ma sí, ci creda, signora! Però le dico: rispetti ciò che
            vedono e toccano gli altri, anche se sia il contrario di siò
            che vede e tocca lei. (1039-40)

(LAUDISI: [...] Because I am really as you see me. But that doesn't prevent me, dear lady, from also being really what your husband, my sister, my niece and the lady here—

SIGNORA CINI [*prompting*]:
—Cini—

LAUDISI [*Cini*]:
—take me to be, for neither are they mistaken.

SIGNORA SIRELLI:
And, therefore, you change from one person to the next?

LAUDISI: But of course I change, my dear lady! And you don't? You don't change?

SIGNORA SIRELLI [*hastily*]:
Oh, no! I assure you that, for me, I don't change at all!

LAUDISI: Ah, but neither do I for myself, believe me! And I would say that you are all mistaken if you don't see me as I see myself! But that would be an inexcusable presumption on my part, as it would be on yours, my dear madam.

SIRELLI: But what has all this to do with the matter at hand?

LAUDISI: You think it has nothing to do with it? Why, I see you at your wit's end trying to know who other people are and how things are, as if other people and things had to be such or such a way for themselves.

SIGNORA SIRELLI:
But according to you then we can never know the truth?

SIGNORA CINI:
If we can no longer believe what we see or touch!

LAUDISI: But you must understand, madam! All I am saying is that you must respect that which others see and touch, even should it be contrary to what you see and touch.)

The truth of a thing or a person, Laudisi stresses, does not appear as the certainty

of the immediately perceived presentations of a thing or person, because this presentation is already but a particular ontic mode of apprehension. Grounding this critique is the notion that, as Cassirer explains, "all that is tangible and accessible to us is [not naked sensation but] rather the concrete determinacy, the living multiformity, of a world of perception, which is dominated and permeated through and through by definite modes of formation" (*PSF* 3:14-15).

Laudisi's closing comment and laughter—"Vi guardate tutti negli occhi? Eh! La verità?" (*CE* 1057) ("You're all looking [at yourselves] in each other's eyes? Ah, and the truth?")—then function in a two-fold fashion. On the one hand, they highlight the perceptual paradigm and its inadequacy to determine the "Truth." On the other, they confirm his thesis and reflect back on the would-be viewers, indicating that all that is possible is look at oneself in the mirror that are others' eyes, that all that one can know of the other is what one oneself brings to bear.

This same methodology of counteracting a model which understands truth as final and apodictic by a model that takes into consideration the pluralistic, contextual and interpretive nature of truth is carried through the play. After the empirical model is shown to be inadequate, the verificative model is tried and tested. The questions which seek an unqualifiable answer are: Which one—Signor Ponza or Signora Frola—is telling the truth? Which one is mad? Thus is instituted an investigation for documents—e.g., birth, marriage and death certificates—and witnesses that could confirm whose truth-claim carries a truth-value. However, the witness was but an occasional visitor to the town and did not know the family

personally, and the document of a second marriage does not attest to its authenticity (that is, it may be a fraudulent document trumped up to preserve Ponza's delusion that he is marrying another woman). As Laudisi states, documents, like the letters Signora Ponza writes to Signora Frola, have no independent truth-value, but only "il valore che ognuno gli vuol dare" (1069) ("the value that each person gives to them").

Finally, in the third act, the quest for truth becomes an explicit ontological inquest. The testimonial paradigm of truth-finding as truth-saying (*parlare*) or assertion, which is based on the questioning of the object by a tribunal authority and which requires that the object respond apophantically,[147] comes under fire by the very object of the inquest. Signora Ponza, believed to be the only person who can confirm either Signor Ponza's or Signora Frola's stories by testifying as to who she is, or rather, the relational interconnection (no relation/second wife or daughter/first wife) she bears with each of the scrutinized characters, refuses to subject herself to this methodology. The veiled subject, who would be unveiled, will not be unveiled:

IL PREFETTO (*commosso*):
    [...] Vorremmo però che lei ci dicesse—

SIGNORA PONZA (*con un parlare lento e spiccato*):
    —che cosa? la verità? è solo questa: che io sono, sí, la
    figlia della signora Frola—

TUTTI (*con un sospiro di soddisfazione*):
    —ah!

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[147] Heidegger addresses the apophantic nature of assertion in The Basic Problems of Phenomenology: "[t]he primary character of assertion is apophansis [...]. Translated literally, it means the exhibiting of something from its own self, apo, letting it be seen as it is in itself, phainesthai. The basic structure of assertion is the exhibition of that about which it asserts" (209).

SIGNORA PONZA (*subito c.s.*):
—e la seconda moglie del signor Ponza—

TUTTI (*stupiti e delusi, sommessamente*):
—oh! E come?

SIGNORA PONZA (*subito c.s.*):
—sí; e per me nessuna! nessuna!

IL PREFETTO: Ah, no, per sé, lei, signora: sarà l'una o l'altra!

SIGNORA PONZA:
Nossignori. Per me, io sono colei che mi si crede.

(*Guarderà attraverso il velo, tutti, per un istante; e si ritirerà. Silenzio.*)

LAUDISI: Ed ecco, o signori, come parla la verità!

(*Volgerà attorno uno sguardo di sfida derisoria.*)
Siete contenti?

(*Scoppierà a ridere.*)
Ah! ah! ah! ah! (1099-1100)

(PREFECT [*moved*]:
[...] We would like you to tell us—

SIGNORA PONZA [*speaking slowly and clearly*]:
—what? The truth? It is only this: that, yes, I am the daughter of Signora Frola—

ALL [*with a sigh of satisfaction*]:
—ah!

SIGNORA PONZA [*as above*]:
—and the second wife of Signor Ponza—

ALL [*stunned and disillusioned, quietly*]:
—oh! And how is that?

SIGNORA PONZA [*as above*]:
—yes, and for myself, no one, no one!

PREFECT: Ah, no, for yourself, madam, you are one or the other!

SIGNORA PONZA:
                No, signori. For myself, I am the one whom you believe
                me to be.

[*She looks at them all through the veil for a moment, then leaves.
Silence.*]

LAUDISI: And there you have it, ladies and gentlemen, thus speaks
                the truth!

[*With a look of derisive defiance.*]
Are you satisfied?

[*He bursts out laughing.*]
Ah! ah! ah! ah!)

What Heidegger refers to in The Basic Problems of Phenomenology as assertion's

"predicative structure"—or the attribution of a predicate (second wife or daughter)

to a subject—is both used and undermined by Signora Ponza: while she "dis-plays

the belonging-together of the manifold determinations of being which is asserted

about" (Heidegger 209) by calling herself both daughter and second wife, she does

not offer up an *idem*-identity (that which she is in herself).

Signora Ponza, thus, is the corporeal site of a chiasm of the passive and the

active. This locus is figured in the veil she wears and the dual function that it fulfills.

On the one hand, the visual image of identity rendered a *tabula rasa*, it is a self-

reflexive blank screen, which, as Bonnie Marranca aptly notes in "Pirandello: A Work

in Progress," reappears in Genet's Les paravents (both in the veil that Leïla dons and

in the screens themselves) and onto which "the community projects its own scenario"

(159). Acknowledging that she is both Signora Frola's daughter and Signor Ponza's

second wife—that is, that she has no independent existence of her own but is the one whom others take her to be—she follows Shakespeare's Cressida and precedes Witkiewicz's Edgar, Gombrowicz's Iwona, Handke's Kaspar and Shepard's Hoss as a hybrid composed of elements from diverse origins, that is, other people. She exists purely within a triadic situation of relationality to others. On the other hand, the veil functions to recall "the closure of private space [...,] the injunction of no trespassing upon this space" (Alloula 13). By actively refusing to declare herself to be "either/or" and, moreover, by attending concernfully to the suffering of others (Signor Ponza and Signora Frola) against the invasiveness of others, she speaks on behalf of an ethics of empathy that calls for an interpretation that obeys, or listens to, the injunction starting from the other (as Ricœur points out in "On Accusation," in Latin, *obedien-tia*, meaning *obedience* is related to *obaudire*, which means *to give ear to, to listen* [72-73]). In doing so, she subverts the process of truth-finding under the umbrella of objectivism—that is, as the locating of a single, determinable, unchangeable mean-ing—in favour of truth as, at least in part, an autobiographical affair, a function of subjectivity that is in itself unfixable in any final form. She leaves the others with themselves.

Through the dual strategy of seeing and saying, of demonstration and discourse that was at work in <u>Troilus and Cressida</u>, <u>La Dispute</u> and <u>Die verkehrte Welt</u>, Pirandello foregrounds the nature of human existence as active, transformative and interpretive, as opposed to static and fixed. Here, arguments are not brought to a state of final resolution; rather, they remain open, becoming increasingly more

complex through the presentation of counter-arguments and counter-positions. Truth, consequently, takes the form of an on-going process of questioning: we cannot grasp things in a final and total manner because there always remain alternate perspectives and frameworks of understanding.

III.   SEI PERSONAGGI IN CERCA D'AUTORE: A HERMENEUTICAL PLAYSPACE

Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore (Sei personaggi), the first installment of Pirandello's theatre trilogy, develops the major concerns dealt with in Così è through the explicit presentation of a series of performance situations, which functioned as a backgrounded structuring principle in Così è. First, the dramatic action begins with the introduction of an alterity (also a family, this time "other" because of its ontological status as "character" to the others' designation in terms of theatrical roles) into a pre-established realm (though as scenic space—literally, a bare stage—the realm is latent with other possibilities). Second, this event similarly generates an ultimately inconclusive dialectic of self-representation and representation by others that takes place, not only between the internal spectators (the Actors and Manager) and the spectated (Characters), but also amongst the Characters themselves in their private drama. Pirandello here, as in Così è, creates a intersubjectified subjective playspace in which to examine questions relating to the interpretive nature of personal identity. However, he expands the scope of this inquiry by, in the same vein, exploring the interpretive nature of language and textuality, using the context of the productive side of theatre as a paradigmatic hermeneutic situation.

Six Characters, having been abandoned by their creator—that is, not "fully realized" in a dramatic form—interrupt a rehearsal of Pirandello's <u>Il giuoco delle parti</u>, demanding that the Manager and Actors stage their drama. The Characters, fixed in a given form because of their ontological status as written characters and thus without embodiment, wish to live momentarily through the corporeality of others (Actors); they desire that others represent them and, effectively, body them forth.

IL PADRE: Vogliamo vivere, signore!

IL CAPOCOMICO (*ironico*):
        Per l'eternità?

IL PADRE: No, signore: almeno per un momento, in loro. (<u>Sei per-</u>
        <u>sonaggi</u> [*SP*] 81)

(FATHER: We want to live, signore!

MANAGER [*ironically*]:
        Forever?

FATHER: No, signore, at least for a moment, in them.)

The drama that they wish to be staged is their collective and individual autobiograph(y/ies). The Father had sent away his wife, the Mother, to live with her beloved, for whom she proceeded to bear three children: the Step-Daughter, the Boy and the Child. Years later, after the death of the Mother's second husband and after poverty has forced the Step-Daughter into a job as a model-prostitute at Madame Pace's, a reunion of the legitimate and illegitimate sides of the family takes place. This reunion is occasioned—and here is the climactic and classical moment of *anagnorisis* around which the drama is to be structured—by the Father's visit to Madame Pace's "dress-shop" and his liaison with his Step-Daughter. The Mother's fortuitous arrival

at the shop serves as an *actus interruptus* which reveals the true nature of the relation-ship between—that is, the true identities of—prostitute and john. The reunion is transformed into a situation of mutual torment: the Father and Mother are re-united as husband and wife in a relation marked by cruelty and pity; the Father must defend himself in his torment against the fixated revenge of the unforgiving Step-Daughter; the Son, contemptuous of all, is nevertheless unable to leave the familial fold; the young children exist for the mother in order to support her in her torment.

This all too "human" condition of being indissolubly linked in a situation of relationality (highlighted by the fact that the Characters are all "biologically" related and, with respect to the major ones, are named according to their familial relation to others) has its theatrical analogue. The Characters are bound to one another on the basis of their ontological status as "characters," which means they are locked into a pre-given script, no matter how incomplete (even necessarily so, as scripts are destined for audio-visual and gestural realization in the theatre), and from which they cannot extricate themselves. That is, as was explored by Shakespeare in Troilus and Cressida and as will be by Gombrowicz (Ślub) and Genet (Les bonnes), and as though subjected to Aristotelian tragic inevitability, they are prescripted to act in a certain way, repeatedly, for all eternity and, in this case, despite anticipatory foreknowledge. The Father tells the Manager, contrasting reality for the Characters and for Ac-tors/human beings, "La differenza è questa! Non cangia, non può cangiare, né esser altra, mai, perché già fissata—cosí—«questa»—per sempre—(è terribile, signore!) realtà immutabile, che dovrebbe dar loro un brivido nell'accostarsi a no!" (79) ("The

difference is this! Our reality doesn't change, can never change or be other, for it is already fixed, thus, this way, for always [it is terrible, signore], immutable. It would make you shudder!"). So, after the reunion, the Child accidentally drowns, and will again during the next verbal invocation and demonstrative re-enactment of the chain of events; the Boy shoots himself as the Son looks on helplessly; the Step-Daughter flees the house, leaving the Mother, the Father and the Son watching one another warily. All semblance of free agency is done away with for characters whose "lives" are literally circumscribed by another (the Playwright).

In a dialectic of retrospection and anticipation, then, the Six Characters first narrate (say) and then act out (show) this story for the Manager and Actors (who become, for the time being, the spectators rather than the spectated), as they try to convince the latter as to the story's "representability." The Manager and Actors take this as the "raw material" for the performance and rehearse it, treating the audience to the process of producing a performance. However, complications arise from a "conflict of interpretations," forcing yet another *interruptus*, this time in the staging of the drama.

The "conflict of interpretations" functions on three interrelated levels: linguistic, ontological and textual. At each level, there is an acknowledgment of the interpretive nature of human existence, or more generally, of x as disclosed in different ways depending on the perspective that is brought to bear on it. The dominant mode of discourse, consequently, becomes neither strictly *narrare* nor *dimostrare*, but rather, *spiegare* (*to explain*); as explanation is "a modo suo" ("in one's

own way"), *spiegare* is transformed into its self-reflexive, *spiegarsi*. Even more

extensively than in Cosí è, then, Pirandello opens up on this bare stage—a space

nihilo from which the author as the overarching, monologic subjectivity who, splint-

ered, speaks through the intermediary of a number of voices, has disengaged and

distanced himself intentionally and receded to the wings[148]—a dialogic site which

confronts and contests various semantic worlds for the purpose of creating the

condition for the transcendence of fixed interpretations. Catherine Arturi Parella's

summation is apt:

> Six Characters explores the processes of artistic creation and
> interpretation where fictive and allegedly real characters reveal
> their diverse and varied perceptions of a tragedy and how it can
> or should be explained or represented. Ultimately, the drama
> underscores the infinite possibilities of interpretation, raising
> philosophical questions well beyond the scope of these interac-
> tive worlds. (32)

As he does in Questa sera, here Pirandello discourses explicitly on the

ontological function of language within the intersubjective realm. Playwrights like

Gombrowicz, Genet, Handke and Shepard will then take up this function, but in such

a way as to exploit the perlocutionary force of performative discourse to "affect"

others: their focus, as we have already seen in part, will be on the formative, re-

formative, deformative, deadly impact of words uttered in the dialogical realm of the

in-between. In Sei personaggi, while Pirandello also takes care to point up the

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[148] Text and author is one mode of distanciation (Ricœur) which is treated discursively, as
mentioned, in Questa sera. In Drama as Literature, Jiri Veltrusky offers another version of the dialogic
nature of the dramatic text: the dramatic text is "a single, integral context with a single subject, its author,
who speaks indirectly through intermediaries, imaginary subjects, to whom speech is allowed. The central
subject is not only split up but recedes into the background" (69).

affective dimension of others' words to cause suffering and to victimize, he addresses a more fundamental issue: the manner in which things, events, people are not given in a purely objective manner, but rather, through subjectively formed and experienced worlds of discourse revelatory of, what Heidegger calls, "significance-contextures." "Significance-contexture" refers to the personal and historical nature of a linguisticality grounded in an *a priori* intersubjectivity ("being-in-the-world" and "being-with"). In The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Heidegger explains the ontological dimension of language:

> [l]anguage is not identical with the sum total of all the words printed in a dictionary; instead, because language, so far as it is, is as the Dasein is, because it exists, it is historical. In speaking about something, the Dasein *speaks itself out, expresses itself, as existent being-in-the-world, dwelling with* and *occupying itself with beings*. [...] Insofar as what is is understood, something of the nature of significance-contextures is articulated by means of this understanding. These contextures are potentially expressible in words. It is not the case that first there are words, which are coined as signs for meanings, but just the reverse—it is from the Dasein which understands itself and the world, from a significance-contexture already unveiled, that a word accrues to each of these meanings. (209)

Furthermore, as Moscarda would elaborate on in Uno, nessuno e centomila, when each person attributes to words a "value" or "weight" and "meaning" that are a function of their own "significance-contexture" (i.e., of a *"per sé"*), the possibility of attaining mutual understanding is problematized: how to establish an agreement between two different persons' conceptions of the correspondence between statement and referent, should such a correspondence exist in the first place? The Father addresses this dilemma in his monologue:

Ma se è tutto qui il male! Nelle parole! Abbiamo tutti dentro
un mondo di cose; ciascuno un suo mondo di cose! E come
possiamo intenderci, signore, se nelle parole ch'io dico metto il
senso e il valore delle cose come sono dentro di me; valore che
hanno per sé, del mondo com'egli l'ha dentro? Crediamo
l'intenderci; non c'intendiamo mai! (*SP* 87)

(But this is where all the trouble lies! In words! We all have
in us a world of things; each person has his own world of things!
And how can we understand one another, signore, if in the
words that I speak I put a meaning and value of things as they
are in me; while others place their own value, according to the
world they have inside them. We believe that we understand
one another; we never understand each other!)

The natural polysemy and plasticity of words to "accrue to meanings" demands that

we accept the endemic otherness of entitites, that we consider that these entities

cannot be encapsulated entirely according to the conception we have of, form we

would bestow on or relational mode into which we would lock them.

The issue of language as a function of subjectivity, in short, filters through to

the ontological level: the clash of semantic worlds functions to disclose alternate

dimensions of understanding and existing. This is demonstrated in the conflict

amongst the Characters who, though agreeing on the course of events—the "what

happened"—disagree as to the "meaning" of a particular event and the "truthfulness"

of the explanations of the actions or the motivations guiding them. Furthermore, they

spend all their time and energy attempting to explicate their own positions—self-

defence functioning as self-representation, and vice versa—as they begin to move

beyond the unreflective level toward critical self-consciousness.

This conflict of interpretations at the ontological level manifests itself as a

clash between self-representation or self-explanation (*spiegarsi*) and representation

by others. It affects almost every relationship in the family. The Father justifies his decision to send the Son away to be raised by a nurse in the country with the reason that the country would provide a healthier environment for a growing child (89), while the Mother considers it to have been an act of cruelty ("crudeltà"). By the same token, the Father explains that sending his wife to live with her lover was an act of charity ("per carità") and pity ("la pietà") to free her to be with her beloved; the Mother believes he did so out of cruelty and selfishness and in order to liberate himself (87-88; 90). The Mother declares that she was forced to live with another man; the Step-Daughter chides the Mother, reminding her that she lived peacefully and happily with her lover (85). The visits of the Father to the school that the Step-Daughter attended as a child are presented by the Father as a gesture of concern ("una tenerezza"), a way of keeping watch and ward over his wife's family; the Step-Daughter presents his watchful presence as bordering on incestuous pedophilia (91). The Step-Daughter accuses the Son of treating his illegitimate siblings, who have "invaded" the kingdom of his legitimacy, with contempt; the Son defends himself, explaining that the situation was thrust on him, that he was not enlightened before-hand about the nature of the relationship, and that in fact it was the Step-Daughter who barged into his home, tyrannizing them all with her haughty behavior (95-96).

The key incident is the Father's visit to Madame Pace's dress-shop, where the prostitute who is to service him turns out to be his wife's daughter: for the Step-Daughter, the "mere fact" of his going to a prostitute defines the Father in terms of a base carnality for which his intellectualizing and rationalizations are but guises, and

fixes her in an attitude of revenge; the Father, while acknowledging his "weakness" and "shame" and the "horror" (92) of his action, regards his Step-Daughter's continued harping on this "human lapse" as a heartless desire to punish him. The Step-Daughter came to know him in a situation of relationality in which she never should have—namely, as the client of a prostitute. The Father, defending himself against being defined by this single act in this single moment, explains himself:

> Il dramma per me è tutto qui, signore: nella coscienza che ho, che ciascuno di noi—veda—si crede «uno» ma non è vero: è «tanti», signore, «tanti», secondo tutte le possibilità d'essere che sono in noi: «uno» con questo, «uno» con quello—diversissimi! E con l'illusione, intanto, d'esser sempre «uno per tutti», e sempre «quest'uno» che crediamo, in ogni nostro atto. Non è vero! non è vero! Ce n'accorgiamo bene, quando in qualcuno dei nostri atti, per un caso sciaguratissimo, restiamo all'improvviso come agganciati e sospesi: ci accorgiamo, voglio dire, di non esser tutti in quell'atto, e che dunque una atroce ingiustizia sarebbe giudicarci da quello solo, tenerci agganciati e sospesi, alla gogna, per una intera esistenza, come se questa fosse assommata tutta in quell'atto! Ora lei intende la perfidia di questa ragazza? M'ha sorpreso in un luogo, in un atto, dove e come non doveva conoscermi, come io non potevo essere per lei; e mi vuol dare una realtà, quale io non potevo mai aspettarmi che dovessi assumere per lei, in un momento fugace, vergognoso, della mia vita! Questo, questo, signore, io sento sopratutto. E vedrà che da questo il dramma acquisiterà un grandissimo valore. Ma c'è poi la situazione degli altri! (94-95)[149]

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[149] In his preface to Sei personaggi, Pirandello echoes the Father's speech: "[s]enza volerlo, senza saperlo, nella ressa dell'animo esagitato, ciascun d'essi, per difendersi dalle accuse dell'altro, esprime [...] sua viva passione e suo tormento [...]: l'inganno della comprensione reciproca fondato irrimediabilmente sulla vuota astrazione delle parole; la molteplice personalità d'ognuno secondo tutte le possibilità d'essere che si trovano in ciascuno di noi; e infine il tragico conflitto immanente tra la vita che di continuo si muove e cambia e la forma che la fissa, immutabile" (60) ("[w]ithout wanting to, without knowing it, in the strife of her/his troubled soul, each being, to defend her/himself against the accusations of the other, expresses [...] her/his living passion and her/his torment [...]: the illusion of mutual understanding founded irremediably on the empty abstraction of words; the multiple personalities each has according to all the possibilities of being that are found in each of us; and finally the tragic immanent conflict between life, which continues to move and change, and form, which fixes it immutably").

(The drama for me is right here, signore: in the consciousness
that I have, that each one of us believes himself to be one, but
this is not true: he is many, signore, many according to the
possibilities of being that are in us: one for this person, one for
that person, a diversity. And we have this illusion of being one
person for all, of always being this one that we believe ourselves
to be in each of our acts. It's not true! It's not true! We
become aware of this when, by an unfortunate accident, we are
suddenly caught on a hook and suspended in one of our acts:
we become aware, I want to say, of not being all in this act, and
that it would be an atrocious injustice to judge us by that single
act, suspended on a hook, on the pillory, as if all our existence
can be summed up in this one act! Now you understand the
perfidy of this girl? She surprised me in a place, in an act,
where she had no right to know me, as I could never be for her;
and she wants to impose on me a reality that I could never
expect to assume for her, in a shameful and fleeting moment in
my life? This, this, signore, I feel above all else. And the
drama, you will see, will acquire a tremendous value from this
point. Then there is the situation of the others!)

This seminal speech gives to understand that the human being is conceived as a

multiplicity of alterities, such that one is always other to oneself and according to

others. The speech then functions in a three-fold fashion: as a counter to the Step-

Daughter's fixedness and self-representation as "truth's authentic author" (Troilus'

self-nomination); as a gloss on the multiple readings of and by the various Characters;

as an analogue to his own speech on language as open to diverse interpretations.

The third level on which the conflict of interpretations functions is the textual,

and it manifests itself in the relation between the play text and the performance text

and the concomitant relation between the written characters and live actors. The play

text is the story the Characters set forth, or rather, the Characters themselves, who

become the textualized verbal and physical signs and gestures. While it appears fixed

in itself, given the multiplicity of interpretations by the Characters themselves, and

the nature of the text written for the theatre as "variable within essential boundaries" (Garner 6), it potentially submits to a destabilization. The performance text, which is dynamic, is created by the Manager and Actors on the basis of the play text through a process of selection and substitution[150] and according to the principle of "representability."

The translation from one type of text into another—or from "form" into "life," as the Characters would have it, from the reality of the Characters into the illusion, the game (from the Latin, in-lusio meaning, literally, in-play)[151] that the Actors create—and the concurrent reconstruction of a performance, bring into play a number of interactive and agonistic processes. Generally, these have been explicated under the rubric, provided by Pirandello in his premise for the theatre trilogy in volume one of Maschere nude, of a dialectic between given agents, such as Manager and Actors, Manager and Characters, Characters and Actors (51). The dialectic engenders an exchange of traditional active and passive roles within the shared action space of the theatre with the result that the participants come to see themselves in the other. So, Actors, whose appearances are described by the Characters and so are physically constituted for the (reading) audience (this happens also in La Dispute), turn into spectators watching Characters, while the Characters, who are written and acted, write and act their own roles for others. Then, the Characters, who disclose their world

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[150] One example of substitutability in Sei personaggi is the exchanging of the original yellow, flowered sofa for the green one in the prop room (100).

[151] The Father tells the Manager, "Quella che per loro è un'illusione da creare, per me è invece l'unica nostra realtà" (SP 125) ("That which for them [the actors] is an illusion to be created, for me is our only reality").

gesturally before the Actors, assume the role of spectators watching those Actors assume their (the Characters') roles.

Here, I focus on the foregrounded interactive process of interpreting and representing a text. In keeping with the rest of the discussion, I concentrate on the way in which the resultant self-reflexive process, whereby the Characters come to see themselves represented by others, functions as a continuation and expansion onto another level of the aforementioned conflict between self-representation and representation by others.

In the following early exchange, which also presents diverse views on what the Characters' drama itself is (i.e., narrative, literature, life, passion), the Manager expresses his concerns with the "narrativity" of the story and its possible unstageability:

IL CAPOCOMICO:
      Ma tutto questo è racconto, signori miei!

IL FIGLIO (*sprezzante*):
      Ma sí, letteratura! letteratura!

IL PADRE: Ma che letteratura! Questa è vita, signore! Passione!

IL CAPOCOMICO:
      Sarà! Ma irrappresentabile! (*SP* 91)

(MANAGER: But this is all narrative!

THE SON [*scornfully*]:
      Yes, literature! Literature!

FATHER: What do you mean, literature! Life! Passion!

MANAGER: That may be! But it's unrepresentable!)

Later, in an argument with the Step-Daughter—who is convinced that the Manager

colluded with the Father to represent the drama from the latter's perspective, while

she wants to represent her own drama ("io voglio rappresentare il mio dramma"

[119]), that is, "la verità" from her point of view—the Manager explains that his job

as creator of the performance text, as well as the task of the Actors who will embody

the Characters, is to resolve the conflicts amongst the various interpretations of the

events. While granting that, ideally, each Character should have the opportunity to

be completely performed—here, given shape in body and form, voice and gesture

(104)—he cannot disregard the others' voices. He must be guided by the principle

of representability and this demands selectivity:

> Non può stare che un personaggio venga, cosí, troppo avanti, e
> sopraffaccia gli altri, invadendo la scena. Bisogna contener tutti
> in un quadro armonico e rappresentare quel che è rappresentab-
> ile! Lo so bene anch'io che ciascuno ha tutta una sua vita
> dentro e che vorrebbe metterla fuori. Ma il difficile è appunto
> questo: farne venir fuori quel tanto che è necessario, in rapporto
> con gli altri; e pure in quel poco fare intendere tutta l'altra vita
> che resta dentro! Ah, comodo, se ogni personaggio potesse in
> un bel monologo, o... senz'altro... in una conferenza venire a
> scodellare davanti al pubblico tutto quel che gli bolle in pentola.
> (119)

> (On stage, you can't have a character becoming too prominent
> and overshadowing the others. It is necessary to contain every-
> one in a harmonious frame and to represent that which is
> representable! I know as well that each one has his or her own
> inner life that he or she would like to externalize. But the
> difficulty lies precisely in this: to externalize that which is neces-
> sary, taking the others into consideration; and also to hint at the
> rest of the life that remains inside! Oh, it would be nice if each
> character could have a beautiful monologue, or a conference at
> which to reveal to the audience all that troubles him or her.)

The variety of performances or interpretations belongs to the ontological possibilities

of the work, just as each form belongs to the ontological possibilities of the human being. Ideally, each interpretation is to "stand-for" that which is not "standing-there."

However, herein lies the problem which ultimately disrupts the performance. Despite the Characters' projectedness toward being represented, they cannot agree to the limitations of performance, which is, in the words of the Manager, "La verità, fino a un certo punto" (118) ("Truth, up to a certain point"). Or rather, their view of representation is that, as a performative act of staging something, it is (to use Iser's terminology) a basic form of doubling that entails the removal of difference. The Characters' primary demand, then, is for self-sameness, truth, mimetic mirroring in the representation of themselves by others, and they continually interrupt the performance, correcting the actors to achieve this goal. Glossing his earlier comment about not wanting to be defined by one act, the Father expresses the Characters' position, which, expressed in hermeneutical terms, is basically the pursuit of a canonical interpretation, of the in-itself:

> Eh, dico, la rappresentazione che farà—anche forzandosi col trucco a somigliarmi...—dico, con quella statura....
>
> (*Tutti gli Attori rideranno*)
> difficilmente potrà essere una rappresentazione di mi, com'io realmente sono. Sarà piuttosto—a parte la figura—sarà piuttosto com'egli interpreterà ch'io sia, com'egli mi sentirà—se mi sentirà—e non com'io dentro di mi sento. E mi pare che di questo, chi sia chiamato a giudicare di noi, dovrebbe tener conto. (105)
>
> (I say, the performance which he will give, even being made-up to resemble me, I say, with such a stature....
>
> [*All the actors laugh.*]
> will still hardly be a representation of me, as I really am. The

effect will rather be, apart from his appearance, an interpretation of what I am, how he perceives me to be, if he perceives me at all, and not as I perceive myself to be. And I think that this should be taken into account by all who come to judge us.)

Just as the performance text is a particular reading of the play text, so the role enables the Character to be interpreted in a given fashion. In the end, the Father must concede that the other cannot be the self, that, as Iser expresses in Prospecting, "no mirrored manifestation can ever coincide with [...] actual being," that "no single staging could ever remove difference and so explain origin" (245). Hence, the Characters are destined to search forever for that elusive authoritative representation (even as the Father turns this pursuit around on the actors themselves): "ecco, non sono noi.... Appunto, gli attori! E fanno bene, tutti i due, le nostre parti. Ma creda che a noi pare un'altra cosa, che vorrebe esser la stessa, e intanto non è" (SP 117) ("exactly, they are not us.... Your actors are great! They play our parts exceedingly well, both of them. But believe me when I tell you that for us, it is something different. They want to be the same [that is, us], but they aren't us at all"). Each individual appearance may represent the thing, but can never truly coincide with it.

IV.   CIASCUNO A SUO MODO: THE MIMETIC WHIRLIGIG OF SELF AND OTHER

In Sei personaggi, Pirandello uses the situation of theatrical production to deal with such issues as the nature of subjectivity within a situation of alterity and the corresponding tension between self-presentation and representation-by-others, as well as the nature of reality and language as a function of the situatedness of the subject and, hence, open to a multiplicity of interpretations. On the one hand, this situation

carries with it an ethical obligation to recognize and respect an unassimilable other-ness and indestructible difference; on the other, it functions self-reflexively to reveal more about, first, the various limited and distorting paradigms governing the existen-tial modes of the knower rather than the known and, second, our capacity to experi-ence others. The latter function is explored in greater depth in the second installment of the theatre trilogy, Ciascuno a suo modo (Ciascuno), one of the most multidimen-sional expressions of the intersubjectivity of human experience in Pirandello's dramatic œuvre.

In this play, Pirandello uses the situation of theatrical reception to explore a nexus of hermeneutically-oriented issues such as judgment, understanding and interpreting the self and other, and conscience, each of which is couched in terms of an intersubjectivity. As in Così è, the basic method of inquiry is dialogical, or question-and-answer. And, similarly, the inquiry is open-ended: no categorical determination of the object of knowledge (Delia Morello) is rendered in the end; instead, as will be developed by Gombrowicz (Ślub and Operetka) and Genet (Les bonnes, Le balcon and Les nègres), Pirandello cultivates an interactive, reflexive approach that comes to shatter any distance between self and other(-as-self)—here in terms of spectacle and spectator, known and knower, judged and judge—making of an unassimilable difference an identity.

As is the case with a number of the dramatic works dealt with in this study, Ciascuno (CSM) is structured as a play-within-the-play. This form of the performance situation is used to establish a specular relation between the two fictional levels of

the dramatic world such that, as Bonnie Marranca aptly notes in "Pirandello: A Work in Progress," "there are two stories, two situations of characters, evolving simultaneously and in relation to each other" (156), each interrogating the other.[152] This parallelism is emphasized by the similarity (with difference) in the name of the leading female characters: Delia Morello (internal play) and Delia Moreno (external play).

The internal play opens with a series of discussions focusing on the nature of judgment and perception. Each functions as a gloss on the primary dramatic action. The primary dramatic action consists of an argument amongst the members of fashionable society as to how to interpret the actions of an actress, Delia Morello, who, by running off with another man the night before she was to marry a painter named Salvi, drove the painter to commit suicide. The main argument is carried on between Francesco Savio and Doro Palegari. The former, assuming the voice of public opinion, holds that Morello acted with deliberate treachery; the latter declares that Morello acted self-disinterestedly, as the real ruin of Salvi would have been to marry her. The two antagonists meet again, having rethought the limits of their own views, and exchange their positions and, hence, their roles as accuser and defender of the lady in question. Their mutual friend, Diego, underlines this exchange when he tells them, "Invertite le parti" (*CSM* 196) ("You have inverted your respective

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[152] Although I do not deal explicitly with the matter here, it should be noted that, beneath this formal structure, and motivating the dramatic movement toward specularity, is a multi-form, discursively foregrounded, ludic structure: *mimicry* (the role-playing and the intermittent allusions to mirroring), *alea* (the chance circumstances which lead to the initial argument), *agôn* (the duel) and *ilinx* (the "bandieruola" or "whirligig" [*CSM* 159] of exchanged positions, the barely-leashed madness and the various images of cataclysm [195]).

positions/roles"). What has been a verbal duel prompts a challenge to an actual duel.
(This happens in Gombrowicz's Operetka, as well, though in Gombrowicz's case, I
argue, the transformation from verbal to actual is occasioned by a ludic imperative.)
The entrance of Morello, far from clarifying the matter, only confuses it more, as was
the case in Così è: she agrees with the interpretation of herself rendered at a given
moment by her partner in dialogue and changes her mind as that reading or partner
changes.

The situation comes to a head in the internal play, as it does in the external
play, which presents the audience to the internal play, and portrays their discussions
and diverse opinions and judgments of this play by Pirandello during the intermis-
sions—thus constituting and re-constituting the play for the theatre audience, and
mirroring the undecidability factor that is located in the audience members who
variably configure the dramatic event from their unique (physical and existential)
vantage points. During these breaks, it is revealed that the internal play is based on
events that have taken place in "life" at the level of the first degree play (reality has
been subjected to a fictionalizing act) and that the "actual" counterparts of the fictive
characters are in the audience. As in Sei personaggi, wherein the play cannot be
staged due to a conflict of interpretations, here, the internal play is interrupted by
the actual counterparts who then act according to their staged representatives. That
is, the spectators in the external play, as if "sbarbagliare di specchio impazzito" (182)
("looking into a mirror gone mad"), on seeing themselves being represented by others
in the internal play, come to see, to recognize and to know their own selves.

The opening three brief dialogues serve as a metadiscursive gloss both on the play-within-the-play and the external play. Each dialogue has a question-and-answer structure, which opens up a playspace for the confrontation of different viewpoints on a given subject. Each is a variation on the theme, ostensibly of public opinion, but in actuality, of the way in which we know and the degree to which we can be certain of that which we claim to know. Moreover, each incorporates the notion of the intersubjective nature of knowledge—that is, that the other stands as an important modificatory element in the cognitive process—but addresses a different aspect of otherness.

The first dialogue takes place between the Old Man and the Young Man. The subject of the discussion is never stated. Instead, the talk immediately jumps to a theoretical level of the possibility of knowing anything at all with certainty when other people may possess some knowledge which may alter the original judgment:

IL GIOVINE SOTTILE [...]:
> Ma che ne pensa lei?

IL VECCHIO [...]:
> Che ne penso! (*Pausa.*) Non saprei. (*Pausa.*) Che cosa
> ne dicono gli altri?

IL GIOVINE SOTTILE:
> Mah! Chi una cosa e chi un'altra.

IL VECCHIO: S'intende! Ciascuno ha le sue opinioni.

IL GIOVINE SOTTILE:
> Ma nessuno, per dir la verità, par che ci s'attenga sicuro,
> se tutti come lei, prima di manifestarle, vogliono sapere
> che cosa ne dicono gli altri. (149)

(YOUNG MAN [...]:
        Well, what do you think of it?

OLD MAN [...]:
        What do I think of it! [*Pause.*] I don't know. [*Pause.*]
        What do the others say about it?

YOUNG MAN: Some say one thing, others another.

OLD MAN: I see. Everyone has their own opinion.

YOUNG MAN: But no one, to speak the truth, seems to be sure of
        themselves, if all like you, before revealing it, want to
        know what others are saying about it.)

The second dialogue continues the theme that we gain knowledge only

proximately as we view things relationally, in the ethical terms of the harmfulness of

stating one's opinion on a given subject matter when one lacks absolute knowledge.

This topic serves as a basis for discussing the impression that one lady has of the

other's lover on the grounds of sense-certainty (what we see and hear) and authority:

L'ALTRA: Ma non è niente piú che una mia impressione, bada!

LA PRIMA: Se l'hai avuta, è segno che qualcosa di vero dev'esserci!
        —Era pallido? Sorrideva triste? (150)

(THE OTHER: But it is only my impression!

THE FIRST: If you've had it, it is a sign that there is something true
        in it! Was he pale? Was his smile sad?)

However, forecasting the Morello dilemma, the discussion quickly turns back onto

the self and into an ontological questioning of what the self is, the possibility of

knowing the self and the (im)possibility of being self-identical. Changeable public

opinion finds a correlate in the changing self: "E come sono? Non lo so più! Ti

giuro che non lo so più! Tutto mobile, labile, senza peso. Mi volto di qua, di là,

rido; m'apparto in un angolo per piangere. Che smania! Che angoscia! E continu-
amente mi nascondo la faccia, davanti a me stessa, tanto mi vergogno a vedermi
cambiare!" (151) ("And how am I? I don't know anymore! I tell you that I don't
know anymore! Mobile, unstable, drifting. First I'm here, then I'm there, I laugh;
I go off by myself into a corner and cry. What agitation! What anguish! And I have
to hide my face constantly, even before myself, so ashamed am I at seeing myself
change so much!"). The self is other to itself.

The third dialogue transposes the insight into an endemic otherness onto the
level of conscience. Two different theories of conscience are advanced and con-
fronted: the first claims that our own conscience suffices as a guide for judging and
acting (conscience as a single, self-sufficient entity); the second reconceptualizes the
notion of conscience as "gli altri dentro di te" (152) ("others inside yourself"), that
is, as an internalization of the voices of others. Diego, the spokesperson for the latter
position, functions as the voice of conscience in this play:

> Perché credi che gli altri, al tuo posto, se fosse loro capitato un
> caso come il tuo, avrebbero agito come te! [...] E anche perché,
> fuori dei casi concreti e particolari della vita... sí, ci sono certi
> principii astratti e generali, su cui possiamo essere tutti d'accor-
> do (costa poco!). Intanto, guarda: se tu ti chiudi sdegnosamente
> in te stesso e sostieni che «hai la tua coscienza e ti basta», è
> perché sai che tutti ti condannano e non t'approvano o anche
> ridono di te; altrimenti non lo diresti. Il fatto è che i principii
> restano astratti; nessuno riesce a vederli come te nel caso che
> ti è capitato, né a veder se stesso nell'azione che hai commessa.
> E allora a che ti basta la tua coscienza, me lo dici? A sentirti
> solo? No, perdio. La solitudine ti spaventa. E che fai allora?
> T'immagini tante teste, tutte come la tua: tante teste che sono
> anzi la tua stessa; le quali, a un dato caso, tirate per un filo, ti
> dicono sí e no, e no e sí, come vuoi tu. E questo ti conforta e
> ti fa sicuro. Va' là, va' là che è un giuoco magnifico, codesto

della tua coscienza che ti basta! (152-53)

(Because you think that others, in your place, finding themselves
in the same circumstances as you, would act as you would! [...]
Or that, outside the concrete and particular situations in life,
there exist certain abstract and general principles on which we
can all agree, as this costs us so little? But notice now: if you
shut yourself up disdainfully in yourself and maintain that "you
have your conscience and it suffices you," it is because you know
that everyone is condemning you, that no one approves of you
or that they are laughing at you; otherwise you wouldn't say
that. The fact is that principles remain abstract; no one is able
to recognize them as you do in the situation in which you find
yourself, or to see themselves acting as you did. And so tell me,
for what does your conscience suffice you? To feel yourself
alone? No, for heaven's sake. Solitude frightens you. And so
what do you do then? You imagine so many heads, all like your
own: so many heads which are your own; which, in a given
situation, you can pull by a thread and they will tell you yes or
no, or no and yes, as you wish. And this makes you feel com-
fortable and secure. What a magnificent game, this conscience
of yours that suffices you!)

There are several interrelated points made in and inferrable from this particular
speech that are significant for the unfolding drama. The first is that human existence
is temporally committed and that human beings are "thrown into" situatedness, in
general, and a unique situation, in particular. Second, conscience must take into
account the fact that we are relationally present in the world (*being-with*). Third,
conscience is the voice of the other within ourselves (the internalization of a multiplic-
ity), and not merely a replication of the self (conscience as self-sameness). Fourth,
furthermore, conscience is the vehicle by which, to quote from Ricœur's gloss on
Heidegger's notion of *Gewissen*, "the self is made capable of taking hold of itself in
the anonymity of the 'they'" (*OAA* 342); therefore, the otherness that distinguishes
conscience, Ricœur explains, "is closely related to [the] emergence [of selfhood]"

(342), intersubjectively understood. Fifth, as will be played out in the interaction

between audience and actors in this play (as well as by Gombrowicz's Henryk),

conscience itself is split into two, into acting consciousness and judging conscious-

ness,[153] becoming, in effect, other to itself. This scene, in conjunction with the two

previous ones, thus sets up, on the theoretical level, a number of issues that will be

fleshed out in the course of the play.

The premise of this play concerns the accurate determination of the intentions

and the judgment of the actions of Delia Morello regarding her part in Salvi's suicide.

However, this inquiry is quickly recast into terms having ontological import—namely,

the identity of the lady. Morello, who continues the line from Signora Ponza and to

L'Ignota in Come tu mi vuoi, is appropriately an actress, someone for whom playing

the other and never the self is a profession. Furthermore, she stands as an enigma

for the rest of society. On the one hand, everyone "knows" her, as by reputation:

DONNA LIVIA:
        Voi dunque la conoscete?

DIEGO: E chi non la conosce, signora mia?

DONNA LIVIA:
        Anche Doro? Dunque è vero! La conosce!

DIEGO: Oh Dio, la conoscerà [...]—come la conoscono tutti[...].
          (CSM 154)

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[153] These are Hegel's terms from Phenomenology of Spirit. To quote Ricœur: "[t]he fact that conscience is the voice of the Other in the sense of others is something that Hegel enabled us to think, to the extent that conscience is tied to the reconciliation of two as yet partial figures of mind: judging consciousness and acting consciousness. In this way, the phenomenon of split consciousness crosses through the entire Phenomenology of Spirit, from the moment of the desire of the other, passing through the dialectic of master and slave, all the way to the double figure of the beautiful soul and the hero of action" (OAA 353).

(DONNA LIVIA:
　　　　　You know her then?

DIEGO:　　　Who doesn't know her?

DONNA LIVIA:
　　　　　And Doro, too? So it's true! He knows her!

DIEGO:　　　Of course, he knows her. [...] As everyone knows her.)

On the other, as Diego declares, "«Delia Morello» sarà un soprannome. Chi sa come

si chiama, chi è, di dove viene!" (155) ("'Delia Morello' is probably a pseudonym.

Who knows what her real name is, who she is, where she comes from!").

Not only is she an unknown and point of contention for others, provoking

others to impose on her the form of, for example, scarlet or misunderstood woman,

so is she an unknown for herself. As a demonstration of what was presented discur-

sively in the second and third introductory scenes, the audience witnesses how Delia,

able to see and understand herself only through the eyes of others, advances from

her declaration of herself as a nothing, a "mask," whose own flesh is as though not

her own, through to her con- and re-formation, first, to what Doro had judged of her

actions as reported to her by others, and then, to what Savio had judged of her

actions as reported by Doro (the words of the other are filtered through and reported

by another). The verbal re-enactment of the fateful night is subjected to a dual

interpretation, and Delia is formed and re-formed by the voices of others:

DELIA:　　　[...] È che mi sono riconosciuta, capite, «riconosciuta» in
　　　　　tutto quello che avete detto di me, appena me l'hanno
　　　　　riferito!

DORO (*c.s. ma non volendo parere smarrito*):
　　　　　Ah, bene—perché... ho—ho indovinato dunque?

DELIA: Come se foste vissuto in me, sempre; ma intendendo di me quello che io non ho potuto mai intendere, mai, mai! Mi sono sentita fendere le reni da brividi continui; ho gridato: «Sí! sí! è cosí! è cosí!»; non potete immaginarvi con che gioja, con che spasimo, vedendomi, sentendomi in tutte le ragioni che avete saputo trovare!

[...]

DELIA: [...] per me che sono niente! [...]

DORO: Calmatevi, calmatevi.

DELIA: Mi calmo, sí. E appena mi calmo—ecco qua—sono cosí—come insordita. In tutto il corpo, insordita. Proprio. Mi stringo e non mi sento. Le mani—me le guardo—non mi sembrano mie. E tutte le cose—Dio mio, le cose da fare—non so piú perché si debbano fare. Apro la borsetta; ne cavo lo specchio; e nell'orrore di questa vana freddezza che mi prende, non potete immaginarvi che impressione mi facciano, nel tondo dello specchio, la mia bocca dipinta, i miei occhi dipini, questa faccia che mi sono guastata per farmene una maschera.

DORO (*appassionato*):
Perché non ve la guardate con gli occhi degli altri.

DELIA: Anche voi? Sono proprio condannata a odiare come nemici tutti coloro a cui m'accosto perché m'ajutino a comprendermi? Abbagliati dai miei occhi, dalla mia bocca... E nessuno che si curi di ciò che piú mi bisogna!

DORO: Del vostro animo, sí.
[...]

DELIA: —e rendeva impossibile quella vendetta che almeno ho potuto prendermi d'improvviso contro gli altri!—Un angelo, per una donna, è sempre piú irritante d'una bestia!

DORO (*raggiante*):
Oh guarda! Le mie parole! Io ho detto proprio—precisamente—cosí!

DELIA: Ma io ripeto le vostre parole, appunto, come mi sono

state riferite: che mi hanno fatto luce—

[...]

DELIA: —sí; che mi misi con lui [Rocca], disperata, disperata, quando non vidi piú altra via di scampo—

[...]

DELIA: —[...] per farmi sorprendere da lui, e impedire cosí quel matrimonio—

DORO: —che sarebbe stato la sua infelicità—

DELIA: —e anche la mia! la mia!—

DORO (*triofante*):

      —benissimo! Tutto quello che ho sostenuto io! Cosí v'ho difesa!—E quell'imbecille che diceva di no! che tanto le repulse [of Giorgio], quanto la lotta, la minaccia, il tentativo di sparire, furono tutte perfide arti—

DELIA (*impressionata*):

      —diceva questo?

[...]

DORO: —sí, attraeste e travolgeste il Rocca come un fuscellino di paglia in un gorgo, senza pensare piú al Salvi, solo per il gusto di dimostrare a quella sorella che cos'è la fierezza e l'onestà di codesti illibati paladini della morale!

(*Delia resterà per un lungo tratto in silenzio, fissa a guardare innanzi a sé, come insensata, poi si coprirà di scatto il volto con le mani, e resterà cosí.*)

DORO (*dopo averla mirata un tratto, perplesso, sorpreso*):
      Che cos'è?

DELIA (*resterà ancora un poco col volto coperto; poi lo scoprirà e guarderà un poco ancora innanzi a sé; infine dirà aprendo desolatamente le braccia*):
      E chi sa, amico mio, ch'io non l'abbia fatto veramente per questo? (166-72)

(DELIA: [...] The fact is that I recognized myself, you understand,

recognized myself in all that you said of me, the moment it was reported to me!

DORO [*in growing bewilderment but not wanting to appear so*]:
Ah, good, so, I, I guessed correctly?

DELIA: It was as if you had lived me, always; but understanding me as I have never been able to understand myself! Never! Never! I felt a shudder run through me! I cried, "Yes! Yes! That's the way it is! That's the way it is!" You can't imagine what joy and what anguish I felt, seeing myself, feeling myself in all the reasons that you knew to find!

[...]

DELIA: [...] for myself who am nothing! [...]

DORO: Please be calm.

DELIA: I am calm. And no sooner am I calm, you see, I am as if, as though stunned. My whole body, stunned. Exactly. I pinch myself and I feel nothing. My hands, I look at them, and they don't seem to be mine. And all the things I have to do, I don't know why I have to do them. I open my handbag and take out my mirror, and I am horror-stricken at this empty coldness that has come over me. You can't imagine the impression I get, in the circle of that mirror, my painted mouth, my painted eyes, this face ruined, making of me a mask.

DORO [*impassioned*]:
Because you don't see yourself with the eyes of others.

DELIA: You too? Am I condemned to detest as my enemies all those with whom I have anything to do because they help me to understand myself? You are blinded by my eyes, by my mouth.... And no one takes notice of that which I need most!

DORO: Of your heart, yes.
[...]

DELIA: And it was impossible for me to have the satisfaction of that vengeance which at least I was able to inflict on

other men by suddenly giving myself to someone else!
For a woman, you see, an angel is always more irritating
than a beast!

DORO [*triumphantly*]:

You see. My own words. I said exactly, precisely that!

DELIA: But I am only repeating your words, exactly as they were
reported to me. You see, they suddenly made things so
clear to me.

[...]

DELIA: Yes, I went away with him [Rocca] out of desperation,
when I could see no other way of escape...

[...]

DELIA: So that he would catch me with him and thus make him
call off the wedding....

DORO: Which would have been his ruin...

DELIA: And mine too, and mine too...

DORO [*trimphantly*]:

Precisely. That is exactly how I explained it. That is just
how I defended you. And that imbecile who said I was
wrong. Who said that all your refusals [of Giorgio], all
your struggles, your threats, your attempt to run away...
were wicked artfulness on your part.

DELIA [*alarmed*]:

He said that?

[...]

DORO: Yes, you seduced and overwhelmed Rocca as though he
were a twig of straw in a whirlpool, without thinking of
Salvi, just because you wanted to show that sister of his
what the pride and respectability of the pillars of moral-
ity amounted to!

[*Delia remains silent for a long time, as though fixed on something
ahead of her, as though stunned, after which she suddenly covers
her face with her hands and remains thus.*]

DORO [*considering her, perplexed and surprised*]:
What's the matter?

DELIA [*She keeps her face covered a while longer, then she lowers her arms and looks straight ahead. Finally, she opens her arms in a gesture of desolation*]:
And who knows, my friend, if I didn't do it for precisely those reasons?)

The process is glossed by Diego in the second act when he refers to the construction and then collapse of a definite consciousness, or "fictitious form," of the self in terms of the visual images of vertigo, such as the whirlpool, hurricane, earthquake (195). For her part, then, Delia is envisaged as a transformative product of the cognitional activities of perception and judgment and abides in the interactive open in between the self and the flesh, I and other people, acting and judging consciousnesses. The gesture of covering and uncovering her face signifies visually, like Signora Ponza's veil, an erasure and then re-formation of the self as effected dialogically through the interchange with Doro: her self-definition is but the repetition of the words of others. A final form, however, is unachievable as Delia, her understanding of herself shattered anew, leaves her self under the sign of a question mark. Indeterminacy is located in the object itself.

Delia remains an alterity (or "concealment," in Heidegger's terms), even for herself; she cannot be fully absorbed by a given interpretive standpoint but rather submits to the contingency of perception. This situation precipitates an ongoing and inconclusive process of disclosure that reverberates through the whole work. Furthermore, it signifies that, essentially, the multitude of interpretations belong to Delia's very being as the possibilities that flow from, overflow her. That is, Delia stands as

a point of chiasm (like Gombrowicz's Iwona and Albertynka), both provoking or eliciting from others and including in herself the varying, possible interpretations. Doro's closing statement in the first act echoes and comments on Delia's dilemma in a way that casts back on himself and his own actions: "Vero? Che cosa?—Che mi batto? —Forse.—Ma perché? Per una cosa che nessuno sa quale sia, come sia: né io, né quello—e nemmeno lei stessa! Nemmeno lei stessa!" (173) ("True? What's true? That I'm going to fight a duel? Perhaps. But why? For something that no one knows what it is, how it is: neither I, nor he, nor least of all she herself. Least of all herself!").

The scene encapsulates a prevalent self-reflexive hermeneutic process in the play. Not only does the unknown (Delia Morello) come to see and understand herself only when presented with an explanation of herself by another person, but the very interpreter (Doro) is forced to undergo a critical self-examination—the result of which is a coming-to-consciousness of the indeterminacy of his own intentionality. That is, just as the primary question motivating the original argument is—Why did Delia Morella run off with another man on the eve of her wedding?—the explanations of which promote a changing self-consciousness on the part of the object of inquiry, so the actual question motivating the main action and with which Doro is forced to contend is: Why did Doro defend Delia? Is he not, in fact, as Diego holds, actually in love with her? When confronted with a situation in which he is to interpret an other, Doro's own concealed prejudices come to the fore. Diego explains:

Tende ognuno ad ammogliarsi per tutta la vita con un'anima
sola, la piú comoda, quella che ci porta in dote la facoltà piú
adatta a conseguir lo stato a cui aspiriamo; ma poi, fuori dell'on-
esto tetto coniugale della nostra conscienza, abbiamo tresche,
tresche e trascorsi senza fine con tutte le altre nostre anime
rejette che stanno giú nei sotteranei del nostro essere, e da cui
nascono atti, pensieri, che non vogliamo riconoscere, o che,
forzati, adottiamo o legittimiamo, con accomodamenti e riserve
e cautele. Questo, tu ora lo respingi, povero pensiero trovatello!
Ma guardalo bene negli occhi: è tuo! Tu ti sei davvero innamo-
rato di Delia Morello! Come un imbecile! (163)

(We all yearn to marry one particular soul for the rest of our
lives, the soul which is most convenient, the one which brings
us a dowry of the faculty most likely to take us to the state to
which we aspire; but afterward, outside the honest, conjugal
relation of our consciousness, we have one affair after the other
with all our other rejects, which remain in the depths of our
being, and from which are born our acts, thoughts that we do
not want to recognize, but which, when we are forced to, we
adopt or legitimize with adaptations, reservations and cautions.
Now, in your case, one of your poor thoughts has come home!
But look it carefully in the eyes: it is yours! You are really in
love with Delia Morello! Like an idiot!)

The same self-reflexive move takes place with respect to the relation between

the internal and external plays. The internal play, based on a "real life" situation,

comes to a head when, at the duel, Delia comes face to face with her lover, Rocca,

and the two realize that they actually love one another. The significance of this scene

lies in the impact that the performance has on the spectators. Using a strategy

similar to the one used by Tieck in Die verkehrte Welt, Pirandello sets up a specular

construct, whereby the individuals, La Moreno and Baron Nuti (the "real" referents

of the fictive signs), are actually present in the audience watching the play. In a

metaphorical transposition of the image in the mirror to which Delia Morello

referred, La Moreno and Baron Nuti, therefore, are seeing themselves through the

mimicry of others. La Moreno cries, "La mia stessa voce! I miei gesti! tutti i miei gesti! Mi sono vista! mi sono vista là!" (218) ("My own voice! My own gestures! All my own gestures! I saw myself! I saw myself there!"). This self-seeing through the displacement of the self in the other engenders a critical transformation in the self: listening to the voice of the other, La Moreno and Nuti recognize that they actually love one another. Their final lines mimic the mimicry of themselves.

The concerns raised in these three plays culminate in two later ones, Come tu mi vuoi (1930, As You Desire Me) and Quando si è qualcuno (1933, When Someone is Somebody). The works deserve brief mention as they fix the lines of inquiry taken by Gombrowicz and Genet in their respective dramatic œuvres.

In Come tu mi vuoi, the original self is a complete unknown, even to itself, and the protagonist, L'Ignota (the Stranger)—who continues the line from Shakespeare's Cressida, Pirandello's own Signora Ponza and Witkiewicz's Edgar/Water Hen—is an actress (literally, "a body without a name") who assumes the role of a lifetime. That is, she is to assume the identity of and be a woman who had gone missing years before and whom she "resembles" in terms of looks and pasts. The ultimate object of desire who has rendered herself a blank slate and made herself malleable to others—in this, she precedes Gombrowicz's Iwona (if in reverse) and Albertynka— L'Ignota is the archetypal performative self toward which the above-articulated central dialectic of representation-by-others and self-representation has tended: she performs another and is performed by others; she comes to see herself

only in the multiplicity of forms which she makes take shape through, before and in others. She is not only indeterminate to herself, a condition which opens up the possibility of her assuming a number of roles according to the demands of the particular situation. She is, furthermore, even in her role as the long-missing woman, undecidable to others, who cannot agree on either what they see in her when she stands before their own eyes (e.g., her eyes are a different colour for each viewer) or her "identicalness" to the original referent, of which there is left no direct trace, only a representation (portrait) of a representation (photo).

Finally, in Quando si è qualcuno, the hero—who anticipates Genet's Police Chief (Le balcon) and Shepard's Hoss in his pursuit of fame (the desire to be known by others)—has come to live entirely in the image he has created for public consumption. This situation culminates in the erection of a statue that represents the fixity of life in form and demands the destruction of his self. Pirandello's own gloss in "'Foglietti' Inediti" on this work, which he calls a "satire of fame," sums up the play's central concern, which is also this study's: "[u]n uomo celebre non può piú vivere la propria vita come gli pare e piace; ma bisogna che la viva secondo il concetto che gli altri si sono fatto di lui e su cui riposa la sua fama, schiavo dunque della forma ch'egli si è data e in cui gli altri lo riconoscono [...]. Cosí egli diviene alla fine la statua di sé stesso" (1274) ("[a] famous man can no longer live his own life as he would want, but must live according to the conception that others make of him and on which his fame rests, a slave to the form that others bestow on him and which others recognize him to be [...]. In this way, he becomes, in the end, a statue of himself").

WITOLD GOMBROWICZ'S INTERHUMAN CHURCH

The dramatic œuvre of Witold Gombrowicz (1904-69) represents a striking variation of specular theatre—the model for conceptualizing the dramatic world as a playspace or *topos* for the "mirror-play" in which to present a particular view of the subject as constructed in a situation of alterity. Like Pirandello, Gombrowicz was highly critical of the concept of a unique, unified, coherent and consistent subject (*idem*-identity). And, in response, he formulated an account of and gave expression to an intersubjectivity, which he too cast in the ontologically-weighted theatrical discourse of masks and roles, and in the general philosophical terms of form.

Where the two playwrights diverge is in the way in which Gombrowicz recuperates *form* as a dynamic entity ("form in motion"), governed and circumscribed by the play phenomenon,[154] and the vividness with which his works articulate an almost visceral struggle with, and ultimate submission to, its negative power as it

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[154] Gombrowicz writes: "*artysta to forma w ruchu' [...], artysta jest grą nieustanną, nie jest tak, że artysta ujmuje świat z jednego punktu widzenia—w nim samym dokonują się nieustanne przesunięcia i jedynie tylko własny ruch może przeciwstawić ruchowi świata*" (Dziennik 3:73) ("*the 'artist is form in motion' [...], the artist is endless play, it is not that the artist conceives of the world from one vantage point—endless shifts take place within him and only he can oppose his own movement to the movement of the world*" [Diary 3:57]). Here Gombrowicz intimates what Gadamer states (*TM* 106)—namely, that play denotes a self-renewing, back-and-forth movement and constitutes a phenomenon with an existence apart from the artist's or player's consciousness, requiring the corporeality of the artist, player or artwork as a medium for it to come to presentation. The important point for my purpose is that that which is brought or comes into play and the players are rhythmicized and formalized by the introduction. To recall the earlier discussion, the result is a self-dispossession—that is, a relinquishing of autonomy and volition—and a conformity of the self to the game.

arises from the intersubjective relation. For Gombrowicz, the cognitive dimension of self-seeing and self-knowing that is so critical for Pirandello is present but subsumed to a greater degree by the affective dimension of victimization, deformation and pain.[155] Through his literary œuvre, Gombrowicz gradually but decisively, if somewhat resistingly and finally resignedly, moves away from the paradigm of *idem*-identity as he re-envisages the subject as precariously, sometimes gleefully, other times haplessly, but nevertheless inescapably abiding within the liminal realm of the agonistically interactive "open" in between subject and object, I and it, self and other. From the studies of power relations in the short stories of Bakakai (written between 1928 and 1944)[156] and Ferdydurke's (1937) depiction of the protagonist's imprisonment by and struggle against the progressively deforming impact of the multitude of conventional masks imposed by others, to Trans-Atlantyk's (1953) tale of a "double outcast" reduced to being "a function of how others see him" (Barańczak xv) and

[155] It must be stressed that the categories of the cognitive and the affective are not mutually exclusive and that I am not claiming here that Pirandello disregards the affective (note the emphasis on Pirandello's issuing an ethical imperative against causing the other suffering when imposing our own form of understanding of the other on the other, as we can never know the other as a for-itself). One of the best comparisons of Pirandello's and Gombrowicz's respective formulations of intersubjectivity is by Krysiński in Le paradigme inquiet (327-51).

[156] Bakakai was first published in 1933 under the title of Pamietnik z okresu dojrzewania (Journal from the Time of Immaturity), the work that gets Ferdydurke's protagonist into such hot water. "Tancerz Mecenasa Kraykowskiego" (1928, "The Advocate Kraykowski's Dancer"), for example, presents a sado-masochistic relation similar to the one between the Underground Man and the officer in Dostoyevsky's novella. After being publicly humiliated by the lawyer, the Dancer strives to weaken Kraykowski's composure and self-assurance by forcing him to react to his immaturity and shame. "Zbrodnia z premedytacją" (1928, "A Premeditated Crime") depicts a shift in power between a visiting magistrate and the family of a man who had died of natural causes: the family gradually loses the ability to resist the magistrate, who forces them to strangle the corpse in order to leave behind the necessary trace of a murder he himself knows was not committed. In "Bankiet" (1944, "The Banquet"), ministers of state attempt to defend kingship against the King, to impose kingly behavior on the King, in order to save the Crown from being compromised by its wearer.

<u>Operetka</u>'s (1966) universal vision of humanity as transformed into mutually torment-

ing masks—Gombrowicz explores the constraining theatricality of the interhuman

space as that which acts on us ceaselessly, on every level of our existence, creating

and defining, but also deforming us.

Gombrowicz's theatrical works stage the disclosure, creation and destruction

of the human subject through alterity. Here, I lay out Gombrowicz's particular

formulation of intersubjectivity as *interhumanity* (*międzyludzkość*). The term, inter-

humanity, gives to understand a strictly anthropological focus; however, as a few

critics have astutely pointed out[157] and as I would concur and demonstrate, it actually

conceptualizes a broad context of the in-between, of which the interpersonal is but

one of many different facets including the hermeneutic, the intertextual and the

interdiscursive, as charted in the first chapter. Then, I treat each of the three

complete plays, elucidating their fundamental play-structure. <u>Iwona, Księżniczka</u>

<u>Burgunda</u> (1935, <u>Princess Ivona</u>) shows the closest convergence with Pirandello's

works. The play poses the problem of interhumanity in terms of a hermeneutics of

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[157] A number of critics have tackled the problem of intersubjectivity in Gombrowicz's works. The most incisive are Jakób Liszka, Stefan Chwin, Michał Głowiński and Jerzy Jarzębski. Liszka, for example, discussing Gombrowicz's novel, <u>Ferdydurke</u>, concludes with the following observation: "<u>Ferdydurke</u> creates the literary basis for the new Self—an element which can never be defined or identified except in its relation to the non-Self—and transfers it to the relation between the author and reader. The new Self exists in a tension of opposition of a system of reciprocities and exchanges which barter for its being" (71). For the most part, these critical discussions have tended to remain on the conceptual level: they explain Gombrowicz's particular version of intersubjectivity, arguing that the prose and dramatic works function as literary media for his anthropological ideas. The major critical lacuna, then, lies in the failure to elucidate and demonstrate systematically the multivalent and multi-form manner in which intersubjectivity *functions* in the literary works—that is, the way in which Gombrowicz engages various forms of alterity in the construction of the (personal and textual) subject. As Głowiński rightly recognizes in „Ferdydurke" Witolda Gombrowicza (16) though fails to rectify, intersubjectivity is not merely something that is talked about or that constitutes a common thematic thread in his literary works; more, it is a formative and deformative dynamic that impinges consequentially on the structure of his works.

the self: the attempt to know an unknown ends up casting back reflectively and reflexively onto the knowers. Where Pirandello stops with the revelation of the interpretive nature of perception and judgments, Gombrowicz injects the hermeneutic circle with the ludic force of *ilinx* (*vertigo*) and incarnates it in concrete action by having the interrogators wreak vengeance upon the object of the interrogation and then having them be revenged upon in turn. Ślub (1947, The Marriage) is the fullest expression of the creative and deformative power of interhumanity, here laid bare as the *a priori* of subjectivity. In this play, not only do I examine Gombrowicz's anthropological vision but, by uncovering the pervasive dialogicity in the text and how language (dialogically conceived) functions to constitute the subject, I argue that the anthropological serves as an analogue for what takes place on the lexical, discursive and intertextual levels. Finally, Operetka (1966, Operetta) presents, vis-à-vis the ever-changing mask as our ultimate and ultimately deforming reality, a human subject that is a temporally determined product of social and international tensions.

I. INTERHUMANITY

Gombrowicz formulates his notion of intersubjectivity in terms of *interhumanity* (*międzyludzkość*). By interhumanity, the writer understands the *forms* that get established *between* people.[158] Briefly, for Gombrowicz, form is a specific mode of

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[158] Gombrowicz's notion of form is multivalent. Jerzy Jarzębski, in "Pojęcie ‚formy' u Gombrowicza," for example, analyzes it in terms of the following categories: socio-psychological (form as a value created between people and enabling contact); philosophical (interhuman contact depends on the mutual self-explanation of the fragments of a personal cosmos); artistic (creation of form); literary (literature creates its own form, a microcosm governed by its own laws); intentionality (the literary work creates a cosmos in relation to the author [the phase of creation] or reader [the phase of

human being (*sposób bycia*) provoked by interhuman social tensions and it may take

a social, cultural, historical, sexual or psychological cast. Form enters into the

constitution of the human being (it has an ontological value) through various matri-

ces of alterity, of which interpersonal relations are the paradigm.

Gombrowicz elucidates his interrelated notions of form and interhumanity in

a number of places in his fictional works and journals. In Ferdydurke (1937), for

example, in a discursive authorial digression that glosses the narrative, Gombrowicz

writes that form is not limited to the aesthetic realm, but has ontological and socio-

logical facets and implications. Form is both intrinsically determined and extrinsically

imposed to varying degrees; more radically, it is an entity unto itself, an imperative

that works its will through human beings.

> To pewne, że sztuka polega na doskonaleniu formy. Lecz wy—i
> tu objawia się inny wasz błąd kardynalny—wyobrażacie sobie, że
> sztuka polega na stwarzaniu dzieł doskonałych pod względem
> formy; ów niezmierzony i wszechludzki proces stwarzania formy
> sprowadzacie do produkcji poematów lub symfonii; i nawet nie
> umieliście nigdy wyczuć należycie oraz wyjaśnić innym, jak
> olbrzymia jest rola formy w naszym życiu. [...] Lecz w
> Rzeczywistości sprawa przedstawia się, jak następuje: że istota
> ludzka nie wyraża się w sposób bezpośredni i zgodny ze swoją
> naturą, ale zawsze w jakiejś określonej formie i że forma owa,
> ów styl, sposób bycia nie jest tylko z nas, lecz jest nam narzu-
> cony z zewnątrz—i oto dlaczego ten sam człowiek może obja-
> wiać się na zewnątrz mądrze albo głupio, krwawo lub anielsko,

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concretization]) (313-46). For his part, Tadeusz Kępiński, in his recent book, Witold Gombrowicz: studium portretowe drugie, takes issue with the comprehensiveness of Jarzębski's formulations and provides a schema for systematizing Gombrowicz's *Weltanschauung*: the genesis of form; the author's self-characterization as tied with a view of form; the definition of form; the consequences of the functioning of form; the author's reaction to form (see esp. 36-67). Supporting Jarzębski, Jan Błoński, in Forma, śmiech i rzeczy ostateczne, notes that it is possible to interpret the Gombrowiczian notion of form in sociological terms (as interhuman relations), in terms of cognitive theory (as a tool of knowl-edge) and in terms of a cosmogony (as a principle of being), depending on where the stress is placed (185).

dojrzale albo niedojrzale, zależnie od tego, jaki styl mu się napatoczy i jak uzależniony jest od innych ludzi. I jeśli robaki, owady cały dzień uganiają się za pożywieniem, my bez wytchnienia jesteśmy w pościgu za formą, użeramy się z innymi ludźmi o styl, o sposób bycia nasz, i jadąc tramwajem, jedząc, zabawiając się lub wypoczywając, lub załatwiając interesy—zawsze, bez przerwy szukamy formy i rozkoszujemy się nią lub cierpimy przez nią i przystosowujemy się do niej lub gwałcimy i rozbijamy ją, lub pozwalamy, aby ona nas stwarzała, amen. (87)

(It's true that art consists in the perfection of form. But you— and here we are faced with another of your cardinal errors— you imagine that art consists in the creation of perfectly formed works; you apply this immense and universal process of creating forms to the production of poems or symphonies; yet you haven't ever properly understood or explained to others, just how great the role of form is in our own lives. [...] But in Reality, the situation is this: a human being does not express himself directly and in conformity with his own nature, but rather always in some defined form and that form, that style, that way of being do not derive solely from us, but are imposed on us from without. And this is why the same person can appear to us on the outside as wise or stupid, blood-thirsty or angelic, mature or immature, depending on the style that lights upon him and how dependent he is on other people. And as worms and insects chase all day after food, so we relentlessly seek form, struggle with other people for a style, for our own way of being, and, while riding the streetcar, eating, at play or at rest, settling our affairs—we are perpetually in search of form, we delight in it and suffer for it and adapt ourselves to it or we violate or shatter it, or we allow it to create us, amen. [my translation])

This passage expresses the ambiguous and ambivalent nature of form: it may be self-fashioned or fashioning of us; it may be desired, accepted, struggled against or violently forced upon us. The human being's unavoidable submission to form results in a fundamental non-coincidence of the self with itself—a gap having somatic

(violation, deformation) and affective (pain,[159] suffering) entailments.

Later, in his journal, Gombrowicz as though resigns himself to the inevitability of the interhuman situatedness of the human being, to the fact that the human being exists as a form only before, for and through others: "ja jestem zawsze ‚dla innego', obliczony na cudze widzenie, mogący istnieć w sposób określony tylko dla kogoś i przez kogoś, egzystujący—jako forma—poprzez innego" (Dziennik 2:8) ("I am always 'for another,' counting on someone else's seeing me, being able to exist in a specific manner only for someone else and by someone else, and existing—as a form—only through another" [Diary 2:4]). Here, he also lays out, in a schematic fashion, his anthropological vision:

1) Człowiek stwarzany przez formę, w najgłębszym, najogól-
niejszym znaczeniu.

2) Człowiek jako wytwórca formy, jej niezmordowany prod-
ucent.

3) Człowiek zdegradowany formą (będący zawsze „niedo"
—niedokształcony, niedojrzały).

4) Człowiek zakochany w niedojrzałości.

5) Człowiek stwarzany przez Niższość i Młodość.

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[159] For Gombrowicz, pain is the authentic human condition: "[a]lbowiem, rzeczywistość to to, co stawia opór, czyli to, co boli. A człowiek rzeczywisty to taki, którego boli. Cokolwiek by nam nie opowiadano, istnieje na całym obszarze Wszechświata, w całej przestrzeni Bytu, jeden jedyny element okropny, niemożliwy, nie do przyjęcia, jedna jedyna rzecz naprawdę i absolutnie przeciwna nam, a miażdżąca: ból. Na nim, na niczym innym, oparta jest cała dynamika istnienia. Usuńcie ból, a świat stanie się obojętny" (Dziennik 3:233) ("[f]or reality is that which offers resistance; namely, that which hurts. And a real man is one who is in pain. No matter what we are told, there exists, in the entire expanse of the Universe, one and only one awful, impossible, unacceptable element, one and only one thing that is truly and absolutely against us and absolutely devastating: pain. It is on pain and on nothing else that the entire dynamic of existence depends. Remove pain and the world becomes a matter of complete indifference" [Diary 3:184]).

6) Człowiek poddany „międzyludzkiemu", jako sile nadrzęd-nej, twórczej, jedynej dostępnej nam boskości.

7) Człowiek „dla" człowieka, nie znający żadnej wyższej instancji.

8) Człowiek dynamizowany ludźmi, nimi wywyższony, spotę-gowany. (Dziennik 2:11)

([1] Man created by form, in the profoundest, most universal sense.

[2] Man as the creator, the indefatigable producer of form.

[3] Man degraded by form [always being an "under-" or an "im-"—undereducated, immature].

[4] Man in love with immaturity.

[5] Man created by Inferiority and Youngerness.

[6] Man subject to the "interhuman" as a superior, creative force, our only accessible divinity.

[7] Man "for" man, knowing no higher instance.

[8] Man animated, elevated, magnified by other people. [Diary 2:6])

Three points require articulation and elaboration. The first is that Gombro-wicz's notion of the *interhuman church* (*kościół międzyludzki*)[160] can be understood productively as the collective participation in the fabrication of individuals and social and cultural realities. To paraphrase Gombrowicz, the human being, subject to that which is created by another individual, has no god other than that which springs from

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[160] The term, "earthly church" ("kościół ziemski"), appears in Gombrowicz's preface to Ślub (91; The Marriage 15) while "human church" ("kościół ludzki") appears in Henryk's monologue in Act 3 of Ślub (204; The Marriage 137). All citations from the dramatic works in Polish are from the collection, Dramaty, and are referenced by page number.

the other: divinities are exchangeable. All forms, then, are collective, communal creations. Moreover, form itself has an active function: as Krysiński notes in Le paradigm inquiet, it is a generator of forms (335).

The second point is that, in being formed in between—that is, in a situation of interaction—the human being is a formal being for whom authentic behavior is impossible. For Gombrowicz, the theatrical discourse of enactment and the notion of the human being as actor who exists always (be)for(e) others and by taking the form of another—a notion that filters down through Vives, Shakespeare, Witkiewicz and Pirandello—most appropriately convey this constitutive artificiality.

> Przecież mój człowiek jest stwarzany od zewnątrz, czyli z istoty swojej nieautentyczny—będący zawsze nie sobą, gdyż określa go forma, która rodzi się między ludźmi. Jego „ja" jest mu zatem wyznaczone w owej „międzyludzkości". Wieczysty aktor, ale aktor naturalny, ponieważ sztuczność jest mu wrodzona, ona stanowi cechę jego człowieczeństwa—być człowiekiem to znaczy być aktorem—być człowiekiem to znaczy udawać człowieka—być człowiekiem to „zachowywać się" jak człowiek, nie będąc nim w samej głębi—być człowiekiem to recytować człowieczeństwo. (Gombrowicz, Dziennik 2:8-9)

> (Why, my man is created from the outside, that is, he is inauthentic in essence—he is always not-himself, because he is determined by form, which is born between people. His 'I,' therefore, is marked for him in that 'interhumanity.' An eternal actor, but a natural one, because his artificiality is inborn, it makes up a feature of his humanity—to be a man means to be an actor—to be a man means to pretend to be a man—to be a man means to 'act like' a man while not being one deep inside—to be a man is to recite humanity. [Gombrowicz, Diary 2:4])

When the external world (i.e., social and cultural worlds and other individuals) imposes itself on the internal, intersubjectivity becomes potentially deformative. The

third point is that this deformation, by constituting itself into its own form, becomes

reformation in a potential infinity of variations.

Gombrowicz, thus, positions his human beings between two modes of being,

two modes of the mask/form: that of "human sovereignty and limitless creativity,"

on the one hand; that of "enslavement through the demonic power of the mask," on

the other (Fink's expressions, 25). While they may direct interhuman relations,

rituals, even—as in Gombrowicz's 1964 novel, Kosmos—perceptual data, in the

creation of their particular cosmos, they are simultaneously imposed upon and

directed. As his dramatic works make explicit, human beings, therefore, are not only

agents striving to determine themselves, others and the external world, but also

patients, profoundly determined, affected and victimized by others. In this relation

of mutual affecting, the face, the marker of identity, no longer marks a subject for-

itself; rather, it is transformed into the mask, deformed by others into the grimace,

becoming the carrier of alterity. The human being's dual status as characterized by

a "binding-freedom" in the interactive realm of the in-between,[161] thus, is presented

as the ineluctable engagement of human beings in a "duel" of masks, roles, voices.

This duel, by forming itself into the simultaneity, contemporaneneity and then

sameness of mimicry (qua reflective imitation), functions specularly, not only to

interchange the identities of the playing subjects but, furthermore, to do away with

private, fixed self-identity by gradually but decisively abolishing the difference

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[161] See the following articles on interaction and play in Gombrowicz's works: Jan Błoński's "O Gombrowiczu," Zdzisław Łapiński's "Ślub w kościele ludzkim: o kategoriach interakcyjnych u Gombro- wicza" and Jerzy Jarzębski's "Kategoria ,gry' w poglądach Gombrowicza."

between them.[162]

II.   IWONA, KSIĘŻNICZKA BURGUNDA: PRINCESS IWONA AND THE VICIOUS
       CIRCLE

Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda (1935, Princess Ivona of Burgundy) contains

seminal elements of Gombrowicz's interhuman *Weltanschauung* as it becomes infused

with and by play. The dramatic action is structured on the basis of the ludic configu-

ration of *ilinx* (vertigo)—a circle, modelled on the intersubjective hermeneutic or

question-answer interrogative situation, which is transformed into a spiral. However,

the ludic is not restricted to this level: it comes to impinge both on linguisticality and

on the subject, which is created and destroyed within the interhuman relation of

mutual affection gone beserk.

Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda (Iwona) opens with the interruption of quotidian

existence and its replacement by a ludic *chronotope*: temporally, a national holiday,

during which the King and Queen are obliged to "fraternize" with the folk; spatially,

the traditional playground of the park. The temporary suspension of the established

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[162] This process is illustrated perfectly in the schoolyard episode from Ferdydurke, which depicts
the duel of grimaces between the constructive and beautiful faces of the Innocent and Ideal Adolescent,
Siphon, and the ugly and destructive counter faces of the Disgusting Boy, Miętus, each of which
irreparably deforms the other, and leads ultimately to the suicide of the former. The novel's protagonist
is imprisoned between these two mutually deforming faces: "co za potworność! Oto jeden wypaczony,
wyszczerzony w jedną, drugi w drugą stronę! A pośród nich ja, superarbiter, na wieki chyba uwięziony,
więzień cudzego grymasu, cudzego oblicza. Twarz moja, jakby zwierciadło ich twarzy, również pokracz-
niała, przerażenie, wstręt, zgroza żłobiły na niej niezatarte pięto. Pajac pomiędzy dwoma pajacami jakże
miałbym zdobyć się na coś, co nie było grymasem?" (71) ("what a grotesque situation! Here on one side
was a warped, grinning face, on the other, another one! And here was I, the umpire, imprisoned no
doubt forever between them, a prisoner of the grimaces, the faces, of others. And my face, a mirror of
their faces, was distorted too. Fear, disgust, threat left their ineradicable mark. A clown between two
other clowns, what could I do but grimace?" [my translation]).

hierarchy brings about a reversal in the dramatic world. The reversal is signalled, arguably catalyzed, verbally by the beggar's structurally and semantically chiasmic blessing, which levels King and God and establishes a relation of reciprocity and reversibility that reverberates through the kingdom: "Niech Bóg Najwyższy błogosławi Najjaśniejszemu Królowi i niech Najjaśniejszy Król błogosławi Najwyższemu Bogu"[163] ("May God Almighty bless Your Majesty the King and may Your Majesty the King bless Almighty God"). It, further, opens a breach that permits an outsider, Iwona, a member of the bourgeoisie, to ingress the closed court world by becoming engaged to the Prince. With her verbal silence, her physical non-responsiveness, her non-playfulness—in short, her otherness with respect to the immature, game-playing court[164]—she subverts the court world, effecting a change in the holiday festivities from light-hearted fun into deadly seriousness.[165] In order to restore order—that is, the former hierarchy—the court must assassinate her "z góry" ("from above") by

[163] Iwona 8. Subsequent citations are referenced as ([I] page). All translations from Iwona are mine.

[164] The majority of the characters are defined by their tendency to play games and the type that they play: the King has an inborn tendency to play bridge and a love of old Polish jokes; the Queen suggests that Prince Filip play football or dominoes if bridge, tennis and polo are beginning to bore him; Cyryl and Cyprian have just finished a game of soccer; Isabel runs around the park. Game-playing is viewed as the norm. Only the outsider Iwona does not participate in any type of activity.

[165] Here are some points at which the change in the nature of the game is indicated. Prince Filip assures Iwona's aunts of his sincerity in proposing to Iwona: "Kpię? Nie, ja nie kpię. Godzina jest zbyt poważna na to" (I 14) ("Joking? No, I'm not joking. The time is too serious for joking"). In the second act, the Prince foregrounds this reversal in his conversation with Innocent, who confesses his love for Iwona: "Wszystko stało się nagle poważne. Nie wiem, czy pan to zna—te nagłe przejścia od śmiechu do powagi? Jest w tym nawet coś świętego. Jest w tym jakieś objawienie" (36) ("Everything has suddenly become serious. I don't know if you know, those sudden passages from laughter into seriousness? There is even something holy in it. There is some kind of revelation in it"). Finally, the Prince states outright, "Zmieniłem ton, i zaraz wszystko się zmieniło" (53) ("I changed my tone, and suddenly everything changed"). See Gadamer on the "sacred seriousness" of play (TM 102).

forcing her to choke herself on a fish bone at a royal banquet.

The play poses the problem of interhumanity in terms of a hermeneutics of the self. Iwona functions, first—like her predecessors, Shakespeare's Cressida and Pirandello's Signora Ponza and Delia Morello, and like her successor, Historia's Witold[166]—as an object of interpretation for others, a vessel for their "obsessive speculation and rumination" (Hyde 725); second, as a principle of *anamnesis* (recollection) and—like the character-constellations in Die verkehrte Welt—*anagnorisis* (recognition) for others; third—like Witkiewicz's Edgar, Handke's Kaspar and Shepard's Hoss—as a victim suffering the aggressive acts of others; finally, because she provokes others, as a subject.[167] Concomitantly, the court members, who initally function as agents/inquisitors in their attempts to understand Iwona, are transformed into patients/"inquisitees."

The passage from agent into patient, from object into subject, is set up dialogically. However, *ilinx* enters the give-and-take of dialogue, causing it to rebound reflexively back onto the questioning subject. In other words, like the

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[166] Historia is Gombrowicz's other (unfinished) dramatic work, and it forms the basis of Operetka. Briefly, Iwona provokes the royal court with her silence and physical non-responsiveness just as Witold, silenced and unable to respond, provokes his family (an analogous structure to the royal court for Gombrowicz) with his bare feet. Just as Iwona submits almost silently to a series of verbal interrogations on the reason for her silence, so Witold submits to a series of verbal interrogations by his family during which his responses are minimal. In Historia, these interrogations are transformed into a series of tribunals: the Examination Committees for Maturity and Immaturity, the Conscription Committee and the Court Martial.

[167] In "The Word Unheard: 'Form' in Modern Polish Drama," G.M. Hyde, who examines the iconography of suffering and silence in modern Polish drama, considers Iwona as a "puppet in the hands of the court" who accumulates an "extraordinary and perverse power" (725). On this point, I think that Zdravko Malić's assessment of Iwona in ",Ślub' Gombrowicza" is too simplistic: he considers her as "an abstract opposition to the fundamental idea of the dramatic work [and someone ... whose] role is scenically conventional [...]. She exists only as a role, not as a character" (my translation, 97).

tribunal in <u>Cosí è</u>, the question-and-answer dialogical structure is initiated by certain

characters with the hermeneutical aim of understanding an unknown, Iwona. Then

it changes when the addressee does not function as an actively responsive partner in

dialogue, forcing the questioner to assume this other role.

The tribunal situation is set up upon Iwona's entrance with her aunts. Her

aunts pose a series of "why" questions during which her otherness (her non-playful-

ness) with respect to other girls is thrown into relief:

IWONA *(milczy)*

II CIOTKA: *Dlaczego* tak niemrawo? *Dlaczego* ty, moje dziecko, tak
               się niemrawo uśmiechasz?

IWONA *(milczy)*

II CIOTKA: Wczoraj znów nie miałaś powodzenia. Dzisiaj znów nie
               masz powodzenia. Jutro także nie będziesz miała powo-
               dzenia. *Dlaczego* ty jesteś tak mało ponętna, moja koch-
               ana? *Dlaczego* nie masz wcale sex appealu? Nikt na
               ciebie spojrzeć nie chce. Prawdziwe skaranie boże.
[...]

I CIOTKA *(do Iwony)*:
               Dlaczego wczoraj na zabawie nie ruszałaś nogą, dziecko
               drogie?

II CIOTKA: *Dlaczego* nikt się tobą nie zainteresuje? *Czy myślisz*, że
               to dla nas przyjemne? Wszystkie nasze ambicje samicze
               umieściłyśmy w tobie, a ty nic... *Dlaczego* nie jeździsz na
               nartach?

I CIOTKA: *Dlaczego* nie skaczesz o tyczce? *Inne panienki* skaczą.
               (emphasis added, *I* 11-13)

(IWONA [*silent*]

AUNT II: *Why* are you so sluggish? *Why* can't you smile properly,
               my child?

IWONA [*silent*]

AUNT II: Yesterday you didn't have any luck again. Today again you're not having any luck. And tomorrow you won't have any luck yet again. *Why* are you so unattractive, my dear? *Why* don't you have any sex appeal? No one even wants so much as to look at you. You're a curse from God, you are.

[...]

AUNT I [*to Iwona*]:
            Why didn't you dance at the party yesterday, dear child?

AUNT II: *Why* isn't anyone interested in you? *Do you think* this is pleasant for us? We concentrated all our female ambitions on you, and you do nothing... *Why* don't you ski?

AUNT I: *Why* don't you jump rope? Other young ladies jump rope.)

Once dialogue's separation of the roles of addresser and addressee is internalized, the result is a "perpetuum mobile" (27) of "dialogized self-consciousness,"[168] which here brings out into the open the addresser's own concerns, motivations and predelictions (e.g., the aunts' own female ambitions). Gradually, everyone is forced to submit to this "[p]rawdziwy circulus vitiosus" (*I* 14) ("real vicious circle")—whose transformation into a spiral actually does lead somewhere.

Prince Filip is the best example of this process. He undergoes a marked transition from agent into patient. The Prince's initial status as an agent is estab-

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[168] This is Bakhtin's term to refer to an "internal polemic," "an endless dialogue where one reply begets another, which begets a third, and so on to infinity, and all this without any forward motion" (*PDP* 230). It is related to the logical term of the *vicious circle* (*petitio principii, circulus in probando*), defined as "[a]n argument or proof which uses a statement S^1 to justify another statement S^2 which in turn is used to prove S^3, etc., until a last member in the series of logically connected statements is used to provide evidence for the initial statement S^1 and thereby the entire series is then believed to have been completely proved" (Angeles 312).

lished by his act of rebellion against the strictures imposed by the court, not to mention by the fairy tale genre from which the play derives: acting against type and convention, he becomes engaged to the most *undesirable* girl in the kingdom. Yet, his status as agent is ambiguous in that, even at the outset, he expresses a desire, after reading his horoscope, that "something should happen" *to* him ("Chciałbym, żeby coś się stało" [11]). At this point Iwona happens to him. Even at the moment of absolute freedom, the Prince is willing to submit himself to an outside power.

When the Prince is introduced to Iwona, an exchange ensues during which the aunts explain to him the reason for Iwona's apathy:

I CIOTKA: Nieszczęście! Jest w niej jakaś niedomaga organiczna. Krew jest w niej za leniwa.

[...]

KSIĄŻĘ: [...] I nie ma na to lekarstwa?

I CIOTKA: Lekarze orzekli, że gdyby się trochę ożywiła, gdyby była weselsza, krew zaczęłaby żywiej płynąć i znikłyby te przypadłości.

KSIĄŻĘ: A dlaczego w takim razie nie wpadnie w lepszy humor?

I CIOTKA: Bo krew jest w niej za leniwa.

KSIĄŻĘ: Gdyby się ożywiła, krew zaczęłaby żywiej płynąć, a gdyby krew zaczęłaby żywiej płynąć, to by się ożywiła. Bardzo szczególne. Prawdziwy circulus vitiosus [...]. (14)

(AUNT I: What a misfortune for us! She is suffering from some kind of organic deficiency. Her blood is too sluggish.

[...]

PRINCE: [...] And is there no cure for her?

AUNT I: The doctors said that if she were to liven up a bit, if she were to be happier, her blood would begin to flow a bit

more livelily and these deficiencies would disappear.

PRINCE: So then why doesn't she liven up?

AUNT I: Because her blood is too lazy.

PRINCE: If she were to liven up, her blood would begin to flow more livelily, and if her blood would begin to flow more livelily, then she would liven up. Most peculiar. A real vicious circle [...].)

Iwona's organically-based sluggishness causes her psychological apathy and vice-versa: the Prince conjoins the two separate explanatory sentences into one tautological, vicious circle that is reflected in the chiasmic syntax.

This rhetorical tendency proves infectious when Iwona repeatedly utters the word, "kółko" ("circle"), after being relentlessly interrogated as to "why..." by the Prince:

KSIĄŻĘ: Pani, *dlaczego pani jest taka*?

IWONA   (*milczy*)

KSIĄŻĘ: Milczy. *Dlaczego pani jest taka*?

CYRYL: Nie odpowiada. Obrażona.
[...]

IWONA   (*cicho, z przymusem*):
Ja wcale nie jestem obrażona. Proszę mnie zostawić.

KSIĄŻĘ: A! Wcale pani nie jest obrażona? A *dlaczego* pani nie odpowiada?

IWONA   (*milczy*)
[...]

KSIĄŻĘ: Nie może pani? *Dlaczego*?
[...]

KSIĄŻĘ: [...] *Dlaczego* nikt nie szykanuje tamtych? *Dlaczego* tak jest, pani? *Dlaczego* pani jest kozłem, a raczej kozą ofiarną. Czy się tak utarło?

IWONA   *(cicho)*:
   To tak w kółko. W kółko.

CYRYL: Kółko?

KSIĄŻĘ: Jak to—kółko? Nie przeszkadzaj. Kółko?

IWONA: To tak w kółko każdy zawsze, wszystko zawsze... To tak zawsze. (emphasis added, 25-26)

(PRINCE: *Why are you like this?*

IWONA *[silent]*

PRINCE: She's silent. *Why are you like this?*

CYRYL: She doesn't answer. She's offended.
[...]

IWONA *[quietly, as though forced]*:
   I'm not offended. Please leave me alone.

PRINCE: Ah! So you're not offended? So *why* don't you answer?

IWONA *[silent]*

PRINCE: Can't you? *Why* not?
[...]

PRINCE: [...] *Why* doesn't anyone tease the others? *Why* is it so? *Why* are you a [female] scapegoat? Has it just rubbed off?

IWONA   *[quietly]*:
   It goes round in a circle. A circle.

CYRYL: Circle?

PRINCE: How's that—circle? Don't interrupt. Circle?

IWONA: It goes round in a circle, everyone always, everything
           always... It goes always.)

Iwona's final phrase repeats and links the first two syllables of the previous state-

ment—"to tak"—with the last two—"zaw-sze"—closing the circle, thereby transfer-

ring semantics ("to tak w kółko" and "zawsze" both mean "always" in a repetitive

sense) and subject matter (the circle) onto syntax.

The Prince becomes increasingly conscious of this mysterious circle. The

obsessive repetition of the word, in hermeneutically circular fashion, promotes under-

standing as he comes to comprehend that Iwona's existence itself is a vicious circle:

"Kółko? Kółko? Dlaczego kółko? Jest w tym coś mistycznego. Aaa, zaczynam

rozumieć. Rzeczywiście, tu jest jakieś kółko. Na przykład: dlaczego jest ospała? Bo

jest nie w humorze. A dlaczego jest nie w humorze? Bo jest ospała. Uważasz, jakie

to kółko? Piekło nie kółko" (26) ("Circle? Circle? Why a circle? There's some-

thing mystical in it. Ah, I'm beginning to understand. Indeed, here is some kind of

circle. For example. Why is she lethargic? Because she's out of sorts. And why is

she out of sorts? Because she's lethargic. You see what kind of circle it is? It's hell,

not a circle"). The Prince continues to interpret her inactivity, unresponsiveness and

blankness, declaring that, were she were to smile, it would be a purely artificial and,

therefore, more irritating, though exciting, gesture. However, his own interpretive

act self-reflexively begins to affect and excite him as he enters into the vertiginous

logic of the infernal circle.

> Jest w tym jakaś piekielna kombinacja. Jest w tym jakaś specy-
> ficzna, piekielna dialektyka. Zobacz, nie można powiedzieć,
> ona wniknęła w te sprawy dosyć głęboko. [...] Wiesz, to jest

jakby jakiś układ, jakieś perpetuum mobile—to jest tak, jakbyś
przywiązał do pala psa i kota: pies goni i straszy kota, a kot
goni i straszy psa, i wszystko bez końca pędzi i szaleje w kółko;
a na zewnątrz—martwota. (27)

(There is some kind of hellish combination in this. There is
some kind of hellish dialectic in this. Look. You can't deny
she has penetrated these matters very deeply. [...] You know,
it's like a system, a perpetuum mobile—it's like someone tied
a dog and cat to a pole: the dog chases and frightens the cat,
and the cat chases and frightens the dog, and they both chase
one another madly, relentlessly in a circle; and on the out-
side—stillness [actually and significantly, still life].)

As the Prince interrogates Iwona, everything is reduced to the structure of this

vicious circle. Finally, he yells out, "Złapałem teraz kota za ogon! [...] Koło zamyka

się na pani korzyść, to się wyrównywa" (29) ("I've caught the cat by the tail! [...] The

circle closes to your advantage, it all evens out"), indicating that, in this game, Iwona

appears to have the advantage.

Thus, having "caught the cat by the tail"—i.e., having brought to consciousness

and to presentation the vicious circle which governs Iwona's state of biological

suffering—the Prince, in turn, becomes caught up in and by it and Iwona. The

transition is signalled verbally in the change from his using the active to his using the

passive tense, which rebounds referentially back onto him:

Nie mogę gardzić nią... jeśli mnie kocha. Nie mogę być tutaj
gardzącym, gdy tam, w niej, jestem ukochanym. Ach, ja właści-
wie cały czas myślałem, że ja jestem tu, sobą, w sobie—a tu
naraz paf? Złapała mnie—i znalazłem się w niej jak w potrza-
sku! (do Iwony) Jeśli jestem twoim ukochanym, to nie mogę
ciebie nie kochać. Będę musiał ciebie pokochać... ja ciebie
pokocham ... . (39)

(I can't scorn her... if she loves me. I can't be scornful here if
there, in her, I am beloved. Ach, I always thought that I existed

here, on my own, in my own way—and suddenly, poof! She caught me—and I found myself in her like in a trap! [*to Iwona*] If I am your beloved, I cannot not love you. I will have to love you... I love you... .)

His recognition of his existence in the other—that he is not self-contained—is made possible through the other. The Prince, trapped in a circular polemic with his now split self, places himself in the position of submitting to his own deontological command to love her. He literally becomes Iwona's "obiekt" (77) to her subject, a situation which eventually prevents his being able to act, to kill her.

The attempt to understand Iwona reveals more about the subject than the object of the interpretation. The authentic *inquest* into an alterity, therefore, rebounds reflectively and reflexively, becoming, instead, an *autopsy* (self-seeing and self-knowing). Iwona, functioning as a specular instrument, reflects back the interpreter's own imperfections, flaws, sins, cracking the form, the mask, of royalty. In other words, in confronting Iwona's otherness, the court members find the prejudices and deformities that they have sought to forget or conceal thrown into relief and come to critical consciousness both for others and for themselves. For example, on learning that the Prince has become engaged to Iwona, the ladies tell him that they "understand" why he has done so and, in the process, they expose themselves:

II DAMA: [...] Teraz rozumiem. To wszystko przeciw nam zaaranżowane! To dla kawału, co? Książę kpi sobie z nas! Książę zaręczył się z tą biedaczką, żeby nas wykpić. To po prostu złośliwa aluzja do felerów i defektów niektórych dam dworu. A, rozumiem! Książę dowiedział się o zabiegach kosmetycznych i masażowych Jolanty... dlatego książę zaręczył się z tym kocmołuchem... żeby ośmieszyć Jolantę, ha, ha! Sens ironiczny tej intrygi jest dla mnie jasny! Do widzenia!

KSIĄŻĘ: Sens ironiczny?

I DAMA (*zasłyszawszy*):

Jeśliby tak było, to raczej chyba, żeby wydobyć na jaw i wyszydzić twoje dwa sztuczne zęby, o których wszystkim wiadomo!   Ha, ha, niechże nie będzie okrutny, ha, ha—do widzenia, muszę już iść.

II DAMA: Moje zęby? Twój sztuczny biust raczej!

I DAMA: Albo twoja krzywa łopatka! (34)

(LADY II: [...] Now I understand. You've arranged everything to show us up! As a joke, right? You're making fools of us! You got engaged to that simpleton in order to make fools of us. It's just a spiteful allusion to the blemishes and defects of certain ladies in the court. Ah, I understand! You found out about Jolanta's cosmetic precautions... that is why you've gotten engaged to that sloven... in order to make a fool of Jolanta, ha, ha! The irony of this intrigue has not escaped me! Good-bye!

PRINCE: Irony?

LADY I [*hearing this*]:

If it were intended to show anyone up it would be you with your two false teeth that everyone knows about! Ha, ha, don't be cruel, Prince, ha, ha. So long. I have to run.

LADY II: My teeth? More likely your falsies!

LADY I: What about your crooked shoulder!)

Iwona unintentionally becomes what the Prince nominated her—namely, a reality principle (30).

Iwona's biological suffering has the cognitive value of not only anagnorisis, as the above situation demonstrates, but also of anamnesis. In Act 3, the King has an encounter with Iwona. As he approaches her, she backs away fearfully. In reassuring

her that he is not an animal, he recalls a past event—namely, the death of the

seamstress he had bestially raped.

KRÓL: Boi się. Szambelanie, pamiętasz ty tę... co to tego... co
             się boi... Caca... Mumu... Tete...
[...]

KRÓL: Ha! Coś mi się przypomniało.

SZAMBELAN: Przypomniało się?

KRÓL: Boi się. Szambelanie, pamiętasz ty tę... co to tego... co
             to my... Dawno już. Jak to się zapomina.
[...]

KRÓL: Dawno. Ja sam na śmierć zapomniałem. Dawno. Ja
             byłem wtenczas jescze księciem, a ty zaledwie projektem
             na szambelana. Tę małą, co to tego... Co to myśmy...
             Bodaj właśnie na tej kanapie. To była zdaje się szwacz-
             ka... . (48-49)

(KING: She's afraid. Chamberlain, do you remember that... the
             one ... that was afraid... Caca... Mumu.. Tete...
[...]

KING: Ha! I'm reminded of something.

CHAMBERLAIN:
             You're reminded of something?

KING: She's afraid. Chamberlain, do you remember that... the
             one... that we... A long time ago. How one forgets.
[...]

KING: A long time ago. For the life of me I'd forgotten. A
             long time ago. I was still a prince then and you were
             barely an embryo of a chamberlain. That little one,
             whom we... That we... I think it was here on this very
             couch. I think she was a seamstress... .)

The King's encounter with the other is an encounter with the self projected and

objectified in the form of Iwona. Through Iwona, he dis-remembers himself—that

is, his royal role—by apprehending and reproducing his past in the present and, in the process of anamnesis, re-cognizing his self once again.[169]

Upon the Queen's entrance, the King begins to remember certain unpleasant things about her. The recollection is triggered by Iwona:

KRÓL:	Przypomina mi coś, ale o tobie! O tobie, moja kochana!
KRÓLOWA:	O mnie?
KRÓL:	Ha, ha, ha, cóż się tak patrzysz? Diabli, diabli, Małgorzato, przyznaję, że się uniosłem, ale wyobraź sobie, rzecz dziwna, nie mogę spojrzeć na tę ptaszynę, żeby mi zaraz nie przyszło na myśl coś o tobie. Nie chciałem tego mówić, bo to jest trochę krępujące, ale kiedy się pytasz, będę szczery. Bywa, że jedna osoba przypomina nam inną osobę, ale, żeby tak wyrazić się, w stanie rozneglizowanym. A kiedy widzę Cimcirymci, jak ona tak rusza się... tak gmerze, grzebie się... uważasz, tak jakoś ciamka się w sobie... to zaraz coś mi si przypomina o tobie, zaraz mi się nasuwa tak jakby jakieś... rozmamłanie... twoje...
[...]	
KRÓLOWA:	Zapominasz się!
KRÓL:	Ja właśnie sobie przypominam! Przypominam sobie! Już ja sobie wszystko przypomnę! Cucu! Mumu! (50-51)
(KING:	She reminds me of something, about you! About you, my dear!
QUEEN:	About me?
KING:	Ha, ha, ha, why are you looking like that? Hang it all. Margaret, I admit that I got carried away, but imagine, it's a strange thing, I can't even glance at this poor child without immediately having something come to my mind about you. I didn't want to say this, because it's a bit

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[169] This stripping of the mask, and consequent breakdown of the royal self, is reflected in the fragmentation of the King's speech and logic (see the progression over pages 48, 51, 55, 64).

embarrassing, but since you ask, I'll be frank. It some-
times happens that one person reminds us of another,
but in another kind of state, as it were. And when I see
Grumpy Dumpy[170]... the way she moves... the way she
fumbles and gropes around... you see, how she slops
about... then suddenly, I'm reminded of you, suddenly
your... sloppiness comes to mind, your...

[...]

QUEEN: You're forgetting yourself!

KING: On the contrary, I'm remembering! I'm remembering!
           Now I remember everything. Cucu! Mumu!)

When the Queen warns the King that he is forgetting himself—namely, that he is no

longer acting in the manner befitting a king—he retorts that, on the contrary, he is

remembering everything.

The Queen, similarly, undergoes a process of self-remembering and self-

recognition. Referring to Iwona, she asks her lady-in-waiting: "Czy nie myślisz, że

ktoś złośliwy mógłby skojarzyć to z... z... z tymi moimi poezjami, w które może za

wiele włożyłam poezji... mojej poezji... mojej poufnej poezji?" (52) ("Do you think

that some malicious person could link that with.. with... with my poems, in which,

perhaps, I put a bit too much poetry... my poetry... my intimate poetry?"). Her

poetry writing is a secret passion and, in acknowledging its "potworność" ("grotesque-

ness") and seeing the similarity between it and Iwona (she calls Iwona a "terrible

allusion to [her] poetry" [71]), she comes to see her own grotesqueness.

The self-awareness that is engendered by reflecting on an other, then, becomes

outwardly manifested and realized when the Queen literally assumes, in a highly

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[170] "Grumpy Dumpy" is the translation solution in the extant English version, Princess Ivona,
by Krystyna Griffith-Jones and Catherine Robins (39).

theatrical and purposeful manner, the role of the murderess (the allusion is to Lady

Macbeth). As she stares into the mirror, which acts as a substitute for the other, and

commands herself to recall all her poetry, all her secret dreams (72), she disarranges

her face into a grimace, dishevels her hair, bestowing upon herself the mask of the

other, the mad murderess:

> Musi zginąć! O Małgorzato, musisz ją zgładzić! Naprzód,
> morderczy flakonie! [...] Nie, nie, zaraz. Nie mogę tak iść.
> Jestem taka sama jak zwykle—i taka sama mam truć? Muszę
> się zmienić. [...] Przestań mówić do siebie. Ona na pewno
> także mówi do siebie. Małgorzato, przestań mówić do siebie—
> to może cię zdradzić. *(patrzy w lustro)* O, jak to zwierciadło
> mnie przyłapało. [...] Wykrzyw się, wykrzyw się Małgorzato! O
> tak, tak, teraz chodźmy! Ty ze mną, ja z tobą—przecież tylko
> ja sama idę. [...J]eszcze pomażmy się, jeszcze to... *(maże się
> atramantem)* tak, teraz z tymi plamami łatwiej... Teraz jestem
> inna. Stój, to może cię zdradzić! Chodźmy! Zabić donosiciel-
> kę! Nie mogę! Poczytajmy jeszcze! (71-72).

> (She must die! Oh, Margaret, you must wipe her out! Onward,
> murderous vial! [...] No, no, just a second. I can't go like this.
> I am the same as always. Am I to poison like this? I must
> change myself. [...] Stop talking to yourself. She probably
> speaks to herself. Margaret, stop talking to yourself. It can
> give you away. [*she looks into the mirror.*] Oh, how the mirror
> has caught me. [...] Contort yourself, contort yourself, Margaret!
> Yes, that's it, now let's go! You with me and I with you. But
> I'm going by myself. [...L]et's just smear ourselves, right here...
> [*she smears herself with ink*] yes, now with these stains it'll be
> easier... Now I am other. Stop, that can give you away? Let's
> go! Kill the informer! I can't! Let's read for a while longer!)

Gombrowicz here exploits both the function of deictic markers in the dialogical

situation to indicate the movement of intersubjectivity, as well as the dialogical

(intersubjective) encounter to constitute subjectivity, but he does so on the intrasub-

jective level. He dialogizes the monologue. The Queen, in turn, splits herself

(reference to the self in the second person singular) and doubles herself with this other self (reference to the self in the first person plural). Like Genet's maids (Les bonnes) and the Bishop (Le balcon) who, as we will see, incant their desired role/identity while positioned before a mirror, so the Queen re-constitutes herself into her monstrous self through the dialogical relation she establishes with her reflection: the mirror image functions specularly by effecting a transformation. In the process, she loses self-possession and becomes possessed by her other (than conventional or quotidian) self. Yet, like all the other court members who desire to but are unable to kill the denuding intruder (they have been rendered passive), the Queen is unable to act, to kill on her own.

In this play, Iwona becomes "the still-point in the turning" (Hyde 725), the increasingly disarranged and deranged world of the court. The characters gradually lose self-possession as they give themselves over to the game that they had invoked by inviting her into their midst, over to the power that they themselves had projected onto her through their (dialogically monologized) juridical interrogation of Iwona, an interrogation that, as in Così è, functions self-reflexively.[171] They, then, seek to restore the former order and their own masks—i.e., re-dis-remember, re-dis-recognize themselves—by en masse and with full royal authority committing the ultimate act of violence on Iwona.[172] In an incarnation of word in action that would be given full

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[171] The Prince had declared Iwona "nasze szaleństwo" ("our madness"), which is what she verily becomes (I 25).

[172] In From Ritual to Theatre, Victor Turner provides what could serve as an interesting, if more positive, gloss on this process of attempting to restore order once a crisis threatens a reigning social group: "[w]hether juridical or ritual processes of redress are invoked against mounting crisis [in

reign in Ślub, the courtiers at the royal banquet warn Iwona not to choke on the fish, say she is choking, and then she chokes (*I* 85): they force her to kill herself.

The structure of the dramatic action, then, like Iwona's self, is circular: there is effected a return to the state of affairs prevailing at the beginning. However, *ludus* wreaks vengeance through Iwona. The circle is transformed into a vertiginous spiral. As imaged in the repeated gesture of the inverted genuflection (21, 87), the end-state incorporates the new element of Iwona's provocative control. The court members uneasily, compulsively, kneel once more before her now even stiller corpse. The passive and the active, acting and suffering selves coincide in Iwona's corporeality, in her still life ("martwota").

III.   ŚLUB: THE DIALOGIC STAGE

The fullest expression of the creative and deformative power of interhumanity is found in Ślub (written 1946, published 1953, The Marriage). Here, the writer coins the term, *interhuman church* (*kościół międzyludzki*), to signal his dis- and re-placement of a traditional, metaphysical world view with (a parodic) one that considers human beings to be the only divinity, the true formative power. Exposing the play-structure of theatre as a *topos* connecting mimicry and improvisation, he fashions a dynamic, transformative world of incessant invention arising from the cauldron of pure relationality, out of the potent liminal realm of the in-between. In this revisioned world, to cite the Drunkard, "człowiek nowoczesny wie, iż nie ma nic stałego, nic

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Iwona both are invoked], the result is an increase in what one might call social or plural *reflexivity*, the ways in which a group tries to scrutinize, portray, or understand, and then act on itself" (75).

absolutnego, a wszystko w każdej chwili stwarza się... stwarza się między ludźmi... stwarza się"[173] ("modern man knows that there is nothing permanent or absolute, but that everything is forever creating itself anew... creating itself between individuals... creating itself"[174]). Intersubjectivity, here laid bare as the *a priori* of subjectivity, is manifested in terms of the submission of human beings to the imperative of imposing-and-adopting roles, masks and poses, as the boundaries between role and self, playing and being, enacting and being-enacted, directing and being-directed, speaking and being-spoken, are explored and dissolved. Moreover, in its verbal medium as the dialogic—foregrounded in this play as being "formative of modes of being, and [as opening] the possibility of transforming those modes" (DiCenso 54)—the intersubjective, as a relation of mutual affecting, cuts through and functions constitutively within the multiple layers of the literary text: lexical, tonal, discursive and intertextual.

Given that Gombrowicz's *Weltanschauung* is articulated in terms of the interhuman church, an apt way to schematize the plot of this dream-play is by reference to ritual, or sacred performance.[175] The protagonist, Henryk (Henry), a Polish soldier fighting in France during the Second World War, returns home in a

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[173] Gombrowicz, Ślub 158-59. Subsequent citations are referenced as (S page).

[174] Gombrowicz, The Marriage 89. Subsequent citations are from Iribarne's translation and referenced as (M page).

[175] There are other ways of interpreting the dramatic action, of course. In "The Theatre of Gombrowicz," Lucien Goldmann, for example, focuses on twentieth-century historical processes: Ślub presents, from Gombrowicz's "aristocratic point of view" and "in light of his Christian values," an "essential schema of the revolutionary seizure of power by the masses and its consequent transformation into a dictatorship, as in Russia, Poland and most other people's democracies" (102).

dream only to find the paternal manor has been transformed into a tavern, his

parents into innkeepers beseiged by drunks, and his fiancée into the tavern whore.

Cast into the realm "betwixt and between one context of meaning and action [i.e.,

wartime France] and another [i.e., postwar Poland]"—a realm, significantly, that is

marked by ambiguity and inconsistency in meaning—and being "neither what he has

been nor [...] what he will be,"[176] Henryk decides that he must perform a ritual[177] in

order to return to a previously constituted, traditional pattern of social organization

(i.e., that of prewar Poland). In an attempt to recover the past, and in a potent

demonstration of what Schechner in Between Theatre and Anthropology has named

"restored behavior" (36-38), Henryk elevates the representative of that old order, his

father, to the status of king through the gesture of kneeling before him.[178] He does

this in order that his father would bestow upon him the sacrament of marriage.

Concurrently, he would restore the innocence of his fiancée, Mańka (Molly), as

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[176] This is Turner's definition of liminality in From Ritual to Theatre (113).

[177] Huizinga defines ritual as a formalized activity executed in accordance with rules and procedures specified by society and having both an instrumental aspect (it does something) and an expressive one (it says something). The motivation for acting derives from what the correct execution of the ritual, or sacred performance, is believed to deliver: "participants in the rite are convinced that the action actualizes and effects definite beatification, brings about an order of things higher than that in which they customarily live"; the ritual act "represents a cosmic happening, where representation means identification" (14). There is no mere portrayal of the event, but the event itself; the ritual participant does not *represent* the god, but, as Henryk demonstrates, *is* the god.

[178] Malić, in ",Ślub' Gombrowicza," explains the symbolic connection between family and aristocracy: Henryk's "conflict, his confusion about the family, do not have a strictly psychological character, but, above all, a mythological one: through the family we are tied to the 'prerational foundations of our traditional culture' (F. Fergusson). The next, more precise definition of the fundamental mythological schema of Ślub is sociological and historical: the family as the concise point for the feudal hierarchy of the Polish landed gentry. Here we also find the key to understanding the 'first degree of strangeness' in the play: the Father, in Henryk's dream, is transformed into a King, and the family home into a feudal castle" (my translation, 95).

purity is the condition for a successful marriage. At the level of sacred performance, then, the imperative to perform the marriage, a rite of incorporation,[179] can be interpreted as a "declaration" of "order" against the condition of indeterminacy (Moore 16) into which Henryk has found himself thrown.

The effort, however, is in vain. The past world has been too perverted:

HENRYK:	Nic.
OJCIEC:	Przeinaczone.
MATKA:	Wykręcone.
WŁADZIO:	Zrujnowane.
HENRYK:	Wypaczone. (*S* 110)
(HENRY:	Nothing.
FATHER:	It's been transformed.
MOTHER:	Distorted.
JOHNNY:	Destroyed.
HENRY:	Dislocated. [*M* 36-37])

Just as the tavern is the inverse image of the paternal manor, so the archaic imagery and anachronistic structures of the court, as well as the Catholic Church upon whose ruins the play opens, appear as distorted, parodic reflections of a past world that

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[179] The rite of incorporation, or re-aggregation, is one of Van Gennep's three *rites de passage*, or transformative rituals. The other two, which also appear in this play, are the rites of transition, potentially volatile as the individual is *between* social roles (e.g., the betrothal), and separation (e.g., the funeral) (see Turner, From Ritual to Theatre 24). It should be noted that the title, Ślub, actually derives from ślubować, meaning *to trothe*; therefore, since the marriage does not actually take place, becoming a constantly displaced rite, the whole play is set in the interregnum of pure potentiality marked by the betrothal.

cannot be recuperated. This deformed state also characterizes all of humanity, as

Henryk conveys in his soliloquy on the problem of mutual deformation:

> Choćbym był najzdrowszy... najrozsądniejszy...
> Najbardziej zrównoważony
> To przecież inni zmuszali mnie do popełniania
> Czynów okropnych... zabójczych, a także
> Szalonych, idiotycznych, tak, tak, rozpasanych...
> [...] Ale ci, którzy zmuszali mnie do tego szaleństwa, również
> byli zdrowi
> I rozsądni
> I zrównoważeni...
> [...] I cóż tego, że każdy, poszczególnie biorąc, jest całkowicie
> trzeźwy, rozsądny, zrównoważony, jeżeli wszyscy razem jesteśmy
> jednym olbrzymim szaleńcem [...]. (S 149)

> (Even though I was the most healthy...the most rational
> The most balanced person
> Others forced me to commit
> Atrocious acts, murderous acts,
> Insane, moronic, and yes, licentious acts...
> [...] But those who forced me to commit these insanities were
> also healthy
> And sensible
> And balanced...
> [...] And what does it matter if taken separately each of us is
> lucid, sensible, balanced, when altogether we are nothing but a
> gigantic madman[...]. [M 78-79])

The destruction and attempted reconstruction of the past world actually

becomes a transformation into an interhuman world, in which the intersubjective is

the superior creative force.[180]   Henryk, under the Drunkard's influence, becomes

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[180] Gombrowicz writes in his preface to Ślub: "[t]aki jest właśnie ten ‚kościół ziemski', który objawia się Henrykowi we śnie. Tu ludzie łączą się w jakieś kształty Bólu, Strachu, Śmieszności lub Tajemnicy, w nieprzewidziane melodie i rytmy, w absurdalne związki i sytuacje i, poddając się im, są stwarzani przez to, co stworzyli. W tym kościele ziemskim duch ludzki uwielbia ducha międzyludzkiego" (91) ("[t]his is exactly what is meant by that 'earthly church' which appears to Henry in his dream. Here, human beings are bound together in certain forms of Pain, Fear, Ridicule, or Mystery, in unforeseen melodies and rhythms, in absurd relations and situations, and, submitting to these forms, are created by what they themselves have created. In this earthly church the human spirit worships the interhuman spirit" [M 15]).

intoxicated with the power he appears to wield here and, after seizing control of the throne and imprisoning his parents, seeks to confer the sacrament of marriage on himself: "dotknę ją [Mańkę]... dotknę ją... tym palcem... i to będzie oznaczać, że ją poślubiam i że stała się moją prawowitą, legalną, wierną, niewinną i czystą małżonką. Nie potrzebuję innych ceremonii. Ja sam sobie stwarzam moje ceremonie" (*S* 214) ("I'll touch her [Molly]... I'll touch her with this finger... and that will mean we are married and that henceforth she is my legitimate, legal, faithful, chaste, and innocent spouse. I don't need any other ceremonies. I can invent my own ceremonies" [*M* 147]). He further resolves that, to re-Marianize Mańka and sanctify the marriage, there must be a sacrifice: he directs his friend, Władzio (Johnny), who has been "wed" to Mańka by the drunk-turned-priest, to commit suicide. In a final movement, he compels his subjects to invest him with divinity in order that he may fulfill his aspirations to godhead. Unable to sustain this position, the dreamer, imprisoned in his own images, imprisons himself. Imprisonment is the logical punishment for murder: the sacrifice, the goal of which is to establish a connection between the human and divine orders, has been perverted into murder. The wedding turns into a rite of separation, a funeral.

§1:   THE MISE-EN-SCÈNE OF THE SUBJECT

> *"If you were alone, you'd cut yourself in two,*
> *so that one part would shape the other."*
> (Canetti 79)

This schematization of the dramatic action highlights the important dimension of sacred performance. More fundamentally, it points to the centrality of perfor-

mance behavior. Cast into a world devoid of any absolute divinity (an effect of the Second World War's shattering of the old world order), human beings must take upon themselves the task of "self-making," or the creation of the self *through-form* (*per-form*). This self-performance, however, can only be accomplished in the potently unpredictable realm of the in-between. This is appropriate, as "performing is a paradigm of liminality. And what is liminality but literally the 'threshold,' the space that both separates and joins spaces: the essence of in-betweenness?"—to cite from Schechner's Between Theatre and Anthropology (295). In this ambiguous realm, situational patternings are being transformed at the drop of a word, the flicker of a gesture, consequently creating a self that can only be "multiple, duplicitous, unstable, and constantly changing" (Robinson 9). Gombrowicz presents his audience with a staging of the subject in and through alterity.

The fracturing of the subject can be located, from a quantitative perspective, in the multiplication of the roles assumed by a given character. In this play, roles are determined by the demands of a given plot line or dramatic register (to preserve the orchestral structuring principle suggested by Gombrowicz in his preface), the three major ones being the inn, the church and the court. A change in the plot line or register requires that the characters—who, like Shepard's, are "transformational" in nature (Chaikin's term), meaning that they have a fluid relationship in keeping with the changing realities—then fulfill the appropriate set of roles.

It is important to emphasize that the different plot lines are established through what Keir Elam in The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama refers to as the

"'world-creating' and outward-looking (*exophoric*)" function of dramatic dialogue (153), usually in conjunction with anaphora (repetition). This function is fulfilled, initially it appears, by the "declaration," an illocutionary speech act which, if performed in the appropriate conditions, brings about the state of affairs referred to. In this oneiric drama, in which the dream is not only an element of the content, but acquires a potent "form-generating function" (Bakhtin, *DI* 154), utterances propose possible states of affairs, which then create the actual state of affairs in the dramatic world by necessitating changes in scenery, costume, role. Here, the declarative mode takes on a dialogical cast: the declarative (the saying), in order to be effective (i.e., that it *show* something), requires a responding other, requires an *interchange*.

In this play, then, the dramatic exchange does not merely refer deictically to dramatic action, but directly constitutes it. When, for example, the inn is invoked by Henryk's tentative proposition, "Przepraszam, tu, zdaje się, restauracja... (*milczenie*) Restauracja?" (*S* 102) ("Excuse me, is this a restaurant? [*Silence.*] Is this a restaurant?" [*M* 28]), and then ambiguously affirmed by the Father's "A bo co?" (*S* 102) ("And what if it is?" [*M* 28]), the murky, open-air stage takes a more concrete shape as, and is walled in by, a tavern; Henryk, then, immediately assumes the role of Traveller and the Father, in response to Henryk, that of Innkeeper. The inn becomes a court, the proper setting for a royal drama, when Kingship is invoked by the drunken repetition of the word, "król" ("king"), that transforms the actants into court members and summons up the required dignitaries (*S* 127; *M* 54-55). The queried and affirmed "ślub" ("marriage") changes the atmosphere, invokes the ritual which

would turn this royal drama into a wedding play, and the whore into a virgin bride (*S* 130-31; *M* 58-59). Finally, the word, "msza" ("mass"), invoked as a poetic trope (simile), is appropriated literally, queried and affirmed, and turns the proceedings into a mass, and Henryk and the Drunkard into priests:

HENRYK: Ja sam sobie z niej dziewicę zrobiłem. Ten pijak trzeźwo
rzecz sądzi... A jednak
    Jeżliby to było takie proste, to dlaczegoż
    Ja tak się czuję, jakbym celebrował
    Jakąś dostojną mszę?

PIJAK: Mszę?

HENRYK: Mszę.

PIJAK: Mszę?

HENRYK: Mszę.
(*poważnie*)   Odejdź ode mnie: ja jestem kapłanem...

PIJAK (*powoli*): Ja też kapłanem jestem... . (*S* 154)

(HENRY: It was I who made a virgin out of her. This drunkard
has a pretty clear head on his shoulders.... And yet
    If it were really that simple, why
    Do I feel as though I were celebrating
    Some sort of elevated mass?

DRUNKARD: A mass?

HENRY: A mass.

DRUNKARD: A mass?

HENRY: A mass.
[*Gravely.*]   Get away from me: I am a priest...

DRUNKARD [*slowly*]:
    I am a priest too... . [*M* 83-84])

The proairetic, or action, dynamic of the play, therefore, is carried by the intersubjec-

tive force of dialogue that, furthermore, is formative and transformative of the subjects engaging in this activity.[181]

This assemblage of drunks, innkeepers and whores, then, is assigned the sacred roles of father and mother, king and queen, priest and bride, in order to play out the royal family romance. All the while, as in Genet's dramatic works (esp. Les bonnes, Le balcon and Les nègres), the multivalency of the characters—or their simultaneous embodiment of "high" and "low," "sacred" and "profane" roles—is evident, primarily in the tension that is created when the speech of a given locutor does not quite conform to the discursive conventions dictated by a social position (an instance of dialogism).

For example, Mańka is a blank slate who exists solely in the mode of being for-others. She never represents herself, she never declares who she is; rather, others' words shape her, determine her identity as reverent "imprisoned in a slut" (S 114; M 40), cast her in the roles of tavern whore and virgin bride. Henryk declares, "Ja sam sobie z niej [dziwki] dziewicę zrobiłem" (S 154) ("It was I who made a virgin out of her [a slut]" [M 83]). Henryk captures her essential receptivity: as she emerges from the shadows, he says, "niejasna/Ja ją wyjaśnię!" (S 170) ("[She's] unclear/I will clarify or explain her" [my translation].) However, she is unable to sustain her sacred role as virgin bride:

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[181] In ",Ślub' Gombrowicza," Malić also notes the creative power of language in this play, but fails to grasp that dialogical exchange is a necessary *a priori* to the creative act: "Ślub is the scenic demonstration of the power of the word. Events follow words, dramatic action is a commentary on words. The fabula imitates the creative language act, the materialization, realization, affirmation, dedication of words" (my translation, 96).

MANIA (*teatralnie*):
Dlaczego dręczysz mnie i siebie?!!

HENRYK: Cóż za nachalna aktorzyca! Czasem miałbym ochotę...
(*gest jakby uderzał*)

MANIA (*ordynarnie*):
No, proszę tylko bez takich! (*S* 194)

(MOLLY [*theatrically*]:
Why do you torture yourself and me so!

HENRY: What an insufferable ham! There are times when I'd
like to... [*Makes a gesture as though he is about to strike
her.*]

MOLLY [*in a vulgar tone*]:
Hey, don't pull any of that stuff on me, buster! [*M* 126])

Her uncultured tongue, her tavern vulgarity, continually break through the theatrical

conventionality of her lines.

The Father changes from Tavernkeeper into Henryk's Father to Priest to

God-the-Father to King to Prisoner, all as a consequence of the words spoken, the

style assumed and the gestures made by Henryk. Once Henryk speaks in the style

of a Traveller, the Father immediately responds in the style of an Innkeeper (*S* 103;

M 28). When Henryk sarcastically proposes to approach the Innkeeper and his wife

and call out, "Ojcze, mamo!/Tatusiu i mamusiu! To ja, Henryk!/ Wróciłem z wojny!"

(*S* 105) ("Father, Mother!/Papa! Mama! It's me, Henry!/I've come home from the

war!" [*M* 31]), the Innkeeper, overhearing this exchange, reluctantly but immediately,

acts like the Father, and the appropriate familial relationships are established. And,

kneeling before the Father, Henryk, at the instigation of the Drunkard, turns him

into a King. The Father's role, thus, changes according to the situational patterning.

His peasant vulgarity, however, continually undermines the legitimacy and authority of his sacred roles as Father and King.

In this play, the role becomes the identity. Henryk asks frustratedly, "Ojciec to taki sam urząd, jak król. Czy nie możesz mówić jak człowiek prywatny? Czy zawsze musisz stroić się w jakieś dostojeństwa?" (S 185) ("Father is a title, the same as King. Can't you speak like an ordinary man? Must you always get dressed up in some title or other?" [M 116]). The Father, of course, cannot speak like a "private man," or individual with his own private, fixed, self-identity: identity is a title or "dignity" which is a costume to be donned (the Polish is *stroić się*, which means *to dress*, usually in an elaborate manner).

Władzio is transformed from Soldier into Man Servant (to Henryk's Groom), Husband (through the gestural marriage performed by the Drunkard-turned-Priest) and, finally, Scapegoat (at Henryk's behest). While being directed by Henryk, he refuses consciously to play the role of the Scapegoat, declaring, "Ja nie jestem aktor" (S 199) ("I'm not an actor" [M 131]) and "Nie chcę nic sobie wyobrażać" (S 199) ("I don't want to imagine anything" [M 131]). Henryk quashes his objections and Władzio begins to capitulate: "Cóż ci przyjdzie z tego, że ja to wyrecytuję. Słowa to nie żaden fakt" (S 200) ("What good will it do you if I recite them? Words are not facts" [M 132]). He is unaware that the role assumed, even temporarily, is the only reality in this world, and the stamp of language, uttered between himself and Henryk, creates the fact. His recitation of Henryk's script is incarnated in action, and we are left with his dead body in the end.

The Drunkard is the central catalyzing force. A subversive opportunist, he exploits the temporary and temporal roles and situations as he converts from Tavern Drunkard into Conspirator, Dignitary (through others' fascination with his upraised finger), Priest (through his verbal mimicry of Henryk's declaration and, then, through their act of mutual annointing [*S* 154; *M* 84]) and Usurper of the kingdom. Henryk says to the Drunkard regarding his tendency to metamorphosis, "Nie mogę odmówić panu giętkości... i nieustannego stwarzania się" (*S* 159) ("One cannot deny that you are a flexible person and that you are constantly creating yourself anew" [*M* 89]). He serves as a continual, destabilizing force by provoking other character and situational transformations.

Henryk is transformed from Soldier into Traveller (upon his seeing the run-down tavern), Son (once the Innkeeper calls out his name), Son of War (*S* 111; *M* 37), Prince (to his father's King), King (when he declares himself such [*S* 165; *M* 96-97]), Man-God of the interhuman church and, finally, Prisoner (when he orders himself incarcerated [*S* 224; *M* 158]). He is highly self-conscious, submitting to and fighting against the role, against the mask imposed by the other in a struggle for authenticity.

These transformations in and pluralization of roles can be schematized thus along the plot lines. (1) Family: Son (Henryk), Friend (Władzio), Father, Mother, Fiancée (Mańka). (2) Inn: Traveller, Travelling Companion, Innkeeper, Innkeeper's Wife, Tavern Maid and Whore, (+) Drunkard. (3) Court: Prince, Man Servant, King, Queen, Royal Bride, Foreign Dignitary.

Moving the characters and scenery through these various registers, Gombrowicz creates a "heterotopic" (Foucault's term) performance space "where many spaces are represented" (Dudley 569). The fourth and overarching plot line or register, then, is the heterotopic space *par excellence*, the theatre. The metatheatrical premise of the play is set up with the opening line, "Zasłona wzniosła się" (*S* 99) ("The curtain has risen" [*M* 25]), which, as Głowiński points out in "Komentarze do ,Ślubu'," functions both metaphorically to indicate that something has begun, and metatextually to suggest that we are dealing with theatre-in-the-theatre (646). This premise is carried throughout the play, which discursively and dramatically presents Gombrowicz's notion of an existential fictionality—namely, we are all actors, reciting prescripted lines, reciting our own humanity (*S* 203; *M* 135). At this level, the writer, as is the case in the majority of the works discussed in this study, presents a typological fracturing of the self into, and ease of movement among, the different theatrical roles.

Henryk temporarily inhabits all the theatrical roles. The first is as actor. He considers possible acting techniques, searches for the most effective gesture: "Co robić? Siedzieć? Nie. Spacerować? Także nie miałoby sensu. A jednak nie mogę zachowywać się, jakbym nie miał z tym wszystkim żadnego związku. Co się robi w podobnych wypadkach? Mógłbym uklęknąć" (*S* 126) ("What'll I do? Sit down? No. Go for a walk? That wouldn't make sense either. But I can't go on behaving as though I had nothing to do with all this. What's a person supposed to do in such a situation? I might kneel down" [*M* 54-5]). In his long monologue, he oscillates

between character and actor (even playwright and director) as he speaks aloud both

the main speech and the didascalia (an instance of the doubling up of the dramatic

voice). The didascalia, then, no longer function strictly to give directions or offer

suggestions to the actor, but form part of the spoken text:

> Jeżeli jednak ja, ja, ja sam, to dlaczegoż
> (Użyjmy tego efektu) mnie nie ma?
>
> [...]
>
> Ja sam (zaznaczmy to jeszcze raz)... a tam
>
> [...]
>
> O deklamatorzy!
> (Z furią wyrzućmy to słowo, z sarkazmem)
> Co pełną gębę macie moralności
> I odpowiedzialności! (Szyderczo
> Złośliwie wykrzywmy się, machnijmy ręką)[....] (*S* 202-03)

> (And yet if I, I, I am alone, why
> [Let's try this for effect] am I not?
>
> [...]
>
> I alone [once more, for emphasis]...but from over there
>
> [...]
> Oh, you pontificators!
> [Be vehement, sarcastic when you say that]
> With your mouths so full of morality
> And self-righteousness [Now grimace
> Mockingly, sardonically, and make a sweeping gesture of
> the hand] [....])[182]

In giving himself direction on gestures, tone and laughter, Henryk foregrounds the

actor's conscious internalization and iconic presentation of what Bakhtin in his work

on dialogism refers to as a "change of speech subjects." Henryk practices the

gestures and dons the mask of an "existential tragedian":

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[182] Gombrowicz, "Two Monologues from The Marriage" 46-48. Unless otherwise indicated, all
English citations from this Act 3 monologue are from Louis Iribarne's retranslation in Czesław Miłosz's
anthology, Postwar Polish Poetry (45-49) and are referenced as ("Monologue" page).

> [...] Ba, ba, mogę
>> W obliczu tego podłego, strasznego
>> I zawstydzającego świata brew zmarszczyć
>> I rękę wznieść do nieba, mogę
>> Zamienić dłoń moją w pięść lub ręką
>> Przesunąć po mym czole mądrym, zamyślonym. (S 203)

> ([...] Why, why
>> Before this vile, inhuman
>> Wretched world I might wrinkle my brow
>> Lift my arms to heaven, I might
>> Roll my hand into a fist or pass my palm
>> Across my wise and thoughtful brow. ["Monologue" 47])

As an actor, he, like Witkiewicz's Edgar, is also a puppet, a plaything: his actions, scripted by the playwright and rescripted by the director, are controlled by another power—"Jestem igraszką igraszki" (S 165) ("I'm a puppet of a puppet" [my translation]).

A third theatrical role that Henryk assumes is that of director of his own dream-play. In this capacity, he threatens to and does freeze scenes, to make everything and everyone disappear (S 148; M 77). He directs Władzio to commit suicide by prompting him repeat prescripted lines (S 201; M 133) and advises Mańka on which gestures, smiles and glances to make (S 207-08; M 140-41). The Son and Prince, thus, like his namesake, Enrico IV, is the play's protagonist, actor and director.

Two final theatrical roles are those of audience and playwright. The role of the audience to complete the play is actualized within the confines of the play itself as Gombrowicz makes use of the convention of the performance situation to turn certain actors into spectators. Initially, Henryk and Władzio are distanced sufficiently

from the action to watch, interpret and comment on the events. Henryk takes this one step further, attaining self-splitting self-consciousness, when he reflects on his own acting, thus becoming his own audience.

Lastly, the role of playwright is assumed at key points by certain characters as they attempt to dramatize one another, employing, what Abel refers to as, "the playwright's consciousness to impose a certain posture," attitude or role on an other (46). The Drunkard renders everyone drunk with his noxious presence. He dramatizes Henryk in the role of Priest by annointing him with his upraised finger (S 156; M 85-6), and of the Jealous King by staging the marriage of Władzio and Mańka: "Ach, ten pijak mnie upił. Ach, ten kapłan naprawdę jest kapłanem. On palcem swoim... palcem swoim... zrobił z was bóstwo... przed którym ja muszę klęczeć i ofiary składać, jak we śnie" (S 194) ("Oh, that drunkard has made me drunk. Oh, that priest really is a priest. With his finger... with his finger... he has fashioned an idol out of you... before which I must kneel and offer sacrifice as in a dream" [M 125-26]). The Father gets Henryk to dramatize him in the role of King, and to make of himself a subordinate by having Henryk kneel down before him (S 129; M 57). Content to play this role when believing in the validity of the old order, Henryk eventually reacts like a man with a "playwright's consciousness" who has been cast in an undesirable role and now is determined to make an actor of the very character who had cast him thus: Henryk has the Father arrested and thrown in prison (S 168; M 99).

Henryk's dilemma of restoring a past order through the performance of a reintegrative ritual can be recontextualized in theatrical terms. Henryk has been

given the problem of rewriting the drama into which he has been cast. When he realizes the script of the royal drama no longer works, he must locate a more appropriate form, improvise another order. Having discovered that his own power is derived not from God but from himself in interaction with other human beings, Henryk declares himself King and God. He would dramatize himself: "Ja stwarzam królów!/Ja powinienem być królem!/Jestem najwyższy! Nic wyższego ode mnie?/Ja jestem Bogiem!" (*S* 165) ("It is I who create kings!/It is I who should be King!/I am supreme! There is nothing higher than me!/I am God!" [*M* 96-97]).

As the play progresses, role-playing becomes compulsive, and the self does not just perform but is performed as well. The compulsion is both external (originating from other individuals, situations and plot lines) and internal (the innate tendency to self-dramatization). When the formal logic of the situation assigns Henryk the role of Murderer, he is compelled to order himself into prison, to dramatize himself in the role of Prisoner. Henryk enacts his own imprisonment to role-playing in the end.

The pluralization of the self through the assumption of different character roles and the fracturing of the self into various theatrical roles point to a fundamental cleavage in the self into a subject for-itself and a representation for- and before-others and a movement toward the latter as the only possible mode of being in this world. Gombrowicz's representation of this cleavage is even more pronounced when we consider the play from the perspective of the category of plays to which it belongs—namely, the oneiric drama. As Malić correctly states in ",Ślub' Gombro-

wicza," the play as a whole can be viewed as Henryk's "dramatized inner monologue" (96): it is a monodrama in the form of a dream play in which each performer is a projection of the dreamer's consciousness.

Though I make reference to other sections of the play, at this point I discuss primarily the play's opening, where the fracturing and pluralization of the self is dramatized, and Henryk's monologue in Act 3, which serves to gloss the play.

Ślub can be viewed as Henryk's monodrama, in which he, the dreamer, is the sole character. However, the dream into which he finds himself cast has conjured up a world in which he cannot remain alone. Hence, out of his solitude and dialogized consciousness, he generates his friend and foil, Władzio:

> Pustka. Pustynia. Nic. Ja sam tu jestem
> Ja sam
> Ja sam
> A może nie jestem sam, kto wie co jest za mną, może na przy-
> kład, może coś... ktoś tu z boku [...] i ... (*ze strachem*) lepiej nie
> ruszać się... i nie ruszajmy się... bo jeśli ruszymy się... to on
> gotów ruszyć się... i dotknąć się... (*niepokój wzrasta*) o, żeby coś,
> albo ktoś tu skądś gdzieś na przykład żeby... aha, tam coś...
> (*wyłania się WŁADZIO*) Władzio! To Władzio! (*S* 99-100)

> (A void. A desert. Nothing. I am alone here
> Alone
> Alone
> But perhaps I am not alone; who knows what is behind me,
> perhaps... something... someone is standing here alongside me
> [...] and... [*With alarm.*] I'd better not move... no, don't move,
> because if we move... he'll move... and touch... [*With growing
> uneasiness.*] Oh, if only something or someone would come out
> from somewhere... Aha! There's something...
> [*JOHNNY emerges from the shadows.*]
> Johnny! It's Johnny! [*M* 25])

The opening is a literal demonstration of the power of *poiesis* in this play[183]: language itself is an essential "saying-showing" that brings beings originally into the open as something. That is, Henryk's proposition of the existence of another being generates and discloses that being. However, this generation *ex nihilo* of the other takes place through the verbal medium of intersubjectivity—namely, the dialogic. Henryk's initial monologue, in other words, becomes two types of dialogue: internal, between two levels of consciousness, signalled by the reference to the self in the first person plural imperative and indicative (*ruszajmy, ruszymy*) and, hence, indicating a doubling of the self; external, between himself and Władzio.

Literally a new-born, Władzio functions initially as Henryk's double: he is a projection and objectivization of Henryk's being and, like an infant, is imitative and reflective. Then, together they create the primordial intersubjective bond which negates the need for a transcendental authorizing power.

WŁADZIO (*młodzieńczo*):
> Na co ci Bóg, jeżeli masz mnie tutaj?
> Przecież widzisz, że *jestem taki jak ty*!
> Po diabła przejmować się majakami
> Jeżeli ty i ja jesteśmy z krwi i kości
> *I jeśli ty jesteś taki jak ja, a ja taki jak ty*!

HENRYK (*z radością*):
> *I jeśli ty jesteś taki jak ja, a ja taki tak ty*! Ha! Wszystko jedno! Niech tam! Jak to dobrze, żeś tu się urodził, Władzio! (emphasis added, *S* 101)

(JOHNNY [*petulantly*]:
> What do you need God for when I am here?
> Don't you see, friend, that *I am the same as you*?

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[183] In his preface, Gombrowicz writes that Henryk resembles a poet in a state of inspiration more than he does a dreamer (*S* 92; *M* 16).

Why let yourself get upset by ghosts
If you and I are of flesh and blood
If you are as I and I am as you!

HENRYK [*joyously*]:

> '*If you are as I and I am as you*!' Oh, what's the differ-
> ence! But I'm sure glad you're here [literally, that you
> were born here], Johnny! [emphasis added, *M* 26-27])

In a self-reflexive movement that is reflected, first, in the specular syntax ("ty [...] taki

jak ja, a ja taki jak ty") and, second, in the verbal mimicry or re-citation, the I

recognizes itself as completed in the you while the you recognizes itself as completed

in the I.

Later, in a (per)version of Genesis, the two, through the illocutionary force

of their dialogic exchange (here, invocation and anaphora) rendered compulsive,

proceed to incant the other players, thereby shattering the dreamer:

WŁADZIO: [...] Ale dlaczego nikogo nie ma? Hola!

HENRYK (*w strachu*):

> Nie krzycz! Czekaj! Lepiej nie krzyczeć!

WŁADZIO: Dlaczego nie miałbym krzyczeć?
Hola! Jest tu kto? Wymarli wszyscy? Hola!

HENRYK: Głupiś! Zamknij gębę!
Ucisz się! Ucisz się, mówię! Hola!
Dlaczego nikt nie wychodzi? Ciszej. Hola!
Hola i hola!

WŁADZIO: Hola!

HENRYK: Hola!

WŁADZIO: Hola!

> (*Wchodzi Ojciec, stary, sztywny, sklerotyczny, podejrzliwy...*). (*S*
> 102)

(JOHNNY: [...] But why isn't anyone here? Hallo!

HENRY [*terrified*]:
>Don't shout! Wait! You'd better not shout!

JOHNNY: Why shouldn't I shout?
>Hallo! Is anybody here? Is everybody dead? Hallo!

HENRY: Fool! Shut your trap!
>Shhh! Be quiet, I say! Hallo!
>Why doesn't anybody come out? Shhh! Hallo!
>Hallo! Hallo!

JOHNNY: Hallo!

HENRY: Hallo!

JOHNNY: Hallo!

[*Enter the FATHER, old, rigid, sclerotic, distrustful...*]. [*M* 28])

This activation of the constitutive power of language in the theatre is laid bare: "Czuję się tak, jak gdybym, udając coś, naprawdę to coś wywoływał i jakbym każdym moim słowem i czynem zaklinał coś i stwarzał coś... coś potężniejszego ode mnie" (*S* 197) ("I feel as if, when I pretend something, I actually bring that something into existence, as though with my every word and deed I conjure up and create something... something far more powerful than myself" [*M* 129]).

The opening's language is echoed, and the major themes articulated are encapsulated, in Henryk's monologue in Act 3. The real significance of the monologue is that it functions as a metatext within the play[184]—that is, it inscribes a critical relation to the text within the text. On the level of performance, it is a screenplay-

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[184] Głowiński makes this observation in "Komentarze do ‚Ślubu'" (see esp. 646-50).

within-a-screenplay: as in the full text, in which Gombrowicz, the subject-writer, controls the conditions for the emission of speech, grants to each character a place to speak and stipulates the manner of speaking the text, so this monologue, as indicated above, is complete with sections of monologue, dialogue and *didascalia*. The *didascalia* no longer function strictly as directions for the audio-visual performance, but rather, they form part of the spoken text. Henryk provides his own mise-en-scène within which he stages himself, just as he is staged by others and the playwright within Ślub.

The other way in which the monologue functions as a metatext is that it asks and answers the two basic questions with which the play deals. (1) The monologue provides its own theoretical statement on, and dramatization of, "the real power of words" (S 201; "Monologue" 45). (2) Hamlet's dilemmas of "[t]o be, or not to be" (Hamlet 3.1.56) and whether or not it is possible to "shuffle [...] off this mortal coil" (3.1.67) are transposed into Henryk's dilemmas of "Is it possible to be when one is alone?" and "Can one ever shuffle off the interhuman coil?" That is, alone, Henryk would verify his divinity, his own power, in a place where he cannot forget that he is not alone, in the place where he is placed before everyone, "w samym środku, w samym centrum" (S 202) ("in the very middle, in the very centre" [my translation]), caught "w obieży spojrzeń, w okręgu widzenia" (S 202) ("in a grid of glances, a precinct of looks" ["Monologue" 45]). Consequently, in this place, as he does in the opening, he fractures his own self to take the place of the other.

The monologue, capitalizing on the "egocentricity" of dramatic discourse

(Elam's term in <u>The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama</u> [143]), functions as a paradigm

of self-interrogation on stage—that is, an examination and demonstration of Henryk's

subjectivity.[185] It is a self-conscious performance of the self. Asking after the power

of words, after his own power,[186] Henryk "listens intently to his own voice, examines

his own gestures, observes his own mimicry—observes the surface of his own 'I,' his

Form, mask" (my translation, Chwin 323). Through the emphatic repetition of "ja"

("I"), he presents himself directly in his role as speaker, thus fulfilling the fundamen-

tal condition for the possibility of speech—namely, that someone must say "I." By

the use of deictic markers (here and now), he defines the situation of utterance in

terms of his own place in the dramatic world: "Powiedzmy to szczerze tutaj, w tym

właśnie miejscu, w tej chwili" (S 202) ("For once, just this once, try to be sincere, in

this place, at this moment" [my translation]). He lays bare kineisic markers for their

subject-defining and intention-stressing functions:

> [...] Wyciągam rękę. Ten ruch tak zwykły
> Normalny
> Codzienny
> Staje się ruchem znaczącym, ponieważ do nikogo nie jest
> Skierowany...

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[185] Gombrowicz's use of the soliloquy here is interesting. As Głowiński argues in "Komentarze do ,Ślubu'," the monologue, in form and language (blank verse, the flow of questions and exclamations, the passage from statement to invective) is motivated, but intertextually. That is, the monologue invokes the model in which the monologue played an integral part (it was both conventional and motivated)—namely, the tragedies of Shakespeare (643). Gombrowicz uses monologue as a licensed means of confirming the frame by pointing to the pure facticity of representation. The monologue, in other words, draws attention to the fact that this is a representation: "(A teraz, by skończyć/Monolog ten)" (S 204) ("[And now, to bring/This monologue to a close]" ["Monologue" 48]). Furthermore, it breaks the dramatic action in the tavern-court in order to reflect on the dramatic world: "Igraszka/ Przypuśćmy, że to była igraszka/Ale... co to było? O ile mogą być niebezpieczne te igraszki?" (S 201) ("A game/Suppose it's just a game/But... what sort of game? Can such games be dangerous?" ["Monologue" 45]).

[186] "Jaki jest mój zasięg?" (S 201) ("What is my own power?" ["Monologue" 45]).

W ciszy palcami ruszam, a osoba moja
Sobą rozrasta się na samej sobie [...]. (S 202)

(I stick out my arm. This common
Normal
Everyday gesture
Swells with importance because it's not intended
For anyone
I wiggle my fingers in the silence, and my self
Swells itself to become itself [...]. ["Monologue" 45])

Self-interrogation is effected through the dialogization of monologue, that is,

by dissolving the defining characteristic of soliloquy—namely, the identity of speaker

and listener—into a contrast and interchange between addresser and addressee,

questioner and responder. Gombrowicz uses a number of dialogic devices in the

monologue.[187] (1) Henryk indulges in apostrophes to the following: (a) "deklama-

torzy" ("pontificators"); (b) the setting, as when he asks of a piece of furniture,

"Spoglądasz na mnie?" (S 202) ("You're staring at me, aren't you?" ["Monologue"

45]); (c) the spectator, as when he says, "Ja mogę/Przybrać siebie w takie postawy...

przed wami/I dla was!" (S 203) ("I... might be moved/To such poses... in your

presence/For your benefit!" ["Monologue" 47]), and "Gdy wy wciąż postawy/Jakieś

przyjmujecie" (S 203) ("While you out there/Persist in your endless posing" ["Mono-

logue" 48]). By taking the semantic context of the addressee into consideration, the

purely reflexive quality of soliloquy is suspended. (2) The splitting of the speaker

into two conflicting subjects is conveyed through the use of particular pronouns

(reference to the self in the second person singular) and expresses the cleavage into

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[187] These devices have been outlined by Pfister (esp. 130-31). Pfister pragmatically argues that, rather than regarding monologue and dialogue as two separate textual entities, they should both be considered in terms of a greater or lesser degree of monologicity or dialogicity.

two modalities of the self, that is "between the rational, philosophical [...] [and more reflective] self and the self that is caught up in [the dramatic] situation" (Pfister 130), or between the subject of the enunciation (the rationally calculating speaking subject) and the subject of the enunciated (the mad spoken subject): "Teraz gdy jesteś sam, zupełnie sam, mógłbyś przynajmniej zawiesić na chwilę twoją nieustanną recytację/Tę fabrykację słów/Twoją produkcję gestów.../Lecz ty, nawet wtedy gdy jesteś sam, udajesz, że jesteś sam" (S 202) ("Now that you're alone, all alone, you might at least quit [your] incessant recitation/This fabrication of words/[Your] production of gestures/But even when you're alone, you pretend you're alone" ["Monologue" 46]). At the self-reflexive level of performance, the split expresses the breach between the actor and character. (3) Henryk addresses his own speech, such that the dialogic relation is set up between himself and his own cry, his own "alas": "Poza mną ja się tworzę, ach, ach, o bezdźwięczna/Pusta orkiestra mego ‚ach', co z próżni/Mojej dobywasz się i w próżni toniesz!" (S 203) ("I forge myself/Outside myself, alas, alas, oh, the hollow/Empty orchestra of my 'alas', you well up/And sink back into my emptiness!" ["Monologue" 47]). Thus, where each moment of the central I-you dialogical relation indicates the movement of intersubjectivity, here, it indicates the movement of intrasubjectivity. Henryk fractures himself and has his self take the place of the other in dialogue.

In this play, just as role-playing becomes an imperative, so does dialogue. As both Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer argue, upon entering into a dialogue with another, the subject yields to its flow; in Ślub, this submission is made explicit. One statement

provokes another; propositions mechanically demand that others respond in certain ways. For example, to the Drunkard's question of whether or not Henryk believes in God, the latter responds, "On mnie zapytał i muszę powiedzieć, że nie" (*S* 152) ("Since he asked, I have to say no" [*M* 82]). Later, caught up by the Father's paranoid declaration of "treason"—a declaration that issues from a dialogue between the King and his own cry—Henryk automatically pipes in with,

> Aresztować
> Aresztować mi tego ojca! I do lochu
> Ciemnego i obskurnego, podziemnego
> I wilgotnego!
> (*rozpaczony*)
> Ja nie to chciałem powiedzieć! (*S* 168)

> (Arrest
> Arrest this father of mine! And cast him
> Into some dark and dreary,
> Foul and oppressive
> Godforsaken dungeon!
> [*Despairingly.*] That's not what I wanted to say! [*M* 99-100])

Henryk, against his own will, turns himself into a traitor. In short, the compulsion to speak negates the intentionality of the speaker, creating a rupture between what one intends to say and how the given circumstances, conventions, formalities, demand that one respond. Henryk expresses this dilemma: "Każdy mówi/Nie to co chce powiedzieć, lecz to co wypada" (*S* 163) ("Nobody says/What he wants to say, only what's considered proper" [*M* 94]).

As the monologue in Act 3 demonstrates, solitude does not free Henryk from the imperative to speak dialogically. He dialogues with himself while reflecting metalinguistically on this imperative: "Teraz, gdy jesteś sam, zupełnie sam, mógłbyś

przynajmniej zawiesić na chwilę twoją nieustanną recytację/Tę fabrykację słów/Twoją produkcję gestów" (S 202) ("Now that you're alone, all alone, you might at least quit this incessant recitation/This fabrication of words/This production of gestures" ["Monologue" 46]). The dialogic relation implicates Henryk fully in the world of the in-between that is represented perfectly by Henryk's being centre stage, before everyone, where everything that he looks at looks back at him (S 202; "Monologue" 45). As Henryk goes on to transform himself into a man-god of the earthly church, it is made clear that it is in the region of the in-between that the word achieves its fullest presentative and creative power. The real reach of words, then, is that, through the intersubjective exchange, they constantly create and shape different masks or forms of human beings.

This monologue thus draws attention to the non-coincidence of the character with the self, to a character engaged in the struggle for self-representation: "Ja, ja, ja! Ja sam!/Jeżeli jednak, ja, ja, ja sam, to dlaczegóż/(Użyjmy tego efektu) mnie nie ma?" (S 202) ("I, I, I! I alone!/And yet if I, I, I am alone, why/[Let's try this for effect] am I not?" ["Monologue" 46]). However, the struggle is futile. Inquiring after his "I," Henryk must acknowledge that "Nie, ja nie istnieję/Nie jestem żadnym ,ja'" (S 203) ("No, I don't exist/I am not any 'I'" [my translation]). The staging of the self is the staging of an absence.

The only way to forge the self is outside the self, in the realm of the inter-human[188]: "ach, ach, poza mną/Poza mną ja się tworzę" (S 203) ("alas, I forge

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[188] See Stefan Chwin's excellent discussion of Gombrowicz's human being as a "living paradox: a mask who wishes to be himself" (my translation, 328).

myself/Outside myself" ["Monologue" 47]). As Jacques Ehrmann explains in "Habiter l'Utopie—Live in Utopia?," appropriately for this context, the "subject who says 'I' never coincides with the object he is thinking of. Even and especially when he is thinking of himself, he suffers from a gap—literally, a dis-location. [...] [H]e is outside of himself" (210). The dialogization of the monologue, in particular, and the play, in general, does not only demonstrate the fundamental cleavage of the self into a subject for-itself and a representation before- and for-others, but also foregrounds the latter as the only way of being in this world. To be is to adopt a pre-determined behavior, to don another's mask, and, therefore, never to be oneself. Henryk defends his existence, declaring that he does not need any poses, but goes on to adopt poses, discovering that "Recytuję tylko/Mą ludzkość" (*S* 203) ("I only recite/My humanity" ["Monologue" 47]). Even when alone, he can only make believe to himself that he is himself: "Udajesz siebie samego/Nawet przed samym sobą" (*S* 202) ("you go on .../Pretending to yourself/To be yourself" ["Monologue" 46]).

Where Iwona, in provoking others, functions as a reality principle to strip off the masks of others and to reveal their flaws and defects, in Ślub, the mask is all one has, even as one struggles against it. Mimicry is an imposed mode of being in the world: the mask, traditionally used to disguise the conventional self and liberate the true personality, here becomes the self bestowed by, or donned in response to, the other, as there is no "authentic personality" to liberate. Role-playing is a malignant, unavoidable, uncontrollable imperative in a world where "infinitely reflexive theatrical posturing" provides the only access to reality (cover note to The Marriage).

§2:   THE DIALOGIC TEXT

In the previous section, I brought out a few instances where the pluralization

and fracturing of the self, by means of which alterity enters as a constitutive part of

human being, are locatable in the characters' speech: in the conflict between the

speech of a given locutor and the discursive conventions dictated by a particular

social role; in the breach that opens up between various theatrical roles, such as

character and actor, actor and director, when the usually unspoken (e.g., contents of

the *didascalia*) is verbalized for the audience; in the dialogization of monologues; in

the speaker's address to his own voice, his own cry. Moreover, what Bakthin calls

dialogism, or double-voiced discourse (i.e., where a single utterance presents a

perceptible conflict between two different points of view), manifests itself in Ślub in

terms of equivocity—that is, in instances where two tones oppose, or co-exist with,

one another, often within a single utterance. The primary form that this type of

double-voiced discourse takes in Ślub—a play which reflects metalinguistically on the

very nature of the artifice of theatrical language as counterpart to the existential

theatricality of the human being[189]—is natural versus exaggerated or artificial:

> Przepraszam cię, jakoś sztucznie mi się mówi... nie mogę mówić
> w sposób naturalny...
>> I stokrotny smutek
>> O, żałość bezgraniczna i bezbrzeżna
>> I jakieś przygnębienie straszne, głuche, ciemne,
>> Opanowały duszę moją. Boże!
>> Boże i Boże! (*S* 100-01)

(Excuse me if my words sound artificial... I'm unable to speak

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[189] Aptly for Ślub, Kennedy defines the paradoxical nature of dialogue in theatre as the "artifice of sponteneity," the "rhetoric of naturalness," and "grandiloquent simplicity" (23).

naturally...
A hundredfold sorrow
A grief without cease or limit
And a terrible oppression, dumb and dark,
Have invaded my soul! Oh, God!
Oh, God! Oh, God! [*M* 26])

These are but some of the points at which alterity penetrates the textual layers as a

constitutive part.

Here, I elaborate on these points but broaden the discussion by elucidating

the manner in which the dialogic—the verbal medium of intersubjectivity—functions

at various textual levels: discursive, lexical, intertextual.   As the already-cited

passages from Ślub attest, Gombrowicz creates a highly style-conscious, agonistic

theatre of language which pits tone against tone, type of discourse against type, word

against word, text against text.

In Languages of the Stage, Pavis explains that Bakhtin has shown that the

voice of "dialogism [...] always bursts forth in periods when ideology is 'moulting,'

moving away from the comfort of monologic certitudes to the uncertainty of dialogic

ideologies" (90).   This movement is rendered explicit in Ślub, where the protagonist

must resign himself to the pastness of the traditional metaphysical world order

shattered by the Second World War and must come to terms with an interhuman one

in which the individual is responsible for self- and other-making.   In this play, a

dialectic holds court between different types of discourse: to use Bakhtin's compre-

hensive terms, official and unofficial (*DI* 270-73).   The legitimacy of the prevailing,

centralizing, authoritative, "unitary" language, and the speaker of, or world view

represented by, said discourse, are questioned, deprivileged and submit to a deforma-

tion as various forms of argot and profane discourse are assimilated and, in their turn, deformed.

Although standard Polish literary and formal or diplomatic languages are also interrogated, the predominant form that official discourse takes in Ślub is liturgical—appropriately so, given that the play can be viewed as a parody of sacral dramaturgy. It is the Father who represents this form of official discourse. In uttering sermons, leading everyone in prayer, acting as mediator between God and the others, the Father-and-King assumes the role of Priest in the Catholic Church. In Act 1, for example, in a verbose address reminiscent of the sermon, he declaims: "Bo nima ty czci, ty miłości, której by syn ojcu swojemu nie był powinien, a bo Ojciec od wieku wieków amen nietykalnie świentem i uświenconem, ogromnem przedmiotem synowskiego nabożeństwa jezd pod grozą kary wieczystej..." (S 111) ("Gone forever is that love and fidelity which the son has always owed the father, because for centuries and centuries, amen, the father has always been a hallowed and sacrosanct saint, an object of filial devotion under the pain of eternal chastisement..." [M 37]). Later, he commands everyone to genuflect in supplication:

> [...] Ja przed Panem Bogiem! Ja do Pana Boga! Ja Bogu Najwyższemu polecam się w Trójcy Św. i Jego dobroci niewyczerpany, łasce najświętszy, opiece najwyższy... Oj, Henryś, Henryś... w niem schronienie, w niem pociecha, w niem ucieczka nasza...
> Ojcze mój
> Ja synem twojem jezdem
> Tyś ojcem mojem... . (S 129)

(I kneel down before the Lord! I address myself to the Lord! I commend myself to Almighty God, to the Holy Trinity, to His inexhaustible goodness, to His mercy most holy, His protection

most sublime... Oh, Henry, Henry!... In Him is there shelter, in
Him is there comfort, in Him is our refuge...
>My Father
>Thy son am I
>Thou art my Father... . [M 57])

He gives his blessing to Henryk on his upcoming marriage to Mańka:

>Hendryku, synu mój, przystępujemy
>Do aktu zaślubin twoich. Za chwilę
>Orszak dziewiczy wprowadzi dziewicę
>Z którą połączysz się na wieki wieków
>I amen, amen. (S 137)

>(Henry, my son, we are about to embark
>Upon your nuptial ceremony. Soon
>Will the bridal party usher in the maid
>With whom you'll be united world without end
>Amen, amen. [M 65])

To this, everyone responds, anaphorically and imitatively, either solemnly (followers)

or ironically (traitors), "Amen"—an instance of dialogism functioning at the level of

tone, which involves an explicit interpretation or evaluation of another's speech (see

Bakhtin, *PDP* 195). The final example from the liturgical canon is the curse, which

assumes the form of a hell-fire-and-damnation sermon:

>Świnie!
>Wara ode mnie, bo ja was!
>Jeżeli kto mnie dotknie, to coś okropnego
>Ja wam mówię: coś okropnego!
>Ale to coś takiego, że ja nie wiem. Ryk, piekło
>Loch, dyby, kat i tortura, przekleństwo
>Wszystkiego świata kwik roztrzaskujący
>Rozsadzający i zabijający, tak jest, tak jest,
>bo mnie nie wolno, bo mnie nie, bo nie, bo
>nie, bo ja niedotykalny, niedotykalny
>jezdem
>>Bo ja was przeklnę! (S 124)

(You pigs!
Keep away from me, or you'll be sorry
If anybody touches me, something awful
I repeat: something awful
So awful that...that I don't know what.
There'll be weeping and screaming and the gnashing of
teeth,
The rack and execution, hell and execration,
A leveling, piercing, pulverizing squeal
That'll blow this whole universe to kingdom come...
       Indeed! Indeed!
Because no one, because no one may touch me
Because no one, because no, be-be-because
I'm untouchable, I'm untouchable, I'm untouchable
Because I'll curse the lot of you! [*M* 51])

Just as the past world is dead, so this form of official discourse is viewed as

moribund and without power. In this curse-cum-sermon, the Father, speaking from

the discursive position of the patriarchal belief in the divine right of the king, reveals,

instead, his impotence, his fear before the other's "touch," the fragility of his station:

striving to maintain his sovereignty, his untouchability, and to assert control over the

court, he discloses his legitimacy—and hence that of the "ennobled discourse" (Bakh-

tin, *DI* 381-84) for which he is the voice—to be a mere pose. Dialogism is mani-

fested in the conflict between the speech of the locutor (impotence) and his discur-

sive position (authority)—or is it the other way around?

This assault on, and depriveleging of, the authoritative discourse and its

representative function on a number of levels. Within a given utterance (in an

example of dialogism functioning between the speech of the locutor and her/his social

position), the "purity" of the standard literary form of liturgical language (and of

Polish literary language, in general) is undercut by the introduction of the peasant

dialect: the use of voiced consonants where literary language uses voiceless (e.g., "jezd" and "jezdem" as opposed to "jest" and "jestem") and the narrowing of vowels (e.g., "nima" as opposed to "nie ma").[190] The Father subverts his own position as King through his speech, which bears the ineradicable mark of his peasant or "lower class" origins.

The polemic unleashed between official and unofficial discourses is manifested also in the metalinguistic conflict between their representatives: the Father-King-Priest and the Drunkards-Traitors. The Father's liturgical speeches are undercut by the subversive element. For example, while most blindly refer to the blessing by the father as an important and dignified declaration, a Traitor calls it "głupie i śmieszne oświadczenie" (*S* 137) ("an asinine and ridiculous speech" [*M* 65]). This polemic between stupidity and wisdom even takes the form of a verbal duel (see *S* 153-55; *M* 83-84).

Gombrowicz interjects into the text a series of words with crude associations (pig, finger and touch) which drag the sublime down to mundane, base reality and materiality. Speeches initially function on a lofty, literary plane; then, they burst and break down. For example, the Father's sermon (*S* 111; *M* 37) is undercut when Henryk realizes that the Father actually fears him. The Father's grandiloquent

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[190] The use of archaisms (which Gombrowicz exploits to full advantage in <u>Trans-Atlantyk</u>) is also rampant in these speeches: the broadening of vowels ("niem" as opposed to "nim"); the use of the ending "em" instead of "im" or "ym" (e.g., "twojem," "mojem" and "ogromnem"); the phonetic spelling of "en" instead of "ę" ("świentem" and "uświenconem") and of "on" instead of "ą" ("ksiondz"). Certain Polish dialects still preserve these forms, which underwent uniformization in the interwar period, when Poland was reunited into one independent country. See Ewa Thompson's book, <u>Witold Gombrowicz</u> (esp. 107), on how Gombrowicz mocks Polish literary language through the use of peasant dialect and archaisms. Similar speech patterns are found in the Drunkard's utterances.

oration then changes into a diatribe:

> A kto by na Ojca swojego rękę świętokradczą, ten zbrodnię tak okropną, tak niewymowną, tak ach piekielną, diabelską, nieludzką, że z pokolenia w pokolenie w krzyku strasznem, w jęku, we wstydzie, w udręczeniu od Boga i Natury wyklenty, przeklenty, wyrzucony, pozostawiony, opuszczony. (*S* 111)

> (And whoever raised a sacrilegious hand against his father would commit a crime so appalling, so unnatural, so abominable, so monstrous that afterwards he would pass the rest of his days, from one generation to the next, amid screams and groans of anguish, as one condemned by God and by Nature, heaped with shame, abandoned, accursed, rejected, forsaken, tormented. [*M* 38])

Finally, it deteriorates into a reference to eating, "Dobra zupa" (*S* 111) ("Good soup" [*M* 38]). The Father, announcing the wedding party, begins with a grandiose proclamation on behalf of wisdom and dignity, but ends in a panicked stammering:

> Z niezmierną godnością i z wysoką mądrością odezwał się syn mój! Otwórzcie wrota i wprowadźcie narzeczoną oraz świętego Biskupa, a trąby niech trąbią w samo sedno natury całem rykiem swojem przepotężnem, żeby przestraszyć i odstraszyć jakby kto jakie świństwo, bo świń nie brak i świnia, świniaaa... świniaaa... . (*S* 142-43)

> (With wisdom profound and dignity sublime has my son expounded. Open the gates and bring in the bride and His Holiness the Bishop, and let the trumpets trumpet with all their might into the very heart of nature; let the trumpets trumpet, I say, so as to terrify and terrorize any pig who's piggish enough to pig up the works, because there's no dearth of these dirty pigs and... aaah, the pigggs, the piggggs, the pigggggs... . [*M* 71])

Later, as the Father-King and Drunkard-Ambassador exchange diplomatic formalities, they simultaneously engage in a cursing match that shows their official capacities to be mere posturing, and their formal discourse a mask:

OJCIEC: Życzenie jezd moje, panie ambasadorze, żeby stosunki

między naszemi mocarstwowemi państwami w zgodzie z harmonią i współpracą międzynarodową ku utrwaleniu i zabezpieczeniu, a także pokój wieczysty, co od wieków stanowi postulat, oraz w interesie całej ludzkości. Jeśli, świnia, mnie trącisz, to ja cię w pysk i w dyby.

PIJAK: Zabezpieczenie i utrwalenie oraz ludzkość w duchu współpracy i w interesie pokoju stanowi niezłomny i naczelny postulat naszego pokojowego dążenie ożywionego duchem porozumienia. Ja cię trącę i napcham się i cie świnia trące przepcham sie.

OJCIEC: Może tych ciasteczek. (*S* 164)

(FATHER: It is my sincerest wish, Mr. Ambassador, that relations between our two powerful governments in accord with international harmony and co-operation and with a view to consolidating and safeguarding, as well as everlasting peace which for centuries has constituted the guiding principle, and in the interest of mankind. If ya touch me, ya pig, I'll clobber ya in the kisser and slap ya in irons.

DRUNKARD: The consolidation and safeguarding as well as mankind in the spirit of co-operation and in the interest of everlasting peace constitutes the guiding and inviolable principle of our peaceful aspirations that are enlivened by the spirit of mutual understanding. I'm gonna touch ya, see... I'm gonna blow myself up, you pig, and lay ya out flat...

FATHER: May I offer you some pastry? [*M* 95])

Similarly, Henryk and the Drunkard, after solemnly declaring each other priests, break out into a cursing match, slinging "świnio" ("pig") at one another (*S* 156; *M* 86).

Official language, therefore, be it conceived as liturgical, standard literary or diplomatic, is undercut, often by the prevalent use of abusive words, profanities and oaths. In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin explains the function of these speech

patterns: "[a]buses, curses, profanities and improprieties are the unofficial elements of speech. They were and are still conceived as a breach of the established norms of verbal address: they refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability" (187). In Ślub, they are enhanced by their perversion even of the norms of profanity. For example, the Drunkard, calling for Mańka's services and being hampered by the Father, retorts with a bełkot (*stammering*) that has no precursor in the Polish language: "Milczy sie w pysk... Ja wołam sie na kylnerke, to nie ma prawa sie odmówić psiaciemagacie połamać, a jeżeli dziadu bendziesz stawiał sie na mnie, to ja napcham sie i przepcham ci w sam krucyfiks!"(*S* 120) ("Aaah, shut your lousy trap, grandpa.... If I feel like callin' the waitress she ain't got no right to refuse, goddamit, and if you try to get tough with me, ya old coot, I'll blow myself up and blow off your crucifix!" [*M* 47]). The line is mimicked, but intonated ominously (hence, double-voiced), by Henryk's "W sam krucyfiks!" The profanities and oaths function as a rejection of the official ideology, as a verbal protest. Bakhtin continues: "[s]uch speech forms, liberated from norms, hierarchies, and prohibitions of established idiom, become themselves a peculiar argot" (*RW* 188). In Ślub, they reconstitute themselves into their own norm.[191]

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[191] As detailed by Bakhtin in Rabelais and His World (188-95), the unofficial side of speech has a rich store of curses, various indecencies, ditties, speech patterns, which Gombrowicz exploits to the fullest comic and parodic effect. For example, the Father's artificial preaching degenerates into a string of maledictions blatantly associated with disease and the bestial world: "Choroba, psiakrew, a żeby to morowa zaraza" (*S* 117) ("Disease, dog's blood and a pestilential plague on you all" [my translation]). Nor can one ignore the almost thematic proportions which the word, "świnia" ("pig"), acquires in all its contortions, and either the unadulterated glee or, in the Father's case, panic to contain its potential for violence, with which various characters appropriate it: "Proszę żadnego świństwa z tom świniom świnia świński ryj świniopas świńtuch świnia!" (*S* 118) ("Kindly keep your piggish paws off this swinish sow of a pigged-up pig of a swineherder's pig prick!" [*M* 45]). Finally, the play abounds with chorus-like ditties and characters suddenly breaking out into song (e.g., *S* 115, 120; *M* 41-42, 47).

Thus, not only the characters, but language itself submits to a deformation. Certain words, in particular those which function provocatively—namely, "dotykać" ("touch"), "idiota" ("idiot") and "świnio" ("pig")—are the best examples of how language submits to the relation of mutual affecting. Gombrowicz, exploiting both the flexibility of the Polish lexicon and the anaphoric (verbally mimetic) constituent of dramatic dialogue, breaks into and exposes poetic language's capacity for self-perpetuation—or what Cassirer, in <u>The Platonic Renaissance in England</u>, calls "the game of the pure self-activity of the word [...] charged with inner tensions" (176). Then, in a linguistic demonstration of how mimicry (as imitation of the other) functions negatively, by twisting and rotating the anaphoric links, Gombrowicz deforms and distorts lexical units in their convulsive reiteration.

The contortions to which each word submits make manifest, what Bakhtin calls, the "internal dialogism" of the word—that is, a dialogism that "penetrates [the word's] entire structure, its semantic and expressive layers" (*DI* 279). Just as the polemic between official and unofficial discourses takes place both between the utterances of characters engaged in dialogue and within a single utterance, so "internal dialogism" functions on two levels. It is manifest in rejoinder, where, as it were, the "word is born in a dialogue" (279). One striking illustration is the verbal duel between Henryk and the Drunkard who, in slinging "pig" back and forth, submit the lexical unit, *świń*, to a creative deformation:

HENRYK (*do Pijaka*)
    Świnio!

(*Henryk i Pijak wpadają przód sceny*)

PIJAK: Świnio!
Ty świniopasie świński dziwki świnia
Świński świńtuchu wyświniarz!

HENRYK: Świński ryj!

PIJAK: Świnia!

HENRYK: Świnia!
[...]

PIJAK: Świńska świnia!
Twa dziwka świnna świnia! Świk! Świk! Kwik!

HENRYK: Ty sam świnia!
Ty świnio, świnio, świnio!
[...]

PIJAK: Świńtuchu
Świntuchowaty, świński, zaświniony
Świniotowaty, wyświniak, wyświniak,
I prosiak, prosiak, kwik, świk! (*S* 217-18)

(HENRY [*to the DRUNKARD*]:
       You pig!

[*HENRY and the DRUNKARD come down to the front of the stage.*]

DRUNKARD: Pig!
You piggish pigmonger pig of a slut
Hoggish boar of a greasy porker!

HENRY: Sow of a souse!

DRUNKARD: Prick of a pig!

HENRY: Swine!
[...]

DRUNKARD: Piggish pig!
Your girl friend is a slut of a sow! Oink! Oink! Oink!

HENRY: You're a pig yourself!

> You pig, pig, pig!
> [...]
>
> DRUNKARD: You're a pig!
> A piggified pig!
> A piggish, piggicized, piggerized superpig!
> Piggy-wiggy! Oink! Oink! Oink! [*M* 151-52])

This exchange demonstrates how the word, dialogized, "forms itself in the atmosphere of the already spoken" (i.e., as response to) and in anticipation of the "future answer-word" (Bakhtin, *DI* 279).

"Internal dialogism" also occurs in soliloquy. Henryk stammers out, "[...] ktoś tu z *boku*, na *uboczu*, na *uboczu*, jakiś *idio... idiota, nieokiełznany, nieopanowany, idiotowaty, idiodotykalny*, ktory *dotyka*" (emphasis added, *S* 99) ("someone is standing here *alongside* me, off *to the side*, off *to the side*, some *id-...* some *in*superable, *un*governable, *idiot*ized, *idiotouchable* idiot, who can *touch*" [emphasis added, *M* 25]). Through the repetition and slight alteration of lexical and semantic elements (*bok, idio, dotyk*), words undergo a gradual transformation into sometimes new creations. As it penetrates and deforms the semantic structure, then, this "internal dialogism" wields "enormous power to shape style" (Bakhtin, *DI* 279). Gombrowicz manages to break into the chain of linguistic being and expose the concatenations of words. In yet another demonstration of the power of *poiesis* in this play, Gombrowicz taps into and manages to release, what Cassirer calls, language's "pure formative energy with unlimited openness," an energy that "floods [the linguistic forms...] and keeps them eternally mobile," recasting them again and again through the interaction of forces and impulses of movements (*PSF* 4:18).

These instances of (1) tonal engagement (solemn versus ironic), whereby the same word or phrase is invested with different valuations, (2) a conflict between the speech of a locutor and her/his discursive or social position (peasant dialect and King, impotence and authority), (3) a polemic between official (liturgical, standard literary, diplomatic) and unofficial discourses (improprieties, profanities, oaths and peasant dialect), and (4) the deformation of words, demonstrate that dialogism penetrates deeply into the linguistic layers of the text. The creative and deformative dynamic, therefore, does not function only interpersonally, but—as is appropriate for a play that metalinguistically reflects on the power of language—radically affects the work's linguistic structure.

The final level on which dialogism functions in this play is the intertextual. Ślub provides an excellent example of the literary work as a polyphonic construction which, partaking in the dialectic of tradition and innovation, responds to the ensemble of texts that preceded it. Conceiving and realizing Ślub as a strange artificiality, Gombrowicz deliberately positions the play at the centre of a rich network of echoes and references to, and constructs the work out of the spectral presences of other dramatic works. This dramatic text, thus, does not present itself as a closed, monologic entity, but reveals itself instead as an unending process of production whereby the voices of playwrights of past generations enter into a dialogic relation with Gombrowicz.

In Ślub, Gombrowicz turns to canonical fare from the traditions of Polish

Romanticism[192] and Młoda Polska (Young Poland),[193] and, beyond the ken of Polish literature, to the royal dramas of William Shakespeare (esp. Hamlet and The Taming of the Shrew) and Alfred Jarry (Ubu Roi).[194] By appropriating the theatre that preceded him, it should be emphasized, Gombrowicz does not present the audience with the mere historical re-collection and re-collation of a set of given texts; rather, he demonstrates an "effective historical consciousness" (Gadamer's term) which "disrupts the ossification of fixed ontic modes of apprehension by revealing the interpretive nature of understanding" (DiCenso 83). In other words, Gombrowicz brings out and transforms, in accordance with his vision of an interhuman church, an essential facet, a potential meaning, from the past source text into the structure of

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[192] There are many references in Ślub to the Romantic tradition. One is to Zygmunt Krasiński's Nie-Boska komedia (1833, The Undivine Comedy), which serves as an intertext for Operetka also: the protagonists of both works are named Henryk; both Henryks must play a number of different social roles; both represent the authorial alter-ego; in both plays, the dream action is played out in a ruined world (in Ślub, on the post-war ruins of a disfigured church; in Nie-Boska komedia, on the ruins of an old world destroyed by the war). Gombrowicz polemicizes with the Romantic tradition. He demolishes the static societal rituals, or the Polish Romantic perception of ritual; while the Romantics respected patriarchal society, Gombrowicz transforms the poetic vision into a shabby tavern, and strips the Father of sacrum with a drunk's finger. In "Witold Gombrowicz's Plays and the Polish Literary Tradition," Ewa Thompson explains: where the "pursuits of the Romantic heroes were grounded in a vision of the world in which values were fixed and meanings were not detachable from events" (i.e., Konrad's [in Adam Mickiewicz's Dziady] or Kordian's [in Juliusz Słowacki's Kordian] actions had a guaranteed positive meaning), Gombrowicz throws his hero into a fictional universe that has been deprived of these very foundations (201).

[193] The most prominent member of the Młoda Polska movement is Stanisław Wyspiański. His play, Wesele (1901, The Wedding), is alluded to by the very title of Gombrowicz's play. Wesele's (like Ślub's) action presents characters who are punished, not by external forces, but by forces that they themselves have invoked by their own utterances—namely, fantastic creatures who are projections of the characters' own thoughts. Wesele's wakeful dream is transformed into a dreaming waking; Ślub can be viewed as the externalized projection of Henryk's dream. Wyspiański's play presents a pastiche of colloquial language and versification that is more radically exploited and laid bare by Gombrowicz. Both plays, moreover, turn from celebrations into funerals or states of paralysis: Wesele ends with characters dancing a somnambulistic dance under the spell of the mulch who was called up by the poetess, Rachel, and who takes over as maestro; Ślub ends with a funeral and imprisonment.

[194] See Malić's article, "Les feuilletons littéraires de Witold Gombrowicz," in L'Herne for Jarry's influence on Gombrowicz, in particular with respect to the topic of infantilism (68).

the present target text (Ślub), thereby appropriating, repeating and engaging the dramatic tradition in an often parodically dialogic manner. Ewa Thompson evaluates his use of intertextuality in "Witold Gombrowicz's Plays and the Polish Literary Tradition":

> Gombrowicz made an effort to use the tradition in a new way: as a starting point rather than a focal one, and as a producer of meanings it did not know it potentially possessed. [...] His message was that one of the ways to acknowledge a literary culture is to provide a perspective on it and to play a counterpoint voice to it, instead of deadening it by docile imitation. (204).

In "Komentarze do ,Ślubu'," Głowiński explains that Gombrowicz establishes a dialectic of tradition-parody in which the source text is both affirmed and denied (643-47).[195] This dialectic can be understood as constituting simultaneously a call to the cultural consciousness of the (here, Polish) audience and an interrogation of it. The core of the play, then, as Iser has been careful to emphasize, is virtual, and only when actualized by the recipient does it explode in plurivocity. Thus, I would disagree with Jakób Liszka's assessment that, in his dramatic works, Gombrowicz fails to elaborate on Ferdydurke's engagement of the audience in the heremeneutical task that is but one facet of the larger context of the in-between (pomiędzy), that Ślub "fails to call the spectator to action or participation [...and that] rather, one is invited to watch an absurd game" (70). The writer does indeed implicate the audience in the dramatic world, primarily through the medium of another facet of the in-be-

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[195] Or, as Ewa Thompson expresses this dialectic in "Witold Gombrowicz's Plays," "[Gombrowicz's] plays and novels voice a disagreement with the uses made of the tradition by the writers preceding him, and they contain a joyful acceptance of the yet untapped resources and undiscovered meanings of the tradition" (197).

tween—namely, the inter-*textual*. When Henryk reveals his own situation of relation-

ality—"Jestem w obieży spojrzeń, w okręgu widzenia, a wszystko, na co spojrzę, mnie

ogląda" (*S* 202) ("I'm caught in a grid of glances, a precinct of looks, and whatever

I look at, looks back at me" ["Monologue" 45])—the self-reflexive structure of

seeing-being seen, looking-being looked at, points to the presence of a spectator.

Similarly, the work's self-reflexivity, revealed through the mode of verbal recursion

of intertextual debt, calls upon the audience to concretize the work, to draw from the

cultural repertoire and, simultaneously, to reflect back upon the presuppositions of

that cultural consciousness and the manner in which we have been influenced by the

dominant modes of interpretation.

To delimit this discussion, I examine one striking example of intertextuality

by focusing again on Henryk's monologue in Act 3. In this monologue, as he does

in the play as a whole, Gombrowicz goes to the dramas of transformation (that is, to

those of Polish Romanticism), where poetry is the progeny of the human being's

spiritual power, where form is the product of human expression, and where language,

consequently, creates its own poetic reality. The target text from the tradition is Part

3 of Adam Mickiewicz's Dziady (Forefather's Eve), a work, not insignificantly, that

refers to the pagan rite of reciting incantations to invoke the dead and, hence, to

intercourse with the specters of the past. Specifically, I focus on Konrad's mono-

logue, known as "Wielka Improwizacja" ("The Great Improvisation").

Konrad has one dream—namely, to be God. Henryk's dream is the entire

drama, in which he declares himself God. Specifically, Konrad's "Great Improvisa-

tion" is methodologically rendered in Henryk's monologue: Henryk's monologue

appropriates the Improvisation's theme and structure, at points even the rhythm of

question and exclamation, statement and invective.[196]   The self-generating

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[196] A line-by-line comparison demonstrates the degree to which Gombrowicz parodically appropriates Mickiewicz's improvisation (the translations of "Wielka Improwizacja" are mine and the references are to the line; the translations of Gombrowicz's monologue are from Iribarne's re-translation in "Two Monologues" as above). (Thanks to Louis Iribarne for pointing me in this direction.)

KONRAD:		_HENRYK:_
1.	"Samotność" (1) (declares he is alone)	(_Sam_) (is alone)
2.	The posing of a series of questions:	
	a) "czym śpiewak dla ludzi?" (1)	a) "Ale... co to było?"
	("what is the singer for people")	("But... what sort of game?")
	b) "Gdzie człowiek, co z mej pieśni całą myśl wysłucha,/Obejmie okiem wszystkie promienie jej ducha?" (1)	b) "O ile mogą być niebezpieczne te igraszki?"
	("Where is the man who hears the whole thought in my song, whose eye sees all the radiance of its spirit?")	("Can such games be dangerous?")
	c) "Z drżenia ziemi czyż ludzie głąb nurtów docieką" (9)	c) "jaki jest właściwie zasięg słów?"
	("From the trembling of the earth who will know the depth of the river")	("what is the real power of words?")
	d) "Gdzie pędzi, czy się domyślą?" (10)	d) "Jaki jest mój zasięg?"
	("Where it flows, who will guess?")	("What is my own power?")
3.	falls in and out of sleep	verbalizes, thematizes, examines the dream: "Sen? Tak, tak, sen..." ("A dream? That's right, a dream...")
4.	addresses his song, which is like a star (beyond the reach of human eyes) (15-24)	addresses the furniture, which looks back at him
5.	addresses himself to God and Nature(25)	refers to his being alone
6.	"Ja mistrz wyciągam dłonie!/ wyciągam aż w niebiosa i kładę me dłonie/ Na gwiadzach jak na szklannych harmoniki kręgach" (28-30)	"Wyciągam rękę"
	("I, a master, stretch my palms on high and touch the stars as though they were the crystal wheels of a harmonica")	("I stick out my arm")
7.	"To nagłym, to wolnym ruchem/ Kręcę gwiazdy moim duchem" (31-32)	"Ten ruch tak zwykły/ Normalny/Codzienny/Staję się ruchem znaczącym, ponieważ do nikogo nie jest/ Skierowany..."

("With this naked, this free gesture,/ I turn the stars with my soul")

gesture is directed toward the stars

("This common/Normal/Everyday gesture/ Swells with importance because it's not intended/ For anyone")

lack of intentionality of gesture

8.   "Odjąłem ręcę, wzniosłem nad świata krawę-dzie,/I kręgi harmoniki wstrzymały się w pędzie." (38-39)
("I took my hands away, I raised the borders beyond the world,/ And the circles of that harmonica stay their course.")
During this part, Konrad raises himself up through the power of words; he refers to himself as father to his songs, which become his progeny.

"W ciszy palcami ruszam, a osoba moja/So-bą rozrasta się na samej sobie/ I sednem staje się sedna."
("I wiggle my fingers in silence, and my self/ Swells itself to become itself/Seed of my seed.")
He lays bare the gesture as self-swelling.

9.   "Sam śpiewam, słyszę me śpiewy" (40)
("I sing alone, I alone hear my songs")

"Ja, ja, ja! Ja sam!"
("I, I, I! I alone!")

10.   expresses confidence in his own poetic power:
"Cóż ty większego mogłeś zrobić—Boże?" (55)
("What greater deed could you do, God?")

"Nie czuliby własnego szczęścia, własnej mocy/ Jak ja dziś czuję w tej samotnej nocy" (79-80)

("[You poets] could not feel your own happiness and might/As I feel mine on this lonely night.")

expresses an existential crisis:
"Jeżeli jednak ja, ja, ja sam, to dlaczegóż/ (Użyjmy tego efektu) mnie nie ma?"
("And yet if I, I, I am alone, why/[Let's try this for effect] am I not?")

"Cóż stąd (zapytam), że ja, ja jestem w samym środku,/w samym centrum, jeżeli ja, ja nigdy nie mogę być/ Sobą?"
("[What d]oes it matter [I ask] if I am center stage if I can never be/ Myself?")

11.   "Kiedy sam śpiewam w sobie,/Śpiewam samemu sobie." (81-82)
("When I sing alone in myself,/ I sing to myself alone.")

"Ja sam./Ja sam."

("I alone./I alone.")

12.   Through the long passage, Konrad continues to raise himself up, eventually putting himself on par with God, since he, through poetry, is similarly a creator of immortality.
He reaches his zenith.

Henryk refers to this talking and gesturing as compulsion, and expresses his impotence in the face of humanity's trials.

13.   "I mam je, mam je, mam—tych skrzydeł dwoje;/ Wystarczą:—od zachodu na wschód je rozszerze." (95-96)

"Ba, ba mogę/W obliczu tego podłego, strasznego/I zawstydzającego świata brew marszczyć/I ręce wznieść do nieba, mogę/ Zamienić dłoń moją w pięść lub ręką/Prze-sunąć po mym czole mądrym, zamyślo-nym"

("I have them, I have them, I have these two wings;/They suffice: I stretch them from west to east.")

("Why, why/Before this vile, inhuman/ Wretched world I might wrinkle my brow Lift my arms to heaven, I might/Roll my

power of poetic language that is an essential tool in transforming Konrad, is thematized (discourse), dramatized (event) and parodied by Gombrowicz.[197]

These are the major points of contact. First, Konrad, alone in his prison cell, addresses God, thereby establishing a vertical relation between himself and God. Through the power of his poetic language, he would shape himself, transform himself

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		hand into a fist or pass my palm/Across my wise and thoughtful brow.") Gombrowicz degrades the wings into a fist.
14.	After a series of negations, Konrad discloses his love for a nation, for humanity: "Ta miłość nie na jednym spoczęła człowieku/ [...]/Nie na jednej rodzinie, nie na jednym wieku. Ja kocham cały naród!" (106-09) ("This love has not found repose on one man/ [...]/ Not on one family, not on one age. I love a whole nation!")	After a series of negations, Henryk negates himself: "Ja nie potrzebuję/Żadnego postawy! Nie czuję/Cudzego bólu! Recytuję tylko/Mą ludzkość! Nie, ja nie istnieję/Nie jestem żadnym ‚ja'." ("I don't need/Any poses! I don't feel/Anyone's pain! I only recite/My humanity! I don't exist/I haven't any 'I'.")
15.	Both Konrad and Henryk refer to the dynamic of self-creation: "Ja się twórcą rodził:/Stamtąd przyszły siły moje,/ Skąd do Ciebie przyszły Twoje." (127-30) ("I was born a creator:/My powers came from where yours did.")	"Poza mną ja się tworzę, ach, ach, o bez-dźwięczna/Pusta orkiestra mego ‚ach', co z próżni/Mojej dobywasz się i w próżni toniesz!" ("I forge myself/Outside myself, alas, alas, oh, the hollow/Empty orchestra of my 'alas', you well up/And sink back into my emptiness!")
16.	In the final movement, at the peak of his raving, and on the verge of uttering a blasphemy, Konrad demands of God "rule over souls" ("Daj mi rząd dusz!" [170], in the second person singular), stating that his name is million and that he loves as millions (260-61). Henryk, referring to the mass of "two billion" and negating every pattern, law, doctrine, rejects God and Reason and demands of men man ("Give me man," in the second person plural) ("Dajcie mi człowieka").	

[197] In "Komentarze do ‚Ślubu'," Głowiński, referring specifically to Gombrowicz's appropriation of the Shakespearean monologue, but in a way that can be generalized, evaluates: "[t]he parody of Shakespeare is a means of constructing the whole drama in which everything that was once favoured in the genre can appear. A means, and not a goal, because it is not a question here of copying a degraded model, but of bending toward that which the author considers essential. [...] Reactivating certain elements[, such as asides, self-address, the presence of the monologue form,] allowed Gombrowicz to unfold the work's problematic on two levels: event and discourse" (my translation, 643).

into a Christian Prometheus by usurping God's power: "Chcę czuciem rządzić, które jest we mnie" (156) ("I want to rule by the love in me"). Henryk, alone prior to his committing himself to prison (an inversion of the chain of events), though he is imprisoned in his dream to begin with, has a dialogue with himself, thereby establishing a vertical relation between himself and his word (*S* 203; "Monologue" 47). In this dialogue, Henryk lays bare Konrad's self-elevation as "self-swelling," but likewise affirms humanity: he would "forge [him]self outside [him]self" in the realm of the interhuman. Second, Konrad announces his quest in the name of beautiful language, in the name of poetry, and both thematizes and demonstrates the creative power of poetic discourse to effect a self-transformation. Henryk poses this Romantic principle as a question to be explored: he wants to know the real power or reach of words, how language, uttered in the realm of the in-between, generates its own reality.[198] Third, Konrad speaks on behalf of an oppressed nation (106-09), on behalf of "millions" (260-61): he typifies the Romantic hero, the individual fighting for an independent Poland. Henryk, feeling the terrible burden of pain and dishonour, begins by speaking for himself alone, but finishes by referring to a mass of two billion. He invokes a "human church" which grants individuals the freedom to change established forms, to create their own rituals, just as he, through others, would confer upon himself a marriage. Fourth, at the height of his visionary trance, Konrad sees himself as a man-god who would have dominion over souls. He com-

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[198] Henryk had just realized, "Słowa wyzwalają w nas pewne stany psychiczne... kształtują nas... stwarzają między nami rzeczywistości..." (*S* 200) ("Words evoke certain psychic states in us... [they shape us...] they create worlds of reality between us" [*M* 132]).

pares his poetic act with the creative act *ex nihilo* of God, and his poetry with children: he would thus put himself on par with God and degrade God to the status of tsar. However, before pronouncing this final blasphemy, he collapses, unable to surmount ancestral law. Henryk, in a state of poetic inspiration and destroying not only ancestral law but all laws, doctrines and rules, rejects God and elevates himself to the status of man-god of an earthly church wherein he is subject to that which is created in interaction with a humanity that is "mętny, niedojrzały/Nieukończony, ciemny" (*S* 204) ("troubled, immature,/Confused, opaque" ["Monologue 48]). Finally, Gombrowicz, through the self-reflexive comments and instructions to the self in the *didascalia*, plays with what is implied in Mickiewicz's work—namely, the split between character and role.

Using specifically the very powerful Polish Romantic tradition as a point of departure, a spectral presence that continues to haunt the Polish consciousness, Gombrowicz engages it in a dialectic of "denial-and-affirmation." On the one hand, Henryk lays bare, and then punctures, Konrad's self-elevation through the power of words as "self-swelling." On the other, he then goes to the dynamic of self-creation through language that is inherent in Konrad's speech, and actualizes language's performative capacity (i.e., its "event-nature") by using the formal aspects of versification (rhythm) to effect his self-transformation into, to stage himself as, the man-god of the interhuman church.

III.   OPERTKA: WHERE ONE MASK TORMENTS THE OTHER

In Ślub, Gombrowicz casts his protagonist into the potently liminal realm of the interactive in-between—wherein a word uttered, a gesture made and augmented through another's mimicry, have the power to transform the performance space and the roles and relationships required therein; wherein, as a consequence, every attempt to represent the self can only be the staging of an absence, a non-self, a pose adopted from or imposed by another. In his last play, Operetka (1966, Operetta), Gombrowicz takes this vision of interhumanity and blows it wide open. He simplifies his recurrent themes to the conceit of the duality of dress and nudity, or form and anti-form, and translates this conceit into the terms of the force of history imposing itself on and dynamizing the playful operetta genre.[199] Placing the notion of the interhuman within a context broader than the interpersonal, he demonstrates, vis-à-vis the ever-changing mask as the ultimate and ultimately deforming human reality, that the human subject is in time, temporal and temporary—a dynamic product of kinetic historical processes that impact on and provoke social and international tensions.

That human identity is a product of interhuman social tensions is demonstrated by the form that mimicry takes as a doubling up or imitation of another. As

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[199] In his journal, Gombrowicz expresses his dilemma of reconciling a historical content with an outmoded theatrical form: "Operetko, co z tobą, cóż więc mam robić, jakie sposoby wymyślić, żeby twoje worki przemówiły głosem Historii?... Bełkot Historii w workach, tak to widzę w tej chwili... Niespodziewane, ironiczne, zjadliwe, wichry-gromy i nagłe, urywające się, śpiewy-tańce" (Dziennik 3:217) ("Operetta, what's wrong with you, what am I supposed to do, what methods am I supposed to devise so that your sacks speak with the voice of History?... The raving of history in sacks, this is how I see it right now.... Unexpected, ironic, venemous, gale-thunderstorms, and sudden, interrupted songs and dances" [Diary 3:171]).

is the case in <u>Ferdydurke</u> and, as pointed out, in certain sections of <u>Ślub</u>, mimicry here is governed by the symmetricality of the duel motif, initially a manifestation of *agōn*.[200] In <u>Operetka</u>, the ludic configuration of *agōn* is depicted in the macrostructure as the war between the upper and lower classes. This war is formalized as the chorus of lackeys—with their brutal "Nogi wyrywać" ("Tear their legs out") refrain—countering the chorus of seigneurs—with their meaningless "Krzesełka lorda Blotton" ("Stools of Lord Blotton") refrain—and actualized in the violence and brutality of the revolution that closes Act 2. It comes to its fullest realization in the sexual rivalry of the decadent rakes, Szarm (Charmant) and Firulet: they are in pursuit of the girl-child, Albertynka (Albertine), whom, in an inversion of the traditional seduction motif, they wish to dress up in elaborate garments (they would reconstruct this shopkeeper's daughter according to their own desires), while she comes to desire only nakedness.

This rivalry assumes the form of a highly stylized and programmatic movement, and functions on a number of levels: physiological (laughter),[201] rhetorical (verbal flyting) and formal (the duel). The movement is as follows: one provokes the other; a verbal sparring ensues, which formulates itself into a verbal game of cards as the players incite and buttress one another further in their mutual passion;

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[200] For the purposes of <u>Operetka</u> (and all of Gombrowicz's plays for that matter), it is necessary to note that *agōn*, competition, is a specific dynamic into which the players enter and to which the players are subjected. As Gadamer states, the competition is "not so much the subjective attitude of the two men confronting each other as it is the formation of movement as such, which, as in an unconscious teleology, subordinates the attitude of the individuals to itself" (*PH* 54).

[201] For example, Firulet attacks Szarm with laughter while Szarm defends himself with same laughter (<u>Operetka</u> 254; <u>Operetta</u> 37). Subsequent citations from the Polish original are referenced as (*O* page), and from Iribarne's English translation as (*OP* page).

the card game eventually dissipates its participants, who are representatives of an

exhausted epoch, leading to ennui, as Szarm inevitably capitulates. An example of

the physiological and rhetorical duel is given in the following exchange:

SZARM (*śpiewa*):
> Co bahon, a, co bahon znów?
> Co bahon chcesz? Co to za śmiech?
> Wyphaszam sobie! Phecz, phecz, phecz!
> Impehtynencja! Co to jest?

FIRULET (*śpiewa*):
> Na goło Szarm, na goło Szarm!
> Ha, ha, ha, i hej hopsasa!
> Ha, ha, ha, ha, na golasa!
> Na goło Szarm, na goło Szarm!

(defilują jeden przed drugim arogancko)

SZARM: Kohonka w kiehy!

FIRULET: Szlem w karo!

SZARM: Dubełt w kolorze!

FIRULET: Dubluję dubelt!

SZARM: Trzy bez atu!

FIRULET: Wielki szlem w piki!

SZARM: Pas!

FIRULET: Pas!
> Kochany hrabio Szarm, jak hrabia się rozbierzesz do goła, nie zapomnij pan mnie wezwać, abym mógł podziwiać, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

(wychodzi ze Strzelcem)

SZARM (*złamany*):
> Impehtynent!
> Ahogant! *(siada na krześle-parasolu)*

Zghałem się... . (O 257-58)

(CHARMANT [*singing*]:
> What is it now, my dear baron?
> What do you mean? Why that laugh?
> I won't tolerate it! Now off with you! Off!
> What impertinence! What are you implying?

FIRULET [*singing*]:
> Charmant in the nude, Charmant in the nude!
> Ha, ha, ha, horray, horrah!
> Ha, ha, ha, Charmant in the raw!
> Charmant in the nude, Charmant in the nude!

[*They parade before one another arrogantly.*]

CHARMANT: Four honours in hearts!

FIRULET: A grand slam in diamonds!

CHARMANT: A double in suit!

FIRULET: I double and redouble!

CHARMANT: Three no trumps!

FIRULET: A grand slam in spades.

CHARMANT: I pass!

FIRULET: I pass! My dear, Count Charmant, when you're getting undressed don't forget to call me so I can come and admire, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

[*Exits with his GAMEKEEPER.*]

CHARMANT [*crushed*]:
> Impudent fellow!
> Malapert!

[*Sits down on the umbrella-stool.*]
> I gambled and lost... . [OP 39-40])

The rivalry resolves itself into the imitation of one another's words, actions,

gestures, costumes and accessories. Szarm lays bare this imitation when he says to the Princess, "Firulet zawsze musi mnie naśladować" (*O* 267) ("Firulet [...] always feels obliged to imitate me" [*OP* 52]), and to Firulet,

> Dophawdy, saphisti, tego już za dużo, ja sphawiam jej kapelusz, bahon sphawiasz jej boa, ja hękawiczki, bahon pantofelki, ja przybywam w sthoju myśliwskim z dzikim złodziejaszkiem na smyczy, bahon przybywasz w sthoju myśliwskim z dzikim złodziejaszkiem na smyczy! Ależ phoszę ja kogo, co za małpowanie! (*O* 271)

> (Really, sapristi, this is too much. I buy her a hat, you buy her a boa, I buy her gloves, you buy her pumps, I come in a hunting costume with a wild pickpocket on a leash, you come in a hunting costume with a wild pickpocket on a leash! Well now, if that isn't plagiarism [apeing]! [*OP* 56])

Szarm and Firulet physiologically and verbally duel with one another until they wind up at a formal duel, dressed and accessorized identically and conventionally. At daybreak, Szarm and Firulet come forward and face one another; they bow, fire, change places, bow, fire, swing to and fro, utter "Pass" and then leave with their seconds (*O* 275; *OP* 60). This duel scene, moreover, is repeated except that, instead of shooting one another, they proceed to undress, and thus turn the duel into an anti-duel. The repetition of verbal utterances and visual gestures creates a ritualized, formalized movement which gives the effect, not of individuals, but, as Jan Błoński concurs in Forma, śmiech i rzeczy ostateczne (210), of signs duelling. In the process, the rivals become indistinguishable from one another: each (rather narcissistically inclined anyway) functions as a mirror for the other; the back-and-forth duelling motion absorbs the players, changing subtly into a simultaneity of reflection. Where in Shepard's The Tooth of Crime (called a talking rock opera), Hoss and Crow,

through their verbal duel, exchange identities, in <u>Operetka</u>, identities merge, difference is effaced, shattering any pretence to private, fixed self-identity. The original rhetorical duel, and the resultant tension created from the "reaction of one partner to the attempted attack of the other," becomes pure mimicry—or what Gadamer calls in the context of games of competition, "a reciprocal behavior of absolute contemporaneousness [...where] neither partner alone constitutes the real determining factor [...but where] the unified form of movement as a whole [...] unifies the fluid activity of both" (*PH* 54).

SZARM:	Przeklęty... zabić cię, zabić, zabić...
FIRULET:	Przeklęty... zabić cię, zabić, zabić...
SZARM:	Zniszczyć się...
FIRULET:	Zabić cię...

(*wpatrują się w siebie*)

SZARM:	Jakbym do lustha strzelał...
FIRULET: [...]	Jakbym do lustha strzelał...

FIRULET (*poufnie*):
Rozbierz się...

SZARM (*poufnie*):
Hozbierz się...

FIRULET (*wyzywająco*):
Zdejmuję spodnie!

SZARM (*wyzywająco*):
Zdejmuję spodnie!

FIRULET: Pas.

SZARM: Pas.

FIRULET: Hélas!

SZARM: Hélas!
[...]

FIRULET: Do siebie mówisz?!

SZARM: Nie, do ciebie!

FIRULET: Do ciebie ja do siebie!

SZARM: Do siebie ja do ciebie! (*O* 286-88)

(CHARMANT: Cursed one... I'd like to kill you, kill you, kill you...

FIRULET: Cursed one... I'd like to kill you, kill you, kill you...

CHARMANT: Annihilate you...

FIRULET: Exterminate you...

   [*They stare at one another.*]

CHARMANT: It was like shooting in a mirror.

FIRULET: It was like shooting in a mirror.
[...]

FIRULET [*confidentially*]:
          Undress yourself...

CHARMANT [*confidentially*]:
          Undress yourself...

FIRULET [*defiantly*]:
          I'm taking off my pants!

CHARMANT [*defiantly*]:
          I'm taking off my pants!

FIRULET: I pass!

CHARMANT: I pass!

FIRULET: Hélas!

CHARMANT: Hélas!
[...]

FIRULET: Are you talking to yourself?

CHARMANT: No, to you!

FIRULET: To you I to myself.

CHARMANT: To myself I to you. [*OP* 72-3])

As in Gombrowicz's other plays, ontological mimicry (self-as-other, other-as-self) is made manifest on the syntactic level as a mirrored phraseology, which, as the final pair of exclamatories demonstrates, involves the specular inversion of word order in a phrase. Ultimately, the rakes, through their mutual apeing, transform and deform themselves into their own travestied self-portrait—namely, clowns—who, in a cretin-like fashion, proceed to chase an ever-elusive butterfly.

The clown figure, standing as the completory configuration of the assification of the aristocracy in the post-war period, is, moreover, the sign of nostalgia for a past world that has been irrevocably shattered. It is one mask that human identity assumes as a result of international tensions. In addition to imitation, mimicry takes the form of the donning of a multitude of masks which objectivize the historical evolution of the twentieth century, from *la belle époque circa* 1914 through the world wars to the reign of the flower children in the 1960s. The changing costume (and the incessant disguisings and unmaskings, dressing and undressing), in other words, is the visual vehicle for the progression of history: as Fior, the master of fashion, states,

"Moda jest historią" (*O* 261) ("The style [fashion] is history" [*OP* 41]).

More specifically, the changing costume is a visual vehicle for the transformations that the human subject has undergone in the twentieth century. Kaja Silverman, in "Fragments of Fashionable Discourse," explains the connection between a "vestimentary code" and the articulation of subjectivity:

> clothing is a necessary condition of subjectivity [for...] in articulating the body, it simultaneously articulates the psyche. As Freud tells us, the ego is "a mental projection of the surface of the body," and that the surface is largely defined through dress. Laplanche makes a similar point when he insists upon the need for an "envelope" or "sack" to contain both body and ego, and to make possible even the most rudimentary distinctions between self and other, inside and outside. In effect, clothing is that envelope. (84)

The significance of clothing is that it makes "the human body culturally visible [...] and articulate[s] [...] it as a meaningful form" (Silverman 81). In other words, a dress code visually represents or interprets a given historico-cultural content, which here is created by international tensions and which in turn constructs the human subject. In Operetka, then, the changing masks and garb mark the transformations of human identity conceived, to quote Irene Sadowska-Guillon, as "the object of history as the object of systems of classifications that command [specific types of] behavior and attitudes" (my translation, 72).

At the level of international tensions, the masks are dynamized and the historical parade advanced by the ingression of the ludic configuration of *ilinx* into mimicry which shatters and rearranges the world on a series of different bases. Where the ingression of *agôn* by mimicry shattered any pretence Szarm and Firulet

might have had to *idem*-identity, so in turn the penetration of mimicry by *ilinx* "ups

the ante" by injecting a crucial temporal element into an otherwise static form, and

thus demonstrating the manner in which "fashion constructs a new [...] body every

year and challenges the assumption of a fixed identity," thereby subverting "the

oppression of the preceding fashion" (Silverman 85-87).

Ilinx, like *agôn*, assumes a number of forms as it progresses through the work.

It manifests itself figurally in the wind that springs up the moment the thief touches

the sleeping Albertynka and eroticizes her, and that passes into a raging whirlwind

through the second and into the third acts. It takes gestural form in Hufnagiel's

(Hufnagel) revolutionary gallop that is transformed from a verbal, self-identifying

mark ("Hej, galop to mój zwykły gest" [*O* 246] ("Hey, the gallop's my regular

gesture" [my translation]) into a contagious, mad, whirling racing.[202] It manifests

itself verbally in the specular syntactic structure, which impacts on the logical struc-

ture of sentences, as in the tautology (e.g., *O* 267; *OP* 52), and then in the shattering

and raging of human language (see esp. *O* 270, 310; *OP* 55, 96-97).

Ilinx appears formally and gesturally in the physical revolution of the many

kinds of dance[203] that parallel the lambency of masks. The secrecy and intrigue that

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[202] See the progression in Operetka over pages 246, 263-64, 286, 301, 302 (in Operetta over pages 29, 45-48, 71, 88-89).

[203] Just as the gallop is revealed to be pure verbal and physical gesture, so, too, is all dance motion an element in the exhibition of gesture. Susanne Langer explains in Feeling and Form: "[t]he primary illusion of dance is a virtual realm of Power—not actual, physically exerted power, but appear- ances of influence and agency created by virtual gesture. [...A]ll the motion seems to spring from powers beyond the performers" (175). The significant factor is not the physical gesture performed by the dancers themselves, as that which emanates from the movement: the movement creates a virtual power that shapes a world of dynamic forms. "[C]reated dance forces, impersonal agencies, and controlled, rhythmicized, formally conceived gesture begetting the illusion of emotions and wills in conflict"

the masked ball invites disrupt the convention of "song-and-dance," turning it into the formalized, slow-turning quadrille, which is *la danse macabre* from Stanisław Wyspiański's <u>Wesele</u> (<u>The Wedding</u>). Yet, the paralysis of will that this dance symbolizes in <u>Wesele</u>, and which, in <u>Operetka</u>, is configured in the sleepiness and a slow congelation into motionlessness, is transformed into a surrender of will to the force of the ball:

KSIĄŻĘ: Ah, ah, mehci, ah, ah, bonjouh!
I tańczmyż, tańczmyż, jak zaghają
Gdy w tańcu pląsa noga twa
Nie pytaj, co kapela gha!

KSIĘŻNA: Och, enchantée, ah, ah, chahmée
Bal w wohek wlazł! Eh bien, hélas!
Gdy w wohku bal, nie pytaj, tańcz
Nie pytaj, co wohku siedzi! (*O* 290)

(PRINCE: Ah, ah, bonjour, ah, ah, merci!
Let everyone dance to the melody!
Once the dance has carried you away
Don't bother to ask what the orchestra will play!

PRINCESS: Oh, enchantee, ah, ah, charmee
The ball has climbed into a sack! Alas!
If the ball's in a sack, don't ask, just dance
Don't bother to ask what's inside the sack! [*OP* 75])

The ball, here conceived as an "impersonal agency" (Langer's term), enters into the mask. *Ilinx* enters mimicry, unleashing an unstoppable force as the whirl of dancing becomes orgiastic, creating disorder: "Phecz mi z nagością! Dalej tańczyć!/ Gdy na wulkanie taniec whe/Nie trzeba przestać khęcić się!" (*O* 291) ("Down with nudity! Let's all dance!/Even if you're dancing on a powder keg/That's no reason to fall out

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(184)—Langer's conceptualization of dance elucidates the manner in which dance functions as a specific ludic force in <u>Operetka</u>.

of step [literally, to stop turning round]!" [*OP* 76]). Finally, the convergence of all these forms of *ilinx* in their extreme expression in Act 2 effects the political revolution.

In <u>Operetka</u>, then, the mask, as a meaningful form that articulates a human identity constructed within a particular historico-cultural context, functions in a multivalent manner. First, in keeping with the conventions of the operetta format, in Act 1, which opens with the period of *la belle époque* with its imitation of the decadent forms of Western culture, the characters lay bare the pure conventionality of role-playing in the theatrical precinct. The subject is reduced to the role and, with the aid of a unique, identifying set of signs, defines her/himself according to her/his function within the operetta. For example, after being introduced by the Chorus of Seigneurs, Szarm comes forward and describes his role within the general scheme of things—namely, he is a rake with a flamboyant flair for fashion. This act of self-representation, or self-speaking, is self-showing as showing off and "stands for" an era characterized by its decadence, narcissism and exhibitionism:

> Jam hhabia Szahm
> Zdobywca dam!
> Jam bihbant Szahm
> I lampaht Szahm
> Enfant gâté salonów, heu, heu, wąsik, monokl,
> laseczka ma, szapoklak mój, maniehy me (*ziewa*)
> A dogahessy
> I phincessy
> Kontessy, mieszczki, szwaczki i Murzynki
> Och, och, dhogi, ach, nieodpahty, ach sznytowy, ach,
> czahujący, ah, quel, chich, quel chahme et quelles manièhes! (*O*
> 235)

(I am Count Charmant
To the ladies a true gallant!
I am the rake Charmant
A blade and an elegant!
Enfant gate of every cafe
With top hat and cane
Monocle and moustache
And manners none can match!
[*Yawns.*]
Countesses and princesses
Seamstresses and Negresses
And daughters of the middle-class—
Oh I'm the idol of every lass!
So suave and debonair
A man of fashion and of flair
Ah, quel chic, quel charme et quelles manieres! [*OP* 17])

Firulet introduces himself in a similar manner as a hunter of female prey. While the men pile on the accessories, Albertynka, for her part, nominates herself "miracle of a girl" (see *O* 250), and makes a gesture of denuding self-anatomization as she names her body parts (in the diminuitive, for she is a girl-child, after all), thus mapping out the female body's changing "erotogenetic zones" (Silverman's term).

Other functions of the mask are contained in the modern survivors of the sorceror's mask: the carnival and black masks (Caillois 253). With respect to the former, one of the movements effected in the play is the carnivalization of the operetta form.[204] More specifically, operetta's "lowness" of form, its element of

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[204] Certain elements of this drama reflect the carnival experience as analyzed by Bakhtin (*RW*, *PDP*): the imagery of digestion (e.g., the listings of food) and regurgitation (in a parody of Sartrian nausea, the Professor's "wymiot absolutny, radykalny, uniwersalny, kosmiczny, fizyczny, metafizyczny, wszechwładny, wszechobejmujący, wymiot, wymiot, wymiot" [*O* 282] ["a radical, absolute, universal, cosmic, physical, metaphysical, omnipotent, all-encompassing and categorical vomit, vomit, vomit, vomit!"] [*OP* 68]); the disguising and unmasking (the elaborate dressing up of Albertynka in Act 2 is countered by the count and baron taking off their pants during the anti-duel); the ambivalent laughter, which ranges from merriment to threat; the prominence of corporeality, as in Albertynka's self-anatomization; the pure spectacularity of pageantry (a fashion parade), funerals (which, turning into a resurrection, affirms life and naked corporeality), balls and feasts. The following two articles also note the links

carnival ribaldry, is recuperated and turned against the lofty heights of its monumental effervescence[205] with a vengeance, as the marionette-like figures of the first act, so conventionally operetta-like in their uni-dimensionality, are transformed into carnival participants during the specially demarcated chronotope of the masked ball, before being swept out with the whirlwind of history. The procession of costumes, masks and sacks transforms the operetta into an anti-masque—i.e., a grotesque dance of monsters and clowns. While originally conceived to affirm the legitimacy of the dress parade, the cortege, capitalizing on the power of the carnival mask, serves instead to inspire fear and apprehension as it grants licence to excess and violence, anarchic improvisation and confusion, gesticulation and the pure expenditure of energy. Natural boundaries are violated: the disparities between the aristocracy and masses are abolished (the "bum" being that great democratizer) leading to carnivalistic *mésalliances* of the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid. For example, the ex-lackey-turned-revolutionary, Hufnagiel, kicks the Sartrian intellectual/professor in the backside (*O* 282; *OP* 68) while the unleashed pickpockets furiously tickle members of the aristocracy and the priest, creating massive confusion as the ball disintegrates into a Gombrowiczian *kupa* (*mêlée*). In coinciding the carnival expenditure of energy with the political revolution, Gombrowicz, as it were, harnesses the power of the carnival mask to metamorphose and to effect transition (Bakhtin, *RW* 40), not only in the structure

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between this play and the carnival: Jan Kott's "On Gombrowicz" (esp. 94-96) and Danuta Danek's "Oblicze. Gombrowicz i śmierć" (707-42), which is on Kazimierz Dejmek's production of Operetka.

[205] See Gombrowicz's preface to Operetka.

of the world, but concomitantly in human identity.

Caillois notes that the carnival mask's destructive forces are directed toward "disinterested, empty and joyous agitation" (my translation, 255). This function is represented, in Act 3, by Szarm and Firulet, who, as mentioned above, re-enter the scene dressed in pastoral clothes, their faces painted in an expression of the cretin-like joy of the clown (*O* 286; *OP* 97). In this capacity, the clown, as Jean Starobinski describes, is the figure of pure nonsense, the pure dispensation of laughter (141).

However, the clown does have another aspect, a diabolical and menacing one, as it serves to destabilize the established order. Starobinski continues:

> the entry of the clown tears through some of the mesh in the network, and in the suffocating plenitude of accepted significations, he opens a breach through which the wind of disquiet and life can rush [...]. Thus, [...] the clown attains the signification of the contradictor: he negates all pre-existing, affirmed systems, he introduces, into the massive coherence of the established order, the emptiness thanks to which the spectator [...] can laugh out loud. (my translation, 141-44).

In Operetka, this subversive function is contained by the black mask, which is one reduced to the essential, the abstract, and functioning as a celebration of erotic and political intrigue (Caillois 253). One appearance of the black mask is the sack in which "Sekhet przyszłości khyje się!" (*O* 268) ("Hidden [...]/Is the secret of the future" [*OP* 53]). Visually, it is a large, plain bag—one reduced to its basic shape and functionality. Hufnagiel discloses its serviceability as implying political complicity: "Worki stwarzają nastrój konspiracji i anarchii, powinny ułatwić wyzwolenie ukrytych jadów obecnej fazy strukturalnej procesu historycznego" (*O* 285) ("Sacks create an atmosphere of conspiracy and anarchy, and will facilitate the liberation of

those hidden poisons inherent in the present structural phase of the historical process" [*OP* 70]). The black mask also serves as a symbol of amorous scheming when donned by the thieves-cum-dogs. The wind first picks up the moment Szarm's thief lets his hand stray and touch Albertynka in a sexual manner, and it is the thieves together who, once let loose, touch everyone in a manner signifying the "penetration" of the high by the low. They are responsible for the seduction and abduction of Albertynka: the thieves, whose function it is to steal objects, steal the eroticized object of pursuit. Their re-entry in the final scene, dressed in black masks and, like grave-diggers, carrying a black coffin, turns them into the sign of a menacing force. In its capacity as a symbol of both political and amorous intrigue, then, the black mask permits the "whirlwind of disquiet" to rush into the order of *la belle époque*, cracking it and inducing a revolution that shatters the world and rearranges it on a different principle.

Masks, furthermore, serve a utilitarian function. So too the sack, which, on the one hand, serves to inspire fear while creating an atmosphere of conspiracy, on the other hand, hides an identity (i.e., the faces of the future). So, also, the objects—the lamp, table and Woman—of the third act veil the upper classes because "Bezpiecznej" (*O* 299) ("It's safer" [*OP* 86]). It is in the uniforms which close the second act that this utilitarian function is most articulate. As Caillois notes, whereas the mask, strictly speaking, disguises, the uniform, official and regulated, proclaims (256)—and, in Operetka, once the sacks are torn aside, revealing a face revulsed, possessed, with a haggard and tortured expression, the uniform proclaims the terror

of the Nazi regime. The General is dressed in an SS officer's uniform, complete with monocle and revolver; the Marchioness is a guard in a German concentration camp, with the regulation stick and manacles in hand; the Banker wears a protective gas mask and carries a muzzle and bomb.

The progression of roles and masks, therefore, can be schematized as follows. Beginning with *la belle époque*, with its imitation of decadent Western European culture, the subject is reduced to the conventional role and defines her/himself according to her/his function within the operetta. In Act 2, the political intrigue which prefigures the political revolution is figured in the sacks of the masquerade ball which cover up the costumes of the future. During the major upheaval of the Second World War, these sacks are torn aside, and the totalitarian ideologies of Nazi-fascism and Communism emerge respectively in the bloodied grimaces, uniforms and gas-masks of the SS regime, and in the abstraction of human identity indicated in Hufnagiel's nomination of himself as an "idea" (*O* 303; *OP* 89). In Act 3, after the horrors of the concentration camp and the extinction of humanity, human identity is manufactured and reified into objects.

At the interhuman judgment of the bourgeoisie and fascists, Fior, the master of fashion, demands an end to what has become "Męcząca maskarado!" (*O* 314) ("a painful masquerade" [*OP* 101]), that everyone become human again (*O* 309-10; *OP* 96). In the interhuman vision of the world, "maska maskę dręczy!" (*O* 310) ("one mask is tormenting another" [*OP* 103]). Fior's summation denounces the tyranny of, and suffering caused by, the deforming mask:

Przeklinam ludzki strój, przeklinam maskę
Co nam się ciało wżera, okrwawiona
Przeklinam mody, przeklinam kreacje
Krój pantalonów przeklinam i bluzek
Zanadto w nas się wzgryzł! (*O* 316)

(I curse man's clothing, I curse the masks.
Those bloodstained masks that eat into our bodies
[I curse fashion, I curse creations]
I curse the cut of trousers and blouses
They've eaten too far into our flesh! [*OP* 103])

While Ferdydurke's Józio[206] and Ślub's Henryk struggle in vain against the mask imposed by the other and for authenticity, in Operetka, Gombrowicz radicalizes mimicry as a fundamental and fundamentally deformative mode of human being.

The only way to escape this vicious circle of masks, as Genet's Saïd and Leïla would similarly attempt, is by the equally radical act of casting off all masks. Fior, the consummate demi-urge, urges everyone to strip off their particular deforming mask (pain) and then proceeds to conjure up untouchable, holy nudity. Albertynka on cue, resurrected, arises from the coffin, clothed in holy, human nakedness, eternally youthful, she dances. As a culmination of Albertynka's self-erotic preoccupation, her dance focuses on the body, on corporeality itself, its grace, vigor and erotic attraction, as she sings out: "A to me udka, rączki, nóżki me!/A to mój biuścik!/Ach, a to uszka, ząbki me!" (*O* 319) ("These are my thighs, my hands and feet/These are my ears and these my teeth/And these, oh, these are my breasts so petit!" [*OP* 106]). Simultaneously, because the dancer always assumes an illusory role

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[206] "Ach, stworzyć formę własną! Przerzucić się na zewnątrz! Wyrazić się! Niech kształt mój rodzi się ze mnie, niech nie będzie zrobiony mi!" (Ferdydurke 18) ("Ach, to create my own form! To externalize myself! To express myself! Let my form be born of me, let it not be imposed on me!" [my translation]).

in that s/he becomes an other, represents something, this dance gestures towards

humanity's salvation. Captured in the palpitation between the triumph of flesh

(nakedness) and the virtuality of symbolic meaning[207] (anthropomorphized resurrec-

tion), then, is the power of the anti-mask of nakedness to take humanity out of the

realm of the vicious circle of masks and to realize a measure of authenticity and

liberation: the anti-mask is the visual objectivization of the 1960s decade of love and

peace and the celebration of youth.[208]

Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda, Ślub and Operetka each present a variation on,

and important development of, the conceptualization of the dramatic world as a *topos*

for a "mirror-play." Engaging in an explicit ontological inquiry into the nature of

identity, Gombrowicz challenges the assumptions of *idem*-identity as he revisions the

manner in which a multi-form alterity, functioning within the broad context of the

liminal realm of the ludically interactive in-between, serves as a constitutive, creative,

transformative, deformative and destructive factor in the coming-to-be of the subject.

Cast into the interhuman church, Gombrowicz's subject is forced into a condition of

constant reconstruction that is disruptive, even subversive of a preceding, pre-estab-

lished or stable socio-political, ontological, discursive or literary order. In Iwona,

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[207] Starobinski describes the movement of "perpetual palpitation" of dance: "it raises the body toward a fictive signification and returns it to a literal physical presence" (my translation, 58).

[208] Lucien Goldmann, in "Notes on Operetta," argues that the play, basically optimistic, speaks from the perspective of revolt and the triumph of youth, and proclaims triumph in ridding History of its ideological guises. The end, he continues, though written a couple of years earlier, can be viewed as a chronicle of France in May-June 1968, which "affirmed the existence of a new historical force and the hope for a truly human world" (114). What Goldmann fails to take into account is that the events of 1968 were also the expression of an ideology.

even though the static, traditional order of the monarchy is restored in the end, Iwona's provocative power continues to reverberate through and destabilize the court as the aristocracy is compelled to bow before the even stiller life of this bourgeois interloper. In Ślub and especially in Operetka, the submission of the human being to the constantly changing masks and roles (imposed by others, international tensions, even the self) becomes an ineluctable way of being, the only possible escape from which is by throwing off of all masks and invoking the anti-form of nudity—or rather, nakedness, for nudity is itself but another metamorphic and culturally determined form.

CHAPTER FIVE

JEAN GENET'S INTERSPECULAR STAGE

Witold Gombrowicz's creation and exploration of a notion and category of form as that interhuman space which acts on every level of our existence, creating and defining, but also deforming us, and the categorical imperative of the human "I" to resist form, however in vain, represents one post-Pirandellian variation of specular theatre. Another important, and more extreme, variation of the presentation of subjectivity as intersubjectivity and, hence, as constituted and mediated by alterity, is located in the dramatic works of Jean Genet (1910-86). From his vision of the total theatricalization of human existence, the apotheosis of the reflection and the mask, and labyrinth of ritualized, interchangeable roles, impersonations, incarnations, replications, transformations and mirrored repetitions, there appears to be no exit—or perhaps only through the narrowest chink in the speculum.

Genet's critics have analyzed the function of the mask and role-playing in the dramatic works (Coe 223-25, 261; Krysiński, Le paradigme inquiet 355-92), the figure of the double,[209] the key notion of metamorphosis (Plunka), the dialectics of being

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[209] Cynthia Running-Johnson, in "Genet's 'Excessive' Double: Reading Les bonnes through Irigaray and Cixous," sums up the critics' views on Genet's use of the double: "[c]ritics discussing Jean Genet have named the configuration of the double as one of the major elements of his work. They have examined the form as it appears in the relations between characters, in the dual narrative structures of his writing, and in the thematic organization of his texts, with their paradoxical pairing of good and evil, masculine and feminine, and illusion and reality. Certain writers—Jean-Paul Sartre and critics Richard Coe and Jean-Marie Magnan—have linked the form to existential theory. Others, including Lewis Cetta and Robert Hauptman, have examined it from a more specifically psychological perspective. Sociological

337

and nothingness, of reality and illusion (Piemme, Gitenet, Borie, Sartre in <u>Saint Genet</u>, Abbott 205-10, Hassan 178-203), and the writer's reformulation of the notion of dramatic action as ritual and *jeu* (Innes 108-16, Vymétal Jacquemot, Murch, Pronko 142-52). I would refocus these discussions onto the specific nature of the specular image, which, in conjunction with the gaze, is the dominant paradigm of the reversibility relation in Genet's theatrical works. Because of the prevalent and multivalent appearance of the mirror image, and the way in which it is bound both metaphorically (i.e., it models the interdependency of self and other) and functionally to the constitution of identity, the most adequate formulation of Genet's version of the relational epistemology is *interspecularity*.[210]

Here, I discuss interspecularity as key to Genet's renovation of the notion of identity—the search for which stands as a significant thematic thread in his œuvre.[211]

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approaches such as that of Lucien Goldmann and the formalist perspective of Camille Naish are also inspired by the double in Genet's texts" (959). Running-Johnson argues, and here I would agree with her, that these critics have tended to simplify Genet's use of the figure of the double and that Genet in fact moves past the establishment of a simple series of oppositions "into the realm of the multiple," which she proposes to examine in light of the critical theories of Cixous and Irigaray. Benjamin Bennett, in "Performance and the Exposure of Hermeneutics," also employs the notion of the double in his examination of <u>Les nègres</u> when he discusses the figures as "characterized by a sharp internal break comparable to the distinction between subject of utterance and subject of enunciation" (446).

[210] The term appears in <u>Le paradigme inquiet</u>, where Krysiński argues that in <u>Les bonnes</u>, Genet creates an interspecularity that surpasses the intersubjectivity functioning in Pirandello's works (371).

[211] Genet's first play, <u>Haute Surveillance</u> (1948, <u>Deathwatch</u>), which will not be dealt with in this essay, continues his novels' preoccupation with the prison theme by setting three criminals—Yeux-Verts, a prestigious murderer, Lefranc, who aspires to criminal renown, and Maurice—in a cell. Reminiscent of Jean-Paul Sartre's infernal world of <u>Huis clos</u>, the play is set in a hermetically-sealed space governed by its own rules of precedence, its own hierarchy, in which the characters are subjected incessantly to the gaze of the other. The central theme, which recurs throughout Genet's works, is the quest for identity through crime. Lefranc's thwarted effort to impose his concept of himself upon the others—an effort which stems from his frustration (evident also in Gombrowicz's <u>Ferdydurke</u>) with being "between" the others—serves as the catalyst (33-34). Lefranc eventually feels compelled to murder Maurice, a deed which brings him not the desired esteem of Yeux-Verts, but disdain and solitude.

In a world in which identity is bestowed according to the crime committed, Lefranc comes to

Then, I briefly review Genet's pivotal balletic work, 'Adame Miroir (first performed 1946, first published 1948), and early play, Les bonnes (1947, The Maids), to establish a frame of reference for interspecularity, focus on Le balcon (1956, The Balcony) as the fullest manifestation of interspecularity, and conclude by indicating the development of the reflexive spectator-spectacle relation in Les nègres (1958, The Blacks) and the more radical effacement of alterity that Genet effects in Les paravents (1961, The Screens).

As was the case in the works of Pirandello and Gombrowicz, so in Genet's plays, the basic I-other model of intersubjectivity undergoes an expansion, and alterity takes on a polysemic character. The progression can be charted vis-à-vis the functions of the specular image and the versions of the mask, and the way in which Genet renders mimesis (being like) reflective and reflexive, transforming it into identity (being). So, for instance, the interspecular relation also obtains between worlds (e.g., the "inside" and "outside" worlds in Le balcon; the Arab and French colonial worlds in Les paravents), and between performance and audience in a chiasmic interplay and reversibility of spectator and spectated that melds Pirandello's metatheatrical explorations into the interpretive nature of human existence with Gombrowicz's vision of the potentially deformative nature of the self-other relation.

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be identified according to the identities he attempts to steal. Maurice would divest him of the crimes in which Lefranc tried to clothe himself: "Je te déshabille. Tu te nourris des autres. Tu te vêtais, te parais de nos beautés. Tu voles nos crimes! Tu as voulu connaître la vraie composition d'un crime, je t'ai regardé le digérer" (106) ("I will undress you. You feed on others. You clothe yourself, don our glories. You steal our crimes! You wanted to know the true make-up of crime, I watched you digest it"); and, "Tu es gonflé par notre vie" (137) ("You are swollen up by our lives"). It is the theme of identity as reflected in the opinions of others that connects this play with his later ones. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Genet's works are mine.

I.   INTERSPECULARITY

While the interrelated issues that I have articulated under the rubric of specularity appear throughout Genet's literary œuvre,[212] here I mention just one essay which presents in distilled form Genet's vision of the human being and most concisely encapsulates the notion of interspecularity—"Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés bien réguliers, et foutu aux chiottes" (1967, "What remained of a Rembrandt torn up into very even little pieces and chucked into the crapper"). In relating an encounter with a fellow train passenger, Genet traces a crucial passage—central to Genet's theatrical works—from the experience of alterity (or self-other divergence) to that of identity (or self-other communion):

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[212] For example, Genet's novel, Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs (1944, Our Lady of the Flowers), presents a cluster of these issues: the notion of dressing for others, for the effect one has on, or to affect, others ("on ne s'habille pas que pour soi et Mignon s'habille pour la prison. À chaque nouvel achat, il croit en voir l'effet sur ses camarades possibles à Fresnes ou à la Santé" [29] ("one does not dress for oneself alone and Darling dressed for prison. With each new purchase, he thought he could see the effect on his possible mates in Fresnes or Santé"); the consciousness that one is not necessarily an agent, but subject to the actions of others ("qu'au lieu d'agir et de nous connaître agissants, nous nous savons agis" [135] ["rather than acting and recognizing ourselves as acting, we know ourselves as/we realize that we are being acted upon"]); the ability of the gaze upon an object to rebound self-reflexively on the subject and provoke self-understanding ("[u]n regard—c'est peut-être de notre œil—a l'acuité soudaine, précise de l'extra lucide, et l'ordre de ce monde n'a qu'à disparaître. C'est ce qu'il fait en un clin d'œil. Le monde est retourné comme un gant. Il se trouve que c'est moi le gant et que je comprends enfin qu'au jour du jugement, c'est avec ma propre voix que Dieu m'appelera: «Jean, Jean!»" [135] ["[a] look, perhaps our own, need have only the sudden acuity, the precision of the extra lucid, for the order of this world to disappear. This is what happens in the wink of an eye. The world is turned inside out like a glove. It happens that I am the glove and that I finally understand that on Judgement Day, it will be with my own voice that God calls me, 'Jean, Jean!'"]); the use of the metaphor of reflection to convey the constitutive power of otherness, and the consequent proliferation of identity according to the visions others have of us ("[j]e veux dire que la solitude de la prison me donnait cette liberté d'être avec les cent Jean Genet entrevus au vol chez cent passants, car je suis bien pareil à Mignon, qui volait aussi les Mignon qu'un geste irréfléchi, laissait s'échapper de tous les inconnus qu'il avait frôlés; mais le nouveau Jean fait rentrer en moi-même—comme un éventail, qui se replie, les dessins de la gaze—fait rentrer je ne sais quoi" [142-43] ["I want to say that the solitude of prison gave me the freedom to be with the hundred Jean Genets glimpsed in the flight of a hundred passers-by, as I am quite like Darling, who also stole the Darlings whom a thoughtless gesture let escape from all the strangers whom he had brushed up against; but the new Jean made enter into me—like a fan which enfolds the tissue's designs—made enter into me I don't know what"]).

[s]on regard n'était pas d'un autre: c'était le mien que je rencontrais dans une glace, *par inadvertance et dans la solitude et l'oubli de moi.* Ce que j'éprouvais je ne pus le traduire que sous cette forme: je m'écoulais de mon corps, et par les yeux, dans celui du voyageur *en même temps que le voyageur s'écoulait dans le mien.* Ou plutôt: *je m'étais écoulé,* car le regard fut si bref que je ne peux me le rappeler qu'avec l'aide de ce temps verbal.

[...]

Comment, je fus incapable de le dire, comment je passai de cette connaissance que tout homme est semblable à tout autre, à cette idée que tout homme est tous les autres hommes? [...] «Au monde il existe et il n'exista jamais qu'un seul homme. Il est tout entier en chacun de nous, donc il est nous-même. Chacun est l'autre et les autres. Dans l'abandon du soir, un clair regard échangé—appuyé ou à peine posé, j'ignorais la technique—nous en rendait compte. Sauf qu'un phénomène, dont je ne connais même pas le nom, semble diviser à l'infini cet homme unique, le fragment apparemment dans l'accident et dans la forme, et rend étranger à nous-même chacun des fragments.»

[...]

Si chaque enveloppe, précieusement, recèle une même identité, chaque enveloppe est singulière et réussit à établir entre chacun de nous une opposition qui paraît irrémédiable, à créer une innombrable variété d'individus qui se veulent: l'un-l'autre. [...] Mais ce regard allait du voyageur inconnu à moi, et la certitude aussitôt que l'un-l'autre n'étaient qu'un, à la fois ou moi ou lui, et moi et lui? ("Ce qui est resté..." 22-28)

([h]is gaze was not that of someone else: it was my own that I was meeting in a mirror, *inadvertently and in the solitude and oblivion of myself.* What I was feeling at the time I can only translate in the following terms: I flowed out of my body, and through my eyes, into that of the traveller *at the same time as the traveller flowed into mine.* Or, rather, *I had flowed,* for the exchange of looks was so fast that I can only recall it with the help of that tense.

[...]

How had I passed from the knowledge that every man resembles any other to the notion that every man *is* every other man, I was incapable of saying. [...] "There exists, and has always existed, but one single man in the world. He is completely in each of us, therefore he is we. Each man is the

> other and the others. In the relaxed atmosphere of evening, a
> limpid look exchanged—cast or barely darted, I was ignorant of
> the technique—made us aware of it. With the exception that
> one phenomenon, whose name I do not even know, seems to
> divide this unique man infinitely, apparently fragments him in
> accident and in form, and makes each of the fragments
> unfamiliar to us."
> [...]
> If every envelope preciously conceals a same identity then every
> envelope is singular and succeeds in establishing between us an
> opposition which seems irremediable, in creating an infinite
> variety of individuals who are equal: one = the other. [...] But
> this look went from the unknown traveller to me, and in a flash
> I knew for certain that the one-the other was one and the same,
> at once either me or him, and me and him. ["What remained..."
> 79-88])

The movement from the experience of alterity still implicit in the term of reciprocity

(*l'un-l'autre*) and the notion of resemblance (*semblable à*), to that of identity (*être*) is

achieved by using the optic metaphors of reflection (*la glace*) and the gaze (*regard*)

and is conveyed through the self-reflexive verb in the passive mood (*je m'étais*

écoulé).

The specular image and the gaze serve Genet as visual paradigms of the

reversibility relation and have cognitive and affective values. Genet's is not a

mastering, objectivizing gaze. Rather, it is an empathetic, hermeneutic one in which

the seen tempers the seeing: "[n]otre regard peut être vif ou lent, cela dépend de la

chose regardée autant, ou plus, que de nous" ("Ce qui est resté..." 21) ("[o]ur gaze

can be sharp or dull, depending on the object seen as much as, or more than, upon

ourselves" ["What remained..." 77]). The gazer (Genet's "I") comes to understand

the other through the empathetic exchanging of positions with the other: the

experience of *in-sight* arises from the activity of *in-forming* the self by stepping outside

the self, imaged here as a mutual "flowing out." This process can occur only through the *a priori* establishment of a reversibility relation in which the gazer, in order to overcome the absolute alterity of the other (object of the gaze) and transform the other into something familiar to the gazer, comes to be governed by the claims of the other.[213] Thus, it is the action of gazing upon the object of cognition and, in the reflex, the action of that object on the subject, that promotes a defamiliarization and then insight, a transformation in the subject's awareness and understanding of the other and the self—namely, each of us is the other. In the case of Genet's "I," it also has a very powerful somatic affect on the subject in terms of disgust and sexual stimulation. Vision becomes a profound "revisionary process" (Benston 441)—a transition which is crucial to understanding the shift in Genet's theatrical works, to borrow again Benston's phrasing, "from the stage to the auditorium of consciousness" (441).

The real significance of the metaphoricity of the mirror in this essay and for Genet's dramatic works, then, lies in its function as a model that clearly presents a back-and-forth process that takes place, and that, in its extreme, functions to promote an interchange, between the relational members of subject and object, self and other,

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[213] Recall the earlier discussion of Bakhtin's conception of the hermeneutic gaze in the first chapter of this study. Merleau-Ponty's description of the reversibility of viewer and viewed in "On the Phenomenology of Language," serves as an excellent gloss for Genet's essay: "[i]t happens that my gaze stumbles against certain sights (those of other human and, by extension, animal bodies) and is thwarted by them. I am invested by them just when I thought I was investing them, and I see a form sketched out in space that arouses and convokes the possibilities of my own body as if it were a matter of my own gestures or behavior. Everything happens as if the functions of intentionality and the intentional object were paradoxically interchanged. The scene invites me to become its adequate viewer, as if a different mind than my own suddenly came to dwell in my body, or rather as if my mind were drawn out there and emigrated into the scene it was in the process of setting for itself. I am snapped up by a second myself outside me; I perceive an other" (94).

and, by extension to the theatrical situation, spectator and spectacle. Genet superimposes an intersubjective world view onto a specular playspace and thereby opens up an interspecular world in which the audience members, like a glove turned inside out,[214] become increasingly and uncomfortably aware that they have been looking, not through a glass, but into a *glace*, have themselves become the spectacle. Such a critical interplay of glass and mirror, seeing through and seeing the self, is rendered succinctly by Schechner in <u>Between Theatre and Anthropology</u> in his examination of the interface of life and art/performance:

> [s]ometimes—I would say almost always—people peeping through see not only what's on the other side but their own image too. The interface between realms is a mirror. Only by willingly disregarding that image of themselves are they able to "see through" to the other side. But this willing suspension has grown too costly. Many prefer to see things stained by the consciousness that one is seeing. Thus the reality of the perceived event—as art, as life—is of both what is seen and the seeing of it. So much has this experience of seeing myself even as I see the event I am looking at become so central, even obsessional, that I run back and forth from one side of the mirror to the other, looking first at art from the life side and then at life from the art side, always seeing myself from either side. (296-97)

II.   THE EARLY THEATRICAL WORKS

§1.   'ADAME MIROIR: THE SPECULAR DANCE

Originally created for *le Grand-Guignol* puppet theatre, 'Adame Miroir features dancers caught in a specular world—namely, a Hall of Mirrors—who

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[214] Genet uses this metaphor in <u>Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs</u> to conceptualize the process of self-understanding (135). Merleau-Ponty uses this same image to visualize the intertwining in <u>The Visible and the Invisible</u>.

undergo a chain of metamorphoses leading to death. The Domino enters, crosses the stage, looks into the mirrors, which fail to reflect his image, and leaves. From that spot enters the main character, a Sailor. When the Sailor, trapped in the Hall of Mirrors, gazes into the mirror, he notices that his Image does not precisely replicate his gestures. Eventually, the Sailor, penetrating the mirrored surface, and thus entering the virtual world of reflection, socks the Image in the jaw. This act precipitates a mimicked fight during which the Image leaves the mirror and enters the "real" world. The mirrors, divested of their image, cease reflecting. The Image pursues the Sailor; then, they reverse roles until, facing one another, they make a gesture of consolation—namely, the exchange of a cigarette (from Sailor to Image). An erotic dance follows. Just when they are about to unite, the Domino enters, steps between the Sailor and the Image, dances with them in an increasingly turbulent manner and then kills the Sailor. The Domino, pursuing and capturing the Image, tries to force the Image into a mirror, but the Image escapes. The two, gyrating in opposite directions (*ilinx*), exchange clothing, effecting an exchange of identities during which the ex-Domino reveals himself to be the dead Sailor. The Domino (ex-Image) pursues the Sailor (ex-Domino) who tries to save himself by re-entering a mirror; however, the mirror, unable to accept the subject, repels him. Eventually, the Sailor, retreating, penetrates a mirror, after which the Sailor (now Image) and Domino do battle. Both retreat and the Image disappears from view. The Domino leaps at the mirror, but rather than encountering the Image (ex-Sailor), he knocks against his own Image. Astonished, he retreats as does his Image. Finally, a double

mirror opens and swallows up the Domino into the world of endless reflecting.

'Adame Miroir lays bare an architectonic that structures the majority of Genet's dramatic works. This architectonic consists of a carefully choreographed exchange of active and passive roles (pursuer and pursued, murderer and victim, subject and image) which devolves into a chain-like interchange of identities (Sailor → Domino → Image → Sailor → split Image; Image → Domino → Image).[215] Within this chain of metamorphoses, the other represents an annihilating force both concretely, by virtue of the death blows, and symbolically, by virtue of the other's appropriation of the self's identity. This series of identity exchanges, which, upon each turn, is preceded by a coupling (either erotic or violent), is presented visually, to literalize Merleau-Ponty's metaphor of flesh *qua visible-voyant*, as "two mirrors facing one another where two indefinite series of images set in one another arise which belong really to neither of the two surfaces, since each is only the rejoinder of the other, and which therefore form a couple" (*VI* 139).

The ballet, moreover, exploring the ontological import of the specular image, demonstrates the way in which its "being" disappears. Gadamer explains: the mirror image "exists only for someone looking into the mirror, and is nothing beyond its mere appearance. [... A] mirror makes what it reflects visible to someone only for as long as he looks in it and sees his own image or whatever else is reflected in it" (*TM* 138). In short, the mirror image (as Églé failed to realize in La Dispute) is/has no independent being but is understood as something that is contingent on that which

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[215] This chain creates a "spiral" or vertiginous effect much like Sartre's notion of the "tourniquet" or "whirligig" in Saint Genet (611).

is being reflected. Subject and Image are bound to and co-exist in and for one another. Or rather, in 'Adame Miroir, Genet, pointing to the absolute interdependence of the reflected image and that which is being reflected vis-à-vis the series of couplings and reversals of identity, reverses the Image and Subject, making the latter contingent on the former—a point that is emphasized by the Image's rebelliousness. Genet then not only disrupts the usual relation of dependence between Subject and Image, but disengages the reflection from that which is reflected by rupturing the correspondence between the Image's gestures and the Subject's. Genet plays with, exposes and breaks down the barrier (the silvered mirror surface) between Subject and Image, turning it into a penetrable interface, by alternately drawing attention to its presence and then disregarding it. It is this alternation, and the accompanying crossing from the virtual space of the virtual other (mirror) into the "virtual" space of the self (hall of mirrors) and back again, that set in motion the laws of reversibility and the exchanges of identity.

Thus, the transposition of intersubjectivity into interspecularity is realized vis-à-vis the specular world of the hall of mirrors. As is explored in greater depth in the later works, the reflected image comes to serve as a metaphor for the virtuality of theatrical representation, which "appears" only in relation to the spectator and which, further, promotes self-seeing on the part of the spectator through identification with the spectated, the non-self. Michel Foucault's reflections in "Of Other Spaces" on the mirror image are appropriate for the discussion here and a potent forecast of what is to come: "[i]n the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal,

virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent" (24).

§2.   LES BONNES: THE ETERNAL COUPLE GLORY-BOUND

Les bonnes (*LB*) explores the reciprocity and reversibility of power relations and the negative impact of the other on the self. Here, the investigation of provisional identity that was presented in seminal form in 'Adame Miroir vis-à-vis the commerce of identities takes Genet into a subjunctified, theatrically ritualized world of "restored behavior" (Schechner's term), where the attempt to "rebecome" what one never was but always desired to be locks the maids into a repeatable playscript by means of which they would draw nearer to the identity sought through impersonation. However, as they discover, the achievement of the identity of the other can take place only through the annihilation of the self.

Two maids, Claire and Solange, are driven to attempt the murder of their employer, Madame. When the curtain rises, Claire and Solange are in mid-impersonation in a secret, repeated ritual that is to culminate in Madame's death: Solange plays Claire or, more precisely, the role of Symbolic Maid who is ritually debased by means of a carefully scripted verbal diatribe; Claire plays Madame, or Symbolic Mistress who is ritually deified. However, by means of anonymous letters, the maids have just falsely accused Madame's lover of robbery. Upon learning that Monsieur is to be released, they realize their betrayal will be discovered and they resolve to murder the actual Madame for real this time. They fail again and consider

killing themselves. So, they resume their charade and bring their fantasy to its logical conclusion. Claire-as-Madame commands Solange-as-Claire to serve the poisoned tea, which she drinks, while Solange-and-Claire, like Henryk, wrists verbally self-manacled, awaits arrest.

The maids live in a redoubled state of bondage. First, they can only define themselves as seen in the eyes of Madame or Monsieur—namely, as maids. Claire-as-Madame (representative Mistress) declares to Solange-as-Claire (representative Maid): "Par moi, par moi seule, la bonne existe. Par mes cris et par mes gestes" (*LB* 27) ("Through me, through me alone, does the maid exist. Through my cries and through my gestures") and "C'est grâce à moi que tu es" (27) ("It is thanks to/because of me that you are"). The Maids' being is determined directly by their relation to the Mistress. The reciprocity of this power relationship is made evident through the insults that Claire-as-Madame heaps on Solange-as-Claire, in particular through the Symbolic Mistress's acknowledgment that the Maid functions as a deformed image of the Mistress: "Vos gueules d'épouvante et de remords, vos coudes plissés, vos corsages démodés, vos corps pour porter nos défroques. Vous êtes nos miroirs déformants, notre soupape, notre honte, notre lie" (101) ("Your frightened, guilty faces, your puckered elbows, your outmoded clothes, your bodies fit only for our cast-offs! You're our distorting mirrors, our loathesome vent, our shame, our dregs"). When being is thus expressed in terms of a power relation, selfhood arises from a dialectic of the power to modify and the power to suffer modification, a point which is made in Claire-as-Madame's statement: "Je grandis davantage pour te

réduire et t'exalter" (27) ("I become greater in order to degrade and exalt you").[216]

Second, the maids define themselves according to the way they see one another:

SOLANGE: Tu ne te voyais pas.

CLAIRE: Oh! si! Je peux me regarder dans ton visage et voir les ravages qu'y fait notre victime! (*LB* 44)

(SOLANGE: You couldn't see yourself.

CLAIRE: Oh, yes, I could! I can see myself in your face and see the ravages made there by our victim!)

Claire interprets the body and gestures of the other as a mirror for herself. It is the confrontation with the other that constitutes the decisive advent for the reversibility of seeing-being seen, that is, of the narcissistic self-seeing. They continue:

SOLANGE: Je voudrais t'aider. Je voudrais te consoler, mais je sais que je te dégoûte. Je te répugne. Et je le sais puisque tu me dégoûtes. S'aimer dans le dégoût, ce n'est pas s'aimer.

CLAIRE: C'est trop s'aimer. Mais j'en ai assez de ce miroir effrayant qui me renvoie mon image comme une mauvaise odeur. Tu es ma mauvaise odeur. (58)

(SOLANGE: I would like to help you. I would like to console you, but I know that I disgust you. I repulse you. And I know that because you disgust me. To be in love in disgust is not to be in love.

CLAIRE: It is too much to be in love. But I've had it with this frightening mirror which sends back my image like a foul

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[216] In his study of the play in <u>Saint Genet</u>, Sartre explains this interdependency in terms of the relativity of maid to mistress and, moreover, of female to male: "[a]s a woman in relationship to Monsieur, Madame has only *relative* being. As the maids' mistress, she retains an absolute being. But the maids are relative to everything and everyone; their being is defined by its absolute relativity. They are *others*" (617).

odour. You are my foul odour.)

Where in the Mistress-Maid specular relation, the other (Maid) as mirror image

functions to distort, here it functions to reproduce.

The relations are not set once and for all; rather, just as the maids alternate

roles on different nights when playing out the drama of the Maid and Madame, so

they exchange active and passive roles, relations of domination and submission, as

they submit to the law of reversibility dictated by the specular paradigm they invoked

as metaphor. Claire at one point says, "À mon tour de te dominer" (59) ("It's my

turn to dominate you"). The result is that, as Fior expresses in Operetka, one is no

longer certain which of the two menaces the other—even, at times, which one is

which, that is, where one stops and where the other begins. One finishes the

sentence started by the other (e.g., 92). Each completes the other.

The mirror image is not only a verbal metaphor expressing interdependence.

The mirror, furthermore, is a stage prop that functions strategically as an instrument

for achieving the identity sought through impersonation, through mimicry, by visually

translating and reproducing the reflexivity of interhuman relations. The opening of

the play provides a good demonstration. As Sartre explains in Saint Genet: "[w]hen

the curtain rises, Claire is standing in front of the dressing table of her mistress. She

is experimenting with Madame's gestures and language. For Genet, this is an actual

incantation. We shall see later on that, by imitating the gestures of his superior, the

domestic treacherously draws him into himself and becomes saturated with him"

(619). Claire, gazing into the mirror, "incants" Madame by imitating the latter's

gestures and language: between herself and the image in the mirror, she conjures up the image of Madame. Later, when Claire-as-Madame's face begins to "decompose" (LB 30) as a consequence of her forgetting herself (or rather, her role), Solange-as-Claire hands Claire a mirror to help her "compose" herself back into the role of Madame.

The movement from self-other divergence to self-other convergence in the situation of absolute relationality modelled by reflection brings with it devastating consequences. As the drama draws to a close, in an act of "self"-annihilation, "Claire" (Solange-as-Claire) kills Claire by serving her the poison and Solange is left alone to incarnate the dual existence of Claire-and-Solange in prison. The passive and the active coincide as both become the site of a chiasm: suicide merges murderer and victim; Solange manacles herself (arrester and arrested). As well, Laura Oswald argues, Claire is both murdered by her own self and survives herself by being transformed into part of Solange (126). Claire tells Solange, "Nous irons jusqu'à la fin. Tu seras seule pour vivre nos deux existences. Il te faudra beaucoup de force. Personne ne saura au bagne que je t'accompagne en cachette. Et surtout, quand tu seras condamnée, n'oublie pas que tu me portes en toi. Précieusement" (LB 111) ("We will take this to the limit. You will be left alone to live our two lives. You will need great strength. No one in the penal colony can know that I am accompanying you in secret. And above all, when you are condemned, don't forget that you carry me inside yourself. Preciously"). Furthermore, the destiny that awaits Solange-and-Claire in the penal colony of Guyana is that of Madame and Monsieur

as, first, fantasized and enacted by the maids (21) and, later, ventured by Madame herself (68-69, 76)—namely, the sainted Madame would follow the criminal, Monsieur, into exile in Guyana. In effect, then, Solange is to incarnate the quadrupled existence of Claire and Solange, Monsieur and Madame, and, on a symbolic level, Genet's "eternal couple of the criminal and saint" (60), the male and the female.

The pluralization of identities is signalled dialogically: in the (at least) doubling up of the dramatic voice, indicated by changes in intonation and by verbal mimicry; in the use and incorporation of the interpersonal deictic markers of I-you (addresser-addressee). As does Gombrowicz, Genet plays with intonation in dramatic discourse, whose very performance is heavily reliant upon the actor's conscious internalization and iconic presentation of a "change of speech subjects." In such a situation, to reiterate, "the speaker's expression penetrates through these boundaries and spreads to the other's speech, which is transmitted in ironic, indignant, sympathetic, or reverential tones" (Bakhtin, *SG* 92-93). Verbal mimicry of another's speech, thus, involves an explicit interpretation (evaluation via tone), or tonal engagement, of another's speech by the actor/character. A good example of this (one that recalls the strategy employed by Shakespeare whereby Ulysses describes Patroclus' travestied mimicry of the Greek generals) is the passage referring to the Maids' verbal enactment of Madame's penal colony fantasy, which is *followed* by Madame's own overblown (re-)enactment of the Maids' travestied enactment. The first passage is uttered by Claire-as-Madame:

Tu parles de veuvage! Monsieur n'est pas mort, Claire. Monsieur, de bagne en bagne, sera conduit jusqu'à la Guyane peut-être, et moi, sa maîtresse, folle de douleur, je l'accompagnerai. Je serai du convoi. Je partagerai sa gloire. Tu parles de veuvage. La robe blanche est le deuil des reines, Claire, tu l'ignores. Tu me refuses la robe blanche! (*LB* 21)

(You speak of widowhood! Monsieur is not dead, Claire. Monsieur, from penal colony to penal colony, will be taken to Guyana perhaps, and I, his mistress, mad with sorrow, I will accompany him. I will escort him. I will share his glory. You speak of widowhood. The white dress is the mourning garb of queens, Claire, you've forgotten. You deny me the white dress!)

The next is uttered by Madame, who works herself up into an post-orgasmic state:

Mais innocent ou coupable, je ne l'abandonnerai jamais. Voici à quoi on reconnaît son amour pour un être: Monsieur n'est pas coupable, mais s'il l'était, je deviendrais sa complice. Je l'accompagnerais jusqu'à la Guyane, jusqu'en Sibérie. Je sais qu'il s'en tirera, au moins par cette histoire imbécile m'est-il donné de prendre conscience de mon attachement à lui. Et cet événement destiné à nous séparer nous lie davantage, et me rend presque plus heureuse. D'un bonheur monstrueux! Monsieur n'est pas coupable, mais s'il l'était, avec quelle joie j'accepterais de porter sa croix! D'étape en étape, de prison en prison, et jusqu'au bagne je le suivrais. A pied s'il le faut. Jusqu'au bagne, jusqu'au bagne, Solange! Que je fume! Une cigarette! (68-69)

(But innocent or guilty, I will never abandon him. Here is how one recognizes love for another: Monsieur is not guilty, but if he were, I would become his accomplice. I would accompany him to Guyana, to Siberia. I know he will get out of it, at least this idiotic situation has made me conscious of my attachment to him. And this event, destined to separate us, links us more, and makes me almost happy. With a monstrous happiness! Monsieur is not guilty but if he were with what joy would I agree to carry his cross! From one stage to the next, from prison to prison, to the penal colony would I follow him. On foot if necessary. To the penal colony, to the penal colony, Solange! I need a smoke! A cigarette!)

Another instance where the inherence of dialogism points to a doubling of the self is where there is revealed a conflict between the speech of the locutor and her/his discursive or social position: when a character speaks out of character, as when a servant assumes a dominant speech position vis-à-vis the master. In the following exchange, Solange-as-Claire, Symbolic Maid, revolts against Claire-as-Madame, Symbolic Mistress, and begins to berate her. At the same time, Solange forgets that she is playing the role of Claire to Claire's Mistress. Claire's "gentle" reminder is designed to put her back in her "place":

SOLANGE (*marchant sur elle*):
> Oui madame, ma belle madame. Vous croyez que tout vous sera permis jusqu'au bout? Vous croyez pouvoir dérober la beauté du ciel et m'en priver? Choisir vos parfums, vos poudres, vos rouges à ongles, la soie, le velours, la dentelle et m'en priver? Et me prendre le laitier? Avouez! Avouez le laitier! Sa jeunesse, sa fraîcheur vous troublent, n'est-ce pas? Avouez le laitier. Car Solange vous emmerde!

CLAIRE (*affolée*):
> Claire! Claire!

SOLANGE: Hein?

CLAIRE (*dans un murmure*):
> Claire, Solange, Claire.

SOLANGE: Ah! Oui, Claire. Claire vous emmerde! Claire est là, plus claire que jamais. Lumineuse! (29)

(SOLANGE [*advancing on Claire*]:
> Yes, Madame, my beautiful Madame. You think that you are permitted to do everything to the extreme? You think that you have the power to disrobe the heaven's beauty and deprive me of it? To choose your perfumes, your powders, your nail polish, the silk, the velvets, the lace and deprive me of them? And to take my milkman

> from me? Admit it! Confess to the milkman! His youth, his freshness disturb you, isn't that right? Confess to the milkman. For Solange taunts you!

CLAIRE [*panicked*]:
> Claire! Claire!

SOLANGE: What?

CLAIRE [*in a murmur*]:
> Claire, Solange, Claire.

SOLANGE: Ah, yes, Claire taunts you! Claire is there, clearer than ever. Luminous!)

Here, Claire foregrounds the actor/character split, as well as the confusion entailed by the assumption of serial identity ("Claire, Solange, Claire"),[217] while the use of the deictic marker of place (there) and reference to the self in the third person signals the consequent displacement of the self from the self that we have seen already in, for example, La Dispute.

Solange's final long monologue, in which she verbally enacts her own arrest, trial and condemnation, employs a number of dialogic devices which demonstrate the splitting of the self and proliferation of identities effected through appropriation. The changes in speech subjects and addressees, which create a vertical stratification of speech, are indicated by the following markers: Symbolic Maid [SM], Symbolic Mistress [SMIS], Solange [S], Claire [C], Narrator [N], Inspector [I].

> [SM → SMIS] Hurlez si vous voulez! Poussez même votre

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[217] Claire also admits confusion as to the real identity later on: "Claire ou Solange, vous m'irritez—car je vous confonds, Claire ou Solange, vous m'irritez et me portez vers la colère. Car c'est vous que j'accuse de tous nos malheurs" (*LB* 97) ("Claire or Solange, you [in the formal or plural second person] irritate me, for I confuse you, Claire or Solange, you irritate me and drive me to anger. For it is you whom I blame for all our troubles").

dernier cri, madame! (*Elle pousse Claire qui rest accroupie dans un coin.*) [N] Enfin! Madame est morte! étendue sur le linoléum... étranglée par les gants de la vaisselle. [...] (*Elle imite la voix de Madame.*) [SMIS] M'en voici réduite à porter le deuil de ma bonne. À la sortie du cimetière, tous les domestiques du quartier défilaient devant moi comme si j'eusse été de la famille. J'ai si souvent prétendu qu'elle faisait partie de la famille. La morte aura poussé jusqu'au bout la plaisanterie. [SM → SMIS] Oh! Madame... Je suis l'égale de Madame et je marche la tête haute... (*Elle rit*). [SM → I] Non, monsieur l'Inspecteur, non... Vous ne saurez rien de mon travail. Rien de notre travail en commun. Rien de notre collaboration à ce meurtre... [SM → SMIS] Les robes? Oh! Madame peut les garder. Ma sœur et moi nous avions les nôtres. Celles que nous mettions la nuit en cachette. Maintenant, j'ai ma robe et je suis votre égale. Je porte la toilette rouge des criminelles. [SM → I] Je fais rire Monsieur? Je fais sourire Monsieur? [SM → SM] Il me croit folle. Il pense que les bonnes doivent avoir assez bon goût pour ne pas accomplir de gestes réservés à Madame! [SM → I] Vraiment il me pardonne? Il est la bonté même. [...] [SM → SMIS] Madame s'aperçoit de ma solitude! Enfin! Maintenant je suis seule. Effrayante. Je pourrais vous parler avec cruauté, mais je peux être bonne... Madame se remettra de sa peur. Elle s'en remettra très bien. Parmi ses fleurs, ses parfums, ses robes. Cette robe blanche que vous portiez le soir au bal de l'Opéra. [...] Je suis étrangleuse. Mademoiselle Solange, celle qui étrangla sa sœur! Me taire? Madame est délicat vraiment. Mais, j'ai pitié de Madame. [...] [S → C] J'appartiens à la police, Claire? Elle aimait vraiment beaucoup, beaucoup, Madame!... [SM → I] Non, monsieur l'Inspecteur, je n'expliquerai rien devant eux. Ces choses-là ne regardent que nous... Cela, ma petite, c'est notre nuit à nous! (*Elle allume une cigarette et fume d'une façon maladroite. La fumée la fait tousser.*) Ni vous ni personne ne saurez rien, sauf que cette fois Solange est allée jusqu'au bout. Vous la voyez vêtue de rouge. Elle va sortir.

[...]

    [N] Sortir. Descendre le grand escalier: la police l'accompagne. Mettez-vous au balcon pour la voir marcher entre les pénitents noirs. Il est midi. [...] Le bourreau la suit de près. À l'oreille il lui chuchote des mots d'amour. [S → C] Le bourreau m'accompagne, Claire! Le bourreau m'accompagne! (*Elle rit.*)

[...]

Maintenant, nous sommes mademoiselle Solange Lemercier. La femme Lemercier. La Lemercier. La fameuse criminelle. (*Lasse.*) Claire, nous sommes perdues. (105-09)

([SM → SMIS] Scream if you want! Spew out your final cry, Madame! [*She pushes Claire who crouches in a corner.*] [N] Finally! Madame is dead! Splayed out on the linoleum... strangled by rubber gloves. [... *She imitates the voice of Madame.*] [SMIS] Here I am reduced to wearing the maid's mourning clothes. At the exit to the cemetery, all the domestics in the quarter parade before me as though I were part of the family. I so often pretended that I was part of the family. Death will have pushed to the limit that pleasantry. [SM → SMIS] Oh! Madame... I am the equal of Madame and I march with my head held high... [*She laughs.*] [SM → I] No, Inspector, no... You know nothing of my labour. Nothing of our shared labour. Nothing of our collaboration in this murder... [SM → SMIS] The dresses? Oh! Madame can keep them. My sister and I had our own. Those which we wore in secret at night. Now, I have my dress and I am your equal. I wear the red garb of criminals. [SM → I] I make Monsieur laugh? I make Monsieur smile? [SM → SM] He thinks I'm nuts. He thinks that maids should have enough good taste not to make the gestures reserved for Madame! [SM → I] Really, he pardons me? He is goodness personified. [...] [SM → SMIS] Madame notices my solitude! Finally! Now I am alone. Frightening. I could talk to you with cruelty, but I am good [a maid]... Madame will get over her fear. She will get over it very well. Among her flowers, her perfumes, her gowns. This white gown that you wear in the evenings to the Opera ball. [...] I am a strangler. Mademoiselle Solange, the one who strangled her sister! I am to be quiet? Madame is truly delicate. But I pity Madame. [...] [S → C] I belong to the police, Claire? She truly loved a lot, a lot, Madame!... [SM → I] No, Inspector, I will explain nothing in front of them. These things concern only us.... This, my dear, this is our night! [*She lights a cigarette and smokes in an awkward manner.*] Neither you nor anyone will know anything, except that this time, Solange went to the end. You will see her dressed in red. She will leave.
[...]
[N] Leave. Descend the staircase: the police accompany her. Go to the balcony to see her walk amongst the black penitents. It is noon. The executioner follows her closely. In her ear he whispers words of love. [S → C] The executioner

accompanies me, Claire! The executioner accompanies me!
[*She laughs.*]
[...]
        Now, we are mademoiselle Solange Lemercier. The
woman Lemercier. The Lemercier. The famous criminal.
[*Exhausted.*] Claire, we are lost.)

The various dialogic devices employed are the following: Solange assumes the voice

of Madame; she carries on a dialogue with a number of different interlocutors

(Madame, Claire, the Inspector, herself); she incorporates the other's questions,

comments, reactions into her own using reported speech (e.g., "Je fais rire Monsieur?

Je fais sourire Monsieur?" and "Vraiment il me pardonne?"); she refers to herself

in the third person singular (Solange, elle) and first person plural (nous); she uses

both performative speech (or dialogue) and narrative and, hence, is both the enactor

and the narrator.

     In Les bonnes, Genet places the model of provisional identity provided by the

theatre in the specular space of reversibility: the two maids exchange active and

passive roles as they play the eternal couple of the male and female, the criminal and

saint, the dominant and the submissive, the maid and mistress, enactor and enacted,

actor and narrator and director. At times, they impose on the other a role, as when

Solange addresses a reluctant Claire, and turns her back into Madame, or when the

verbal insults and abuse of one effects the transformation or beatification of one into

another character (e.g., 99-101). Or they attempt to give back a role to the other.[218]

In Le paradigme inquiet, Krysiński concludes: in Les bonnes, "Genet underlines the

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[218] For example, as Fior echoes when demanding that everyone cast off their masks and become human again, so Solange tells Claire, "Reprends ton visage. Allons, Claire, redeviens ma sœur" (34) ("Take back your face. Come on, Claire, become my sister again").

fact that masks are interchangeable. At the same time, he creates a dramatic situation [...] where one being is identified voluntarily and through desire with the other and vice versa" (my translation, 375).

Here, the quest for a desired identity, which inveigles the protagonists in the ritual enactment of a crime, progresses from impersonation—which, as in Haute Surveillance, is equated with appropriation in that the maids borrow their mistress's clothes, mimic her discourse and face, and steal her gestures, or borrow the face and gestures of the other maid—through transfiguration into identity. The result is that the same identity (Madame) is acquired by two beings (Madame and Claire) and then three (Madame and Claire and Solange). The desire to appropriate the identity of another, thus, generates a series of impersonations, and leads to an accumulation and pluralization of identities. When make-believe ceases to be make-believe, the boundary between character and the person whom the character incarnates is effaced: the other becomes the self.

III.   LE BALCON: THE INTERTWINING

Le balcon (BAL) is divided into nine tableaux. Structurally paralleling Les bonnes, it opens with four "plays-within-the-play." Each is a variation on a sadomasochistic vignette in which clients and prostitutes enact their fantasies in the salons of a bordello, le Grand Balcon, run by Madame Irma. The clients, all individuals from rather mundane backgrounds, act out their erotic fantasies by means of identifying with certain fictional roles that belong to the repertoire of social power.

Meanwhile, in the "real world" (outside the brothel), a revolution threatens the country's established regime. Since that revolution cannot proceed without its own "image" to combat the images of the established regime, Roger, its leader, has persuaded Chantal, a whore from Irma's establishment, to incarnate the revolution (*BAL* 95). Chantal plays the part with such perfection that the revolutionaries succeed in their *coup d'état*. Madame Irma is persuaded by an Envoy from the overthrown regime to impersonate the Queen, while the clients playing the Bishop, the Judge and the General are forced into the roles of their real counterparts in society when the latter are disposed of or disappear. Chantal is shot, and when the people see that the images they have worshipped are still alive—as the Bishop states, "il n'y aura jamais de mouvement assez puissant pour détruire notre imagerie" (137) ("there will never be a movement powerful enough to destroy our imagery")—the revolution fails. Therefore, like the maids, the clients transgress the boundary of their own social identities by means of the fictionalizing act of mimicry. Unlike Claire and Solange, the Bishop, the General and the Judge do not renounce their lives (though the Police Chief will); rather, they experience a loss of self-possession in the continually shifting interface between reality and illusion, this and that side of the mirror, on- and off-stage, inside and outside the bordello.[219]

The opening scenarios, constructed on the basis of specular duplication, function as a series of parallel, embedded performance situations. They are similar

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[219] In a similar vein, Una Chaduri, in No Man's Stage: A Semiotic Study of Jean Genet's Major Plays, refers to Irma's studios as offering the clients not so much an "absence from self" as the "experience of 'in-between,' of the *process* of self-loss" (67).

in structure (circular), theme (sado-masochistic relations), gestures executed (the motion of the hand, undressing and dressing), props used (mirror), tone employed (alternately interrogative, imperative, explicative) and words uttered (repetition of certain lines). Through the presentation of reciprocal power relations, the scenarios convey the notion of a self discovered in a situation of interaction. Or rather, they present the relational character of the self-as-cultural-role by demonstrating that the station of the various cultural figureheads can be fulfilled properly only inasmuch as these figures are defined in relation to other social roles which appear, initially, in the position of subordinacy, but which, given the requisiteness of that subordinacy, actually achieve dominance. Thus, the Bishop requires the penitent Sinner to fulfill his function of granting absolution, while the General needs his little Horse in order to enact the Victory Gallop to the death and thereby to achieve his glory. For his part, the Judge demands, first, the Thief who commits the crime in order that he may render sentence and, second, the Torturer in order that he may substantiate and put into action his authority; similarly, the Thief and the Torturer are linked symbiotically in that the former must resist so that the latter may deliver punishment. The Judge tells the Thief, "Nous sommes liés: toi, lui, moi. Par exemple, s'il ne cognait pas, comment pourrais-je l'arrêter de cogner? Donc, il doit frapper pour que j'intervienne et prouve mon autorité. Et tu dois nier afin qu'il te frappe" (*BAL* 33) ("We are linked, you, he and I. For example, if he did not beat you, how could I stop him from beating? Therefore, he must hit in order that I may intervene and prove my authority. And you must resist so that he can hit you"). The Judge sums

up the reciprocal nature of this relation and how a change in the subordinate effects a change in the dominant: "il faut que tu sois une voleuse modèle, si tu veux que je sois un juge modèle. Fausse voleuse, je deviens un faux juge" (32-33) ("it is necessary that you be a model thief if you want me to be a model judge. Be a false thief, and I become a false judge"). The power relations are not only reciprocal, but even reversible, as signalled verbally when the Judge (superior) must first address the Thief (inferior) in the "vous" form (38), and gesturally, when he must crawl before her and lick her boot in order to exact a confession that would allow him to achieve the Judge's "being": "Que tu me fasses ramper après mon être de juge, coquine, tu as bien raison, mais si tu me le refusais définitivement, garce, ce serait criminel..." (39) ("You are right to make me crawl after the judge's being, rascal. But if you refuse me it definitively, bitch, that would be criminal").

The reciprocity of the power relations infiltrates the entire network of interhuman social relations. So, in a similar fashion, Madame Irma, Carmen (her prostitute-accountant) and the Police Chief are bound intimately to one another. Irma tells Carmen, "Oui, nous, car tu es liée à moi. Et à lui" (55) ("Yes, we, because you are bound to me. And to him"). The Police Chief who would be Hero requires the Empire and vice versa: "Oui ma chère, je veux construire un Empire... pour que l'Empire en échange me construise..." (83) ("Yes, my dear, I want to construct an Empire... in order that the Empire in exchange will construct me..."). Chantal declares that without the revolutionaries, she would be nothing (92). The Police Chief's authority is a direct function of the Queen's power to bestow authority

(109). The Hero exists only in the glorifying song of the Slave; the Slave, without the Hero's blood, sweat and tears, would be nothing (145). In sum, the particular nature of human being as cultural role is characterized by its being mediated by otherness and reciprocity in a world of intersubjectivity.

The category of otherness does not apply only to another person, but also to the self as an other. The intrasubjective relation of self and other (like in 'Adame Miroir and Les bonnes) is materialized in the interplay of reflecting and being-reflected. As visualized in the fourth tableau where the three mirror images of the beggar are played by three different actors, the audience is presented with the transposition of Merleau-Ponty's insight that "man is mirror for man" ("Eye and Mind" 168) into the theatrical world.

As presented in Gombrowicz's plays and in Les bonnes, so in Le balcon, the mirror, a theatrical prop, creates a visual image[220] which contains the power of the other to bestow identity. The mirror image, or its substitute—namely, the other serving as a mirror—functions as a partner in "monologue-cum-dialogue" to, as Krysiński notes in Le paradigm inquiet, "verify and affirm" (381) an assumed social identity or role: the self becomes an other through the mediation of the reflection, or the other becomes the reflected self, thus setting up a dialogical relation with oneself as another. For example, in the first tableau, the Bishop, left alone,

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[220] On this point, Michele Piemme argues, not incorrectly but without understanding the real function of the mirror here, that "[t]raditionally, the function of mirrors is to reveal the character to her/himself in all of his essence. Sometimes, the mirror functioned to 'say more' about the character. [...] In reality, in Genet's works, this function is illusory [...]. The mirrors allow one to perceive not a reality but an image, an illusion" (my translation, 27).

addresses the mirror, asking it to respond to his query, and develops a pseudo-logical

argument on the nature of the Bishop's essence:

> Répondez-moi, miroir, répondez-moi. Est-ce que je viens ici découvrir le mal et l'innocence? Et dans vos glaces dorées, qu'étais-je? [...] La majesté, la dignité, illuminant ma personne, n'ont pas leur source dans les attributions de ma fonction. —Non plus, ciel! que dans mes mérites personnels.—La majesté, la dignité qui m'illuminent, viennent d'un éclat plus mystérieux: c'est que l'évêque me précède. Te l'ai-je bien dit, miroir, image dorée, ornée comme une boîte de cigares mexicains? (*BAL* 26-27)

> (Answer me, mirror, answer me. Have I come here to uncover evil and innocence? And in your gilded mirrors, what was I? [...] The majesty, the dignity illuminating my person have not their source in the attributions of my function. Nor—heavens!—in my personal merits. The majesty, the dignity that illuminate me come from more mysterious radiance: it is the bishop that precedes me. Have I expressed myself well, mirror, gilded image, decorated like a box of Mexican cigars?)

In a self-reflexive linguistic turn of soul-searching and self-examination, the Bishop

declares, "Je m'interroge" (27) ("I'm interrogating myself"). The Judge, facing the

Torturer and pretending to be looking at himself, expounds narcissistically: "Miroir

qui me glorifie! Image que je peux toucher, je t'aime" (37) ("Mirror which glorifies

me! Image which I can touch, I love you"). The mirror apotheosizes a captivated

and seduced client to the status of Judge. Glorification, thus, as a transformative act,

is treated as a process of reflection that takes place in between the subject and its

image on a polished surface. The General, drunk with joy, looks at himself in the

mirror and nominates himself "Wagram! Général! Homme de guerre et de parade,

me voici dans ma pure apparence" (49) ("Waterloo! General! Man of war in full

regalia. Behold me in my pure appearance"). At the level of the inner playworld,

then, the constitutive reciprocity between seer and image, a projection of flesh *qua*

visible-voyant, establishes a specular relation that enables the formation, verification

and affirmation of an appropriated identity.

The physical structure of the brothel, built from a series of mirrors,

materializes the metaphoricity of the specular duplication of the embedded

performance situations. Working on the principle of spatial embedding, which Maria

Shevtsova relates to Gide's notion of *mise-en-abyme* (35), the scenes in the various

salons are dominated by sets of mirrors, all containing references to Madame Irma's

bedroom-headquarters: each salon has the same chandelier, a mirror that reflects

the same bed which would be situated in the audience and which is Irma's, a

particular disposition of screens. Moreover, miniature images of the salons can be

brought into Irma's headquarters vis-à-vis an apparatus, a scope, which gives Irma a

measure of control over the salon events. The description in the final tableau of the

brothel's new Mausoleum Salon, which is carved into a mountain, encapsulates the

brothel's *mise-en-abyme* structure: "L'intérieur aura la complexité d'un nid de

termites ou de la basilisque de Lourdes, on ne sait pas encore. Du dehors personne

ne verra rien. On saura seulement que la montagne est sacrée, mais dedans, déjà les

tombeaux s'enchâssent dans les tombeaux, les cénotaphes dans les cénotaphes, les

cercueils dans les cercueils, les urnes..." (*BAL* 141) ("The interior will have the

complexity of a nest of termites or the basilica in Lourdes, one will no longer know.

Outside no one will see anything. One will know only that the mountain is sacred.

But inside, already the tombs are embedded in tombs, cenotaphs in cenotaphs,

coffins in coffins, urns..."). The effect is *mise-en-abyme* in infinite regress.

As in Marivaux's La Dispute and Tieck's Die verkehrte Welt, *mise-en-abyme* does not take the form just of an infinite *regress*, but in a reflex, turns back outward, eventually onto the audience of Le balcon. *Mise-en-abyme* in infinite *egress* obtains in the image of Carmen's sacred heart as described by Irma: "Morte ou vivante, ta fille est morte[,...] son image dans l'image du jardin et le jardin dans ton cœur sous la robe enflammée de sainte Thérèse" (70-71) ("Dead or alive, your daughter is dead[,...] her image in the image of the garden and the garden in your heart beneath the flaming robe of St. Theresa"). Another example is in Irma's description of the way in which her clients preserve the brothel experience outside its walls: "Elle doit y être. Comme un lampion restant d'un 14-Juillet, attendant l'autre, ou, si tu veux, comme une lumière imperceptible à la fenêtre imperceptible d'un imperceptible château" (62) ("It must be there. Like a lantern left over from a July 14th, awaiting another, or, if you like, like an imperceptible light in an imperceptible window of an imperceptible chateau").

Within this reflex of regress-egress, the scope of the specular relation broadens to encompass the worlds outside and inside the brothel. In the opening tableaux, Genet makes a clear distinction between the world of the clients and prostitutes inside the brothel and that of the pre- and revolutionary worlds outside. The scenarios refer to the brothel's hermeticism, to its being a haven closed against the dangers outside and to the desire on the part of the clients to preserve their solitude and secrecy (22, 33). The separation, however, begins to break down, first, from

within the brothel as the individual erotic performances are disturbed by screams issuing from other rooms (21, 25 and 43) and by Irma's intrusion into their privacy through the scope, and second, from without, by the sounds of gunfire (26, 27, 33, 36 and 51). Then, in the fifth tableau, the outside and inside worlds begin to merge, effecting a modal shift from play into reality/being, when the Police Chief takes refuge from the revolution in *le Grand Balcon* and reveals his intention to become State Figurehead, and when Arthur returns from his unsuccessful foray into the outside world only to be shot inside by a bullet that shatters a window (the glass for seeing-through) and mirror (the glass for seeing-the-self) (91). The *agōn* penetrates the playworld of mimicry and unleashes a vertiginous force that is visualized, in the ninth tableau, as in Operetka, as the destruction of the brothel by a hurricane. When the Palace is demolished, Irma's headquarters/bedroom is turned into the headquarters for the new political regime. Irma becomes the Queen with the Police Chief at her side. The Ministers of State, who have been killed off or have disappeared, are replaced by the clients who assume the roles they had been playing for real. The brothel world achieves identity with and displaces the pre-revolutionary world outside by appropriating its imagery and social structure. The brothel world, which aspires to reflect (in reverse or in travestied form) or identify with the established hierarchy, actually becomes that world.

In this broadening specular playspace, mimicry—as Vives, Pirandello (Questa sera), Gombrowicz (Ślub and Operetka) and Shepard have also shown—functions as the primary agent of transformation of self into other. The clients play a number of

different roles, which stand as the performative equivalent to different modalities of the self's being. The fundamental difference between <u>Le balcon</u> and a play like Gombrowicz's <u>Ślub</u>—which both function on multiple levels (Brothel-Tavern, Monarchy-Court, Church-Church, Theatre-Theatre) thus necessitating the assumption of different types of roles—has to do with the lack of intentionality inhering in mimicry in Gombrowicz's play. That is, the characters in <u>Ślub</u> are passive victims of the given, ever-changing situational patternings into which they are cast. In <u>Le balcon</u>, the clients desire and voluntarily aspire to achieve the other's being, if only for their momentary pleasure. In fact, the clients of *le Grand Balcon* play a triple role, changes in which are registered verbally in the tone and discourse level appropriate to a specific social role. So, the clients are (1) ordinary individuals who, (2) by employing the techniques of the actor and raising themselves up on actors' cothurni (literally elevating themselves and augmenting their being), donning the costume, using the props, imitating the discourse of the cultural figureheads of social power—in short, by appropriating otherness as their own—enact scenarios designed (3) to attain to the essence of the Bishop, General, Judge, and become that figure. The Bishop, to illustrate, thematically foregrounds this quest for a mode of being (*un mode d'être*) through the appropriation of the Bishop's gestures (genuflection), language (Latin) and symbols (mitres and lace) in his proclamatory address to the mirror.[21] At the same time, he reveals himself to be the carrier of a disjunction by

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[21] For example, while addressing his props, the symbols of his station, the Bishop declares: "Ornements, dentelles, par vous je rentre en moi-même. Je reconquiers un domaine. J'investis une très ancienne place forte d'où je fus chassé. Je m'installe dans une clairière où, enfin, le suicide est possible" (28) ("Ornaments, lace, through you I recover myself. I reconquer a domain. I inhabit a very ancient

contrapositioning and interpenetrating logical legalese and uncontrolled, orgasmic

verbal flights, poetic and profane discourses, studied, formal rhetoric and alliterative

(seemingly self-generating and transforming) epithets. The Bishop proclaims:

> Je n'ai jamais, je l'atteste devant Dieu qui me voit, je n'ai jamais désiré le trône épiscopal. Devenir évêque, monter les échelons—à force de vertus ou de vices—c'eût été m'éloigner de la dignité définitive d'évêque. Je m'explique: (*l'Évêque parlera d'un ton très précis, comme s'il poursuivait un raisonnement logique*) pour devenir évêque, il eût fallu que je m'acharne à ne l'être pas, mais à faire ce qui m'y eût conduit. Devenu évêque, afin de l'être, il eût fallu—afin de l'être pour moi, bien sûr!—il eût fallu que je ne cesse de me savoir l'être pour remplir ma fonction. (*Il saisit le pan de son surplis et le baise.*) Oh, dentelles, dentelles, travaillés par mille petites mains pour voiler tant de gorges haletantes, gorges gorgées, et de visages, et de cheveux, vous m'illustrez de branches et de fleurs! Reprenons. Mais—c'est là le hic! (*Il rit.*) Ah! je parle latin!—une fonction est une fonction. Elle n'est pas un mode d'être. Or, évêque, c'est un mode d'étre. C'est une charge. Un fardeau. Mitre, dentelles, tissu d'or et de verroteries, génuflexions... Aux chiottes la fonction.
> [...]
> Et je veux être évêque dans la solitude, pour la seule apparence... Et pour détruire toute fonction, je veux apporter le scandale et te trousser, putain, putasse, pétasse et poufiasse....
> (26-27)

(I have never, I attest before God who sees me, I have never desired the episcopal throne. To become a bishop, to mount the echelons—by means of vice or virtue—would have been to distance myself from the definitive dignity of the bishop. I will explain myself: [*the Bishop speaks in a very precise tone, as though he were pursuing a line of logical reasoning*] in order to become a bishop, I would have had to struggle with myself not to be one but to do that which would result in my being one. Having become a bishop, in order to be one I should have had to—in order to be one for myself, of course!—I should have had to be constantly aware of being one in order to perform my function.

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and powerful place from where I was chased. I install myself in a clearing where, finally, suicide is possible").

[*He seizes the flap of his surplice and kisses it.*] Oh, laces, laces, fashioned by a thousand tiny hands to veil so many panting bosoms, buxom bosoms, and faces, and hair, you illustrate me with branches and flowers! Let us continue. But here's the crux! [*He laughs.*] Ah, I speak Latin! A function is a function. It is not a mode of being. But a bishop is a mode of being. It is a trust. A burden. Mitre, lace, cloth of gold and glass trinkets, genuflections... To hell with function.
[...]
And I want to be a bishop in solitude, only for appearance... And in order to destroy all function, I will raise a ruckus and feel you up, you slut, you bitch, you trollop, you tramp... .)

Eventually, the clients acquire their quested-for identity "for real" and desire to partake fully in all that the role entails (not just ontologically, but functionally as well). The Bishop explains: "vous croyez que toute notre vie nous allons nous contenter d'un simulacre?" (126) ("did you think that we would be content with a simulacrum all our lives?"). The Bishop, who is sighted dancing naked in the public square (129) (a transformative gesture), reveals his intention to his compatriots: "Il dépend de nous que cette mascarade change de signification. [...] Pour moi, chef symbolique de l'Église de ce pays, j'en veux devenir le chef effectif. Au lieu de bénir, bénir et bénir jusqu'à plus soif, je vais signer des décrets et nommer des curés" (118) ("It's up to us to change the meaning of this masquerade. [...] For me, symbolic head of the Church of this country, I wish to become its actual head. Rather than just blessing and blessing and blessing until I've had my fill, I am going to sign decrees and appoint priests"). The Judge, for his part, has "un rendez-vous avec plusieurs magistrats. Nous préparons des textes de lois, une révision du Code" (119) ("an appointment with several magistrates. We are drafting bills, revising the Code"). Just as the interface between the inside and outside worlds shatters with the

puncturing of the glass window and glass mirror, effecting the actualization of the play world within the playworld, so the boundary between playing and being disintegrates. On this point, Shevtsova argues that *le Grand Balcon* changes from being "a double of society in general" to being "a State in miniature and a State in its own right" (41).

The implication of this dissolution is that, for Genet—as for Vives, Gombrowicz and Shepard—human beings are possessed of a being that requires *enacting* or *performing* in order to be. James Edie explores the innate tendency to mimeticism in "Appearance and Reality: An Essay on the Philosophy of the Theatre." Appropriately for Le balcon, Edie argues that, in order for the individual to achieve her/his own self-identity, s/he must, paradoxically, imitate the cultural figureheads, for it is the culture that determines the individual's identity:

> [i]f to become at all, a person must be named and otherwise designated by the culture, and if exemplar individuals must be lifted up as stand-ins for the culture, then individuals, to become themselves, must identify with these exemplars by taking *their* attitudes toward *themselves*, e.g., by taking as their own the names given by them. In a kind of magical or alchemical equivalence, the other becomes identical with oneself. He fuses with oneself. Yet to be human one must also be an individual human. But if one's enchanted mimetic involvement has made him one—one experientially—with the king of Thebes, for example, then how can one be individual without displacing or killing the king, for there can be but one king? But if one does this one defiles one's own source. (359)

Self-identity is achievable only through the mediation of otherness (the function of mimicry, and where otherness designates the cultural world); this convergence of self and other effects a transfiguration.

This mimeticism, however, harbours a malevolent force—one to which Edie also alludes—that transforms the enactor-of-the-exemplar-individual's script (performer) into the enacted-by-that-script (performed), thus creating a performative self. This transformation from the active into the passive takes place through the imposition by the "real world" of the role on the individual within the brothel. In a parallel fashion to the displacement of the outer world by the brothel world, Irma becomes the Queen when the latter "s'éloigne, s'absente, ou meurt" (*BAL* 137) ("distances herself, is absented, or dies"), "s'abstraire dans une méditation infinie" (102) ("is abstracted in an infinite meditation"). Yet, Irma's displacement of the Queen means that she, in turn, must surrender her own personal identity and subject herself to the script belonging to this cultural figurehead:

LA REINE: Je ne serai donc jamais qui je suis?

L'ENVOYÉ: Jamais plus.

LA REINE: Chaque événement de ma vie: mon sang qui perle si je m'égratigne...

L'ENVOYÉ: Tout s'écrira pour vous avec une majuscule.

LA REINE: Mais c'est la Mort?

L'ENVOYÉ: C'est Elle. (132)

(THE QUEEN: So I will never be who I am?

THE ENVOY: Never more.

THE QUEEN: Each event in my life: my blood which beads if I scratch myself...

ENVOY: All will be written for you in capital letters.

THE QUEEN: But that's Death?

ENVOY: So it is.)

The assumption of the role signifies the denial of the self, which means death. The death of the self means that human beings can be only a set of roles that need to be fulfilled given the particular theatre into which the figures find themselves cast or appropriate to the particular scenario put in play.[222]

This explicit relation between mimicry (or the representation-of-self-as-other) and death, or the annihilatory power of alterity, is elaborated in several contexts and often in terms of a movement of life toward the "immobility," the fixity, the rigidity, the petrification into an image (whereas Gombrowicz would dynamize the encrusting form and set it into a constant trans- or de-formational state). First, the erotic performances of the brothel's clients trace the symbolic movement toward "le petit mort" (orgasm), toward the "Raideur solonelle! Immobilité définitive" (*BAL* 28) ("A solemn stiffness! A definitive immobility") of the hard-on, which is encapsulated in the General's descent into the tomb (49). In terms of thematics, all the scenarios are reducible to death (141). Second, that the cultural figureheads in the "real" world are being represented in the brothel bodes their own destruction vis-à-vis disappearance, murder and, ultimately, displacement, in the post-revolutionary world (101, 102): once one is representable by others, one is no longer a unique, self-contained subject. Third, Arthur, who was to "play at being a corpse" in the Hero's

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[222] Anthony Abbott's point in The Vital Lie that "[h]uman beings in Genet are protean, ever adapting, ever playing new roles for whatever theatre in which they may need to survive" (208) is actually more fitting to capture the open-ended transformative and reformative dynamic in Vives' A Fable about Man or in Gombrowicz's last two plays, as Genet's human beings seem to aspire to one particular role and that more often than not entails their death.

salon, actually becomes one after he is shot (78), thus achieving the sought-after "immobility" for real (101).

The final context in which the relation between mimicry and death is brought out is when the Police Chief joins the State nomenclature as the Hero. His individual being is to be substituted by an infinite number of representations of his being (or rather, his image) in the brothel. The Police Chief states, "j'obligerai mon image à se détacher de moi, à pénétrer, à forcer tes salons, à se réfléchir, à se multiplier. Irma, ma fonction me pèse. Ici, elle m'apparaîtra dans le soleil terrible du plaisir et de la mort" (82) ("I will obligate my image to detach itself from me, to penetrate, to force your salons, to be reflected, to be multiplied. Irma, my function weighs me down. Here, it will appear in the terrible radiance of pleasure and death").

Laura Oswald, taking up this issue in her excellent study of Genet's dramatic works, argues that "the Chief of Police reminds us that the possibility of the extinction of the real is a condition of representation, in the same way that the possibility of representation is a condition of the real" (128). The Police Chief and General, later, make use of the image of a reflective surface, the pond,[223] in order to

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[223] The visual image of the pond is referred to, first, in the seventh tableau, after the revolutionaries have destroyed the palace. The Envoy describes to the brothel's inhabitants the Queen/not Queen's embroidery project: "Elle brode un mouchoir. En voici le dessin: les quatre coins seront ornés de têtes de pavots. Au centre du mouchoir, toujours brodé en soie bleu pâle, il y aura un cygne, arrêté sur l'eau. C'est ici seulement que Sa Majesté s'inquiète: sera-ce l'eau d'un lac, d'un étang, d'une mare? Ou simplement d'un bac ou d'une tasse? C'est un grave problème. Nous l'avons choisi parce qu'il est insoluble et que la Reine peut s'abstraire dans une méditation infinie" (*BAL* 102) ("She is embroidering a handkerchief. This is the design: the four corners will be decorated with the heads of poppies. In the centre of the handkerchief, always in pale blue silk, a swan frozen on water will be embroidered. It is only this detail that troubles Her Majesty: is it the water of a lake, of a pond, of a pool? Or simply of a tank or a cup? It is a serious problem. We have chosen it because it cannot be

express the malevolent aspect of representation, which seduces to their death those

who through mimicry would aspire to the being of the cultural figurehead of the

Hero:

> LE CHEF DE LA POLICE:
>> En somme je suis comme un étang où ils viendraient se
>> regarder?
>
> LE GÉNÉRAL (*ravi, et éclatant de rire*):
>> Et s'ils se penchent un peu trop, ils tombent et se
>> noient. D'ici peu vous serez plein de noyés! (*BAL* 138)
>
> (POLICE CHIEF:
>> In short, I am like a pond where they would come in
>> order to look at themselves?
>
> GENERAL [*delighted and breaking out in laughter*]:
>> And if they lean over a bit too far, they will fall in and
>> drown. Soon you will be full of the drowned!)

The Police Chief links representation and mimicry as reflection through death: "Non

le cent millième reflet d'un miroir qui se répète, je serai l'Unique, en qui cent mille

veulent se confondre" (131) ("I will not be the hundred-thousandth reflection

repeated in a mirror, but the One and Only in which a hundred thousand will desire

to be lost"). The theatrical act of mimicry invests representation with a destructive

power.

The final tableau presents the annihilative power of mimicry most explicitly.

After the failure of the revolution, Irma-the Queen invites the Police Chief to witness

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solved and the Queen will abstract herself in infinite meditation"). The blue patch stands as a riddle, a sign to which no concrete object, no signified, can be conclusively attributed, and the contemplation of which involves the Queen in endless reflection. What is significant is that it is the generic reflective surface that induces the operation of reflection and that this operation absents the Queen from her duties.

his own death—that is, Roger's impersonation of the cultural figurehead of the Hero as a giant phallus, a great hard-on, in the new Mausoleum Salon. Everyone joins the Police Chief as he, creator of his own image and now its spectator (having been detached thus from it), watches the performance through the scope in Irma's bedroom. The hole widens as the two panels of a double mirror forming the back of the stage draw apart bringing the Mausoleum Salon centre-stage and in this way, as Una Chadhuri notes in No Man's Stage, expanding the stage "to include the site of surveillance and the space surveyed" (63). This staging of spectator and spectated will serve as analogue to the audience's implication in the events on stage: the generic reflective surface of the mirrored House of Illusions is to serve the cognitive operation of reflection on the part of the spectator.

The Police Chief watches himself being staged: the voyeur becomes a narcissist in that the spectator, entranced by what he sees—to literalize Merleau-Ponty's insight—is still himself he sees. For his part, Roger wishes to play out his appropriated identity indefinitely and to the end; however, he is constrained by Irma's time limitations.

ROGER: Non! Puisque je joue au Chef de la Police, et puisque vous m'autorisez à l'être ici...

CARMEN: Vous êtes fou! Et vous ne seriez pas le premier qui croit être arrivé au pouvoir... Venez!

ROGER: Si le bordel existe, et si j'ai le droit d'y venir, j'ai le droit d'y conduire le personnage que j'ai choisi, jusqu'à la pointe de son destin... non, du mien... de confondre son destin avec le mien... . (BAL 149)

(ROGER: No! Because I am playing the Police Chief, and because

you authorize me to be him here...

CARMEN: You're nuts! And you're not the first to believe that you
            have gained real power... Come away!

ROGER: If the brothel exists, and if I have the right to come
            here, I have the right to bring my character there where
            I choose, to the point of his destiny... no, of mine... to
            [con]fuse his destiny with mine... .)

In his attempt to meld the Hero's destiny with his own, to assimilate otherness as his

own and achieve identity through identifying with the other, Roger castrates

himself—an act which symbolizes the phallic version of death and the murder of the

Police Chief. However, Roger's act is representation for the individual who is being

represented. The Police Chief confirms the status of his genitals: "Bien joué. Il a

cru me posséder. *(Il porte la main à sa braguette, soupèse très manifestement ses couilles*

et, rassuré, pousse un soupir.) Les miennes sont là. Alors, qui de nous deux est

foutu? Lui ou moi? Et si, dans chaque bordel du monde entier, mon image était

châtrée, moi, je reste intact. Intact, messieurs" (150) ("Well played. He thought he

had me. [*He touches his fly, very visibly feels his balls and, reassured, heaves a sigh.*]

Mine are here. So, which of us two is damned? Him or me? And even if my image

were castrated in every bordello in the whole world, I will still remain intact. Intact,

gentlemen"). Nevertheless, the Police Chief does understand that this staging of

himself represents his own death by representation, that, as Margaret Scarborough

concludes, all "images demand the annihilation of the individual" (357): his

acceptance of the objectification of his own self in his own desired image (the Hero)

for representation by others and the Hero's assumption to the pantheon of Images

of Power necessitate his death, just as these acts did for the "real" Bishop, General, Judge and Queen. Like Solange and Claire, he melds the active (murderer) and the passive (victim), committing suicide by entombing himself alive in the Mausoleum Salon for 2000 years (*BAL* 151).

First, the Police Chief pauses to pose for the photographers. Spectator becomes spectacle yet again as the Police Chief fixes his image in the photograph. The function of the photograph parallels that of the performance: just as the endlessly repeated enactments by the clients in the brothel's salons were choreographed in order to achieve the being of, or incarnate, the various cultural figures in the movement toward fixity, so the photograph—which visually freezes the image of an object on a piece of film, which, as Merleau-Ponty describes in "Eye and Mind," "destroys the overtaking, the overlapping, the 'metamorphosis' [Rodin] of time" (186)—can be infinitely reproduced. These two aspects of the photo—namely, its fixity and reproducibility and, hence, "proliferability"—are emphasized in the final tableau when the Bishop, the General and the Judge pose for some photographers in order ceremonially to capture the archetypal representations of religious, military and judicial authority. More to the point, the image in the photo represents that which was once living and is dead or will be dead. Oswald, who traces the connection between different forms of representation and death in Le balcon, explains:

> photography stages a scene of violence tantamount to murder. The photograph not only produces a likeness more perfect than the work of the human hand, but guarantees the symbolic destruction of the individual identity of the subject because of

the possibility of infinite reproductions of the likeness. The photograph fixes on paper a moment which has ceased being as soon as it is recorded on film, and therefore anticipates the death of its referent. (129)

The Police Chief descends through the stage floor (and into the tomb), thus ending the overarching "revolution scenario." Irma accompanies the clients to the door, leaving them uncertain as to their ontological status (client or State Figurehead), and begins preparations for the next evening's performance. The audience is reminded that the outside world is but another dimension of make-believe embedded in the overall structure of the brothel. As outside and inside intertwine, then, the spectator is drawn into the fold. The final intertwining is constituted by the chiasm of spectator and spectacle.

Gadamer explains the significance of the engagement of the spectator who becomes, in effect, the real player in the game, the real "spectated" by another:

however much a religious or profane play represents a world wholly closed within itself, it is as if open toward the spectator, in whom it achieves its whole significance. The players play their roles as in any game, and thus the play is represented, but the play itself is the whole, comprising players and spectators. In fact, it is experienced properly by, and presents itself (as it is "meant") to, one who is not acting in the play but watching it. In him the game is raised, as it were, to its ideality. [...] A complete change takes place when play as such becomes a play. It puts the spectator in the place of the player. He—and not the player—is the person for and in whom the play is played. (*TM* 109-10)

The involvement of the spectator, notable already in Irma's ability to keep watch over the events in the salons and in the Police Chief's voyeuristic viewing of himself, is indicated at the end when Madame Irma directly addresses the audience, implicating

the members as role-players. This enfolding is underscored scenically by the opening of the two mirrors, which would show the audience its own reflection, and by the bed reflected in the salons' mirrors which would be positioned in the audience and which is a reflection of Irma's bedroom. The place of the external spectator is represented on stage as the place of the spectacle, as one of the folds of the fan that is the House of Illusions. Furthermore, Irma undermines the spectators certainty of their own sense of reality by informing them that their lives are less real than the illusion presented on stage: "je vais préparer mes costumes et mes salons pour demain... il faut rentrer chez vous, où tout, n'en doutez pas, sera encore plus faux qu'ici" (*BAL* 153) ("I will prepare my costumes and my salons for tomorrow... You must go home, where, have no doubt, all will be more false than here").

The usual approach to explicating this particular moment is in terms of Genet's playing with and declaring invalid the boundaries between reality and illusion (e.g., Drell Reck 24), or, as Foucault describes the function of the heterotopic space of the brothel, in terms of Genet's creation of "a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (27). I think, however, that a slightly different focus is required, one that takes into consideration the implications for the voyeur-viewer of this multi-faceted staging of spectator and spectacle. Schechner's description, in Between Theatre and Anthropology, of the multiple modes of theatrical seeing and experiencing encapsulates the viewer-viewed situation in Le balcon:

> [a] person sees the event; he sees himself; he sees himself seeing the event; he sees himself seeing others who are seeing

> the event and who, maybe, see themselves seeing the event. Thus there is the performance, the performers, the spectators; and the spectator of spectators; and the self-seeing-self that can be performer or spectator or spectator of spectators. (297)

The point is that the audience has been gazing, not through a glass at a piece of fiction representing a fictional other, but rather, into a *glace* at its own image. This action functions to constitute (make visible) the viewer there where s/he is not and to reconstitute the viewer (from the viewpoint of the self-as-other/reflection) there where s/he is. Foucault discusses this interplay of the subject and mirror image:

> [i]n the mirror, I see myself there where I am not [... as] a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent [....] From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. (24)

Once off-stage intrudes on to the stage and becomes contained as yet another space within it, a relation of interspecularity between the place of the performance and the place of the audience is established, eradicating the difference and forcing an identification and identity between player and spectator. The final interspecular relation, therefore, radicalizes the notion of theatrical representation which comprehends the audience as the fourth wall: "the openness toward the spectator is part of the closedness of the play. The audience only completes what the play as such is" (Gadamer, *TM* 109). The spectator, egressively enfolded into the performance space, becomes the spectated, the seer the being-seen.

IV.   THE FINAL PLAYS

In each of Genet's early theatrical works, I traced the passage from the experience of alterity (or self-other divergence) to that of identity (or self-other communion) through an examination of the polysemic visual paradigms of the reversibility relation—namely, the gaze and the specular image—and through an exploration of the function of the ludic configuration of mimicry to effect a transformation of self into other (of which the mask is the visual dimension, role-playing the performative, and the fracturing of the monologic speaking subject the verbal). This passage stands as a core structuring and thematic principle around which other major issues converge: the body as the site of a chiasm of the active and the passive, of the affecting and suffering selves; the self-annihilatory power of representation, both for the representer, who desires to incarnate the other, and the represented, who desires to have her/his identity proliferated by and in others; the consequent fracturing and multiplication of identity when alterity (vis-à-vis mimicry) becomes a constitutive part of selfhood; alterity as a provisionally inhabited *situs*. By superimposing onto the intersubjective world view the specific conceptual and scenic terms (e.g., mirror, reflection) used by the writer, I developed the notion of interspecularity as the most adequate formulation of the relational epistemology for Genet's theatre. A stripped presentation of intersubjectivity as interspecularity is found in 'Adame Miroir. Interspecularity does not only obtain between individuals, the basic I-other model of intersubjectivity (e.g., Sailor-Domino, Maid-Madame, Solange-Claire, Bishop-Penitent, Judge-Thief-Torturer, etcetera). It also obtains

between self and self-as-another (e.g., self and reflection), between self and a social or cultural world (e.g., client and State), between worlds (e.g., Symbolic Maid and Symbolic Mistress, inside and outside the brothel), and between spectator and spectacle, or performance space and auditorium space. This latter relation, in particular, has been highlighted throughout this study. As Genet explores in preliminary form in Le balcon, and more directly in Les nègres, the audience begins to take centre stage, and not only as a perceiving entity, a voyeur, without which theatre cannot take/have a place. More, the audience's assumptions, prejudices, responses, expectations are staged, examined, interrogated and even turned against it.

By way of wrapping up this discussion, I sketch out the progression of the interspecular relation in Genet's last two plays, Les nègres and Les paravents.

§1.   LES NÈGRES: THE SPECTATOR ON ENDLESS TRIAL

In Les nègres (LN), actors, who may or may not be professional actors and/or ordinary black citizens, gather to produce a clownshow for a white audience. Some don white masks, standing in (third order representation) for both the white audience and its cultural figureheads (first order representation), or rather, the colonial authorities who represent these figureheads (second order representation): the Queen, the Judge, the Governor, the Missionary and the Valet. On the one hand, these players symbolize white society against which the play is directed; on the other, Genet, playing with the dynamic of concealment (alterity) and unconcealment (self) at work in the mask by specifying that the whitemask/whiteface (whiteness as second

order representation) should not completely conceal the actors' racial features, foregrounds the fact that these are black actors playing caricatured roles enscripted for them. The other black actors, masked in blackface (second order representation of blackness), re-enact the murder of an imaginary White Woman for whom a "fresh corpse" must be produced every evening. The White Woman is played by a black male, Diouf—a renegade by virtue of the fact that he preaches a policy of reconciliation (*LN* 41) as opposed to overthrow. The Court meanwhile acts out its horror at the murder and its desire to avenge their sister. The objective of the portrayal of the crime is the White Court's (White Audience's) justification of its pre-conception of the black race as deserving of condemnation: the Judge tells Archibald, "Vous nous avez promis la représentation du crime afin de mériter votre condamnation" (37) ("You promised us the representation of the crime in order to merit your condemnation"). However, in the end, it is the Whites who crumple, exhausted, in a heap on stage, indicating the end of their domination of the Blacks.

This action is set beside a parallel judicial action. The actors belong to a clandestine, revolutionary group, the Society for Negro Rights, which carries out the trial and execution off-stage of a black traitor (in keeping with the rule of decorum in Greek tragedy that all significant actions take place off stage). The ritual enactment of the murder, then, is designed to distract the attention of the White Court/White Audience from the execution, which is, similarly, a ritual act that will be repeated the following evening. These actions are contained within the dramatically conventional love story of the prostitute, Vertu, and the murderer,

Village.

Les nègres is constructed on the basis of the performance situation in multiple—alongside, embedded in an infinite regress, and open to infinite repetitions: a nineteenth-century American blackface minstrel show; the metatheatrical play depicting the relation between the White Court and the performers; the backstage trial of a Negro traitor; the love story of Vertu and Village; the ritual killing of the White Woman; the mime show within the ritual. This multiplanar performance situation puts into play a dynamic of concealment and unconcealment which serves an overarching trial or judgment situation that extends into the theatre's auditorium. That is, the audience is "wrenched into the imagined space of art" (Dudley 569) as its prejudgments, beliefs, certainties and expectations—both as theatre audience, in general, and as white audience, in particular—are brought to the fore and onto the stage and interrogated.

As the White Representative Authorities/White Audience are killed off on stage, we have a demonstration of performance "deconstructing the structures of authority within theatricality and exposing its ideological underpinnings" (Auslander 44). The play's illusionism is breached and ruptured constantly by interruptions of the action on stage, by uncooperativeness on the part of the actors (even foregrounded as such [LN 37]), as well as by direct reference to theatrical conventions,[224] preproduction and backstage activities (26, 43), and the relationship between the fixed text and the dynamic, variable performance (31). Scenes are

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[224] For example, Archibald indicates how easy it is to create the theatrical illusion of movement by walking backwards (LN 50) and Diouf refers to the Greek tragic aim of catharsis (42-43).

staged only to be "disavowed as mere gesture" (Benston 438), as mere show, a smokescreen for some other activity behind the scenes. Even the actual audience watching Les nègres is referred to indirectly or addressed directly, thereby becoming both subject matter and addressee, thus doubly implicating the audience in the proceedings.

This last instance of dis-illusionment or frame-breaking is of particular interest for the discussion at hand. At one point, for example, Archibald reminds his compatriots, "Des spectateurs nous observent" (*LN* 44) ("Spectators are observing us"). And, in an echo of Pirandello's Questa sera, which similarly is subject to interruptions in the production, Archibald addresses the audience directly:

> Ce soir nour jouerons pour vous. Mais, afin que dans vos fauteuils vous demeuriez à votre aise en face du drame qui déjà se déroule ici, afin que vous soyez assurés qu'un tel drame ne risque pas de pénétrer dans vos vies précieuses, nous aurons encore la politesse, apprise parmi vous, de rendre la communication impossible. La distance qui nous sépare, originelle, nous l'augmenterons par nos fastes, nos manières, notre insolence—car nous sommes aussi des comédiens. (26)

> (Tonight we will perform for you. But so that you can rest comfortably in your seats before the drama which is already unfolding here, so that you can rest assured that this drama will not risk penetrating your precious lives, we will have the courtesy, learned from you, to make communication impossible. We will augment that original distance which separates us by our pomp, our manners, our insolence, for we are also actors.)

Despite assurances from Archibald to the contrary that this is play (a point conveyed at the direct communicative level, as opposed to its being part of the audience's preconceptions on coming to a performance), the aesthetic and cognitive distance between the place of the audience (real world) and the place of the performance

(fictional world), between the spectators and the performers—a distance that is necessary for seeing and understanding what is presented, for being able to achieve a viewpoint or vantage on the object of the gaze—does begin to break down. It does so on an affective level.[225]

The constant exposure of the processes of theatrical production and reception, and the consequent drawing attention to and undermining of the audience's roles as theatre-goer and on-looker, that is, shift the level on which the play functions and, concurrently, effect a modal shift in the play itself in terms of how if affects the audience. Una Chadhuri, in "The Politics of Theatre: Genet's The Blacks," refers to this modal shift as going from "play" to "threat" (365)[226]—a shift that is apparent also in Gombrowicz's works. The clownshow is ever in danger of turning from pleasant past-time into ontological violence, thus recalling the dual function of the figure of the clown to be both a figure of "pure nonsense," of the "dispensation of laughter" and a subversive force that lets enter into the status quo the "whirlwind of

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[225] Una Chadhuri, in No Man's Stage, explains this notion of maintaining distance and difference between the dramatic world and the world of the audience (with respect to Les nègres) in terms of speech: "stage speech is inherently distanced." The "fact of its being spoken on stage gives it the appearance of being unreal, within 'quotation marks' for it is never the utterance of the speaker but of the character this speaker represents." Furthermore, "the emitter of speech exists at a cognitive distance from the intender of speech"—that is, they occupy two different worlds, "actual and fictional" (79).

[226] These are Gregory Bateson's terms from "A Theory of Play and Fantasy": "[w]e might expect threat, play, and histrionics to be three independent phenomena [...]. But it seems that this would be wrong, at least so far as mammalian communication is concerned. Very brief analysis of childhood behavior shows that such combinations as histrionic play, bluff, playful threat, teasing play in response to threat, histrionic threat, and so on form together a single total complex of phenomena. And such adult phenomena as gambling and playing with risk have their roots in the combination of threat and play. It is evident also that not only threat but the reciprocal of threat—the behavior of the threatened individual—are part of this complex. It is probable that not only histrionics but also spectatorship should be included within this field" (70).

disquiet," deconstructing every pre-existing system (Starobinski 141-44).

It is the play's direct address to a White Audience and the way in which the socio-politico-racial group of the colonizing Whites constructs a certain image of Blacks, that are at issue. In his preface to <u>Les nègres</u>, Genet specifies that the play is intended to be presented before an audience of Whites:

> [c]ette pièce, je le répète, écrite par un Blanc, est destinée à un public de Blancs. Mais si, par improbable, elle était jouée un soir devant un public de Noirs, il faudrait qu'à chaque représentation un Blanc fût invité—mâle ou femelle. L'organisateur du Spectacle ira le recevoir solennellement, le fera habiller d'un costume de cérémonie et le conduira à sa place, de préférence au centre de la première rangée des fauteuils d'orchestre. On jouera pour lui. Sur ce Blanc symbolique un projecteur sera dirigé durant tout le spectacle. Et si aucun Blanc n'acceptait cette représentation? Qu'on distribue au public noir à l'entrée de la salle des masques de Blancs. Et si les Noirs refusent les masques qu'on utilise un manequin. (15)

> ([t]his play, I repeat, written by a White, is intended for a White audience. But if, by some improbability, it were played one night before an audience of Blacks, it would be essential that a White, male or female, be invited to each performance. The organizer of the Spectacle will receive her/him ceremoniously, dress her/him in a ceremonial costume and take her/him to her/his seat, preferrably in the centre of the first row in the orchestra. We will perform for her/him. A projector will be directed on this symbolic White throughout the spectacle. And if no White accepts this offer? Then White masks will be distributed to the Black audience at the entry. And if the Blacks refuse to wear the masks, then a mannequin will be used.)

Just as all the theatrical devices are laid bare, and the expectations that had been prepared for are fulfilled, so the Blacks would give the Whites an image (i.e., a specific interpretation objectified through gesturality) that the latter expects of the

former—or more specifically, what one white man thinks the Blacks expect the Whites expect of the Blacks. Archibald states, "Mais peut-être soupçonne-t-on ce que peut dissimuler cette architecture de vide et de mots. Nous sommes ce qu'on veut que nous soyons, nous le serons donc jusqu'au bout absurdement" (122) ("But perhaps they will suspect what can hide behind this architecture of emptiness and words. We will be what they want us to be, we will be it up to the end, absurdly"). They (the Blacks) would represent themselves as the Others (Whites) represent the Blacks to themselves. That is, the Blacks would confront the White Audience with the stereotypes its colonial culture had produced and would require it, not so much to accept those stereotypes as, to bear the consequences of that image by subjecting the Whites to a violent assault impelled by hatred that the Whites expect the Blacks to be capable of inflicting.

This task of what is essentially "image-making" (of representing the self in terms of the other's vision or image of the self) is accomplished by the theatrical means emphasized throughout this study: visually, through the overt donning of masks (the "unconcealing" white masks, and "soot" and "blacking" to blacken the Blacks even more darkly [47]); performatively, through the assumption of multiple roles; verbally, through the doubling and tripling up of the dramatic voice (e.g., character and actor).

Two sets of scenes in particular encapsulate this process. The first is the ritual death of the black male, Diouf, and his transformation into and incarnation of the (dual role of alterity of) White Female Prostitute and procreating Virgin, whose

progeny (white dolls) represents (replicates, doubles and mirrors) the White Court. The transformation is accomplished through the donning of the carnival mask of a white woman (thus harnessing the power of the carnival mask to metamorphose and to effect transition [Bakhtin, *RW* 40]) and through the perlocutionary force contained within the Litany of the Livid. Diouf formally bids farewell to both "Grand Pays Noirs" (*LN* 63) ("the Great Country of Blacks") and his own self, while Vertu kneels before him and begins to recite the litany. The rhythms, sounds, homage and insults capturing the whiteness of all that is white and the unpleasant associations of pallor—first by Vertu and then by Neige and Bobo—are orchestrated in counterpoint fashion to effect the transformation of Diouf into his Absolute Other, thus signalling, at the gestural level, the colonial imposition of the French culture on the Africans.

This scene is related to the verbal showdown or duel that takes place between the Whites and the Blacks through their representative authorities (see 102-07): the White Queen and the Black Queen, Felicité. The specific point of correspondence has to do with the constitutive manner in which the invocation functions. In this verbal duel, the invocation is designed to augment one in one's own selfhood which is created, however, through the prejudgments hidden within the French (re. White European) language:

FÉLICITÉ: Dahomey!... Dahomey!... À mon secours, Nègres de tous les coins du monde. Venez! Entrez! Mais pas ailleurs qu'en moi. Que me gonfle votre tumulte! Venez. Bousculez-vous. Pénétrez par où vous voudrez: la bouche, l'oreille—ou par mes narines. Narines, conques, énormes, gloire de ma race, pavillons ténébreux, tunnels, grottes béantes où des bataillons enrhumés sont à l'aise! Géante à la tête renversée, je vous attends. Entrez en

moi, multitude, et soyez, pour ce soir, seulement, ma force et ma raison.

[...]

LA REINE: [...] À moi, vierges du Parthénon, ange du portail de Reims, colonnes valériennes, Musset, Chopin, Vincent d'Indy, cuisine française, Soldat Inconnu, chansons tyroliennes, principes cartésiens, ordonnance de Le Nôtre, coquelicots, bleuets, un brin de coquetterie, jardins de curés... . (55-56)

(FELICITY: Dahomey!... Dahomey!... Blacks from all corners of the earth, to the rescue. Come! Enter! But only through me. Swell me up with your tumult! Come. Barge in. Penetrate where you will: the mouth, the ear—or through my nostrils. Nostrils, enormous conches, the glory of my race, dark lodges, shafts, gaping grottos where sniffling battalions rest! Giantess with your head thrown back, I await you. Enter me, multitude, and be, for this evening only, my force and my rationale.

[...]

QUEEN: [...] Come to me, virgins of the Parthenon, angel on the portal of Reimes, valerian columns, Musset, Chopin, Vincent d'Indy, French cuisine, the Unknown Soldier, Tyrolian songs, Cartesian principles, orders from above, poppies, cornflowers, a touch of coquetry, parish gardens ... .)

Both Queens, in like fashion to Diouf, call upon all that stands for their respective civilizations to enter into them and to buttress them in their battle by constructing the ultimate image of, respectively, Blackness and Whiteness. Or rather, as David Bradby astutely observes, while the Court "appeals to Racinian purity, metaphoric whiteness, images of light and spotlessness, the white man's civilizing mission [...,] the blacks have picked up on all those things that have been traditionally used as insults by whites[—i.e.,] smells, savagery, cannibalism"—in order to represent themselves (231). Bradby continues, "[t]his is the language through which the white colonizers

oblige the Africans to represent themselves. It is the only self-image available to them once they have adopted the French language. And so they develop and extend it, revel in it, grotesquely" (231). In other words, the blackness that the Blacks call upon is a second order representation, filtered through the White's language, just like the sooting and blacking over their own black skins is a second order representation of Blackness according to the Whites' image of Blacks.

The second scene is the ritual re-enactment of the murder, within which is contained a pantomime by Village (the Black Murderer) and Diouf (the now White Female). In this scene, the polyphonic dramatic voice and the pluralization of roles are cast in the figure of Village. As do a number of the dramatic figures who incarnate multiple theatrical roles, Village functions, interestingly, in a series of dual active-passive capacities, thus constructing a figure out of its own otherness. These capacities are signalled verbally in the change of voice and tone: director/playwright (instigator of action and controller of other characters) and narrator (describer of the action in which he himself partakes); actor (the one who enacts the action) and character (the enacted or the performed or the narrated); two characters (Black Male Murderer [the active, affecting self] and White Female Victim [the passive, affected self]). The following excerpt provides a good illustration of this incarnation of a plurality of active/passive roles. The changes in voice and role are indicated by the following notations: director [D], narrator [N], actor [A], character [C], black male murderer [BMM], white female victim [WFV].

> VILLAGE (reprenant):
>   [N] J'entre. Et je m'approche, doucement. Je jette un

coup d'œil furtif. Je regarde. À droite. À gauche. [C: BMM] «Bonjour madame.» [...] La lumière est très douce. Elle convient bien à votre joli visage. Oui, je boirai un verre de rhum. Je boirai la goutte. [A] (*Sur un autre ton, et s'adressant aux Nègres:*) Je suis dans le ton?

[...]

[D] (*Un temps bref, puis, à Félicité.*) Eh bien, c'est à vous. Faites la Mère.

[...]

VILLAGE (*prenant une voix de femme*):
[C: WFV] Oui, bonne-maman, tout de suite. L'eau chauffe. Je repasse encore deux ou trois draps et je vous monte vos pralines. [C: BMM] (*Au masque:*) Doucement, fillette. De la vieille taupe tu t'en fous. Comme moi. Elle a fait son temps. Qu'elle crève si elle veut pas sucer des pralines. Toi, si tu fais chauffer de l'eau, c'est pour après la fête. Quoi, qu'est-ce... . (66-68)

(VILLAGE [*continuing*]:
[N] I enter. And I approach, softly. I glance about furtively. I look. To the right. The left. [C: BMM] "Good day, Madame." [...] The light is very soft. It suits your pretty face. Yes, I will drink a glass of rum. I'll have a nip. [A] [*In another tone, and addressing the Blacks:*] That the right tone?

[...]

[D] [*After a moment, he says to Felicity:*] Now, it's your turn. Play the Mother.

[...]

VILLAGE [*assuming the voice of a woman*]:
[C: WFV] Yes, good mother, right away. The water's heating up. I'll iron a couple more sheets and then I'll bring you up your pralines. [C: BMM] [*To the mask:*] Softly, little girl. You don't give a damn about the old hag. No more than I do. She's had her day. As if she'd drop dead if she didn't suck on her pralines. You, if you heat up the water, it'll be for after the party. What's the matter, what... .)

Moreover, this scene is, in miniature, a demonstration of the actor-audience

relation in the dialogical form of addresser-addressee. There are moments where Village's response incorporates the unheard question (voice) of the other (e.g., "Oui, je boirai un verre de rhum"). Like Prince Filip, Henryk and Solange, Village incarnates the dual roles of addresser and addressee on the level of the communication between character (BMM) and character (WFV). At a meta-communicative level, Village indicates that the actor's directedness is toward the audience (being-toward-others), as when he asks the Blacks watching the enactment if he is using the right tone. Edie discusses the mandatory presence of the other (namely, the audience, or a *for whom*) for the actor:

> [t]he actor's mimetic tendencies are such only relative to other persons, but the actor cannot see his own body and face when he is actively with and for others, and he must rely upon the audience to signal him when he is on to something telling and essential. [...] Not realizing that they are being heard and followed, and thinking that it is only a fiction to which they are responding, they in the audience are not on their guard. (358)

Edie's analysis also highlights a crucial aspect of the actor-audience relation in this play—namely, the potential threat posed to the audience.

The purpose of the re-enactment of the ritual murder, then, is to stage a particular image or interpretation of Blacks based upon the Whites' prejudgments. This intent does not remain on the level of internal representation, but comes to impact on the theatre audience. The representing of the self as the other, and the representing of the self in terms of the other's vision of the self, establish a specular relation between the spectator and the spectated, the seer and the seen. The Blacks (Image/Spectated/Spectacle/Object) attempt to exchange places with the Whites

(Figure/Spectator/Subject) by casting back the image that the Whites have of and impose on the Blacks in such a way as not only to provoke self-reflection on the part of the White Audience, but more, to undermine the White Audience's sense of a stable vision: "Puisqu'on nous renvoie à l'image et qu'on nous y noei, que cette image les fasse grincer des dents" (*LN* 48) ("Since they send us back an image in which we drown, let this image set their teeth on edge").

As in his other works, the key images and means for accomplishing this hinge on reflection. For example, the Black's body is conceived as a mirror for the representative elements of Africa: "Convexe, chaque surface de mon corps était un miroir et tout venait s'y réfléchir: les poissons, les buffles, le rire des tigres, les roseaux" (54) ("Convex, each surface of my body was a mirror in which everything came to be reflected: fish, buffaloes, the laughter of tigers, roses"). Like Félicité's transformation of herself into a representative of the Black collectivity through the invocation of all that stands for (the Whites' concept of) Blackness and the ingression of it into her body, here the surface of the body *qua visible-voyant* is turned into the horizon of its own establishment, its own world—namely, a particular image of Black Africa. A second image places the Blacks in the position of the Figure drowning in a pool: "On nous l'a dit, nous sommes de grands enfants. Mais alors, quel domaine nous reste! Le Théâtre! Nous jouerons à nous y réfléchir et lentement nous nous verrons, grand narcisse noir, disparaître dans son eau" (48) ("They told us that we are big babies. Well then, what domain is left us! Theatre! We'll play at being reflected in it and slowly we will see ourselves, a great black narcissus, disappear in

its waters"). Theatre is that reflective surface in which the actors play at representing

the image that (a white man thinks Blacks think) Whites have of Blacks. Genet

presents the dual belongingness of the narcissist to the active and passive (Merleau-

Ponty, *VI* 139): (1) to see, as the others see, the contour of the body one inhabits

(*nous* nous verrons); (2) to be seen from the outside (nous *nous* verrons, nous *y*

refléchir). The spectator and the spectacle are in a chiasmic relation. The

separation into distinct entities of the seer and the visible breaks down under the

weight of the reflective surface of the theatre, wherein the audience is forced to see

itself there where it is not. Things are transformed into spectacle, and vice versa, and

the self into another and vice versa.[227]

Les nègres thus develops more explicitly the interspecular relation between

spectator and spectacle that was presented in Le balcon by turning the perceiving

subject into the perceived world. The play stages, interrogates and destabilizes the

expectations, prejudices and presuppositions of the spectator, who stands for the

normative order. Invoking juridical processes to increase social reflexivity for the

purpose of provoking self-scrutiny, self-understanding and powerful feelings (threat

and hatred), the play is designed to affect the consciousness of the viewers. In other

words, the dramatic world is to reverberate in the quotidian selfhood of the

spectator, whose own horzion of understanding is in danger of crumbling along with

the White Court crumpling in a heap on stage. The casting of this trial, an endless

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[227] Jacques Ehrmann, in "Genet's Dramatic Metamorphosis: From Appearance to Freedom," argues that the spectator, "*forced* to participate in the spectacle he is watching"—and hence becoming both "viewing subject and viewed object"—by her/his presence is transformed "into an instrument that enables the spectacle to take place" (40).

one (as the play ends with the opening up onto yet another catafalk), of the audience's prejudices in the specific political terms of racism, then, has to do with the staging, not so much of a particular political reality as, of a self-reflexive, hermeneutic encounter operating on the ontological level in the relationship between performance and audience, spectacle and spectator, and the way in which the former reflects and then comes to impact on and potentially effect a refiguration in the lifeworld of the latter.[228] David Bradby sums up the plays up to this point and opens the discussion onto <u>Les paravents</u> in a way that accords with and expands upon my reading of the works:

> [t]he maids in <u>Les bonnes</u>, the figures of state in <u>Le balcon</u>, the blacks in <u>Les nègres</u> and the Arabs and the colonials in <u>Les paravents</u>, none of these represent the reality of servitude, power, slavery, colonialism, but its image. They are reflections of the images of these things in the minds of the audience, figures onto which the audience projects its own image of social roles and power relations. This is why Genet insisted on the need for at least one white person to be present at every performance of <u>Les nègres</u>. In this way he emphasized the fact that blackness is a social construct, something culturally determined, having its origin in the mentalities of colonialism. Biological factors such as ethnic origins and skin colour are quite unimportant by comparison with the power of one social group to impose an identity on another group. The blacks in the play are not "real" blacks, but figures representing the image of blackness that has been devised by the colonial powers and imposed upon all those defined as subject people. (228)

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[228] That is, as Una Chadhuri argues in "The Politics of Theatre," the "politics of the play does not remain on stage, but is embodied in the relationship the play creates between itself and its audience" (365).

§2.   LES PARAVENTS: THE OTHER IS JUST (LIKE) THE SELF

Set in the context of the Algerian War, Les paravents (*LP*) continues the main thematic thread running through Genet's works of the quest for identity through crime. The play traces Saïd's (the poorest man in the land) progressive degradation and increasing abjection and isolation from Arab society through the commission of a series of crimes. Each crime brings with it another condemnation, and each condemnation a transformation,[229] until Saïd dies and is apotheosized in the legend, the song, the words of his "compatriots."[230] That which Saïd seeks is his authentic self, which can be achieved only through the creation of one's self outside all social orders and conventional values—just as Albertynka would extricate herself from imprisonment in the interhuman theatre of masks by casting off all the masks by which others would construct her according to their desires. Saïd declares, "je suis en train de devenir quelqu'un" (*LP* 170) ("I'm in the process of becoming someone"). In a parallel fashion, the work traces Leïla's (Saïd's wife, partner in crime, "shadow" [167] and counterpart in undesirability as the ugliest woman in the land) concurrent physical degradation and social outcasting (169) in her spiritual quest for "une grande aventure" (97) "au pays de l'ombre et du monstre" (169) ("a great adventure" "in the land of shadow and the monster").

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[229] See especially the judgment scene in the seventh tableau of Les paravents.

[230] Ommou relates to Saïd his transformation into legend: "On embaume tes misères, tes chieries" (*LP* 266) ("We will embalm your miseries, your shittiness"). Later, "s'il fallait chanter, chanter... S'il fallait inventer Saïd... S'il fallait mot par mot, ici et là, cracher, baver toute une histoire... écrite ou récitée... baver l'histoire de Saïd..." (268) ("if we had to sing, to sing... If we had to invent Saïd... If we had to, word by word, here and there, spit and slobber out the whole story... written or recited... slobber out the story of Saïd").

Their quests are realized through, respectively, disembodiment and effacement—that is, through invisibility, or non-image, non-form. Saïd vanishes without a trace, disembodied in song—or is he? Saïd's fate—whether or not he has been appropriated as legend for the purposes of the Arab fellaghas, from whom he has sought to outcast himself—is left as a question mark on his Mother's lips: "Alors, où il est? Dans une chanson?" (276) ("So then, where is he? In a song?"). Leïla, whose face has remained concealed beneath a hood and who has become increasingly disfigured, leaves behind only her veil in the land of the dead.

Leïla's veil functions in two ways. At first, similarly to Signora Ponza's veil, it is yet another of the screens onto which this time the community projects its abuses and insults. Increasingly, though, it functions to protect her from the outside world by abolishing her exterior look (face looking outward) in order to facilitate an interior contemplation. That is, just as Leïla is defaced (e.g., she loses an eye), so the veil symbolizes the making of Leïla into an empty receptacle. It symbolizes a condition of non-Being by which she might attain her great adventure—as captured in her dis-appearance, her effacement. It makes of her own I, her own image, the absence of image.

Saïd's progression toward an authetic self, and Leïla's toward non-Being are set against the background of the French-Arab Algerian War. It is at the socio-political level that interspecularity, as a relation of reversibility and identity of self and other, asserts itself. The specular image serves metaphorically to caricature military patriotism. The French Lieutenant rallies his troops:

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Que chaque homme pour n'importe quel autre soit un miroir.
Deux jambes doivent se regarder et se voir dans les deux
jambes d'en face, un torse dans le torse d'en face, la bouche
dans une autre bouche, les yeux dans les yeux, le nez dans le
nez, les dents dans les dents, les genoux dans les genoux, une
boucle de cheveux dans... une autre ou si les cheveux d'en face
sont raides dans un accroche-cœur... *(Très lyrique.)* S'y regarder
et s'y voir d'une parfaite beauté... *(Il fait un demi-tour
réglementaire et parle face au public.)* d'une totale séduction. Et
que se multiplient encore les miroirs à trois faces, à dix faces,
à treize, à mille, à cent mille! Que les profils se renvoient des
profils et que l'image que vous offrirez aux rebelles soit d'une
si grande beauté, que leur image qu'ils ont d'eux ne pourra pas
résister. Vaincue. Elle tombera en morceaux. Cassée... Ou
comme la glace: fondue. (182)

(Let every man be a mirror for no matter which other man.
Two legs must look at themselves and see themselves in two
legs opposite, a torso in the torso opposite, the mouth in
another mouth, the eyes in the eyes, the nose in the nose, the
teeth in the teeth, the knees in the knees, a curl of hair in...
another or if the hair opposite is straight then in a kiss-curl....
[*Very lyrically.*] Must look at oneself there and see oneself
supremely beautiful... [*He does an about face and speaks to the
audience.*] totally seductive. And let the three-faced mirrors
keep multiplying, the ten-faced, thirteen-faced, thousand-faced,
hundred-thousand-faced! Let the profiles reflect back profiles
and let the image that you offer the rebels be of such great
beauty that their image that they have of themselves will not be
able to resist. Vanquished. It will fall into pieces... Shattered...
Or like ice: melted.)

Military patriotism, expressed in terms of aesthetic and sexual appeal, demands

uniformity: that each soldier is to become identical to the other means the

annihilation of a unique self. Likewise, the rebels are reduced to the status of a self-

same image in a mirror. Against the solitary quests of Saïd and Leïla, the demand

of the military, a social institution representative of the French nation, invests the

effacement of alterity with a satiric force.

Genet does not so much present the particular historico-political situation of the French colonization of Algiers and the subsequent French-Arab war, as a more radical effacement of difference or alterity in the two forces encountering one another. The effacement is conveyed in several ways, primarily vis-à-vis linguistic specularity (or verbal repetition). In the seventeenth tableau, for example, there is an image of a strand of saliva stretched between the mouths of the representative of the French colonizers, the Sergeant, and the representative of the Arab nation, the whore, Malika:

LE SERGENT (*à Malika*):
> Je ne suis pas roublard, chérie, je suis, tellement je suis fin, je suis roublarde.

MALIKA (*même jeu*):
> Je suis plus fort et plus dur que...

LE SERGENT (*même jeu*):
> Je suis plus tendre et plus douce que...

MALIKA: Je suis plus sec et plus froid... que...

LE SERGENT (*dans un grand cri*):
> De ma bouche à la tienne, nous pourrions tendre encore, de si loin que nous sommes, des fils de salive, si fins et si brillants, que la Mort... . (253-54)

(SERGEANT [*to Malika*]:
> I'm not foxy, darling, I'm... I'm so cunning that I'm vixenish.

MALIKA [*the same game*]:
> I'm stronger and tougher than...

SERGEANT [*the same game*]:
> I'm gentler and sweeter than...

MALIKA: I'm dryer and colder than...

SERGEANT [*with a great cry*]:
> From my mouth to yours, no matter how far apart, we
> could stretch threads of saliva so fine and gleaming that
> death... .)

This exchange is an example of verbal *agōn* "mimicried" as a game of one-upmanship in which each repeats with a difference what the person previous says. Malika and the Sergeant, linked by the thread of saliva and following the laws of reversibility, exchange sexes: Malika masculinizes herself while the Sergeant femininizes himself. The I-other relation, internalized, is here conceived like the intersexual, that is, as complementary roles of which one cannot be occupied without the other being also (masculine implies feminine). The eradication of sexual difference—or rather, the incorporation of both sexes into one body—implies the eradication of political difference and the complementarity of the roles of the French colonial powers and the Arab rebels.

In another example, the French General and the Arab whore, Warda, use the same image—namely, a masked skeleton—to convey the epitome of that to which each aspires. In the thirteenth tableau, the General declares, "On y doit y aller. Armés, bottés, casqués, oui, mais aussi poudrés, cosmétiqués, fardés, ce qui tue c'est un fond de teint sur un squelette de gestes précis et quand la mort nous aura tués..." (190) ("One has to go there. Armed, booted, helmeted, yes, but also powdered, made-up, rouged—what kills is foundation cream on a skeleton of precise gestures, and when death will have killed us")—just before (in but one demonstration of the

perlocutionary force of language in this play[231]) he is killed off. The skeleton represents the perfect object, the insensitive killing machine. In the fourteenth tableau, Warda, doubled by a dummy and applying a whitening, erasing agent to her skin, uses this same image to symbolize what she considers to epitomize the style of whoredom: "Moi, Warda qui devais de plus en plus m'effacer pour ne laisser à ma place qu'une pute parfaite, simple squelette soutenant des robes dorées et me voici à fond de train redevenir Warda" (LP 199) ("I, Warda, who had to efface myself more and more in order to leave in my place only a perfect whore, a simple skeleton supporting the gilded dresses, here I am becoming Warda again at top speed"). In the General's case, the skeleton, the symbol of death, represents the annihilation of individuality, of humanity. In Warda's, it represents the desired annihilation of selfhood in the creation of a perfect image.

This repetition of images underlines the interspecular relation that exists between the worlds of the French occupiers/colonizers and the Arab occupied/colonized. The relation is increasingly underscored as the play progresses. Just as the revolution in Le balcon does not effect any real change in the world but only replaces the bodies of the existing set of cultural figureheads, so in Les paravents, as Ommou tells an Arab soldier, in their striving for military patriotism, the Arab rebels have become just like their French counterparts against whom they are revolting. Undermining herself, she uses the very visual image of reflection,

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[231] See Abigail Israel's article, "The Aesthetic of Violence: Rimbaud and Genet," for a discussion of the perlocutionary force of language in this play (33-35). Another example is in the first scene where the Mother metamorphoses herself into a storm through her verbal/gestural powers.

buttressed by the verbal strategy of specular duplication, and the discourse of sexual desire used by the Lieutenant in the passage cited above: "de vous calquer sur eux, être leur reflet c'est déjà être eux: front contre front, nez contre nez, menton-menton, jabot-jabot, et pourquoi pas, bon Dieu, pourquoi pas faire l'amour avec eux, bouche contre bouche, haleine-haleine, languette-languette, cri contre cri, râle contre râle..." (203) ("the fact that you copy them, that you are their reflection means that you are already them: forehead to forehead, nose to nose, chin-chin, belly-belly, and why not, good God, why not make love to them, mouth against mouth, breath-breath, tongue-tongue, cry against cry, moan against moan...").

The sexual imagery is apropos. Each side in the conflict is only the rejoinder of the other; together they form an inseparable couple. Recalling Genet's insight into the human condition in "Ce qui est resté...," Les paravents demonstrates that, in the relation between the agonistic socio-political worlds of the French and Arabs, "l'un-l'autre n'étaient qu'un."

CONCLUSION

Luigi Pirandello, Witold Gombrowicz and Jean Genet explicitly, systematically and consequentially challenged the concept of a unique, unified, coherent and consistent subject—a concept that considers the subject in terms of *idem*-identity, or sameness. In response, each writer formulated a critical account of, or gave expression to, an intersubjectivity that hinged on a requisite relation to and implication of a multi-form alterity (*ipse*-identity): in broad terms, the interpretive, the interhuman and the interspecular, respectively. Situating their subject precariously in the potent, interactive realm of the in-between, they demonstrated how it comes to be disclosed and constituted, transformed and deformed, even destroyed, within the various matrices of otherness.

The manner in which these three playwrights revisioned, expanded upon and staged the reflexive, mutually implicative and affecting relationship between self and other has been the focus of this study. In order to conceptualize this multifaceted intersubjective playspace as it obtains in their theatrical texts, but also provide a sufficiently flexible heuristic model by which to examine and think about similar issues as they appear in dramatic works by other writers situated in other culturo-historical contexts, I formulated the notion of *specular theatre*. Specular theatre envisages the dramatic world as a constructed *Spielraum* or *topos* for a "mirror-play," which understands the subject to be disclosed in its relationality with other entities

in which it is mirrored. This relationality has been characterized as a "binding-freedom" or an "expropriative-appropriating." The dramatic œuvres of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet represent but three unique and fully realized variations of specular theatre.

In order to derive and ground this model theoretically, I turned to the work of philosophers, literary theorists and linguists concerned with the investigation into the meaning and value of intersubjectivity. In this theoretical discussion, I focused on those aspects of intersubjectivity most relevant to texts written for theatre, in general, and to the works under consideration, in particular: the notion of an embodied subject; the function of perception and dialogue as constitutive structures of the human subject; the recognition and formalization of the polysemic character of alterity; the intersubjective phenomenon of play as the formation of a special type of movement that nullifies the subject-object dualism and that entails a radical self-dispossession on the part of the player; the nature of the relation of body to world, self to other, subject to object, audience to art work, as essentially chiasmic. By reformulating intersubjectivity in terms of a reversibility relation that places the human being *qua* embodied subject at the locus of a key interplay of the active and the passive (e.g., seeing-being seen, speaking-being spoken or listening, acting-suffering, playing-being played) and that, consequently, shows how alterity necessarily is introduced into subjective self-sameness (that is, how the self is for itself already an other), my intent was to retrieve the philosophical foundation for understanding the theatrical representation of the way in which a multi-form other stands as a

constitutive factor in the individual's search for identity, in the individual's struggle for self-representation. The specular instrument, a dominant motif in a number of the works considered here, provides but a striking paradigm for this reversibility relation: it translates and reproduces the eradication of the antithesis between self and other, and discloses their necessary interrelation as conflict gives way to a correlative connection, an interwovenness of one with the other so potently captured by Gombrowicz and Genet.

Then, using play as a transitional concept—especially as it implies both the self-dispossession and recreation into an appropriate other, and the essential involvement of the "for whom" it is brought to presentation—I applied these insights into the nature of human existence to the theatrical realm by translating them into the theatrical discourse of mimicry employed by Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet to envision the human subject. Mimicry—the ludic activity foregrounded in the works studied here and whose meaning has run from the passive or reproductive *imitation*, to the more performative *masking, role-playing, miming, impersonation, incarnation*, and the hermeneutic *de-monstration* (*showing* or *bringing forth*)—encapsulates this expropriative-appropriating type of relationality with others: in mimicry, the subject (actor), in representing the self as other (character), submits to a self-dispossession and expropriates and appropriates otherness as its own in its directedness toward others (audience). Expropriative-appropriating, thus, entails a radical cleavage of the subject into a for-itself and a (series of) representation(s)-for-others—a dichotomy and then shattering and proliferation that have been explored,

interrogated, alternately striven for, surrendered to and defended against in the dramatic works discussed.

As maintained, then, the role or mask has ontological import. It provides but a provisional, temporally and situationally determined, ontic form (Pirandello's and Gombrowicz's preferred term) or image (Genet's) of the multiple ontological possibilities embodied within or elicitable from the subject; it is self-constructed and/or constructed in interaction with others; it is the means by which to represent the resultant state of non-coincidence of the self with itself; it may have an influence on either the spectators (internal or external), who see themselves through the other, or the very mimer, who sees her/himself by taking the form of the other. The mask, therefore, has a self-reflexive hermeneutic function as it (an equivalent of *flesh*) mediates between the intimacy of the self and the external world, between actor and audience.

Next, I contextualized the problem by analysing how its various facets appear in works written in other culturo-historical contexts (from humanist Spain through Rococo France and early Romantic Germany to Postmodern America), even well prior to phenomenology's grappling with the nature of the self-other relation. From Vives' presentation of man as actor who possesses no nature that is his own, but who is inconstant, intrinsically self-determined by the protean, performative activity of appropriating the form of otherness as his own (A Fable about Man), through Marivaux's staging of the primordial constitution of selfhood from a complex of mirrors and admiring gazes, through commerce with others by which the formative

subject learns to recognize, and so position and define the self with respect to, various types of sameness and difference (La Dispute), to Witkiewicz's depiction of the human being's (ultimately futile) attempt at self-making when it comes up painfully against the external world (Kurka Wodna), and Shepard's demonstration of the tragic consequences to which a fluid or transformational self succumbs when cast in an interpersonal encounter, here figured in a verbal duel through which identities are exchanged (The Tooth of Crime)—in all these works, the power of alterity to constitute and destroy the subject, a power that creates a self that is performative, transformational, inconstant and unstable, is brought to the fore. From Shakespeare's presentation of myriad performance situations that give play to changing audience perspectives often revealing more about the observer than the observed (Troilus and Cressida), through Tieck's depiction of a series of plays-within-plays in seemingly infinite regress-egress, in which the procedure for representing the self as other functions specularly as a self-seeing with the goal of effecting a self-understanding and refiguration on the part of the target spectator (Die verkehrte Welt), to Handke's *Sprechstücke*, which, taking advantage of the intersubjective contract binding the I and the you, aim at sensitizing and awakening the audience as to the way in which it formalizes aesthetic experience and constructs theatrical meaning, and as to how social, linguistic and gestural forms function to constitute, order and form the individual (Publikumsbeschimpfung and Kaspar)—the performance situation is used as a heuristic model by which to conceptualize the self-reflexive hermeneutic relation. Though the meaning may change or intent differ

from work to work according to its cultural specificity, as laid out, by exploiting the autoscopic potency of mimicry (a performance situation *en abyme*), these pieces show theatre as fundamentally a relational process that takes profound account of alterity: they present situations in which otherness becomes an instrumental factor in the constitution, transformation or destruction of the self; the transforming experience which the spectators may undergo upon seeing and recognizing the self in the other, or the other in the self, is to condition their understanding of themselves and their world.

These two chapters, then, theoretical and historical respectively, were designed to open up a dialogical horizon that would allow for the disclosure and appropriation of the fundamental meaning of intersubjectivity as it appears in the dramatic works of Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet. Each of the final three chapters considered the respective writer's unique formulation of intersubjectivity, followed by a brief description of selected plays and an analysis that culled and examined the pertinent aspects of the central problem as presented thematically and functionally in the given works.

Pirandello stood as the pivotal figure. As shown in a discussion primarily of Questa sera si recita a soggetto and Uno, nessuno e centomila, as well as selected essays and short stories, Pirandello engages in an explicit ontological inquiry into the very nature of identity, conceiving of the identity of the human being and that of the work of art as particular manifestations of an underlying process of cognition, the object of which is unfixable. Presenting the critical interaction of multiple

apprehensions of reality, he inquires into an existential truth that is forced to take account of the finitude and contingency of human experience, and that must attend to the interpretive nature of perceptions, linguisticality and judgments. Through an examination of <u>Cosí è (se vi pare)</u>, <u>Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore</u> and <u>Ciascuno a suo modo</u>, each of which presents the hermeneutical situation of an ultimately inconclusive attempt to know an unknown, or the manner in which the attempt to fix another in a form casts back self-reflexively on the inquirer, I argued that Pirandello gives expression to a pair of hermeneutic paradoxes. First, the impossibility of rendering a fixed identity or authoritative interpretation of the other, on the one hand, demands a constant re-interpreting, which stems from an indeterminacy and results in a multiplicity of identities; on the other, it calls for an ethical injunction against violently imposing a form on that which is to be known. Second, the interpretation or construction of the identity of the unknown other (x) functions dialectically by casting back self-reflexively onto the subject (a) of the interpretation, such that the interpretation of x by a is actually the disclosure of a vis-à-vis x. As these plays demonstrate by ending with the inquiry unresolved, or the either/or upheld against non-empathetic inquiring minds, truth, for Pirandello, takes the form of an on-going process of questioning: we cannot grasp things (persons, events, ourselves, the work of art) in a final and total manner because there always remain alternate perspectives and frameworks of understanding.

For his part, Gombrowicz explores the constraining theatricality of the interhuman space as that which acts on us, on every level of our existence, creating

and defining, but also deforming us. Interhumanity, as I have shown, conceptualizes a broad context of the ludically interactive in-between, the various facets of which examined here included the interpersonal, the intrapersonal, the intermask, the interdiscursive, the intertextual and the hermeneutic. Situating his human being in a "humanly human church" in which s/he is responsible for the task of making the self, the other, social and cultural realities and rituals, he creates a self that can never be itself, but rather, one that is enacted and, therefore, discovered in a situation of interaction between it and the other, between it and its own self, its own mask, its own voice. Gombrowicz's subject is cast into the midst of a concrete process of formation and its dynamics and, thus, is forced into a metamorphic condition of constant de- and re-construction that is disruptive, even subversive, of any stable identity that might be inhabited, any pre-established socio-political, ontological, discursive or literary order. In Ślub and especially in Operetka, the submission and imprisonment of the human being to the mutually forming and deforming masks become a painfully ineluctable way of being, the only possible escape from which is by invoking the anti-mask of nakedness.

Genet's theatrical output represents another, even more extreme, presentation of subjectivity as intersubjectivity, one that exploits the capacity of specularity to collapse the distance and difference between self and other into an identicalness and identity that forces identification. By charting the various appearances of the specular instrument and image, as well as the mask, role and double-voicing (as the visual, performative and verbal manifestations of the cleavage of the subject), I

explored the interpersonal, intrapersonal, interworld and performance-audience relations of alterity in terms of a chiasmic interplay and reversibility that induce a marked movement from self-other divergence (the experience of alterity) to self-other communion (the experience of identity in alterity). Genet superimposes an intersubjective world view onto a specular playspace (a Hall of Mirrors, a House of Illusions, the "reflective surface" of the theatre, screens upon which the community projects itself) and thereby opens up an interspecular world in which the audience members become increasingly, uncomfortably, if not obsessively, aware that they—their gaze shattered and refracted at all angles—have been looking, not through a glass but, into a *glace*, have themselves been subject to an ontological assault and undergone an ontological catastrophe to become the spectacle.

Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet capitalize on the capacity of the ludic form of mimicry—a performance situation *en abyme*—to promote corporeal mimetic identification in order to put it to a self-reflexive hermeneutic service. In an interplay of regress-egress, the spectator's gaze comes to be refocused from the other/performance and onto itself as the other/theatre turns from a glass into a "hermeneutic mirror." Theatre under the rubric of specularity, then, does not function only reflectively and reproductively to show ourselves to ourselves (*autoscopy*). It also functions in two additional ways: reflexively, to bring ourselves to consciousness as to how we see ourselves, thus promoting self-examination and, perhaps, self-understanding of the limited and distorting paradigms governing our existential modes; affectively, to effect a refiguration on the part of the audience.

When the mimetic being-like-the-other is transformed into the identity of being-the-other, or the less stable being-in-alterity, through the laws of reversibility in the interspecular playspace, "mirroring in the other (*in mundus specularis*) becomes a self-mirroring, [...] cognition reveals itself as self-cognition" (Moraru 31), even re-cognition (*anamnesis*), and affection as self-affection. Yet, just as the perpetually unfinished nature of the hermeneutical process acts as a critical check against both the closure of fixed or canonical interpretations of the other and the ossification of self-understanding (that is, interaction with the other entails a concomitant, ever-renewed coming to critical consciousness of the interpreter's own present and constantly changing horizon), so Pirandello, Gombrowicz and Genet reveal that our inquiry into the other is actually a search for the self, and that the search for the self can only take place through or have a place in the other, and that the self completed in and through the other in the world of intersubjectivity can only be temporary and temporal, a provisionally inhabited *situs*, for which mimicry provides the theatrical model. The specular stage, that is, comprehends the theatrical experience ultimately, to re-cite Iser, as "the indefatigable attempt to confront ourselves with ourselves": it is an opportunity to "monitor the continual unfolding [or shifting] of ourselves into [the] possible otherness" (*FI* 303) that we are, and by so making us aware of our own modes of alterity, provide the condition for the possibility to unbind ourselves from and shatter our conditioned existential enframings.

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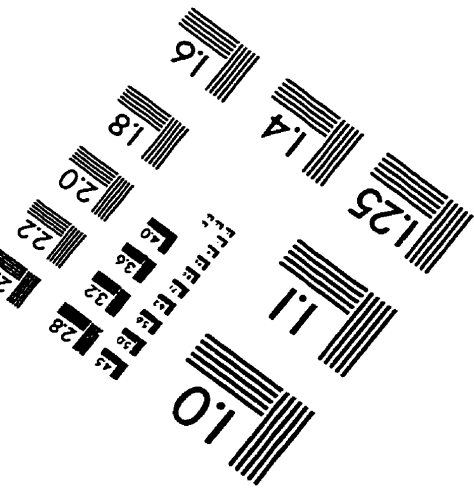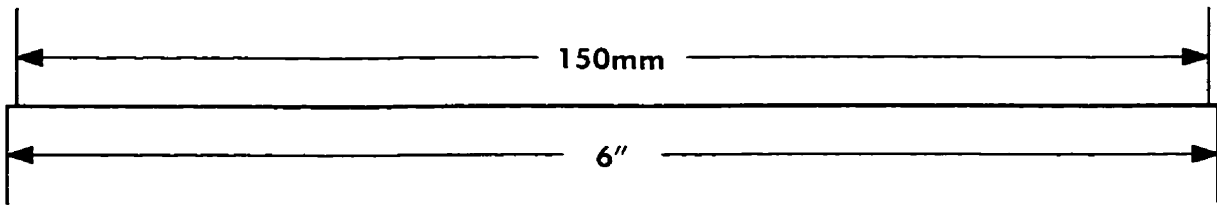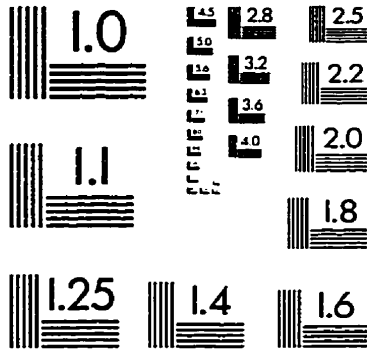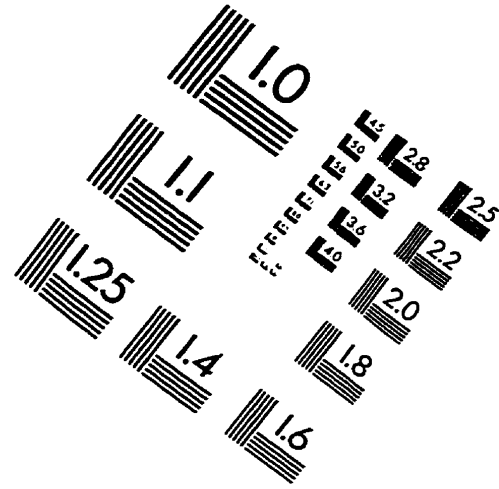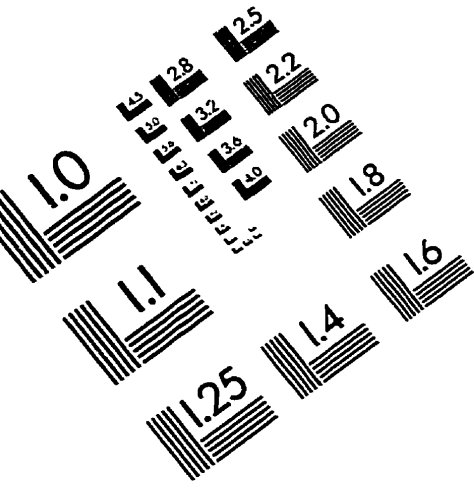Tieck, Ludwig. Der gestiefelte Kater. Werke im vier Bänden. Vol. 2. München: Winkler Verlag, 1963. 205-69.

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