

Schechner Plays

Playtext

Series editor: Patrick Duggan

Print ISSN: 1754-0933 | Online ISSN: 1754-0941

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Schechner Plays

Richard Schechner

Introduction by Márta Minier



Bristol, UK / Chicago, USA

First published in the UK in 2025 by
Intellect, The Mill, Parnall Road, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 3JG, UK

First published in the USA in 2025 by
Intellect, The University of Chicago Press, 1427 E. 60th Street,
Chicago, IL 60637, USA

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A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

Copy editor: MPS Limited
Cover designer: Tanya Montefusco
Cover image: Madeline Barr kneeling at the river's edge in the
final scene of *Imagining O*. Photograph: Marina Levitskaya.
Production manager: Debora Nicosia
Typesetter: MPS Limited

Hardback ISBN 978-1-83595-094-4
ePDF ISBN 978-1-83595-096-8
ePUB ISBN 978-1-83595-095-1

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*For the many people who worked with
me to make the performances that are the
heart, core, and roots of this book.*



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Acknowledgments

Thanks to Professor Lorna Fitzsimmons of California State University, Dominguez Hills, who moved this book from an idea to an actuality. In 2011, Fitzsimmons, a Faust scholar, proposed publishing *Faust/gastronome*. Then Fitzsimmons arranged for Intellect Books to do a collection of my written and wrighten texts. Fitzsimmons was this book's editor until 2023. At that point, I took over as editor.

Thanks also to Micaela Brinsley who worked with me gathering and preparing the texts for publication. And thanks to Melissa Flower Gladney for helping me work through the complexities of obtaining rights to the many works cited, quoted, and reworked in a number of the texts. I explain this process of "wrighting" in my Preface.

Thanks to my wife, scholar Carol Martin, with whom I often consulted and conversed with regarding this book. Her knowledge and insights are instrumental to my thinking.

Thanks to my children Samuel MacIntosh Schechner and Sophia Martin Schechner, to my daughter-in-law Mara Hoberman, and to my grandsons Julian H. Schechner and Caleb H. Schechner. Delighting in them made the work on this book all the more worthwhile.

Finally, thanks to the many who over the nearly 70 years this book spans enabled me to accomplish what is published here. Over a lifetime, we have loved, angered, sustained, attacked, rehearsed, workshopped, dialoged, and in other ways interacted. More than a few colleagues have passed; many I've lost touch with; a few are still in my active contact list. To all, I say, "Thank you!"

Several of the texts published here have appeared elsewhere in earlier versions. Below I specify that publishing history and key sources. The Preface and the Introduction to each play are new, except where otherwise noted.

Publishing History and Sources

Imagining O:

Published here for the first time. Text includes selections from the plays of William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* mostly. Selections from John De St. Jorre, "The Unmasking of O," *The New Yorker* (August 1, 1994): 42–50. With permission from St. Jorre. Selections from Pauline

Réage, *Histoire d'O* (1954), Éditions Fayard, translated from French by Richard Schechner and Marianne Mayer-Thibault, With permission from Éditions Fayard.

YokastaS:

2005 version published here for the first time. 2003 version published in *Dioniso* 2, 2003: 246–73, G. B. Palumbo Editore; also published in 2004 in a bilingual—English and Romanian—anthology of plays translated by Eugen Wohl for Eikon Editores. The book is out of print. The text includes brief selections from *Hippolytus* (1955), translated by David Grene, and *Medea* (1955), translated by Rex Warner, both in *Euripides 1, The Complete Greek Tragedies*, edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. With permission from the University of Chicago Press. *Seneca's Oedipus adapted by Ted Hughes* (1969). With permission from Faber and Faber. Andrea Yates's confession to drowning her five children as published by the Associated Press, February 21, 2002.

Faust/gastronome:

Published here for the first time. The text includes selections from Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (1592 or 1593, published 1604), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Der Tragödie Erster Teil* (1808), *Faust: Der Tragödie zweiter Teil in fünf Akten* (1832), and Adolph Hitler speeches. Selections in German and English translated from German by Ulla Neuerburg.

The Prometheus Project:

Published here for the first time. Text includes selections from Margaret Burbidge, "Adventure Into Space," *Science* 221, no. 4609 (1983 July 28): 421–27. With permission from *Science*. Doris Lessing, *Re: Colonised Planet 5 Shikasta*, 1981: 198–203. Vintage Books Edition. With permission from Vintage Books. Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita, *Pica Don* (1978). With permission from Sayoko Kinoshita. Annie Sprinkle "Sex Education" and "Pornstistics" as "The Annie Sprinkle Show." With permission from Annie Sprinkle.

Richard's Lear:

Published here for the first time. The text combines William Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Richard III*. Introduction by Phillip Zarrilli, "Richard Schechner's *Richard's Lear*." *TDR* 1981: 25, 4: 92–97. With permission from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

Commune:

Commune is used with permission from the Wooster Group Inc., doing business as The Performance Group. *Commune* was published in *The Radical Theatre Notebook* (1975: 172–221) Avon Books and in *The New Radical Theatre Notebook* (1997: 127–65) Applause Books, both edited by Arthur Sainer. *Commune* draws on many texts in the public domain, mostly American, including: *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, the writings of Henry David

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, statements by Charles Manson and members of his “Family,” spirituals, folksongs, Emma Lazarus’s “The New Colossus” on the Statue of Liberty, testimony before the US Congress, the plays of Shakespeare and Marlowe, The Bible, and more.

Makbeth: After Shakespeare:

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Dionysus in 69:

Dionysus in 69, edited by Richard Schechner and designed by Franklin Adams, was published in 1970 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Text for this publication has been newly edited by Richard Schechner. The text includes selections from Euripides’s *The Bacchae* (1959) translated by William Arrowsmith and from Sophocles’s *Antigone* (1954) translated by Elizabeth Wycoff both included in *The Complete Greek Tragedies* (various dates), edited by David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. With permission from the University of Chicago Press.

Briseis and the Sergeant:

Published here for the first time.

The Blessing of the Fleet:

Published here for the first time.

“Lot’s Daughters”:

Published here for the first time.

“The Last Day of FK”:

Published here for the first time.



Preface

From Writer to Wrighter

This book's title is *Schechner Plays*, not "Schechner's Plays." What a difference the absence of an 's' makes. Many of the plays in this book are not mine in the sense of sole or possessive authorship. The longer I make theatre, the more my writing becomes wrighting. What does this mean? "Wright" as in "cartwright" or "playwright." "Wright" derives from the Old English "wryhta," meaning "maker," related to the Indo-European "werg," "to do," "to work." To "wright" something is to master the craft of how to do that particular thing. In the case of "playwright," how to craft a play. Shakespeare was a playwright.¹ However, "write" derives from the Old English "writan," to engrave, to scratch, or to draw.² Most modern playwrights are misnamed: they are writers, not wrighters.

The first play presented in this book, *Imagining O*, is the most "wrighterly." The last four plays in this book, those before *Dionysus in 69*, are the most "writerly." The texts presented here are, for the most part, what was performed. However, wrighting stops when the production ends, writing never stops: it is the literary equivalent of rehearsing. Each of the texts published here has been changed slightly by me as I prepared this book. In my progression from writing to wrighting, *Dionysus in 69* is the turning point. The plays in this book are arranged from the most recent to the oldest so that the reader will start with what is most original in my approach. Original in this context is of course ironic and paradoxical. I am most original when I am least original. Or better: I am most original when I am most collaborative.

The writer Schechner made "Lot's Daughters," "The Last Day of FK," *The Blessing of the Fleet*, and *Briseis and the Sergeant*. From *Dionysus in 69* on, the texts were made by the wrighter Schechner—collaborating with many others, including the writer Schechner. An exception is *Yokasta* whose two versions were written by me and Saviana Stanescu in 2003–05. My experiential basis for evolving from a writer to a wrighter happened roughly from 1962 to 1968, the six years between *Briseis* and *D69*. This was a time of great change, growth, and turbulence for American society (and not the United States alone). And for me personally my experiences in the US Army, the Freedom Movement, the Free Southern Theater, and the anti-Vietnam War

movement as well as my learning about Happenings (aka performance art), my work with the East End Players, the New Orleans Group, my fulltime professorial positions, and my editing of *TDR*—each in their own way, and in their accumulating overall effect—transformed me. I discuss many of these influences in my introduction to each of the plays.

All of the texts, even those that were “written,” show the input from actors, dancers, scenographers, composers, costume, sound, and lights designers, dramaturgs, assistant directors, filmmakers, photographers, stage managers, technical directors, and administrators: the panoply of skilled people whose collective effort makes theatre. Often I took what happened in workshops and rehearsals home where I sat down and wrote. I also searched through many different kinds of texts: plays, novels, speeches, newspaper articles, and more. In each text published here, I have noted my inputs—sometimes I quote directly, sometimes I adapt. Because each play in this book is preceded by my introduction to it,³ I will not go into detail here. The individual introductions both situate each text and relate some of what was happening to me at the point of conceiving, devising, writing, wrighting, and directing.

That I am a theatre director and performer-trainer as well as writer-wrighter means that I know how to work in the theatre. The texts collected in this volume need to be considered in relation to my theatre directing and my performer training workshops. I directed the premiers of all the plays in the book from *Dionysus in 69* onward. I directed the staged reading of “Lot’s Daughters.” The other pre-*D69* plays were directed by others. Throughout my adult life I directed not only what is in this book but many other plays as well—by Aeschylus, Seneca, Shakespeare, Moliere, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Ionesco, Brecht, Shepard, Wilson, and others. Many of these productions, and ones published here, are available on video or film.⁴ When I participate in devising texts, I am at the same time devising staging, investigating dramaturgy, working with designers, musicians, choreographers, performers, and other artists and technicians. I feel at home working in the theatre, especially in environmental and/or immersive theatre.⁵ My experience as a director profoundly informs my performance texts—increasingly so as my career developed.

As important, since I was 28 years old I have been a professor teaching mostly graduate students, first at Tulane University (1962–67) and then at New York University (1967–2017). Before that, for one year while a graduate student I taught freshman English. I delight in seminars, sitting around a table hashing through documents, audio-visuals, giving and listening to reports: vigorously exchanging, learning, and teaching. Early in my career in the 1950s and 1960s, I published essays about the plays of Eugene Ionesco, Henrik Ibsen, Samuel Beckett, and others. I have published eleven books and dozens of articles as well as short stories, poems, and one children’s book. My PhD dissertation is about Ionesco’s plays (not their productions) up through *Victims of Duty*. In 1967, I directed *Victims* at Le Petit Théâtre due Vieux Carré in New Orleans. It was my first environmental theatre production.

Since the start of my academic career, I have been an editor. I edited *TDR* from 1962 to 1969, and again from 1986 to the present. I am the editor of two book series (Worlds of Performance for Routledge, Enactments for Seagull Books). In my editing, I work closely

with authors helping them with their writing—which means helping them with their thinking. This kind of work is fundamentally the same as workshopping and rehearsing: repetition, revising, seeking better ways to express whatever it is. These interactions and operations—teaching, workshopping, writing, editing—are second nature to me. I practice them daily.

In looking over the texts that comprise *Schechner Plays*, I note something so obvious that it escaped my attention. Much of my work is indebted to, affected by, and made in relation to ancient Greek tragedy and Elizabethan theatre—the two greatest epochs of theatre in western culture. *Briseis and the Sergeant* draws on an early Greek narrative, Homer's *The Iliad*. *Dionysus in 69* is a version of Euripides's *The Bacchae*. *The Prometheus Project* includes materials from Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* and refers to his lost *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire-Bringer*. *YokastaS* invents the life of Sophocles's Jocasta at four stages of her life. As for the Elizabethans, *Makbeth*, *After Shakespeare* is my scramble of Shakespeare's tragedy, *Richard's Lear* combines *King Lear* and *Richard III*, *Faust/gastronome* is an expanded version of Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (also with substantial input from Goethe's *Faust*), and *Imagining O* gives voice to Ophelia and Gertrude from *Hamlet*, while excluding all of the play's male characters. Thus, of the twelve texts of this book, seven are based on, or take from, or play with texts from the Greek or Elizabethan canon. In fact, after my first two works—"The Last Day of FK" and "Lot's Daughters"—the predominant input into my playwrighting—in addition to the creativity of those with whom I have worked—has been the Greeks and the Elizabethans. Truth be told, as a writer and wrighter I am more a classicist than an avantgardist. What is most experimental and avantgarde in my work are my methods of production and actor training.

Schechner Plays should be read in relation to this abiding and active exploration of classical and Elizabethan drama and in relation to my academic, editorial, and scholarly work. These lifelong interests and activities affect, even determine, the ways I feel, think, write, and wright.

I hope that the publication of these texts in a single volume will lead to productions. Although many of these texts were devised by specific groups and shaped by and in relation to the artists of these groups, the plays are also ready for new interpretations and stagings. Even to revising the texts. After all, what I and my colleagues did ought not be forbidden to others.

NOTES

1. More than a century ago, theatre visionary Edward Gordon Craig wrote: "In my opinion the Dramas were created by Shakespeare in close collaboration with the manager of the theatre and with the actors; in fact, with practically the whole of the company who invented, produced, and acted them [...]. I believe that the plays grew to their present literary perfection, three distinct periods marking their development. The first period saw them sketched out; the second saw them acted—and at this period many speeches and even scenes were added from week to week at rehearsal and after performances—and the third period saw them handed to the poet for revision before being printed" (1919:

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115–16). In 1967 I discussed Craig’s idea in “The Playwright as Wrighter,” my Introduction to *Four Plays* by Megan Terry.

2. Etymologies from *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 1996: 1015.
3. *Richard’s Lear* which is introduced by Phillip Zarrilli. *The Makbeth Maze* is introduced by its designer, Brooks McNamara; the music for *Makbeth* is detailed by its composer, Paul Epstein. The Narrator (David Letwin) looks on.
4. For films of some productions, see <https://hemisphericinstitute.org/en/hidvl-collections/itemlist/category/387-rschechner.html> (accessed November 11, 2024). For others, contact me directly: rs4@nyu.edu.
5. See my *Environmental Theater*, expanded edition, 1994.

From Poetic Realism to Postdramatic Metaperformance: An Introduction to *Schechner Plays*

Márta Minier

It is a remarkable and summative volume that the reader holds in their hands. While publications associated with Richard Schechner's name—either about his work or written by him—are many, until now we have not yet had a volume that anthologizes a selection of Schechner's plays from all major stages of his career. On the one hand, the volume is the tangible result of a retrospective exercise, an attempt to leave a set of carefully selected and curated texts to posterity—no mean feat from an artist and critic known for his focus on process and his predilection for rewriting, revising, refining rather than “fixing.” Indeed, as Schechner himself ponders in “The Crash of Performative Circumstances,”

Process itself is performance. Rehearsals can be more informative/performative than finished work. The whole structure of finishedness is called into question. If the world is unfinished, by what process are the works of people finished? Why should these works be finished? The world is a reality we are making and changing as we go along.

(Schechner 1982: 124)

Yes, the collection may offer snapshots in time: the plays are what they are at the time of editing and publishing; yet they have all been matured over time (some may have been revisited more over time than others). From another, complementary, perspective, this is a unique volume through which we can follow, via the *oeuvre* of one theatre artist, the most dominant trends in western theatre writing and making from the decades following World War II (WW2) well into the twenty-first century.

Richard Schechner (born 1934) is internationally known as one of the founding figures of performance studies as a(n inter)disciplinary field. With significant academic publications such as *Public Domain: Essays on the Theater* (1969), *Environmental Theatre* (1973), *Essays on Performance Theory: 1970–1976* (1977), *The End of Humanism: Writings on Performance* (1982), *Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila* (1983), *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985), *Performance Theory* (1988), *The Future of Ritual* (1993), *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002, 2006, 2013, 2020), *Over, Under, and Around: Essays on Performance and Culture* (2004), and *Performed Imaginaries* (2015), he has worked tirelessly to shape the field of performance studies (and adjacent areas) as one of its most vocal and influential figures. Schechner is also an accomplished journal editor, having led the prominent journal *TDR: Tulane Drama Review*, from 1962 to 1967 and then, following Schechner's

relocation to New York University in 1967, *The Drama Review* until 1969 and from 1986 onward to the present. The role of *TDR* has been crucial as a “clearing-house for [...] new ideas, seeking out, encouraging, and publicizing new work and new artists” (Carlson 2000: 271). Beyond his remarkable research career and impactful work as an educator, Schechner is also acclaimed as a theatre director—of a particularly wide range of works created and presented in many contexts across the globe in the United States, India, Europe, South Africa, China, and Taiwan.

One creative label we may not often associate with Schechner is that of a playwright or dramatist—something this volume addresses. Reading, thinking about, perhaps even considering to workshop or perform any of the scripts included in this volume will enrich and nuance our understanding of Schechner’s work alongside inspiring our thinking about countless processes within theatre and performance including ensemble, dramaturgy, and adaptation. These plays—let us stick to this tried and tested word for a theatre script—make us reconsider our views on how we may (verbally) capture theatre texts emerging from collective (even if directed, facilitated) rehearsal processes, how we may revisit existing works for performance or respond to contemporary concerns and events through theatre-making.

With its important contributions to the history of physical and devised theatre, the theatrical avant-garde, and off-off Broadway, Schechner’s *oeuvre* as a writer/wrighter-director for the theatre offers perspectives and scripts for historians or students of drama and theatre, fellow practitioners, adaptation experts, cultural historians, and general educated enthusiasts of global theatre and performance. Those well versed in performance studies—where much of Schechner’s work as a scholar and critic falls—are undoubtedly able to identify many points of connection between his creative (or critical-creative) practice and theoretical output. For those who are not performance studies scholars, it may be the approaches to adapting classics, using contemporary political events and aspects of *Weltanschauung* as dramaturgical stimuli, experimenting with the performer-audience relationship, working across cultures, or interweaving art forms dramaturgically that piques our interest. Important, too, is the social/political commentary concerning humanity and the environment at large that is present in almost all of Schechner’s theatre texts, although not in a doctrinaire manner. Schechner’s attention to people of color, which has always been part of his theatre practice (including casting or ensemble formation), can also be discerned by the keen eye in the plays of the collection, which document production work as much as they offer scripts for further artistic experimentation and study. Giving many creative opportunities to women is something that stands out, and the many roles created for women are easy to see in the gamut of plays included in the collection.

Among the many students, scholars, and practitioners who are inspired by Schechner, the performance studies pioneer or Schechner the experimental director, few may be aware that he started out by writing more “straightforward”—we might say dramatic (rather than postdramatic) plays. Unlike Schechner’s mature scripts, these plays were not necessarily derived from ensemble practices and co-creation but were authored in a more traditional, albeit exploratory, way. The collection, thankfully and most excitingly, includes several of these early pieces as well: “The Last Day of FK,” “Lot’s Daughters,” *The Blessing of the Fleet*, and *Briseis and the Sergeant*. We would call these plays “new writing” today—I use that phrase cautiously due to its variable connotations (in the United Kingdom, it refers to writer-driven theatre-making). For our purposes, “new writing” may be a helpful phrase to distinguish between likewise problematic categories such as “original” work (typically Schechner’s early career output) on the one hand, and, on the other, adaptation or indeed postdramatic and/or postmodern stock that has benefited from collective

workshopping (typically since the mid-to-late 1960s onward). Even though such categories facilitate the discussion of the plays to a certain extent, adaptation and “own” or “new” work are barely distinct categories and Schechner has been praised for the originality of his public, more visible theatrical output (problematic as the idea of originality might be in our era), including his bold and radical adaptations, from The Performance Group (TPG) years onward. Brooks McNamara calls him “one of the great originals in the history of American theatre” (1993: 92). An innovative, and often iconoclastic or startling adapter, Schechner leaves his signature on his adaptations as he leaves his signature on any of his creative output.

There is, then, after the early plays a batch of plays that emerged from the TPG era: *Dionysus in 69*, *Makbeth*, and *Commune*—all adapted and partially devised texts but in very idiosyncratic and distinct ways (*Commune*, the least typically so). The productions that engendered the three written plays we read here were important events of the mature avant-garde just as much as they heralded postmodernism in the theatre. *Richard’s Lear* seems to be a bridge stylistically between the TPG plays and the most recent cluster of texts which evolved from work with East Coast Artists (ECA), an ensemble Schechner founded in 1992 to “boldly reinvent” classics, present cutting-edge international work, and move “beyond conventional notions of contemporary theatre and performer training.” ECA is reputed for its productions of *Faust/gastronome*, *Amerika after Kafka* (directed by Maria Vail Guevara), *Hamlet* (two productions), Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*, *YokastaS*, Lian Amaris’s *Swimming to Spalding*, and *Imagining O*. In these mature plays, Schechner experiments with “Rasaesthetics” (Schechner 2001, revised 2023) utilizing Rasaboxes, a performer training method based on Sanskrit Indian rasa theory combined with western ideas (see also Bowditch et al. 2023). The theatre scripts of the ECA era were conceived in a postmodern vein and share postdramatic traits. The aleatoric playfulness characterizing the postmodern have a strong presence in the mature plays, for example in the permutationally based parallel scenes of *Imagining O*. These instances are a close continuation of similar (raw and visceral) aleatoric ludicity in the dramaturgical backbone of earlier Schechner plays such as *Dionysus in 69*, *Makbeth*, and *Commune*. These ECA plays (and the respective productions with which they are intertwined and from which they have been distilled for this book) may be seen as synthesis pieces. They consolidate, even finesse (with routine but with enough of a sense of artistic risk), the challenging strategies for audiences groundbreakingly experimented with in the TPG plays. This group of plays demonstrates an erudite and confident handling of theatrical forms and conventions that were already visible in the early more dramatic plays.

Schechner’s relationship to text has been complex, perhaps even problematic over the years, which is not surprising for somebody famous for provocative performances such as *Dionysus in 69*. Schechner has been critiqued for his dismissal of the authority of the playwright (see Bottoms 2011), with the playtext being almost hidden as one form of proto-performance or proto-p (in other words, a starting point) leading to performance (Schechner 2020 [2002]: 39). The assortment of theatre scripts freshly collated here suggests otherwise—the texts draw attention to the Schechner for whom dramatic and postdramatic theatre texts matter. This is also underlined by the fact that several of the playtexts were already published around the time of the original performances—something Schechner found important to do over the years. In a mid-career piece of academic writing, “Drama, Script, Theatre, and Performance” (1988 [1973]), Schechner uses a diagram of four circles enveloping each other Russian doll style, with “drama” representing the most intense middle circle followed by the “script” which requires person-to-person transmission by someone who knows it. While I am using these terms in the introduction interchangeably,

I find Schechner's engagement with this set of distinctions an important contribution to the discussion of what drama is in relation to theatre, which is enlightening to read alongside the set of metaphors about the dramatic text identified by Worthen (2010): the score, the blueprint, information, and software.

Numerous plays in Schechner's body of work revisit classics. The collection includes two takes on Shakespeare—*Makbeth* and *Richard's Lear*—while *Dionysus in 69*, *The Prometheus Project*, and *YokastaS* revise ancient Greek tragedies and *Faust/gastronome* responds to theatrical and other versions of the legendary figure of Faust. *Imagining O* combines the worlds of Pauline Réage's novel, *Story of O*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; *Richard's Lear* is a mashup, a "recombinant appropriation," to use Eckart Voigts's term (Voigts 2018), of *Richard III* and *King Lear*. *Commune*, despite not having a single discrete source text (not that the other plays follow their sources in a servile manner), creatively reimagines and self-consciously replays actual historical events from recent American history as well as Marlowe's *Edward II*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and selections from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Coterminously, *Commune* ironically addresses myths about the nation in almost a state-of-the-nation play (one not done in a realist manner, needless to say). Characters drawn and adapted from history (including contemporary life) occur elsewhere in the Schechner *oeuvre* as well (e.g., Hitler and Albert Speer, the architect who served the Third Reich, in *Faust/gastronome*). Schechner experiments with this kind of borrowing to the extent of having real-life persons play themselves—in good Schechner manner, a version of themselves (or both themselves and not themselves) in a play, such as the Annie Sprinkle play-within-the-play in *The Prometheus Project*. Or, in the same play, women performers relating when they were raped and/or abused. In *Commune*, Spalding Gray plays the character "Spalding." Talking back to classics, arguing with tired interpretations, is a given in the adaptations, as opposed to any "slavish adherence to a set text" (Harbeck 1998: 116). "[R]egarding progeny all things are possible," Rebecca Schneider recalls hearing from Schechner in 1981. As she elaborates further, "any personal properties of progeny and progenitors are ours to see change if [...] we remain open to question, again, and again, and again" (Schneider 2011: 148). The transmitter is "not a mere messenger," asserts Schechner (1988 [1973]: 71) in his above-mentioned definition of the script, and this conviction also permeates his approach to existing texts and existing cultural material, which can function as raw material and stimulus in the hands of a director/rewriter/adapter.

Contemporizing classic genres is an integral part of the Schechnerian approach to the canon, as we can see for instance in *Faust/gastronome*, which brings the medieval genre of the morality into the era of the postmodern and into a postdramatic modality. Of course, Marlowe brought the morality play into the Elizabethan theatre and Goethe into the Romantic. In *Faust/gastronome*, Schechner jumps off from these. Mixing comic and tragic modes and genres as well as "high" and "popular" culture forms in a postmodern manner is part and parcel of Schechner's adaptive process, as demonstrated by *YokastaS* (which imbues a tragic plot structure with comic touches) and *The Prometheus Project* (which dissects the dramaturgical template of ancient Greek drama fusing it with a postmodern performance lecture by a woman astro-physicist and the sci-fi musings of Doris Lessing—these in a play that also incorporates a burlesque performance by Annie Sprinkle and first-hand recountings of sexual abuse and of being tortured in Iran). In addition to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of *Faust/gastronome* (a play fusing the dramatic, the lyric, the epic, and even the opera), *Imagining O* aptly demonstrates the hybridity of expressive modes in its combination of theatre, dance, and visual art installation—something that undoubtedly

makes the turning of the material into a (verbal) playtext or script a challenge. Folding together languages also appears often in the plays (not only in the adaptations), whether it is a case of bringing together different natural languages (English and French in *Imagining O* and English and German in *Faust/gastronome*, a touch of ancient Greek in *YokastaS*), historical versions of a language (*Makbeth*), or embracing a register such as scientific language (*The Prometheus Project*), academic language and conventions (the “quote [...] unquote” formula in *YokastaS*), or dialect (*The Blessing of the Fleet*). In several performances (and their concomitant plays), hybridizing and remixing are fine-tuned into a collage or bricolage. *Commune* as a case in point brings together numerous fragments and both *Richard’s Lear* and *Imagining O* bring the braiding of two (or more) radically pared down texts to a level of experimental mastery.

Several of the plays address the contemporary phenomenon of retrograde remediation (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 147) by melding newer forms of media (typically television) integrally into the fabric of the (post)drama, enriching the older cultural forms but also challenging possible audience perceptions of what the older media are capable of or how they might respond to the changing world. The (television) interview (or talk show) scenario is a recurring media-on-stage trope for Schechner. By way of beautifully showcasing remediation in the theatre, these instances also exemplify the metaperformative aspect of much of Schechner’s work. The presence of an interviewer character in *The Prometheus Project*, more specifically, contributes greatly to how the play treats agency, as the stripped, tied, and gagged Prometheus’s story is amplified—“reported”—to the audience by the Interviewer. Earlier, in *Richard’s Lear* (1981), the performance featured “microphonists,” performers whose only task was to make sure a microphone was in the face of performers. This not only amplified/mediatized their voices but also reminded audiences that contemporary reality comes wrapped in media. *YokastaS* features a character called Media who conducts “live” interviews with different Yokastas. *Imagining O* features a filmed interview projected on large screens over the spectators who are standing on stage looking up, an interview where Shakespeare’s Ophelia converses with Pauline Réage,¹ the author of *Story of O*. In the text published here, the names of the performers are used: Agape as Ophelia and Krodman as Réage. This is a profoundly metatheatrical, self-referential gesture within a theatre text that, on one level, takes aim at the complex intertwining of fiction and life and how that can be thrown into doubt. Yet another articulation of the staged interview is a particularly liminal version in *Faust/gastronome*. Here, the performer playing Faust is interviewed as a performer by another cast member in the Prologue and the Epilogue—in a liminal space between what is the theatre and what is before and beyond the theatre. This metaperformative device that also brings remediation to the fore frames the play, the drama, signaling its “make-believe” and cyclicity. It thus reminds us of the ongoing longevity and malleability of the Faust myth.

Regarding the evocation of the televisual talk show genre in particular, the “Tragedy’s Baddest Mamas” scene in *YokastaS* highlights a sense of sorority almost against the odds amongst a set of mythical female heroes—Medea, Phaedra, and Yokasta (with a mention afforded to the otherwise engaged Clytemnestra)—who all wage their own individual fights against patriarchy. *Faust/gastronome* has its own embedded tv talk show, too. In the unidentified post-WW2 moment where the play takes us—which we can rightly associate with the early 1990s as well as “today,” an always moving “now”—television is the key vehicle for communicating with “the masses” and clearly a vehicle for demagoguery, too. The theatre spectators are indeed turned into an “emplotted” television studio audience of the fictitious Vernice Minsky Miller Show (performed by theatre-maker Vernice Miller) in a scene set in a television studio (scene 16). In this playful metatheatrical scene,

the spectators in the theatre are told when and how to applaud or laugh as if they were a tv talk show audience. The inclusion of media enriches these plays and contributes to “suggest[ing] interpretive approaches” in a manner similar to what Greg Giesekam describes as multimedia theatre (2007: 8). The experimental, at times interactive, and always metatheatrical embrace of media in these recent postdramatic plays is foreshadowed by Schechner’s probing into the use of media within drama as early as *Briseis and the Sergeant* (1958). In the third act of *Briseis*, the court hearing of the Sergeant is broadcast as the “trial of the century” with a busybody director—a master of ceremonies of sorts—making arrangements on the scene, scantily dressed cheerleaders igniting the public, and the heavily pregnant titular Briseis being spotlit as a media celebrity with an apparent duty toward her followers. There is also a brief interview with the press about the My Lai massacre of the Vietnam War at the end of the mid-career *Commune*. With its presence throughout the *oeuvre*, both thematically and formally, the incorporation of media has been a recurring feature that adds more than social criticism—it has enriched Schechner’s performance language as well.

The weaving of media in the fabric of performances (and their concomitant formalized “play” versions) is just one aspect of how Schechner’s theatre centralizes the reflexivity of live performance itself, of how *Schechner Plays* tackle the concept and experience of performing—for artists and audiences alike. The TPG plays, for example, abound in metaperformative elements, which also vividly reflect Schechner’s thinking about human behavior itself being performance and hence, theatrical performance is twice twice-behaving, with the performers themselves being both themselves as in everyday life and not (or, as Schechner puts it, their being “not themselves” and also simultaneously “not not themselves”).² In the burgeoning field of performance studies, the pioneering of which is one of Schechner’s major career achievements, this problematic became predominant in the 1960s–1970s. It was theorized by Michael Kirby in his 1972 “On Acting and Not-Acting.” Using layered or multiframe identities including the real-life names of performers inside the plays is one notable manifestation of this experimentation. *Dionysus in 69* has many metatheatrical references to The Performance Group. These are further refined in *Commune*, where several metatheatrical postmodern self-references, beyond being TPG in-jokes, draw attention to the process, to the piece always being in-the-making, always being negotiated by the ensemble. As Clementine says in the play: “I’m so fucking tired of environmental, experimental theatre! I want to make a movie with Arthur Penn and star opposite Dustin Hoffman.” Also, *Makbeth*, TPG’s production just before *Commune*, is mentioned in *Commune*, and so is The Performance Group per se.

I have come with fresh (and perhaps too much of a reader’s) eyes to all of the plays. I have not seen any of the performances live, neither had I read the scripts until I started working on this introduction. Those with memories of performances—as makers or as spectators—will most probably have different (and of course individually defined) thoughts, impressions, reactions. The purpose of this independent introduction is to offer a critical annotation, providing potential interpretive contexts or avenues to the plays and the theatre-making *oeuvre* they showcase. It is not the intention of the introduction to reiterate or affirm Schechner’s own perspectives on the plays, which are fully and amply clarified and illustrated in the writer/wrighter’s individual introductions to the plays. There are multiple points of views in the plays themselves, especially in the mid-career and mature plays. We encounter disparate voices rather than one single dominant vision or authorial mouthpiece. This introduction is designed to simply add to the multiplicity of perspectives already there within and on the plays. My viewpoint is, of course, sharpened by what I have gained from Schechner’s own introductions to the plays, from talking to Schechner himself (in the late stages of the work) as well as from the extremely rich secondary

literature about the playtexts (and the productions that the plays accompany). My reading and point of view is by no means intended to come across as anything definitive and is bound to be different from those of Schechner the theatre artist himself, whose editorial revisiting of the plays and whose interpretation of them in the individual introductions is documentation and archiving at the same time, with Schechner being both critic and maker. In fact, Schechner, in whose life-work these areas of creative and/or critical work are so consummately interconnected, is, understandably, “opposed to the division between doers, critics, and theorists” (Schechner 1982: 15). My own takes on the plays are those of an adaptation, translation, and dramaturgy researcher and of a practitioner of higher-education pedagogy, with both the advantages and the limitations of these aspects of professional identity. While Schechner’s own introductions shed light on the creative-critical processes behind the plays, my own work cannot reproduce these processes (that I was not part of myself); I am writing on the plays themselves but unavoidably (and happily) engage with what I find about the processes through which these (post)dramatic texts have come about.

Imagining O

Imagining O (2014) is Schechner’s concept realized by individual and group devised scenes enacted in multiple spaces at the Alexander Kasser Theatre at Montclair State University. This East Coast Artists production was co-directed by Schechner and Benjamin Mosse, with significant input from movement director Roanna Mitchell. A preliminary version of *Imagining O* was staged in 2011 at the University of Kent, UK, where Schechner was in residence as a Leverhulme Fellow. This version then travelled to the International Theatre Festival of Kerala in 2012. *Imagining O* builds on Pauline Réage’s 1954 French erotic novel *Histoire d’O* (*Story of O*) and Ophelia’s part in *Hamlet* plus other borrowings and devised scenes. For example, the chorus, “Desolate, desolate [...]” coming near the end of the performance is a collage of the final words of all the women characters who die in Shakespeare: Cleopatra, Juliet, Cordelia, Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, Desdemona, Gertrude, Constance, and Lavinia. The text published here could be further developed if *Imagining O* were staged with different performers. In that sense, *Imagining O* is permanently in-process.

By turning to Shakespeare’s Ophelia, Schechner once again, as in *Briseis and the Sergeant* and *YokastaS*, gives voice to a female character who says relatively little about herself in the canonical source text. Extracting Ophelia’s lines from *Hamlet* and reconceiving the character for a new play, Schechner wanted to find out what she would “look like if there were no men responding to her, and if it was only her voice” (Ivie 2014). In yet another mashup somewhat like *Richard’s Lear*, Schechner braids Ophelia with Réage’s O, a complex character (and for many feminists, especially second-wave feminists such as Kate Millett, undoubtedly a problematic and troubling one)³ from a story of “willing sexual slavery” as Schechner and his collaborators engage in an “exploration of power dynamics in both sex and theater” (Collins-Hughes 2014). An intriguing juxtaposition at first sight: a sexually highly experienced modern character brought to the same “stage” (here, numerous spaces made into performance spaces in and around the Kasser Theatre) with a sheltered, early modern young woman character who may or may not have had any sexual experiences, though from her utterances in her moments of madness we see that she must have been at least unconsciously (if not physically) engaged in this dimension of life.

For Schechner, the two characters meet in different ways and profoundly so: not only through their shared suicidal fate but also through various motifs. For instance, as he explains in an interview, O sounds like “*eau*” (the French for water), which brings to mind Ophelia’s drowning. Water is an important motif in the production (and accompanying play); among other things, the powerful finale is set in a “river,” literally water; a shower is where one of the “dispersal” scenes takes place; and several times during the performance spectators are sprayed or sprinkled. The vowel *o*, of course, which links the characters by typography and sound, has been associated with zero, a lack, nothing, the female sexual organ, both perfection and annihilation (Pallister 1985: 7). In Schechner’s text: “zero, nothing, everything, a multiplier.” In psychoanalytic terms, let it suffice to refer to Lacan’s identification of “0 phallos” in Ophelia’s name (Lacan 1982: 20). All this has long influenced interpretations of both *Hamlet* and *Story of O*. The motif of the owl also blends the worlds of the two texts. In addition to being a harbinger of death and an emblem of wisdom in some cultures, it reminds the reader or spectator (who did their homework) of the final costume of Réage’s character as well as of the famous line uttered by Ophelia: “They say the owl was a baker’s daughter” (act IV scene 5). O is originally a fashion photographer in the novel, and models and photography remain important in this braided stage adaptation as well. O and Ophelia become foils to each other (mirrors or foils are another important motif in both *Hamlet* and *Story of O*).

Not unusually for a postdramatic play, different performers play Ophelia, O, and the author-character Desclos-Aury-Réage. In addition to the amphitheatre and river of the final scene, the production utilized the lobbies, the backstage area and lawns, guiding the audience around as a whole or divided into smaller groups. It also used screens. In a postmodern fashion—and in Schechner’s fashion of blurring divisions between performers and audience as well as between performing space and auditorium—spectators were invited to interact with the performers and the immersive environment in various instances. For example, at a certain moment in the play, they were invited to perform one of a selection of specific activities at “imagination stations” to signal their ongoing investment in the performance and receive a map of where to find “dispersed imaginings”—scenes devised by the performers. Interestingly, the punishment for failing this test (or for not playing along) is to be “banished to dramaturgy exile under the discipline of our strict dramaturg” (and that is actual dramaturg Carrie Lee O’Dell). It is frequently a feature of postmodern works that they contain their own interpretation(s), reading patterns, and metatextually reference their own artifice. In a “dispersed” (parallel or simultaneously running) scene called “Dramaturgy,” *Imagining O* does exactly this, and playfully so, as Professor O’Dell (the first ever dramatized dramaturg in a Schechner play) is ready to talk to audience members entering her designated space about source texts, the rehearsal process, and other important referential frameworks. But this, of course, is a rather cerebral section where spectators are sent as a punishment (or may wander there of their own will). Other places abound in sensual visual and aural experiences. The various instances of reading and reciting from physically tangible texts (involving the spectators) also foreground metatheatrically the artifice elsewhere in the play (and so does the coaching of audience members to act in “The Mousetrap” scene). “This is all imagination,” we hear in one scene, following an emphasis on Réage’s fiction being full of “honest imaginings.”

In a similar vein, the extremely erudite play features an interview imagined between Ophelia and Réage. In this film scene, Schechner interpolates Ophelia’s lines with extracts from an article in *The New Yorker* about Réage, and some lines of his own invention. There is something playfully metatheatrical and Pirandellian about a character talking to an author and, by doing so, making us think about agency. Intercutting theatre and everyday life—both abounding in performances of sorts—is, of course, also a Schechner trademark. But Ophelia does not altercate with Shakespeare,

her “original” author. She may be interpreted to be indirectly talking back to the Bard, an arch-author of the western canon, but directly she engages in dialog with a female author who may be sympathetic, to whom she may be able to say, “I do not know what I should think.” When they talk about origins, beginnings, this post-Pirandellian Ophelia declares, “I was not born. I was written.” Jean Paulhan, Réage’s employer and lover who challenged her to write erotica *à la* Marquis de Sade as a woman is also woven into this interview. Réage talks about the process of writing; Ophelia comments on her ontological state, on having been written as a character. They talk both to each other and aside from each other, almost on the same wavelength in certain moments but not quite. In the layering together of the two worlds—of Ophelia’s and Réage’s (and indirectly, O’s)—Sir Stephen, O’s captor to whom she is given by René (the man she loves), is mentioned in the same context with Hamlet when Ophelia assumes Réage would have had her own “Lord Hamlet.” There are comic effects emerging from how the different epochs and fictional (or fictionalized) life-journeys (treated here as documentary material) associate different connotations with words and phrases (such as “the war”). The layering together of different eras has long intrigued Schechner, at least since *Briseis and the Sergeant*. Author and character are, of course, equally characters and talk on equal terms as if there were no ontological differences separating them. Yet, of course, they unwittingly emphasize that there are such differences. The conversation makes us ponder on agency for women generally beyond the question of a theatrical character. After this character-author interview, the audience is divided into six segments and in a mode that references aleatoric postmodern playfulness, the play emphatically thematizes being a different experience depending on the permutation each spectator partakes of (let alone depending on what spectators themselves all bring to it).

The “dispersals,” different spectators are literally dispersed into different spaces where they see or interact with the performers who have made short scenes working closely with Schechner, co-director Benjamin Mosse, and movement director Roanna Mitchell. These scenes remind us of current gamified approaches in longer-established art forms such as theatre. So the dispersals are probably very familiar from other walks of life and for many arts and culture consumers. This is obviously a rapidly changing area of creative industries innovation with interactive new media influencing theatre. But we should remember that Schechner and other avant-garde theatre-makers were offering audience participation long before video games emerged. Schechner’s work in this is trailblazing.

Imagining O is described by reviewers as a combination of theatre, dance, and installation art. The performance included moments of one-to-one interaction between performer and spectator. With a strongly site-specific and even immersive ethos, the production harks back to Schechner’s TPG era experiments with environmental theatre and offers a late-style articulation of it. As in *Faust/gastronome*, bilingualism is an important aesthetic feature in *Imagining O*. We hear an extensive extract in French from *Histoire d’O*. Additionally, one of the performers sings a ballad in French and Ophelia utters a few French words in her mad scene.

YokastaS

YokastaS (2005) is a play in twelve scenes authored jointly with US-based Romanian playwright and poet Saviana Stanescu and directed by Schechner at La MaMa in New York. It was an East Coast Artists production. Schechner’s introduction to the play details aspects of the collaborative writing. Using the lexicon and grammar of postdramatic theatre, Stanescu and Schechner re-interrogate the story of Yokasta (Jocasta), an undeservedly marginal figure from the Theban cycle of Greek

mythology, who is here now “to set the record straight.” Playing with intermedia and commenting on overbearing television and celebrity culture, *YokastaS* places center stage the character of Yokasta, who in Sophocles’s *Oedipus* famously goes offstage to commit suicide. *YokastaS* rehabilitates Oedipus’s mother-wife very much in a feminist vein, presenting her as extremely complex, (re)imagining her as a woman (or rather, three women and one girl) with desires, drives, and feelings separate from those of Laius and Oedipus. Stanescu and Schechner split Yokasta into four interconnected characters—“a little like sisters”—who each bring to the fore different phases of Yokasta’s life: an early teen, action-movie and superhero obsessed Yoyo, a young Yoko “with a big chip on her shoulder,” the glowing Yono, who “in a state of perpetual bliss” is always pregnant with one or another of Oedipus’s four children, and the mature, perhaps most “Sophoclean” Yokasta who synthesizes the experience of all the Yokastas. There is also the Understudy, a character who is given small actions at various points of the play as she gets ready to play any one of the Yokastas. The Understudy soaks up a lot of the Yokastas’ discourse and the play’s final speech is hers. She bundles lines into a vehement monolog which is a montage of the feistiest and most hopeful assertions of the Yokastas’ discourse. The Yokastas—the plurality of whom is emphasized in the capital S of the title—often argue among themselves (dramatizing the layeredness of self). They also interact with other important female characters from ancient Greek tragedy but very importantly, in a playful metatheatrical and post-modern way. They speak up against their prior (canonized and ossified) theatrical representation by a male playwright (Sophocles) and a male psychoanalyst (Freud). “Tragedy’s Baddest Mamas” is a scene that brings Euripides and Seneca onto the stage by juxtaposing Yokasta, Medea, and Phaedra in a television studio where a Jerry Springer style talk show host, Media, asks them to debate “Who is tragedy’s baddest mama?” Aeschylus’s candidate, Clytemnestra, is absent because she is “under contract to another network and can’t be here.” There is plenty of catfighting as the three tragic mothers try to outdo each other as bad mamas. They hold paperback books of Greek tragedies from which they cite and read their tragic lines. Medea plays a recording of Medea declaiming in ancient Greek. Each time a Yokasta recites her lines, she announces, “quote [...] unquote”—a by now well-known way to underline reflexivity: frames within frames. The farce turns serious when Yokasta—quoting from Ted Hughes’s magisterial translation of *Seneca’s Oedipus*—delivers Jocasta’s monolog describing giving birth to Oedipus. And then Yono calmly recites Andrea Yates’s confession describing how she drowned in a bathtub her five children.⁴

YokastaS is ironic, with many comic moments, even with the Yates confession and other very serious episodes which, taken together, give the play a grave undertone and a deeper intertextual dimension of a postmodern kind. It is not unusual for the profoundly tragic mythical story of Jocasta and Oedipus (with its almost ridiculously implausible turns of fate) to elicit a more comic tone from adapters (take e.g., Spymonkey’s 2012 *Oedipussy*). *YokastaS* is ultimately preoccupied with the profoundly philosophical themes of the story. The Yokastas seem to be closed into a cycle of action that they cannot break out of—there are so many warning signs for what should be avoided, all of which are, of course, obvious to the spectator familiar with various iterations of the myth, but not to the Yokastas. The play undoubtedly addresses blind spots as part of human life. Each Yokasta carries in her the other three. Yoko, who is disgusted by Laius’s leg, is, as Yono, obsessed with Oedipus’s foot. Are the Yokastas predestined to keep acting out the same story arc with minor or not so minor “restorative” and feminist-tinted details added, such as the experience of sexual pleasure? It is for us, spectators and readers to ponder that, but thanks to kick-ass Yoyo’s determination to take her life into her own hands and the Understudy’s exuberant sampling of snippets from the play that amplify empowerment, *YokastaS* may well leave spectators and readers

with a note of hope. Even just having the Yokastas as central characters of a play and letting them talk about their lives (sex and more) suggests that a page has been turned in the creative-critical afterlife of this character. The production was also particularly progressive for its opening up of this heavily deconstructed classic role to non-white performers: three of the ensemble in 2005 were women of color, as opposed to the 2003 Yokastas, where only one actor was a person of color.⁵

Faust/gastronome

Faust/gastronome (1993) was Schechner's first production with East Coast Artists. The play revisits the Faust myth and uses it as a cultural blueprint to look at the consumer culture fostered by late capitalism. A widely adapted myth with a "polymorphic structure" (Singer 1998: 158) and with several famous renditions across art forms and genres, the Faust myth molds in Schechner's hands into a theatrical extravaganza for the senses that makes the temptation Faust gave in to a palpably exhilarating and enticing one. *Faust/gastronome* is a snapshot of contemporary western culture in the form of a post-Brechtian morality, where the medieval genre's conventions are creatively recycled to make us think about the state of humanity.

In this unidentified post-WW2 era which we can suppose is the early 1990s, television is the key mass communications vehicle and clearly a vehicle for demagoguery, too. In scene 16, the spectators are the "emplotted" television studio audience of the fictitious Vernice Minsky Miller Show (performed by theatre-maker Vernice Miller). Spectators are told when and how to applaud or laugh—a playful, again somewhat metatheatrical device. To start with, the play shows and narrates Faust's life, the man who mortgages his soul in exchange for the power to satisfy his desires. *Faust/gastronome*'s first fifteen scenes emphasize Faust's "education," how he amuses himself with the power conferred on him by Mephistopheles, his affair with Gretchen: the *wanderjahre* or journeyman part of Faust's story (if we may use this word from Goethe's third Wilhelm Meister book). Scene 16 features a Faust who brags about his capitalist, racist, and colonialist accomplishments. Faust as CEO of the "Fist Group" of corporations (Faust is German for fist) is the arch producer-consumer. But finally, after being fed, and then force-fed, his last supper, Faust is thrown into his own giant cauldron, finally again a cook in his kitchen. These later scenes, like Goethe's *Faust Part Two*, explore broad philosophical and ethical issues. Just as in Goethe, the first part of *Faust/gastronome* focuses on the microcosm and the second part on the macrocosm. At one point, Schechner broke *Faust/gastronome* into two parts with scene 15—Gretchen in prison waiting for her execution—ending part one. Later, Schechner decided to perform the text with no interval. Scene 15 shows Faust being drawn to staying loyal to Gretchen and trying to save her but the pull of the devil is stronger. The main plot structure of *Faust/gastronome* is linear, but the Prologue and the Epilogue where the performer playing Faust is interviewed as a performer by another cast member about performing the role of Faust is a metatheatrical frame. As it signals cyclicity, it reminds us of the longevity of the myth in various iterations.

Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* is another core source text for *Faust/gastronome*. Of course, Marlowe borrowed and adapted.⁶ Schechner takes from Marlowe allegorical "minor" characters (Bad Angel, Good Angel, the seven deadly sins personified). But these are also connected to the world of *Everyman* and other morality plays. These connections and borrowings remind us that on one level *Faust/gastronome* is out to educate

(although also, perhaps, thrill). It does not educate however in a cheap, overt or intrusive way but by asking us how much we take part in the apparently omnipresent consumer society that intends to colonize—in the world of the play—not only the less developed (i.e., historically previously already colonized and exploited) parts of the world but, according to Schechner's "super-industrialist" (Mazer 1994: 132), the whole planet and even the solar system. Furthermore, Professor John Faust—or Dr. Fist—seems to be as well versed in philosophy as in culinary matters. Yet, he does everything to avoid confirming to Gretchen that he believes in God. Faust's hubris is most explicit in his act of believing—or at least suggesting to Gretchen—that love is enough and God does not matter (whatever/whoever God stands for here). The devil, however, is tangibly and alluringly present in Mephistopheles's androgynous ebullience, supported by a dedicated entourage including Adolf Hitler. Mephistopheles is a strong presence on the stage, performed by a woman in a man's suit, with angel wings, and an erect penis at the end of their tail. Gretchen is present in *Faust/gastronome* (as in other iterations of the legend) to remind Faust of godly options until it is too late for him. She is able to save herself after her execution for murdering her and Faust's new-born. The (fictitious) characters representing the Catholic Church—including the priest who hears Gretchen's confession, Gretchen's mother, and her churchgoing but corrupt friend, Martha (based on Goethe's Marthe)—epitomize hypocrisy. Gretchen, in contrast, is genuinely pure and pious, but ultimately fallible as a human. She is a composite Eve/(almost)Mary character, who—with a postmodern and feminist twist—survives (or gets a new lease on life after her hanging) and arrives at the end to mock Faust: "What avails all thy riches, pleasures, and pomps?"

The Narrator appears as moderately impartial at first, but that façade starts coming away gradually until he reveals himself as Lucifer. Noting that, we might be prompted to consider how much we may have been sucked into consumer society ourselves. It corresponds to the (at least initially) bridging, objective role of the Narrator that it is he who acts as interpreter for those who do not understand German—there is much German in the text. But how much can we trust the translations of the Narrator, who turns out to be a seemingly omnipresent Lucifer? Is this a case of *traduttore traditore*?

Amidst all the fictional characters are two real people: Hitler (Mephistopheles's assistant) and Albert Speer, the Führer's architect. After serving a full twenty years' prison term for war crimes, Speer attempted to rehabilitate the public's perception of him. He wanted to be seen as an artist and political innocent not fully aware of what the Nazis were doing, including the Holocaust. This perception received intense scrutiny and criticism in the 1990s, with ample proof of his involvement in the regime. At the same time, Speer made many public appearances in order to burnish his reputation. He wanted to be known as the "good Nazi." The characters of Hitler and Speer are given substantial room in the Vernice Minsky Miller Show. They fit into the post-modern, highly intertextual *dramatis personae* who stand for certain things rather than coming across as rounded biographical characters such as might be in many contemporary biographical or historical plays. In *Faust/gastronome*, they are caricatures not dissimilar to the allegorical Angels, Devils, and Seven Deadly Sins. Hitler's brainwashing clearly works on Faust, whose cruelty, racism, and neo-Nazism are spine-chilling.

We may see Goethe's *Faust* as a manifestation of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* as it fuses genres or modes of artistic expression: dramatic, lyric, epic; even opera and ballet. *Faust/gastronome* is an intermedial performance *tour-de-force* that follows this tradition while also being a "metacommentary" (Singer 1998: 163) on other iterations of the myth. Gounod's *Faust* is evoked, for instance, when "Biere et Vin" is sung by the cows Faust controls and is reprised in the final scene.

The language is also experimental as it engages with different eras. There is the odd “thou,” “thy,” “wilt,” “art,” and similar linguistic markers that give the text a mock Marlovian feel and contribute to the macaroni language that traverses both epochs and natural languages. While the play is predominantly in English, there is strategic use of German texts by Goethe and Hitler. Several characters speak in German at times, offering a lingual abundance complementing the culinary one. The cultural references that span canons of high and popular culture alike include Helen of Troy (in Marlowe and Goethe), Lothario, Don Juan, Shylock, Schwarzenegger, OJ Simpson, and Woody Allen. *Faust/gastronome* is a remarkable (post-)humanity-poem for our time.⁷

The Prometheus Project

The Prometheus Project (1985), performed at the Performing Garage as part of the Wooster Group Visiting Artists Series in December 1985, is yet another experiment with ancient Greek mythology and its translatability to contemporary sensibilities and issues. The play primarily concentrates on the mythical figures of Prometheus, the titan who gave humankind fire (and much else as a result), and Io, Zeus’s mortal lover whom he (or, in another version of the myth, Hera) turned into a cow. Schechner takes as a starting point the canonical work on Prometheus by Aeschylus, “the father of western dramaturgy” (Schechner 1986: 9), in *Prometheus Bound* (ca. 460 BCE). Schechner (1986: 9) emphasizes that as Aeschylus replaced the dancer with the actor, his play reinstates the figure of the dancer while not abandoning the actor. Indeed, dance and choreographed movement appear crucial to *The Prometheus Project* (with mostly the cow-masked Ios as the dancers). The playscript understandably is only able to give an impression of this dimension of the performance. There is a “proliferation” of Ios on the stage. They are responsible for enacting the mythical story of Io (with an emphasis on Io as a “prototype of the sexually abused woman” (Goodman 1985) as well as telling their personal—or presented as personal, as authentic—narratives of rape and assault. Their presence, which also gently echoes the chorus of the daughters of Oceanus in the Aeschylean play, prefigures the abundance of Yokastas in the previously discussed play. The only male in *The Prometheus Project* to speak, Prometheus, tells his story of being tortured in Iran. In both cases, the intent is to link a narrative that is at least 2500 years old to events that happen *now*. Perhaps more overtly political than most of his other plays, *The Prometheus Project* (“slightly modified” for the present collection) presents us with Schechner the pacifist, a Schechner who is concerned with global politics and who we will see at work in *Commune* and to some degree in *Dionysus in 69*, albeit by no means in a cheaply didactic way. Here, too, Schechner interrogates the fate of humanity in our technologically advanced age when the threat of nuclear obliteration haunts us. But he does not spell out a lesson. Still, the choice of the word “project” (as in the Manhattan Project⁸) reminds us of education, research, and science where there are lectures, slides, demonstrations, as well as problems to be explored and perhaps solved in the framework of “projects.” Schechner’s metaphoric encapsulation of the intention of the experiment in an accompanying piece of academic writing—“vaccination rather than catharsis”—(Schechner 1986: 7) also suggests that the theatre-maker engages with post-Brechtian dilemmas: the challenge of being political and didactic but not by treating the spectator as an empty vessel. Schechner himself calls *The Prometheus Project* “an active meditation on nuclear wars past and future” (Schechner 1986: 7). Thus, *The Prometheus Project* could be a problem play, but it is more intricate than that.

With its fragmentary structure (like Heiner Müller's 1977 *Hamlet/machine*), *The Prometheus Project*'s text is a scenario or blueprint for what may happen to performers who enact a non-Aristotelian sense of character. *The Prometheus Project* is postdramatic theatre exhibiting postmodern textual and intermedial hybridity and bricolage. The play—or performance—brings together a range of discourses and relishes the postmodern zeal for citation and reference (inviting connotative reception) without worrying about overly homogenizing the fabric, the material of the piece. In his introduction to the piece, Schechner calls the play a collage. In addition to text from astrophysicist E. Margaret Burbidge and a soft-porn/burlesque performance-within-the-performance by Annie Sprinkle, *The Prometheus Project* features images from Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita's animé, *Pica Don* (1978), scenes that parallel Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, lines from Shakespeare's sonnets, and paragraphs from Doris Lessing's 1979 sci-fi novel, *Shikasta*. This technique of using fragments of existing sources fused with texts and actions devised by the performers is a strategy often used by Schechner, as we will also see in *Dionysus in 69* and *Commune*. But it is not only textual fragments that are merged into a performance text. Schechner invites a variety of discourses to enter into conversation. Slides of images from *Pica Don* are followed by sharp criticism of the world depicted in the anime by Japanese Professor Tomoko Kusuha whose perspective on Japan during WW2 is very different from what is evoked by the Kinoshitas' visual narrative. In *The Prometheus Project*, we see *Pica Don* while listening to Kusuha. The integral use of projection and tape recording give the performance an intermediality captured in the text.

Easing the audience into the performance are two slides, each showing the same paragraph from Burbidge's 1983 presidential lecture to the annual meeting of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. Burbidge poses the question this unorthodox problem play will attempt to answer. If life is so common in the universe, why haven't we found it yet? Later in the play, Prometheus answers laconically, "They got the light wrong." Along the way toward that reply, performance artist and porn activist Annie Sprinkle gives an over-the-top, playful, and parodistic sex education class, an interactive and emancipatory lecture in the vein of the titular "project" mode. Sprinkle is perhaps a kind of Io, constantly on the move, restless. As Schechner writes in his introduction to the play, she "masters those who would master her." Perhaps more on a quest than persecuted, Sprinkle aptly talks back to Aeschylus, "the source of our theatrical patriarchy" (Schechner 1986: 9). Schechner's Io, the arch-Io who speaks to Prometheus later in the play, is on a quest. She doubts what some have tried to make her believe: that she has arrived. "They said to me, That's love, yes, yes, not a doubt about it, now you see how—." She recalls being told the same about finding friendship, "the place," beauty, order, "all becom[ing] clear." The MC, who announces Annie and later interrupts her ushering her off stage, can be seen as a post-Brechtian distancing ploy inserting screen media into the world of theatre. There are numerous slides, audio on loudspeakers, and an interviewer interacting with Prometheus: a recurring media-on-stage trope of Schechner's. The scene with Annie Sprinkle is followed by a scene performed by three Ios—one relating (a version of) the myth following Aeschylus and two telling their personal stories of sexual abuse associated with what happens to Io. These, importantly, are not in the published script because they must be told fresh depending on the experiences of specific performers. Then we see the stripped, tied down, and gagged Prometheus, a prisoner in late twentieth century Iran parallel to the "Prometheus bound" of ancient mythology. His muffled, hard to understand story is amplified—"interpreted," "reported"—by the Interviewer. Prometheus testifies about torture, humiliation, and loss. It is only at this point—and in this thoroughly intertextual and mediatized setting—that Prometheus and Io have a dialog. As in

Aeschylus, Prometheus predicts Io's fate, but unlike Aeschylus, the emphasis is on "[i]nfinite emptiness" rather than a happy ending. In Aeschylus, Io is restored to her human form and one of her descendants liberates Prometheus. In the next to last scene of *The Prometheus Project*, Prometheus asks Io for "A few words, to enter my heart." Io can say nothing to ease him. Finally, she utters more to herself than to Prometheus: "For never-resting time leads summer on to hideous winter. When I fall, I'll weep for happiness."

In *The Prometheus Project*'s final scene, the ensemble is revealed upstage as they are changing from costumes to ordinary clothes. They come forward to the front of the stage as "they are at the moment." The performers both individually and in chorus recite lines from Doris Lessing's *Shikasta* (1981). "It is the nursery of life itself that is poisoned, the seeds of life, the springs that feed the well." But maybe there is hope drawn from knowing that humans are but "temporary manifestations" of the universe's "roaring engine of creativity." In a previous version of the script, the final word, uttered by all the performers—"patience"—foregrounds that the earth and its populations are still here, though it very much remains a question whether that gives us humans ground for hope. Reading the 2023 script, involving ecosexual Annie Sprinkle in this performance seems much less random than it may first appear. And when read in the context of the anthropocene, *The Prometheus Project* addresses more than the survival of humankind.

Richard's Lear

In *Richard's Lear* (1981), a text montage of Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *King Lear*, Schechner had the opportunity to delve into a large-scale experiment with theatrical collage of a particular kind: one that braids, actually merges two plays intricately together while also referencing other texts. Schechner had been drawn to this technique for some time, having already considered collage as the dramaturgical principle for what eventually became *Makbeth*. Staged at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as part of *The Other Side of Shakespeare* season, *Richard's Lear* was "a stripped-down Lear story/play within the control of Richard III as would-be king and prime mover of the new piece" (Zarrilli 1981: 92). The two sets of characters were streamlined, merged into an ensemble that also included character splits: a young Richard accompanied the adult Richard; a Fool and a Young Fool. Lear was played by Deborah Holmes. This unorthodox casting was concealed from audiences browsing the program which used first name initials rather than full names (D. Holmes as King Lear). At one point, Holmes removes the mask and holds it next to her face, asking the spectators, "Does any here know me? This is not Lear!"

Richard's Lear was Schechner's first show⁹ after he left The Performance Group in 1980.¹⁰ It was developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison at the invitation of Phillip Zarrilli (a practitioner-scholar who Schechner met in India in the mid-1970s where both men were studying South Asian performance). The play was performed by university-affiliated performers. After several performances in Madison, the show toured to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Zarrilli, like Schechner, sought ways of learning and incorporating non-western performance techniques. He was a strong advocate, teacher, and scholar of psychophysical performer training. Under Zarrilli's guidance, the production featured fight scenes using *kalaripayattu*, a martial art from Kerala, South India.

Beyond probing further into adaptation as a creative and critical practice, *Richard's Lear* can also be seen as a contribution to intercultural theatre at a time when this was a growing practice in the work of Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, and others. It was a considerable

challenge how to learn from the performance traditions of non-western cultures without neo-colonialism or neo-liberal exploitation. Schechner himself sees *Richard's Lear* as significantly influenced by his trips to India (see Schechner 1984). *Richard's Lear* also featured punk music, dance, and costuming. The B-52's and Dead Kennedys were heard "at ear-splitting levels [...] between scenes, for the heath scenes and Gloucester's blinding, provid[ing] a harsh underscore for the action" (Zarrilli 1981: 94). Lear's daughter Regan was "a Soho mod-punker in red and black" (Zarrilli 1981: 93).

The text is derived primarily from *King Lear* and *Richard III* but—in a manner characteristic of Schechner's composition techniques—it also has a tonic of Shakespearean curses from a range of his plays launched at Richard by Lear's daughters. If we look at the text closely, we find that Richard's quest for power and control is grafted onto *King Lear*, itself considerably pared down. Grafting, a horticultural metaphor for adaptation used by Julie Sanders (2015) (taking inspiration in part from Genette's 1997 [1982] definition of hypertextuality), is a particularly apt one here. In graftage the tissues of two different plants are joined together so that the two grow together and morph into a new plant where the plant portion newly inserted into the stock (the scion) is typically dominant in shaping the outcome of the new plant. *Richard's Lear* also owes its existence to the conjoining of the tissues of two, otherwise often adapted, questioned and challenged Shakespearean classics problematising in between them themes such as kingdom, power, and loyalty. Here *Richard III* is grafted onto *King Lear*, as Richard tries to control and almost hijack *King Lear*. Of course, the metaphor almost functions the other way around as well: the Lear narrative is grafted onto Richard's story to enrich it and let it grow. Without the richness of the characters grafted on from *King Lear*, Richard would have a monodrama to perform cyclically, at best.

From *Richard III* we have only Richard himself but as a doubled character. Young Richard described in the stage directions as a "pre-teen boy" speaks as a twelve-year-old who acts as "big" Richard's clone, alter-ego, sidekick, and big-Richard-to-be" (1981: 92). Young Richard is bossy, ambitious, unbridled, and altogether more-Richard-than-Richard. Young Richard's first move is locking his adult counterpart into a cage. Yet, Richard is the only character (if we may use this word with moderate caution and certainly beyond the framework of dramatic theatre), who "had the freedom to stop the action at any point—he was the onstage director" (Zarrilli 1981: 93). Because there are no other characters from *Richard III* in *Richard's Lear* save a few lines of Lady Anne spoken by Cordelia, it really is a case of Richard forcing his way into *King Lear* as he tries to fulfill his ambitions. Richard can also be read dramaturgically as an Edmund character—a ruthless, self-centered and lustful manipulator. The title itself allows us to think playfully of the script (and accompanying production) as Richard Schechner's *Lear*—his take on *Lear* is clearly one soaked in *Richard III*, and the experiment features a Richard who is a caged *metteur en scène*—"imprisoned" by society, by the conventions of orthodox theatre.

Commune

A largely postdramatic devised performance without a single main source, the 1970–72 *Commune*, the first TPG play to be discussed here, "explored metaphorically the concept of the American dream, and the questions of violence, dropping out, and ownership" (Lichti 1986: 154). The intention was to delve into the concept of community—in all its complexity—in America. Great importance is afforded to the foundational myths of America spotlighting their supremacism and imperialism. "In the beginning all the world was America!" proclaims the character Bruce, referencing both the Bible

and American hubris. Particularly targeted are the history of and ideologies associated with the early settlers, with emphasis on how Protestant evangelism and problematic conjectures about racial hierarchies shaped the early thinking about America and its place in the world. *Commune* intricately weaves into its fabric of story and song, myths of America as the “promised land” and the “City upon a Hill.” It asks what is wrong with America and what “community” means to contemporary Americans. The contemplation of these themes takes an apocalyptic and post humanist tone at times. For example, in the second version of the opening, we read that “American history ended last night. We in this room are all that’s left.” Needless to say, the play does not offer answers or definite ways forward but sheds light on deep-rooted hypocrisies, self-deceits, and issues with responsibility.

Death Valley is presented as a legendary place where Jesus on the cross meets the coyote in the desert. The “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” sung near the performance’s start, reminds spectators and characters of a mythical if bogus perfect land full of “lemonade springs,” “cigarette trees,” and “soda-water fountains”:

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain
 The pigs [police] have wooden legs
 The bulldogs all have rubber teeth
 And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs.
 The farmers’ trees are full of fruit
 The barns are full of hay
 Oh, I’m gonna go where there ain’t no snow
 Where the winds don’t blow
 Where the sleet don’t go
 In the Big Rock Candy Mountain!

This song is followed immediately by the hymn, “Bound for the Promised Land” (America). But this America is also the Tate-Polanski home (as will be explained later). Vocal music was very important in *Commune*—both traditional and newly composed by Paul Epstein who worked with Schechner in the New Orleans Group (NOG)¹¹ and who composed the complex sound score of The Performance Group’s *Makbeth*. *Commune* is punctuated by songs, hymns, and ballads in a Brechtian manner.

Commune’s ironic subtitle—“Being Several Well-Known Scenes Enacted After Supper by the Youth of Our Nation”—points not only to the Vietnam War but also to “the Manson Family” who on August 8, 1969 invaded the Hollywood home of movie director Roman Polanski murdering his pregnant wife, actress Sharon Tate, and four others. Neither Polanski nor Manson were there. The murder spree of the Manson Family was tv and tabloid heaven. As Clementine brags, “Hey, Spalding, now that we’re famous we’re going to do this hour-long TV special. It’ll be just us—eating, singing, killing, being together.” The ensemble performs both the Manson gang and its victims in an act of collective remembering. The Vietnam War itself was dubbed “the living room war”¹² because so much of it could be seen on nightly network tv, including reports of atrocities committed by American troops, especially the My Lai massacre of March 16, 1968. In *Commune*, the group designates fifteen spectators who are asked to sit in a circle at the center of the theatre “to represent the villagers at My Lai.” *Commune* distils real-life content into non-realist performance¹³ as some actions on stage re-enact (in a distanced way) what “happened last night,” i.e., the Manson murders and the My Lai massacre. Fragments of these are enacted or referred to throughout *Commune* and

then the Tate murders are staged in detail near the play's end. The last scene of *Commune* is a newscaster interviewing Polanski. Similar media-evoking scenes are in *Briseis and the Sergeant* and *Yokasta*S.

Commune was also about community. The Performance Group was a community, if not a commune, with its own problems and challenges. The performance intertwined troubling events from American history with what "community" means, exploring these connections using classic American and European texts. The throughline of the mosaic-like script is "the American experience" as it might be imagined by Charles Manson. The text is heterogeneous, drawing on a broad range of sources: both Testaments of the Bible, hymns, folk songs, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, *Richard III*, Marlowe's *Edward II*, Melville, Thoreau, Locke, Emma Lazarus's poem on the Statue of Liberty, contemporary advertisements, congressional and courtroom testimony, newspaper articles, and original material devised by the performers and Schechner. But *Commune* is neither a string of quotations nor documentary theatre. The emphasis is on reimagining events and texts as the *Weltanschauung* of "Americanness," weaving these into the lives of the performers. This technique points toward *The Prometheus Project* and *Imagining O*. The real-time interactions with spectators are to some degree like in *Dionysus in 69*.

In terms of its narrative dramatic arc, *Commune* is episodic and loosely structured. The story, such as it is, concerns the Europeans coming to the "new world" and "settling" it—with the production being very aware of the ironies and contradictions embedded in those phrases. There is something aleatoric about the development of the play's themes, including participatory interactions with the audience. Not only are the Manson murders enacted among and between the spectators, but also, as mentioned, fifteen spectators are selected at random to sit in the middle of the playing space to represent My Lai villagers. This is participation at a different level than in *Dionysus in 69*. At this point, how or even if the performance continues depends on how audience members respond to a request to interact. The published text gives three different versions of the My Lai massacre. The published script may benefit from a more aleatoric, hypertextual, almost "gamified" presentation so that the reader or reader-participant can begin to experience what the play offers. Even a fully linear presentation gives a sufficient taste of *Commune*'s sometimes convivial and playful, but deeply serious, treatment of its audiences. It is hard to think of a better example of this conviviality than requiring spectators to take their shoes off, leaving them at the entrance to The Performing Garage. The performers wear some of those shoes as they "murder." At least, by costume-inference, the spectators are implicated. After the performance is over, all the shoes are dumped in the dip of the "wave" in the center of the space—the place where spectators representing My Lai villagers were. Preparing to leave the theatre, spectators sort through the remains in order to claim their property.

Commune is more preoccupied with themes than with rendering a straightforward story and in this sense it is postdramatic, before there was such a term. If *Dionysus in 69* is the thesis and *Makbeth* the antithesis, *Commune* is the synthesis: the keystone.

Makbeth, After Shakespeare

With the 1969 production of *Makbeth, After Shakespeare*, Schechner and The Performance Group turned to Shakespeare, who presented a very different challenge than did Euripides. Shakespeare's English sounds comprehensible, but in fact much of it is hard for today's people to understand. It is easy to miss many nuances, even if one gets the poetry and the overall meaning. In *Makbeth*, Schechner did not come from a place of veneration. Unsurprisingly, his intention was to explore using rather

than simply staging a dramatic text which of course already had a huge stage and adaptation history globally. Experiences from The Performance Group's first production, *Dionysus in 69*, were woven into the fabric of *Makbeth*. This fluid approach to generating the text treats Shakespeare's play as inspiration for creative ensemble work rather than as a prestigious and untouchable literary text. Shakespeare is himself perceived in this context "not so much [as] the author of *Macbeth* as [...] the provider of basic material out of which that production was made." The Shakespearean play hence functioned as "a collection of words" at the disposal of the creative team. Shakespeare's tragedy was thoroughly rewritten for *Makbeth*—"reconstructed," in Esther Sundell Lichti's term (1986). The play was indeed reconstituted from micro-level elements "upwards" through workshops and writing (or indeed, "wrighting"). It is reworded in an intriguing idiom that I might think of (without any disrespect) as a kind of adaptationese, which is neither fully Shakespeare nor fully contemporary but somewhere in between: a predominantly prosaic text with poetic elements and a strong music and sound score (included in this volume), peppered with recognizable words, phrases, sentences from the Scottish play itself. In fact, as Schechner explains in his introduction to the play in this volume, every word in *Makbeth* is in *Macbeth*, sometimes radically rearranged. Many motifs and turns of phrase are indeed recognizable from Shakespeare, even if they have been recontextualized in a dramaturgically very much reshaped—we might even say, deconstructed—play. *Makbeth* contains vocabulary that is choice, in some instances even literary or archaizing (with "tis," "thy" and other Shakespearean linguistic staples), but these words and expressions are often surrounded by sentences that tilt toward the contemporary in their syntax and feel even if each word is from *Macbeth*. The overall effect is include rather than alienate the spectator.

Schechner admits in his foreword to the published version of *Makbeth* that the ensemble was unprepared for the challenge of speaking poetry and dealing with "the feelings evoked by the physics of language-speaking." As Lichti notes,

The basic breathing and articulation work done in workshops laid a sound base for freeing the voice, but it did not go far enough. Shakespeare's poetry compounded the problem. The beauty of the language, and the very fact that it was Shakespeare, became a barrier that prevented the actors from getting through the words to the action beneath.

(1986: 134–35)

It became clear to Schechner that the ensemble needed more refined verbo-physical work in addition to psycho-physical ones, but it is illuminating that the power of Shakespeare's language, the problems it presents (including ossified ways of directing and performing it), and perhaps even its iconic status, startled the already experienced director and writer-scholar, who later recalled this overwhelming feeling as "To stop short of 'doing' Shakespeare was something I couldn't do" (1978: xi).

To borrow Schechner's own fitting musical metaphor, the play is "something like a Haydn variation on a theme of Mozart" (Schechner 1978: xix). The text was built up from the ground, in an experimental regime led by Schechner. The developmental workshop series started with association exercises¹⁴ centered on physicalizing in the moment sentences and single words from the play (evolving into what Schechner calls the "antiphonal Makbeth" exercise, where ensemble members took turns in leading the extended association exercise around a fragment or rhythm of their choice, resulting in "very personal roadmap[s]" (Schechner 1978: ix). In Schechner's facilitation, the actors used the Shakespearean text as "raw material" (Schechner 1978: x) and merged it with their own fantasies and psycho-physical responses.

Schechner identified four character types in *Macbeth* (in the process of transposing it to *Makbeth*), and the production used this typology and the actions identified and generated (or in a sense reconceived) by these character groups as a dramaturgical skeleton for the play. These archetypal character groups were: Doers (*Makbeth*, Lady *Makbeth*), Victims/Founders (Duncan, Banquo), Avengers (Malcolm and Macduff), and the constantly present and ultimately triumphant manipulators, Dark Powers (the witches and the commoners). These characters' movements in the environment as well as their costumes reflected what they stood for. "The Doers wore wine; the Founders, off-white; the Avengers, light brown; and the Dark Powers, midnite blue. Everyone wore boxing shoes" (Lichti 1986: 133). The groups occupied various spaces in the environment and also fought for spaces as part of the power struggle. At the center of the action was a huge table where spectators sit and many actions happen. This was where *Makbeth* and Lady *Makbeth* entertain Duncan when he first arrives to their castle; this was where the second banquet takes place; and this was where the major encounters in the drama take place. Around this central table-stage were cubic structures on and under which scenes take place and also spectators sit. This environment resonated with the cardinal themes as identified by Schechner (love, fame, power, and money). The production was minimalist. The only prop was "a heavy, archaic crown of solid brass passed from Duncan to *Makbeth* to Malcolm [...] but fitting none of them" (Clark cited in Schechner 1978: xxv).

Even though the initial plan was to script collectively, the members of the group could not agree on the dramaturgical structure, so Schechner took it upon himself as director-wrighter to deliver the script. He laments that out of the dramaturgical avenues presented by the developmental process (the antiphonal *Makbeth*, "the playing of scenes in random order as thrown up nightly by the performers, and the 9-movement *Makbeth*"), he opted for "the most orderly and traditional" structuring principle (Schechner 1978: xvi). Still, the performance gave the impression of open-endedness, with "no chance for redemption in the metaphysical sense or for catharsis in the Aristotelian sense" (Hallberg 2001: 202)—undoubtedly a feature shared with *Dionysus in 69*, as we shall see. Less radical in its dramaturgical and even linguistic alterations than some Restoration Shakespeares or Enlightenment-era or Romanticist takes on Shakespeare from Europe, the novelty here is in the beautiful (even if, according to Schechner's own admission, at times disharmonious) *Gesamtkunstwerk* of embodied performance, with its sweeping, often simultaneous action, music, and design.

Schechner emphasizes that although the adaptation was clearly scripted by him, it emerged from extensive workshops, the collective efforts of the ensemble. The performers brought their own fantasies, emotions, and interpretations to the table. In Schechner's 1978 recollection, the process was far too *Macbeth*-like, steeped in internal fights for ensemble leadership and authority. In Schechner's pithy reflection, "*Makbeth* began playing us" (1978: viii). But despite Schechner's judgment that the Scottish play got the better of the Group, *Makbeth* is a significant experiment in adapting a well-known classic whose idiom is far from contemporary into a production that is immersive and physical. *Makbeth* re-interprets the canonical drama by dissecting and rearranging its components boldly yet coming up with a play whose themes and actions do not diverge significantly from more conventional readings of the tragedy.

Dionysus in 69

Dionysus in 69—Schechner's most famous work—was performed from June 1968 to July 1969 in The Performing Garage, a small converted metal works factory at 33 Wooster Street in what

became SoHo in lower Manhattan. *D69* (as it is nicknamed by many) toured to the US midwest and the Belgrade International Theatre Festival. A free and radical adaptation of Euripides's *The Bacchae*, the production gained international acclaim as a highly experimental provocative performance, earning Schechner the reputation as an *enfant terrible* of alternative theatre who wanted to break both commercial and psychological restraints by bonding spectator and actor (Zeitlin 2004: 53). The production opened on June 6, 1968, the day Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated, barely two months after the murder of Martin Luther King and five months before the election of Richard Nixon as US President. The same year saw the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre* by Jerzy Grotowski, the Polish theatre director who had a significant influence on Schechner and whose workshop exercises found their way into the developmental rehearsals for *Dionysus in 69*. *D69* closed shortly before the Woodstock Festival, "an event that has assumed legendary status in the annals of hippie utopia" (Zeitlin 2004: 51). The final two days of the production were filmed by Brian De Palma, Robert Fiore, and Bruce Rubin.¹⁵ The *D69* script remains an intriguing theatre text that not only contributes to the documentation of the "mythologiz[ed]" (Sampatakakis 2014: 391), iconic (and, for many, iconoclastic) performance but also continues to inspire new work and invite discussion about theatre and its audiences. The production has famously played a part in ushering in a particular mode of theatre-making that Schechner terms "environmental theatre" (Schechner 1968b, 1973). Vastly experimental in its focus on (or return to) ritual and negotiating the intricate processes of devising physically from a (classic) dramatic text in an ensemble setting that is intended to be democratic, Schechner practiced environmental theatre throughout his years founding and leading The Performance Group (1968–80).

Schechner—a seasoned adapter—had, unsurprisingly, demonstrated a persistent interest in *The Bacchae*, an elusive and complex play which has generated a range of ideologically, thematically, and artistically disparate interpretations over time. The "structural typicality" of the play—"destruction of order/rebirth of new order"—has been "readily available for scholars and artists to [use] as a political metaphor" (Sampatakakis 2014: 389). As James Harbeck (1998: 27–28) highlights, Schechner had been working on the subject for years before. "Young King, Jealous God" (Schechner n.d.) was an early dramatized version of the subject, while "*The Bacchae*: A City Sacrificed to a Jealous God" (1961) is Schechner's first published scholarship. "In Warm Blood" (1968a) is a second essay about the play. Before working on *D69*, Schechner experimented making adaptations, including a draft set in rural Louisiana where he was stationed as a soldier at Fort Polk.

For *D69*, rather than opting for free improvisations leading to a wholesale rewording of the play in the workshop process, Schechner and The Performance Group retained—or should we say, utilized—almost 600 lines from William Arrowsmith's translation. In some instances, these lines were used more than once. In a slight mashup prefiguring *Richard's Lear* and *Imagining O*, there were also sixteen lines from Sophocles's *Antigone* (659–80) as well as a little borrowing from Euripides's *Hippolytus* (215–21). As Froma I. Zeitlin explains:

The rest of the text was composed by the group, some on their own at home and some in the workshops. The textual montage, arrangements and variations, as well as repetitions, particularly in the use of the chorus, were worked out during rehearsals and throughout the run. The performers wrote their own dialogue in a spirit that respected Euripides' text, even if it was altered, paraphrased, or otherwise personalized. Schechner wanted as much individual expression as possible in a play that deals so effectively with the liberation of personal energy.

(Zeitlin 2004: 64)

The directorial principle about the use of the Euripidean text was that the actor playing king Pentheus—the character who is undermined and scapegoated in the play—should adhere to the source text as closely as possible, whereas the actor performing the god Dionysus—the character who succeeds in humiliating and destroying Pentheus by introducing Dionysian ecstasy into Thebes—is free to infuse Euripides’s dialog with his/her own wording cast in a very contemporary idiom. Schechner in titling the play intended it to refer to both the year after the 1968 presidential election—“A vote for Finley [Dionysus] in 68 brings Dionysus in 69!”—and the sexual position. In the script, staging, and other writing from this period, Schechner makes clear his ambivalence and skepticism about a Dionysian revolution.¹⁶

What the Dionysus of *D69* brings divided commentators at the time and continues to be debated, with sophisticated readings emphasizing a decidedly “pro-hip” fable on the one hand, and one foregrounding a potentially dangerous “ecstatic fascism” (Schechner’s own wording) on the other, and positions in between. Schechner emphasizes that it is a tragedy. With its tragic qualities, *D69* is (in Schechner’s words again) a cautionary tale, a parable or fable for (post) modern times. The main themes and possible intentions of the production have been discussed voluminously by the makers themselves, including Schechner and other members of the collective (e.g., Shephard 1991), and by a variety of critics who either saw the production themselves or relied on archival material including the frequently shown split-screen De Palma film, famous on its own. There is an ever-growing literature surrounding the performance. Wherever on the broad spectrum one’s interpretation sits, it appears that with this production—and the intense workshops and training that led up to it—Schechner and his collaborators sought ways to create community and capture and relish a sense of communality, much in the vein of ancient Greek theatre. Lamenting the predominance of individualism in modern western culture, Schechner is (here and elsewhere) in search of modes of integrating the individual with the communal. As Erika Fischer-Lichte points out in *Dionysus Resurrected: Performances of Euripides’ The Bacchae in a Globalising World* (2014), Schechner takes inspiration from David Cooper’s definition of “commune” as a “viable dialectic between solitude and being with others” (Cooper 1970 cited in Fischer-Lichte 35).

Fischer-Lichte discusses the performance as part of a group of plays that concentrate on the liberating power of Dionysus, “the god of wine—or LSD—of ecstasy, of communality and the theatre” (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 28). Indeed, with its preoccupation with “shared ecstasy and a cultural revolution” (Foley 2015: 163), the production aimed to considerably narrow and, at times, eliminate the distance between performers and audience, giving opportunities to spectators to physically engage with the performers and immerse themselves in the purpose-built and symbolic environment. Stage manager Vicki May Strang welcomed the audience by encouraging them to

Take your time to explore the environment. It’s a very interesting space with many different kinds of places to sit or stand or even lay down. We recommend going up high on the towers and platforms, or down underneath them. The password is, “Go up over or take cover.”

(The Performance Group 1970)

With an underlying commitment to giving a degree of carefully negotiated agency to the spectator, this approach pioneered what we now call immersive theatre, alongside being an early form of the contemporary site-specific theatre. Some scholars, including Fischer-Lichte, “[question] whether the production came closer to manipulating than liberating the audience” (Foley 2015:

163). How much freedom even the performers themselves may have had in choices about body exposure from performance to performance would probably be impossible (and perhaps even futile) to try to understand, even with access to Schechner's own annotation of the process as well as some detailed performer accounts, such as Shephard's, who, in S. E. Wilmer's reading, suggests that the performance at certain moments "ran the risk of turning [...] into a voyeuristic sex show or alternative form of prostitution" (Wilmer 1992: 170). In a post-Me Too historical moment—and in the era of intimacy directors—one can see that *Dionysus in 69* represents a very different kind of performance-making. As Martin Puchner succinctly puts it, "In our post-revolutionary world, we do not make theatre like that anymore" (2009: 141). A "monumental" (Sampatakakis 2014: 391), "path-breaking and influential" (Foley 2015: 163) artistic product of its time, *D69* is canonized as bold in terms of performance mode and subject matter alike, celebrating "the American movement for sexual liberation and freedom of speech" (Sampatakakis 2014: 391) in "a year in which seismic global shifts in political consciousness took place" (Hall 2004: 7), while it also revisited the ritualistic roots of theatre. With regard to the performance's mounting of a "festival of liberation" (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 25), some of its critical reception is undoubtedly imbued with praise. For instance, Sampatakakis (2014: 391) asserts that *Dionysus in 69*

remains a revolution in itself as it was the first one to feel the sexual suggestions latent in the text. Only after Schechner's production did a 'gay' Dionysus and the exposure of the naked body become fashionable, almost mainstream, for *The Bacchae*.

Acting as a trend-setter of sorts, the production did not only foreground taboo themes but also introduced certain performance patterns for some modern takes on Euripides's classic that it pioneered: "the violence [...] and cruelty that the *D69* brought forward [...] became a typical feature of the post '69 productions of *The Bacchae*" (Sampatakakis 2014: 392).

The emphatic metatheatricity of the play is not an aspect I often see in discussions of *D69* (or at least discussions touching on these features are not couched in these terms), but there is a ludic and multistranded self-referentiality apparent in the script that is worthy of attention. Scholars routinely associate this adaptation with the "Performative Turn" in theatre (Hall 2004: 27) but comments on modes of metaperformativity in the performance (and play) are surprisingly scarce. The layering of the empirical experience (and identities) of everyday life and theatrically performed identities feel both a bit "raw" (in the sense of fresh and experimental) and quasi-Pirandellian. The way the script deals with character names and actor names is enlightening. There is a constant fluctuation between performing persona and performed role—in this sense, too, *D69* is a profoundly Schechnerian piece drawing attention to the complexity and multilayeredness of performance and performativity. Fischer-Lichte discusses the in-betweenness of identities in some depth in relation to this production, though she does not perceive it as metadrama. *Commune*, another intricately metatheatrical piece, further experiments with this kind of layering of identity within the performance.

The script reads intricately and challengingly hypertextual to me—in fact, it is a testing task to persevere with a linear reading of the text, since it branches out from the stem at several points to offer variations on scenes. Some scenes have as many as four different versions, and there might even be further alternative routes within a version, due to who is playing the roles—during *D69*'s year-long run at The Performing Garage, roles were always being exchanged—with little regard for matching the gender of the performer to that of the character. The text meanders inside the

environment in which it breathes. In this sense, there is a touch of postdramatic theatre here in addition to a quasi-aleatoric (almost) postmodern playfulness. Some of the quasi-aleatoric ramifications were determined by audience participation.

In her thorough study of Dionysus in performance between 1968 and 2008, Fischer-Lichte argues with regard to *The Bacchae* that performance “cannot capture the original and must perform a sacrifice or *sparagmos* of the text” (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 21). She seems to suggest that alteration, or to reflect the intensity of *sparagmos*, dismembering, mangling, or tearing apart, is inevitable when re-performing or adapting the play—as if it were the fate of the play to enact its own dismemberment as part of telling the story of Pentheus’s dismemberment. It is not possible to make a straightforward “ordinary” production, only to show a process of consecutive acts of tearing, all leading to death (and perhaps rebirth). The Hemispheric Institute’s archival web page holding the re-rendered De Palma film aptly describes the performance as a “free-wheeling adaptation and distortion” of Euripides’s play.

The adapturgy of the play, to use Jane Barnette’s term (2017), involved having lots of performers playing different roles at different times, as previously noted. Four actors, including a woman, Joan MacIntosh, alternated in the role of Dionysus—each with their own script variations—, and there were always two Agaves. Other roles, too, had different performers. Everyone, at one time or another, was Chorus. The dramaturgical fabric of the play is ritualistic; the time is not pinned to any historical moment until the final section of the play, when the triumphant Dionysus gives a chillingly tyrannic and vindictive pre-presidential election speech, with variations across the four actors, cursing the character/ actors and the whole Performance Group community, and inciting riot and violence in the streets, in the country, and the world. The god’s curse targets specific individuals by name, for example, “Upon you, Agave, Ciel [Smith] and Joan [MacIntosh], I pronounce this doom. [...] You shall live out your wretched lives never knowing which of you played Agave,” says Finley as Dionysus to the two actors. The parallel, purposefully unresolved use of both character name and actor name marks the concluding part of the play: “And upon you, Remi, Agave, this doom”; “And you, Cadmus, Bill Shephard.” This is more than a playful postmodern tool, although it is delectable as a postmodern strategy; it ties in deeply with how Schechner thinks about the ontology of theatre: a reality alongside and interacting with other realities, not imitating other realities or merely “representing” other realities. The metatheatrical in-jokes do not spare the director either: “The royal house is overthrown. Schechner will go to South America and never see what happens to this play.” With this statement, the actor-Dionysus hints at the power struggles within the group that Schechner himself also addresses in his “Notes on *Makbeth*” (1978). By attempting to relativize the significance of the director and directorial presence in an element of the script clearly authorized by the director, Schechner also paradoxically ends up highlighting the director’s contribution, bringing his name to the fore, which rarely happens in theatre. Euripides, too, as the author of the source text is blamed for the harshness of the punishments: “I’m sorry. Long ago Euripides wrote these things.” Here Dionysus speaks about the one who brought his theatrical being into being. These are delightful and powerful moments of metatheatre and meta-adaptation. Yet, Dionysus’s curse also relates to the macrocosm outside the performance environment, and the campaign Dionysus begins for presidential power is nothing short of a disruptive insurgency. Several of these pronouncements by the alternating Dionysuses refer to pressing environmental concerns, “You will get thousands of bulldozers and push all that plastic shit into the Pacific Ocean.” Social justice issues, including gender inequalities, are also addressed in a way that now reads deeply ironic about American

politics, “I condemn you to see to it that a woman is made President of the United States within the next fifty years.” America, its politics and its place in the world, concerns for the American present and future are an important component of these quasi-prophetic speeches. The ensemble kept this section fresh by incorporating new commentary on politics, for instance after the election of Nixon as president: “Nixon is tired of the Presidency and is going to be the first President to commit assassination by suicide.” Little did that Dionysus know that in 1974 Nixon would resign his presidency. As the increasingly dictatorial and “Power Power” hungry Dionysus orates, spectators are leaving the environment.

Briseis and the Sergeant

The early plays in this volume show a different side to Schechner. As an early career theatre-maker, he is learning, perfecting different styles, allowing them to rub off individually or in interestingly hybridized ways. These early gems demonstrate that before Schechner made his huge contribution to the launching and development of performance studies, he studied the contemporary and historical theatre landscape thoroughly and wrote several plays in a traditional playwriting mode.

Before joining the army for a couple of years as an enlisted man and widening his experience by encountering significantly new settings and people to those of his upper middle class upbringing, Schechner wrote an intriguing war-themed play, *Briseis and the Sergeant*, as his 1958 MA in English thesis at the University of Iowa where he was a member of Paul Engle’s Iowa Writers’ Workshop. He reworked the play after leaving the army, drawing on some of his army experiences. In 1962, *Briseis* was staged at Tulane University, directed by Professor George W. Hendrickson. Schechner was at Tulane studying for his PhD. In three acts and a prologue, the play revisits ancient Greek mythology, elaborating on an episode of *The Iliad*, namely the story of Briseis whom Achilles wins in battle only to have Agamemnon seize for himself. Offended, Achilles refuses to fight, thus making it impossible for the Greeks to defeat the Trojans. But Homer’s Achilles is not in *Briseis and the Sergeant*, and Agamemnon is a minor character. Helen of Troy is only mentioned as a “leading socialite.” Homer gives Briseis scant attention with few spoken lines, but Schechner fleshes her out as a Brechtian character. In Harbeck’s words, *Briseis and the Sergeant* is “a play about a girl from *The Iliad* being chronotopically displaced, making a presentation of war, past, present, and future” (1998: 25). With its ironical take on war and its focus on the impossibility of maintaining a core personality, the play strongly echoes Brecht’s *Mother Courage and Her Children*, a play that Schechner directed almost twenty years later in 1975 with The Performance Group. There are affinities also with the theatre of the absurd—Schechner’s PhD dissertation is about Eugène Ionesco.

In *Briseis*, the Mother Courage-like figure is the vendor Woman pushing her wheelbarrow of flowers through war after war, unrelentingly attending to her business and her survival regardless of the regimes or political systems she finds herself in. “I’ve found the funeral market by far the steadiest and most lucrative,” she says in act one. Her living off war clearly evokes Anna Fierling, Mother Courage. The Woman’s approach to life is largely pragmatic: she stokes or feeds conflict for the sake of survival. Schechner’s play projects a deep disillusionment about any chance for world peace. The Woman lends a degree of support to clueless, less streetwise Briseis. To a lesser degree and, in the interest of her own survival, the Woman also takes the Sergeant under her wing. Thus, the play presents to us an unnamed, almost archetypal and quasi-Brechtian figure who cannot change

the course of history but has a wise enough head on her shoulders to know the boundaries of her agency while, like Lot's daughters in Schechner's 1957 one-act play, makes carefully premeditated compromises in order to survive. As Mother Courage sums up in her "The Song of the Grand Capitulation," "You have to cut your coat according to your cloth." While the Woman in *Briseis* sells flowers, she is just as implicated in the business of war as Mother Courage—the Woman's best sales come from funerals.

Determined to find and marry her husband's killer, Briseis insists on living out her fate (something very important in *Yokasta* as well). "I've got children to get born and a household to start. You might be in this world to go around killing people. That may be your job. But it's not mine," she says as she attaches herself to a random guy called Achilles, the titular sergeant bearing the same name as her husband's killer, according to the flower Woman's book of wars. But this Achilles is not Homer's sulking hero, but a simple Sergeant in any one of the world's myriad armies. Bewildered by "[t]he illogical way all this is happening," the Sergeant is understandably reluctant and even suspects Briseis to be a spy. Yet, he consents to an unlikely alliance with Briseis, despite misgivings about matrimony: he has had experiences with women but has not loved any of them. Briseis has her own ideas: "Even if you're not the real Achilles, I could make sure you get a whole army to obey you. Otherwise my father'd never let me marry you. We're very class conscious." The theme of interchangeability, the haphazard nature of events and their purely forged interconnections and rationalizations, all indicate the influence of the theatre of the absurd. The Sergeant and Briseis move through time appearing in different wars where the uniforms and the means of making war change but human patterns of behavior and weaknesses of character are the same. The very cyclicity of warfare—although it is clearly a case of juxtaposing different wars here—again reminds us of *Mother Courage*. The language of the play draws our attention to the conceit of the layering of time periods by mixing some very contemporary phrases into the idiom of the time-traveling central characters. There are comic effects emerging from the misunderstandings between figures from different eras, so the epoch-traversing play is never somber.

What *Briseis* might say about human nature, consistency of character, manipulation, or even the time-tested thematic topos of the battle of the sexes is not in any way spelled out. This early play has both subtlety and punch, as do other early plays in the Schechner canon. *Briseis and the Sergeant* may come across as merely a robust companion to *Mother Courage*, but it is also a solid item in the Schechner play catalog. It deserves further stagings by theatre-makers and discussions by scholars.

The Blessing of the Fleet

The traditionally structured five-scene (five-act) *The Blessing of the Fleet* is set in Provincetown, Massachusetts, before, during, and after a hurricane. The young Schechner's confident steering of an even-handed assembly of characters does not only foreshadow the iconic large-scale ensemble productions of his mid-career and later years with The Performance Group and East Coast Artists, but it also seems to be recalling some of the finest pieces of ensemble realism on the global stage. Gerhart Hauptmann's 1892 *Weavers* seemed an obvious (and admittedly loose) connection to me when I first read the play. On subsequent readings, the play has become Schechner's "Russian play" for me—and by that I mean Chekhovian—though the Hauptmann reference has not lost its relevance entirely.

And surely also the ghost of Eugene O'Neill is smiling. Schechner remembers devouring O'Neill's plays in the summer of 1957 in Provincetown where he was working as a short order cook and participating in a theatre group. That summer Schechner began writing *The Blessing of the Fleet* setting it in Provincetown. As a young man, O'Neill was one of the Provincetown Players who in 1916 staged two of O'Neill's early plays, *Bound East for Cardiff* and *Thirst*. The end of the summer of 1957 was also when Schechner started East End Players with a staged reading of his "Lot's Daughters." In the summer of 1958, East End Players mounted a full summer season in Provincetown. That's when Schechner completed *The Blessing of the Fleet* which has a "distinctly O'Neillian flavor" (Harbeck 1998: 26).

The *dramatis personae* of *The Blessing of the Fleet* are thrown together when they take shelter from an approaching hurricane. Although they appear to be forming an unlikely community already at the start of the play, the storm strengthens their convivial bond helping us understand them better. Several of the characters carry wounds or at least some kind of baggage. (In that respect, the drama is more Chekhov than Hauptmann.) The memory of a 1938 hurricane casts its shadow on the present of the action—a disastrous event in which former fisherman John Gaspé lost his wife and some of his fellow fishermen, and which led to him abandoning his career. John, a character subtly reminiscent of Conrad's Lord Jim, is deeply traumatized—today he might be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Around halfway into the drama, the invitation to tell their stories in a situation similar to the frame story of Boccaccio's *The Decameron*—being confined with a small familiar company for long hours in a house boarded up against the storm—is impossible to decline. "We've become quite a little society, haven't we?," says Mrs. Vrondi, a socially conservative, half-educated but opinionated lady, who beneath the veneer of superficiality is still trying to come to terms with having been abandoned by her husband, the "Count." Mrs. Vrondi is preparing for her death from cancer, something the resident philosopher-writer of the collective, Gene, claims to envy. The formal and florid idiolect of Mrs. Vrondi, one of whose *leitmotifs* is reading newspapers, also provides us with numerous intertextual clues in the form of mis-identified plays and books that make us ponder interpretive contexts for *Blessing*.

The play's use of chronotopes, to use this Bakhtinian concept, is important, as the spaces carry metaphorical meaning. The Wharfside Tavern is itself referred to—by Ed, its generous, caring, and sober-headed owner—as a ship where those on board spend a certain but limited amount of time in each other's company. With the hurricane working as a catalyst that foregrounds character traits, some of the male characters question each other about how they will relate to the storm. Shooler, the intrepid Portuguese fisherman who speaks a broken English, is out at sea in the middle of the gale, first among the fishermen—and, we gather, the first to be blessed by the bishop at the titular Blessing of the Fleet. The play's title refers to the ritual about to happen offstage as the play ends. This blessing-to-be suggests a restoration of order, a progress toward healing. It also already indicates Schechner's keen interest in ritual.

Shaped by a childhood memory of a major hurricane in 1938, and also by Schechner's lifelong fascination with meteorology (see Harbeck 1998), *The Blessing of the Fleet* has the urgency of nineteenth- and twentieth-century realist plays. The metaphor of the storm as an immeasurably strong panther "with claws of wind" aligns *Blessing* with the symbolism of lyrical-realist plays by Ibsen and Chekhov, not to mention the symbolism proper of Maeterlinck. The interactions among the group held captive by the storm in the Wharfside Tavern suggest a connection with the social drama of Hauptmann as well as Gorky (*The Lower Depths* and *Summerfolk* in particular). The out-of-season Provincetown atmosphere is reminiscent of the small peripheral town of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* whose characters are stuck in a way similar to those in *Blessing*. The Chekhovian reference point

of an idealized (and out-of-reach) Moscow presents itself here as Mrs. Vrondi's much-missed New York, which she looks forward to returning to once "the check come from the Manufacturer's Trust," as she repeatedly tells us, but from where even out-of-date newspapers are hard to come by in this *ultima Thule*. Instead of Chekhov's tea made in the samovar, we have sandwiches, American cheese, stiff coffee (with Carnation on offer), and schooners of beer. Yet—perhaps due to an American cultural filter—the play is more celebratory than any of Chekhov's masterpieces.

The Blessing of the Fleet draws from the well of these classics of world drama but with a slight whiff of youthful American optimism. Mrs. Vrondi's much-awaited check arrives, as opposed to the unreachable dreams of Chekhov's three sisters. Even the solipsistic and nihilist philosopher-poet, Gene (O'Neill?), makes haste as the play ends not to miss the blessing ceremony.

"Lot's Daughters"

The next to earliest work in *Schechner Plays* is "Lot's Daughters," a one-act play in three scenes (as if a short three-act drama) telling the startling biblical story of Lot's two daughters' incest with their father (Genesis 19). In the Bible the women are unnamed, designated only "firstborn" and "younger." The daughters arrange the incest by getting their father drunk on two successive nights. They each give birth to sons, scions of families.

"Lot's Daughters" was performed at the end of the summer of 1957 as a staged reading directed by Schechner in Provincetown's Yacht and Tennis Club. The play is Schechner's earliest revisiting of a classic text, a practice that became one of his trademarks. With only three characters and a close focus on the plot rather than a psychological profile of the characters, "Lot's Daughters" is more Sophocles than Stanislavsky. This early career play foreshadows future explorations of personal freedom versus predetermination which are at the center of *Dionysus in 69* and *YokastaS*. "Lot's Daughters" also shows the formative impact of Judaism on Schechner. Beyond going to "Hebrew school" where he obtained an extracurricular education in Judaism, and living in an observant home, Schechner also engaged in intense study with Samuel Schwarz, his maternal grandfather who was the son of a rabbi and a scholar of the Hebrew Bible and Talmud. While Schechner may be a self-proclaimed "Jewish atheist," he is very much a Jewish intellectual well versed in the dialectical cornucopia of the Talmudic tradition. This has left a clear mark on his work, emphatically so in "Lot's Daughters." Indeed, throughout his career, even when his focus shifted from playwriting to directing, co-creating, and scholarship, Jewish culture offered deep inspiration.

In "Lot's Daughters," the First Daughter is 32 years old and the Second Daughter is 23. In biblical times, those ages would put them well past their prime in terms of child-bearing. In other words, from their perspective, it is now or never. Lot and his daughters have lived in complete isolation in a cave since they left Sodom nineteen years before the play's action begins. Schechner's calling the sisters First Daughter and Second Daughter replicates the Bible's erasure. This designation also recalls the existentialist leanings of the theatre of the absurd and highlights the suppression of personhood which these mythical figures lived. In "Lot's Daughters" the sisters have diverging memories of their childhood and conflicting perceptions about how they have ended up in seclusion. First Daughter shares with her sister some nostalgic memories of an Edenic Sodom where the now dour Lot took part in the merrymaking. They assert that the story of their mother turning into a pillar of salt is a fairy tale. First Daughter's apocryphal story is that Abraham (Lot's uncle) took

their mother with him as a wife—she was sacrificed for the survival of the rest of the family. In this alternative version of the narrative, Lot betrayed both his wife by handing her over for the sake of his own and his daughters' survival and his community: Sodom and Gomorrah were taken over by Abraham and "the rulers in Jerusalem" in a "trade" that "has eaten [Lot's] soul away." We might see a prefiguring of Faust here. The Second Daughter has been brought up with the official version about their mother's demise—something that the play's Lot tries to stand by to the point of raging.

In their canonical iteration, only the elder daughter speaks, and she only strategizes the seduction of Lot in order that the sisters "may preserve the seed of our father" (Genesis 19:32, 34). In "Lot's Daughters," the women offer a counter-narrative. They speak up, even if we are told that their freedom of choice is very limited. The dramaturgical decision of foregrounding these women is in line with Schechner's support for various social liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. In giving the sisters a chance to tell their own stories, "Lot's Daughters" prefigures *Yokasta*. In "Lot's Daughters," Schechner allows us to see them as individualized sisters with their own personal priorities and at times conflicting opinions. Schechner, well versed in Talmudic disquisition, invites us to see this troubling biblical episode from a less patriarchal perspective. "What if," Schechner asks, "these otherwise silenced women could speak?" Who were they and what did they really want? Could they have wanted something different from the act of incest they are famous for?

It is implied that there is something suspicious about how Lot sobs in their bosoms in his sadness over the loss of his wife. To leave or not to leave for the unknown city, to make or not to make a change, appears to be the central question for these women who are ossified in a particular social position within a rigid patriarchal system. The alternative to leaving is to have children by their father. The First Daughter, who is very worried about becoming too old to find a man and have children and thus lead a more bearable life, opts to lay with her aging and confused father, tricking him into behaving as if she were his long-lost wife. The First Daughter pushes her more attractive and naive sister in front of her, deciding her fate as well. The story is not a full-scale liberation narrative; yet there is a degree of agency taken by a female character within a limited and emotionally and intellectually impoverished set of exilic circumstances. In Schechner's take on the story, the daughters are not "acquitted" but seen more fully fleshed out than in the Bible. As one sister takes the freedom of the other one away—her hope for a different, non-endogamous future—the play remains a perturbing tale of family doom. Harbeck considers "Lot's Daughters" "somewhat existentialist and moderately revisionist (even vaguely Shavian)" and "arguably one of [Schechner's] best plays" (1998: 26).

"The Last Day of FK"

Another one-act play, the first surviving Schechner drama, "The Last Day of FK," can be seen in the light of the theatre of the absurd and existentialism. Schechner had just finished his PhD dissertation on Eugène Ionesco when he wrote "The Last Day of FK." The titular character, "FK," unmistakably refers to Franz Kafka. In the typescript of an early draft, the title character is "Franz." In Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1912), Gregor Samsa is turned into a large bug—and dies from exhaustion and abuse by his family. In "The Last Day of FK," the protagonist is misunderstood (in varied degrees) by his family up to being dehumanized and annihilated.

With characters defined by their respective relations to F—Visitor, Mother, Sister, Father—rather than having names, the drama tells what happens on F's last day, just as the

play's title promises. In true absurdist and existential fashion, the titular anti-hero questions the meaningfulness of existence and the ultimate goodness of humanity. The mysterious Visitor, who appears to be a character urging us to acknowledge the significance of a the messianic F, announces that F's constipation is "a cipher for the general clogging in [his] soul." The metaphor of warping is also alluded to and there seems to be a need for (an unachievable) cohesion, "[a]n imposed unity of the whole" in the world of the play. According to the Visitor, F as a Hamletic or messianic, but also Gregor Samsa-like, figure, ought to set himself on his right path rather than "drive new divisive wedges into [his] already fragmented and tottering machine." Ironically, of course, F hardly mends the warping of this out-of-joint time (or machine) through his death, about which his animalistic, egotistic, misogynistic, and cruel father seems indifferent. If "Lot's Daughters" sheds light on the problematic aspects of the archetypal father-daughter relationship, "The Last Day of FK" centralizes a dysfunctional patriarchal family where an anxious son is destroyed by a domineering megalomaniac *paterfamilias* who provides the very opposite of the paternal support that may be expected of him. Kafka himself had a fraught relationship with his domineering and not well-educated father. The play however is more than a drama *à clef*. In K, Schechner made an early attempt at writing an almost biographical character. The mistreatment of women by Father foreshadows *The Prometheus Project*.

Now anthologized, I hope that the theatre of the absurd would welcome "The Last Day of FK" to its global canon as an option in seminars alongside the giants of this mode. This is sheer conjecture, but had Schechner continued along the lines set out in his earliest drama, he could have developed an American *oeuvre* equivalent to Harold Pinter, bringing a strong and lasting absurdist voice to the stage, an alternative to Edward Albee in the States.

In Conclusion of an Introduction

Performance giant Richard Schechner's plays have invited me to ponder my own relationship with theatre—with plays, performances, rehearsal processes—in my capacity mostly as audience member or scholar but also as occasional performer, director, dramaturg, translator, and adapter, from my earliest childhood experiences up to now. I felt my theatrical organs scanned. As a researcher of adaptation and dramaturgy, I found Schechner's adaptive choices in the "versions/interventions/explosions" (Rosenthal 2024: 59) as well as the general text composition strategies fascinating. As Schechner brilliantly sums up in his introduction to *The Prometheus Project*:

I find things; the performers bring in things; we invent; we steal, we adapt. [...] [O]nce 'material' is dumped into the process, it is grist for the mill. On the printed page, the words are concrete, specific. But in the workshop-rehearsal room, they are fluid, played with, passed back-and-forth, joining gesture, song, and dance.

The frequently used collage technique—a metacritical, reflexive "germinal" aesthetic strategy involving "radical juxtaposition" (Harding 2011: 23) and resulting in a heterogeneous "adaptationese" or simply a heterogeneous performance-language—challenged me in particular and will invite me back for more reflection, after I have wrestled here with a wealth of terminology ranging from mashup to grafting.

When thinking any time about a Schechner play (or more), or about how Schechner plays, I also always think about something else—something in theatre or performance history (or in my personal theatrical memory bank) that the play or plays zoom in on for me. So far so Schechnerian. My writing about the plays has been considerably guided by these undercurrents—connections with theatre history, with personal memories of reading/spectating experiences—with the internal maps of theatrical veins—although I have also sampled works both by and about Schechner throughout the process. Some of these more tailored readings found their way into the introduction, but I wanted to avoid reading the Schechner plays almost as illustrations of the *auteur*-author's theoretical thinking. That would be possible perhaps but also reductive. Hence, I write more about metaperformance or metatheatre, one of my own critical hobbyhorses, than about restored behavior, for example.

Without doubt, Schechner's experimental performances—as we can see from their distillations as plays—have contributed hugely to the emergence of a theatre that Elinor Fuchs describes as “avant-garde, experimental, alternative, deconstructive, postmodern, ‘new’” (1996: 9). Importantly, Hans-Thiess Lehmann (2006: 26) also acknowledges Schechner's pioneering use of the term “postdramatic” with reference to both happenings and the theatre of Beckett, Genet, and Ionesco, with a move away from story and toward the “game” becoming the “generative matrix” in the case of the latter playwrights. Much of Schechner's work, especially the recent work with East Coast Artists from the wrighter's mature years, itself shares features of what Lehmann defines as postdramatic theatre: “a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time ‘after’ the authority of the dramatic paradigm,” a theatre in which “the limbs or branches of a dramatic organism, even if they are withered material, are still present and form the space of a memory” (Lehmann 2006: 27).

Producing significant work in the postdramatic mode and under the aegis of the postmodern is, in Schechner's *oeuvre*, complemented by experimenting with both intercultural and intermedial performance—also key features of Schechner's body of work at least from mid-career onward. So is pioneering, alongside some other avant-garde artists, contemporary site-specific and immersive ways of theatre-making through rigorous and well-documented experiments with environmental theatre. Schechner's earlier pieces, meanwhile, show his confident and creative engagement with modes of realism and modernism.

As for me, I am not parting from these plays any time soon.

NOTES

1. Pauline Réage was the pen name of Anne Desclos who also used the name Dominique Aury.
2. Schechner explores this idea in his “Restoration of Behavior” (1985a).
3. Millett's *Sexual Politics* critiques Freud's perspective on “female personality” as passive, masochist, and narcissist (2000: 194–97). Millett sees *Story of O* as “an extreme statement made upon such assumptions” (2000: 195). This is a powerful and influential interpretation, although the reception of *Story of O* is considerably complex both within and outside feminist contexts. This is in part because of the revelation of the author as a woman (something Kate Millett could not have known in 1970) but it goes beyond the scope of this introduction to go into this matter in more detail.
4. See note 5 of *YokastaS* (this volume).
5. On this, see for instance Stănescu (2012) and Rosenthal (2024).
6. See Schechner's introduction to *Faust/gastronomie* (this volume).

7. Humanity-poem (*emberiségköltemény*) is another term in Hungarian literary discourse for dramatic poems such as Goethe's *Faust* and Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*.
8. "The Manhattan Project was an unprecedented, top-secret WW2 government program in which the United States rushed to develop and deploy the world's first atomic weapons before Nazi Germany. The use of these weapons by the United States against Japan in August 1945 ultimately became one of the most important historical events of the twentieth century. The project ushered in the nuclear age and left enduring legacies that echo all around us today. The Manhattan Project took shape at three primary locations across the country: Hanford, Washington; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Oak Ridge, Tennessee." <https://www.nps.gov/mapr/learn/manhattan-project.htm>. Accessed May 2, 2024.
9. Schechner's 1981 production of Michael McClure's *The Red Snake* closed before opening at New York's Public Theatre. It closed because McClure objected to how Schechner interpreted-directed the play.
10. In 1968, Schechner incorporated his new group as "The Wooster Group, Inc." He could not use "The Performance Group" as a corporate entity because that name was already claimed. In 1980, after Schechner left The Performance Group, those who took over began using "The Wooster Group" as their public name.
11. The NOG was founded in 1966 by co-artistic directors Schechner, Epstein, and painter Frank Adams. They were all professors at Tulane University. The NOG staged happenings and the first "environmental theatre" production, Eugène Ionesco's *Victims of Duty* (1967), directed by Schechner and designed by Jerry Rojo who later worked on many Performance Group productions. Epstein composed the music for *Makbeth*. In one sense, The Performance Group continued the explorations of the NOG.
12. See Patch (2017), "Lyndon Johnson's Living Room War," <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/30/opinion/lyndon-johnson-vietnam-war.html>. Accessed May 2, 2024.
13. There is little wonder that such an international trailblazer of documentary and verbatim theatre as Anna Deavere Smith looks up to Schechner greatly (see Smith 2011).
14. Association exercises were so named because in them performers adjusted precise physical movements to whatever associations they were having at the moment of doing the exercises. In other words, their physical work evoked interior images and feelings and these, in turn, affected the movements. The association exercises were taken by Schechner from what he learned in a workshop led by Jerzy Grotowski and Ryszard Cieslak at New York University in 1967—Grotowski's first workshop in the United States.
15. This widely available film was released in 1970. To give a better sense of the production's multifocused presentation, much of the film is split-screen with two images being seen at the same time.
16. See Schechner's "The Politics of Ecstasy" in his *Public Domain* (1969: 209–28), itself a critique of Timothy Leary's 1968 book of the same title.

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Imagining O, 2011, 2012, 2014

Introduction

Developed over three years, *Imagining O* (*IO*)¹ was performed in three iterations—July 7, 8, 9, 2011 at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom, February 5, 6, 2012 at the Fourth International Theatre Festival of Kerala, India, and on September 10, 11, 12, and 13 as part of Peak Performances at Montclair State University in the United States. Each iteration had a slightly different subtitle, but all were titled *Imagining O*. Without diminishing the excellence of the Kent or Kerala versions, the text and stage directions published here is what we did at Peak Performances. This version is, in my opinion, the most finished of an unfinishable process: theatre is an in-process art.

Imagining O is the most recent stop in my journey from writer to wrighter. Very little in *IO* is written by me. Much if not most of the text was devised by the performers, taken from Shakespeare, and from Pauline Réage's *Histoire d'O* (1954).³ I constructed and staged the conversation on film between Krodman-Réage and Agape-Ophelia drawing on *Hamlet* and John De St. Jorre's 1994 *New Yorker* article, "The Unmasking of O." Near the end of *IO*, I stitched together into a chorus the final words of Shakespeare's women who die. From *Hamlet*, I took the lines spoken by Ophelia and Gertrude, eliminating the words of the play's males. This resulted in complete sentences and in halting, broken, incomplete utterances. And yet these women's words are very revealing. In *IO*, only women are heard. *IO*'s one male is mute, costumed in a dark red dress wearing an owl mask that covers his entire head. The Owl gestures to indicate where the spectators should go as they follow the performance through multiple spaces.

Calling it *Imagining O* came early in the development of the work. "O" is the first letter of Ophelia's name; "O" is the name of the protagonist of *Histoire d'O*. When spoken, "O" sounds like "eau"—"water" in French. Ophelia drowns. I knew I wanted to stage that. "O" is very much more by being less. "O" the numeral is zero, nothing, the "negative capability" poet John Keats admired in Shakespeare.⁴ But "O" is also a multiplier by a factor of 10. In the play, "O" is all her possibilities, as Krodman/Réage says to Agape/Ophelia: "that faceless, ageless, nameless O—zero, nothing, everything, a multiplier."

IO displays, enacts, and investigates relationships among erotics, death, and literature—from the perspective of women. Some of the images and actions of *IO* are erotic, the language is often sexual, the games the spectators play in order to gain access to the second dispersal are send-ups of soft-core pornography. I am aware that I and co-director Benjamin Mosse are male. Still, we tried to bring forward what the women performers wanted to do even as the process was guided by me, Mosse, and Roanna Mitchell.⁵ We three, working both individually and as a team, enabled the performers to explore their own reactions to the texts and the dramaturgical situations. All this within the frame of an overall

concept that was mine: the conjunction of O and Ophelia, and where that meeting might lead us.

So where did it lead us? *Story of O* is a woman's imagining a man's taste in pornography. And Ophelia is a character invented by Shakespeare. In *IO*, these sources are combined with the personal stories of the women performers. In 1985, I followed roughly the same path in *The Prometheus Project* (this book) which combines parts of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, Greek myths, and events in modern Iran with the personal experiences of the cast, who all but one were women. Of course, in *IO*, as in *The Prometheus Project*, men were important contributors to the artistic work: directors, designers, filmmakers, the dramaturg for the Kent iteration, and so on. But the fundamental imaginary is female. I tried to keep myself out of it except to prompt the work of the others and to edit the texts I found or were given to me. But the process was complex largely because Réage sought to "satisfy" the imagination of her lover, the well-known intellectual Jean Paulhan.⁶ As Krodman-Réage says:

What fascinated and excited Jean was the relationship between what I was writing and my own- how can I say it?- real life. I saw between what I thought myself to be and the story I was telling both a distance so radical and a kinship so profound that I was incapable of recognizing myself in it.⁷

However, there is no indication that the sex they had was "sado-masochistic," as *Story of O* is—after all, Réage described Paulhan as a "literary man" fascinated by the Marquis de Sade. As Réage played with her and Paulhan's imaginations in *Histoire d'O*, so did I and the rest of the artistic team in *IO* play with our imaginations. As for Ophelia, she is a model of a woman exploited, rejected, and abused to suicide. But that is not all she is. I wanted to bring out another Ophelia. Removing Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, Claudius—all the males—from Ophelia's world, listening to her words not as responses but as her own assertions—I hear more than brief utterances evidencing being trampled-on, spoken-over, interrupted, cut-off (in dialog and in life). I hear an intrepid insistence on standing her ground, displaying her intelligence, wit, and poetic power. In *IO*, Ophelia is center stage. Along with O. Neither is able to save their lives. But both are afforded their unique space, place, and voice. I also wanted to help the women performers take their own places in their own spaces and speak with their own voices.

In working with the performers, I did not want them to play "characters" in the orthodox way actors become "as if" others. I asked the performers to keep their own voices both actually and metaphorically. I wanted them to speak as and for the other but not meld with or entirely become the other. Of course, there is characterization, some play-acting. But I intended this to exist alongside of, and in dialog with, the persons speaking speeches and performing actions. I wanted *IO* to be an installation, a work of performance art, a performance of the selves of the performers, more than a "play" in the drama tradition.

And just as *IO* is not an orthodox drama, I did not direct the production in an orthodox way. I oversaw the whole production in collaboration with associate director (in the United Kingdom) and then co-director (in India and the United States) Benjamin Mosse and choreographer-movement director Roanna Mitchell. I staged some scenes. Mosse and Mitchell staged or choreographed other scenes. They worked independently of me on many occasions. I did not go to India, so in Kerala *IO* belonged to them, the performers, and the local creative team. In effect, we were three co-directors. In New York, Sarah Lucie—*IO*'s production and stage manager—joined the leadership team.

In my productions before *IO*, I usually began by training the performers and then devising and developing the mise-en-scene with them by combining exercises that I have long taught with materials brought into the process by the performers. For *IO*, I trained the performers in basic hatha yoga, rasaboxes,⁸ vocal work, and other exercises. For *IO*, I depended greatly on Mosse and Mitchell to develop scenes and dances. They worked both together and independently, with individual performers and with groups. The three of us met daily to discuss the work. In a room of heated ideas, it is hard to say who was the first to come up with what. Each person feeds the others and feeds on the others. That's what "collective creation" is in practice. Also, I wanted the performers to devise their own dispersals (more on these later). I divided my time between the scenes that involved everyone, honing what Mosse, Mitchell, and the performers came up with, working with individual performers on their dispersals, and meeting with designers, filmmakers, and producers. At home, I selected, wrote, rewrote, and edited texts.

Because *IO* happened in multiple spaces, "location work" was complex. My task was to oversee and guide a project involving a team of artists and administrators each of whom enjoyed considerable agency. Add to this complex organicity the fact that every iteration of *IO* was different. That's because so much depended on who the performers were and what they and the other participants brought. Also on different cultures, theatre spaces, and locations outside the theatre. And decisively on the behavior of audiences.

The first iteration of *IO* was at the University of Kent, United Kingdom, in 2011. This version, with some changes, went to the Fourth International Theatre Festival of Kerala, India, in 2012. For the East Coast Artists Peak Performances production in Montclair, New Jersey, USA, in 2014 I auditioned new performers but continued to work with Mosse and Mitchell. One performer, Niamh Lyman-Cotter, was in all versions of *IO*. The UK version with some changes went to India. There are films of the Kent and Peak Performances shows.⁹ Distinct as each of these versions are, they share basics: Mosse, Mitchell, and me; the overall mise-en-scene; key non-performer generated texts; some films. Truly, *IO* is the same despite its differences. Its core was maintained even as performances depending on the agency of specific performers and their interactions with spaces and audiences in different cultures changed.

Dispersals

Early in the process, Mosse, Mitchell, and I decided to stimulate the creativity of the artistic team and diversify the audience's experience by including two sets of "dispersals": scenes devised by the performers staged in and around the theatre. Because the scenes were dispersed and happening at the same time, no spectator could see them all. The scenes were usually solos, but some had two persons, never more. As directors, we worked intensely with the performers on their scenes. Several rehearsals went on simultaneously; we directors rotated among rehearsals. Very different from orthodox theatre. The dispersals were the same in Kent and in India; new dispersals were devised for Montclair.

Dispersals took place in hallways, dressing rooms, showers, stairs, the lobby, a space in the back of the Kasser Theatre main seating auditorium, outdoors near the theatre. For the first dispersal, spectators were given numbers as they first entered the theatre. Later in the performance, they were divided into small groups according to their numbers, led as tourists are

by following a person hoisting a sign with your number on it. For the second dispersal, spectators were free to go where they wished using maps that showed them where the dispersals could be experienced. In practice, everyone saw some dispersals, no one saw them all. The theory behind the dispersals is to make a diverse theatre event that exceeded anyone's ability to experience it entirely. This is counter to orthodox theatre or film which depend on a stage or screen to focus the spectators' attention. Of course, happenings and then performance art explore, as did *Imagining O*, simultaneity, indeterminacy, and un-totally. The first happening (from whence the name) was Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in Six Parts* (1959) used simultaneity although ultimately everyone saw everything. I and my co-creators Franklin Adams and Paul Epstein used simultaneity in the New Orleans Group's *4/66* (1966) 45 years before the Kent version of *IO*. What differentiated *IO* from a "classical" happening was that the dispersals took place within a theatre work, as part of that theatre work. In Kent, there were four first dispersals and nine second dispersals; in Kerala, there were four first dispersals and five second dispersals; in Peak Performances, there were six first dispersals and thirteen second dispersals.

Kent

Imagining O began in 2011 as "a work-in-progress?" when I was invited by Professor Paul Allain, a leading Grotowski scholar, to devise a performance while in residence at the University of Kent, United Kingdom, as a Leverhulme Fellow. The question mark signifies the intended exploratory quality of the production. Much of what we found at Kent was incorporated into later iterations: spectators following the performance through several spaces; the Balthus room; dispersed scenes occurring simultaneously; films; "the tipping point" dance-and-text pivotal scene; the gate-keeping carnivalesque scene requiring each spectator to perform a specific task before being allowed to experience the rest of the performance; the peep house; the drowning; the "To bed, to bed, to bed" farewell to the spectators. *Imagining O* was a hybrid performance combining installation with theatre with performance art. The biggest changes from the earlier iterations to Peak Performances were new dispersals, a new gatekeeping scene, and the addition of a "dramaturgy room."

Before arriving in Kent, I noted what I intended. On April 11, 2011 I sent Allain "On Devising *Imagining O*" which I wanted him to share with would-be participants:

What would Cleopatra say if she met Ophelia?
How would Cordelia speak to Ophelia?
What do these women from the past say to women today?

A devised performance investigating Ophelia's encounters with Shakespeare's other women, rearranging the words and female characters of Shakespeare's plays and combining personal stories with classical text. The performance will use the whole Jarman Arts building with live feed, multimedia screenings of live action and audience interaction.

The cast will involve women and men who will be asked what is it to think like a woman, to be a woman.

At present, personal taste. I myself lean toward bloody angry speeches. Speeches that may tend toward vengeance, death, and destruction. On the other hand, there are some favorites such as the French Catherine learning to speak English; some dialogs among women that involve private matters (in *King John*, I think). Also of course some famous things in the Tragedies. Lady M, Cleo, Juliet, and Gertrude. Not to mention Ophelia herself. Once we have it all in front of us, we can see what themes may emerge. And could you ask the participants to do the same as we? Let's see if there are scenes/speeches/ sentences that appeal to all.

You know one of the most "threatening" and "awful" thing about devising the way we are going about this, is that at first it is groping in the dark for a figure that does not yet exist. It is like a kind of literary magic: as we grope, something seems to be there, and then we look for confirmation of its existence, and this attracts more stuff to this "theme" which we think we are discovering but which we are actually inventing and then going forward to find, to re-find, what we have invented. Like the "New World" of the Renaissance- which turned out not to be India but America. So they went looking for an old world, found a new one, and then discovered that the new one was full of people which the Europeans proceeded to conquer and/or exterminate. What a pattern of "discovery"!

Throughout the devising and rehearsal process, I shared creative leadership with Mosse and Mitchell. During the creative process, we exchanged many emails as well as face-to-face meetings, conferring not only with each other but also with the performers and other members of the creative team—a team that included faculty and students, professional artists and first-timers. We worked with people individually and collectively on the environments, staging, costumes, films, soundscapes, and texts. We helped the performers form their dispersals using *Story of O/Histoire d'O*, Shakespeare, and their and our imaginations. We drew on the research of dramaturg Duska Radosavljevic and the whole team of performers, photographers, videographers, designers, visual artists, technicians, archivist, and producer Allain. Both the Kent and Keralan iterations of *IO* contained individual contributions of texts and actions not published here.

For the Kent version, I wrote a program note that accurately summarized what I was after:

Imagining O began as an idea: clashing together entities not ordinarily thought of in one mind-flash: Shakespeare's Ophelia, Pauline Réage's O (from *Histoire d'O/Story of O*). Two young women "wronged," but in different epochs in different ways; and written about very differently. How can we imagine and perform creatures never born but written?

I asked a group of mostly young performers and several older colleagues to imagine with me. To interpret as movement images from the French-Polish painter Balthasar Klossowski de Rola, better known as Balthus; to integrate certain performer exercises and yoga that I have long used as training; to take chances and surpass limits. To make what? Active thinking on troubling subjects: abjection, dying, bodies-as-erotic-objects, the pleasure of pain and the pain of pleasure, innocence corrupted by thought, fantasies, and—for Canterbury, a city whose Cathedral is renowned as a pilgrimage destination and the site of a famous murder—to set out on simultaneous individual and collective journeys: theatrical, filmic, literary, personal, and metaphysical.

The texts you hear are from Shakespeare, *Hamlet* mostly; and from *Story of O*. Treated as concrete poetry more than the stuff of drama.

In progress [...] on the way, not finished; not finishable. We took the plunge. Jump in.

Imagining O—A Work in Progress? (UK)***Imagining O—A Dispersed Performance in Progress (India)*****Production**

Concept and director	Richard Schechner
Associate director	Benjamin Mosse
Movement and choreography	Roanna Mitchell
Texts	Shakespeare, Pauline Réage, the company
Scenic artist and owl mask	Sam Westbury
Sets and props, India	Jaya Krishnan G, Achu George, Vishnu B. Nair, Sajas Rahiman, Anun Raj
Master carpenter, India	Artist Sujathan
Lights	Ian Baird
Lights assistants, India	Emil, Sunitha, Amritha Sankar, Biju Sreedharan
TV lighting assistant, India	Subi
Audio-visual	Scott Miller
Audio, India	Suresh Chandra Das
Video, India	Elam Barati
Dramaturg	Duska Radosavljevic
Production and stage manager	Debs Metcalf Askew
Tech coordinator, India	Chandana Vemana
Stage manager, India	Saji Thulasidas
Assistant stage manager	Elena Liutkute
Assistant stage manager, India	Mani Prasad, Saran S.
Videographer	Jake Juba
Documentary videographers	Ken Plas, Alessandra Skarlatos
Scholar-observer	Carmela Cutugno
Hospitality, India	Rani Dongre
Translation from French	Marianne Mayer-Thibault, Richard Schechner
Producer	Paul Allain,

Performers

Lauren Baino
 Electa Behrens
 Niamh Lynam-Cotter
 Krysta Dennis, India
 Victoria Double, India
 Abbye Eva
 Eluned Herold, India
 Jenna Hobbs
 Cieranne Kennedy-Bell
 Rosemary Napier Klich

Marianne Mayer-Thibault
 Jessica Monk
 Pablo Pakula
 Rachael Eleanor Smith
 Sandy Wardrop
 James Moffatt

India

In February 2012, the Kent production, modified both to suit local conditions and to adjust to a somewhat different cast, toured to the International Theatre Festival of Kerala, Thrissur, India. I did not go to India. Benjamin Mosse and Roanna Mitchell took the production to Kerala. Mitchell and performer Pablo Pakula published an excellent description of *IO* in India, very much what it had been in Kent in terms of what was offered, but very different in terms of the spectators' engagement and responses. From Mitchell and Pakula:

Entering the grounds of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi's^[10] out of town campus, the audience follow strings of lights strung through the trees to enter a vast concrete warehouse-style building. The space is filled with monitors, large screens suspended from the ceiling show film-projections or are covered in collages of words and images. In one area, a cluster of chairs in disarray are surrounded by sumptuous red silk. An old bath reflects images from a monitor. High up under the roof a naked woman moves, moth-like, against a glass window. The audience begins to discover the performers, displayed as part of this living installation, all seated in the same way: in evening gowns, breathing softly with slightly opened mouths, their legs parted, lacy underwear suspended around their calves. Their bodies are open and available to the audience's gaze, who roam freely and soon begin to own the space as visitors to an exhibition would, discussing, examining.

Imperceptibly, the atmosphere changes as the performers' breath becomes a panting sound from which words begin to emerge. In a crescendo the performers rise, and the audience is suspended in a moment of silence and stillness, before being engulfed by a rush of movement. Now the audience is moved and shifted, sometimes implicitly through the flow of the action, sometimes explicitly as performers command or invite them. They are addressed by Ophelia, in an iteration of herself as the commanding queen she would never become, and are then drawn into a bilingual and ambivalent bed-time reading from *Story of O*, one reader savouring the French text's sultriness, the other delighting in the English translation's naughtiness. Draped around and into the audience, half-clad bodies create a moving painting, echoing Balthusian angles.

For a while, the audience is divided into groups and asked to submit to the guidance of the performers. They are led to dispersed scenes taking place simultaneously in various areas in and around the building, in which the words of Shakespeare and Réage are woven into a thematically rich tapestry of submission, love, power, authorship, and the dynamics between feminine and masculine. The first half of the performance culminates in an ensemble scene in which fragments of O and Ophelia inhabit the same space, confronting their past, their choices, and their sense of worth and worthlessness.

After this emotional climax, submitting to the rules of the performance and facing the experience of someone submitting to their actions, each audience member must complete one of three tasks: rubbing lotion into a performer's back, brushing another's hair, or tearing a piece off a paper dress covered in words. This will reward them with the right to proceed to the second half of the performance, and a map that will help them navigate the second space.

Within the womb-like winding walkways and cavities of this building, dimly lit by hundreds of candles, the audience is free to roam and explore in their own time. A woman wanders the roof, playing a saxophone, its sound haunting the passageways. A wooden peep-house takes up the central space, while in another area a live-feed displays the action of those who peep into it. Audience members encounter isolated performers, with whom they share intimate secrets, physical touch, or simply silence.

Finally, the saxophone calls all to the central space. A complex chorus sounds from within the peep house; then, clothed all in white, the performers emerge and lead the audience out into the open. The water of an artificial river throws patterns of light against the overhanging branches of a tree. Surrounded by a delighted, then quieted audience, the performers drown in the river, again and again; a mad frenzy which is gradually worn by time into exhausted repetition. One by one the performers leave, defeated. Two white-clad bodies remain, floating in the water. Finally, under the night sky, the audience is left with only the echoes of screams and splashing, and the river scene turns into a silent tableau.

(Mitchell and Pakula 2012: 180–81)

How did Indian audiences react to the performance? Although pre-Moghul, pre-British India was open to explicit erotic imagery—the sculptures at Khajuraho and Konark, the dancers in stone in Nataraj temples, the *Kama Sutra*—modern India is another story. Again, Mitchell and Pakula (2012: 186–87):

Throughout the piece, the increasing intimacy changed the rhythm of the performance. As the audience gathered around the peep house in the penultimate moment of the piece, I tasted an almost sexual frenzy. The bodies inhabiting *Imagining O* had wooed one another, submitted and demanded submission, gazed and touched, been exposed to gaze and touch. Now suddenly sectioned off by the wood of the peep house, the performers whispered the last lines of all women who died in Shakespeare, anticipating silence, perhaps reverence. But like waves of energy that need to break against something, the audience continued to talk, to exchange, pressing up against the wood, peeping, dancing, taking over the space at the heart of which the performers were clustered behind peep-holes that spell temptation. This frenzy continued as everyone was led to the river and here, *le petit mort* took place in a final release of tension, as the audience laughed and gasped while the performers ploughed through the water, again and again. As the white shirts became soaked, the performers' near-nakedness seemed to be held, now, with almost tenderness by the gaze of the audience. Two policemen removed their hats. A young man cried silently. Finally, the audience's bodies, pressed closely together, held between them the silence of the calmed water, embodiment and presence made palpable through absence and memory. From a distance, through the trees, the audience was beckoned to leave: Shakespeare's words, penned in a far-away time and place, were calling them back to the present world with enduring ambivalence: "To bed, to bed, to bed."

And Mitchell (n.d.) in an unpublished reflection:

The actor's encounters in the show speak for themselves [in response to several of the dispersal scenes]:

In "Addiction," Vicky's [Double] hand, symbolic of her addiction, takes her on a brutal physical journey towards a bucket filled with water, all that she desires. In one iteration, before she gets to the point of submitting to her desire, and audience member steps in, and brings the bucket to her.

In "Waterboarding," the three policemen who have turned, unwittingly, from protectors to audience members, stay for a long, long time, and watch the torture. Who knows what memories it awakes for them. As the actors perform a voice calls out, at one point, "that's enough!"

In "Loss," Jenna [Hobbs] invites audience to write her something they have lost, on paper that she turns into flowers. She rewards them with the flowers of her own, Ophelia's, O's, loss. One audience flower reads: "I lost my body to the cruelty of men. It is because of the cruelty of men that we make shows like these."

A holy man, who can hardly walk, makes his way slowly but surely through the show. To applause from the audience he climbs on stage in the Gatekeeping, rubs lotion into Cieranne's [Kennedy Bell] back, combs Jenna's [Hobbs] hair, thanks every actor with a handshake. As he passes me on his way up from the river, he clasps his hands and nods to me, too, in thanks.

One audience member takes a performer aside, and explains that the show was shocking for him. Shocking because, amongst other things, "I have never seen a woman naked before."

Indian theatre scholar Sreenath Nair (2012) had this reaction to *IO*:

Human history, in many ways, is the story of the bodies. It tells us how bodies have been represented, disciplined, defined and concealed in various religious, political and cultural contexts. The female body in particular, throughout history, has been a site of constant interventions of phallo/logo-centric cultural assumptions making the "real" always absent in the mechanism of cultural reproduction. In India, we have erotic sculptures and murals of female body "out there" and yet too often we refuse the truth and existence of it in everyday life. This "absence" brings silence and fear and therefore, it is an object of exploitation- the violence against the "unspeakable" (rape, murder, insult, abuse etc.,). *Imagining O* re-initiates female subjectivity using the female body as a performative tool. The performance displaces the male gaze through the "presence" of female bodies which/who tell the story of their selves through the visible "speaking bodies." It is deeply a political play of the history of male sexuality.

Montclair

The version of *Imagining O* published here was performed in and around the Alexander Kasser Theater of Montclair State University, New Jersey. Because the text and descriptions of each scene in the Montclair iteration of *IO* follows this introduction, I will not describe the production in detail. I will discuss some key scenes. In addition to the published text, Matt Bockelman's film is an excellent if necessarily selective representation of what happened. The "final" published version of *IO* published here both resolves and opens up what was started in Kent and continued in Kerala.

In her review for *The New York Times*, Laura Collins-Hughes (2014) wrote:

This provocative, confident, sometimes cacophonous production is a sprawling, ambulatory affair—an exploration of power dynamics in both sex and theater. [...] This is immersive theater with a purpose, knocking the audience off balance to create a safe zone for the actors. What's strange, and surely deliberate, is how safe it comes to feel for us, too. [...] But what makes it thrilling is how thoroughly in control the women are. Even performing scenes of degradation, these actors are not themselves degraded. Strength and defiance are defining elements. [...] There is humor, too. In a space called the Balthus Room, decadently draped with women in various stages of dress and undress, a very young-looking, pajama-clad blond woman reads delightedly from Réage's novel in an adolescent cadence that clashes hilariously with the words.

On a pair of video screens suspended backstage, Ophelia chats with the author of *Story of O*, one talking head on each oversize screen. [...] There's something [...] Ophelia tells her, and it's at the heart of *Imagining O*. We hear it again later, spoken by a chorus of Ophelias at the evening's bleak and glorious crescendo, and it urges us to consider who created certain notions we hold about women—about agency, desire, and surrender. "I was not born," she says. "I was written."

Imagining O is a rewrite, and it is powerful.

The Tipping Point

This dance-monologue about halfway through the performance fuses the situations of Ophelia and O. Each woman is abused; each finds a way to tell her story; each at the end of *IO* commits suicide. In the tipping point as choreographed by Mitchell, an older O (performed by Electa Behrens in Kent and Kerala and by Simona Maicanescu in the United States) interacts with the younger Ophelia performed by Niamh Lyman-Cotter. They perform inside a circle formed by the other women. Close to them, sometimes mixing with them, are spectators. The tipping point takes place on the "mainstage," the space where an orthodox theatre piece would take place, a place usually reserved for actors only. But here audience and performers share the space. Maicanescu speaks in a strong voice, addressing everyone while Lyman-Cotter moves among the spectators speaking intimately to one or several at a time.

The circle of women is a chorus, repeating quietly several key words and phrases: "mistook," "wrists, ankles, members," "happiness," "certainty," "true love," "patient, patient." Lyman-Cotter and Maicanescu sometimes converge on a simple wood chair, which tips back almost touching the floor at times in climaxes of sudden strong movement. The chorus of women makes a series of expressive movements (described in detail in the script). O describes the abuses she endures. The scene ends with the elder O quoting from *Story of O*, "What if she actually enjoyed her debasement?" and the younger replying with Shakespeare's "And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi' ye."

A long moment of silence. Then Krodman suddenly sits up and says, "Well, that was heavy." Usually this draws some laughter from spectators. Next, Gate Keeping.

Gate Keeping

The stage is swiftly transformed into a carnival. Amusement park music. Bright, flashing lights. The chair that was the center-piece of the tipping point becomes the carnival barker's platform. During the gate keeping scene, spectators are required to perform an action in order to go on to the next scene. In Kent and Kerala, each spectator had either to rub lotion on a performer's back, brush a performer's hair, or tear a piece of paper from a paper dress covered with words. In Montclair, each spectator had either to spray a semen-colored liquid from a flit gun¹¹ onto a performer's face, or stuff flowers down the throat of Ophelia, or have their photo taken with a "Balthus" early teen model. If anyone refuses to perform one of these actions, instead of receiving a map showing the locations of the second dispersals, they are "banished" to the dramaturgy room.

The Dramaturgy Room

Banishment to the dramaturgy room is not a bad deal. In an ample space off the Kasser Theater's lobby, *IO's* dramaturg, Montclair State University Professor Carrie Lee O'Dell, created and curated a rich display of information about the production's literary, social, and artistic roots and aspects. The dramaturgy room shows that *IO* was as much an installation as a theatre piece. O'Dell (2022) writes:

Typically, a production dramaturg does copious research, providing directors, actors, and occasionally designers with images, production histories, scholarship, and historical context. This information, called a *protocol*, isn't usually seen by anyone outside of the production team. The dramaturg puts the protocol in an enormous three-ring binder and sits it on a shelf to collect dust. For the Montclair State incarnation of *Imagining O*, the directorial team—Richard Schechner, Benjamin Mosse, and Roanna Mitchell—had a different idea: take all those files out of the binder and let audiences satisfy their curiosity about the material they experience in the performance. Thus, our dramaturgy room was born. We re-imagined the lobby of the theatre as a museum space that the audience could engage as they wished and I encouraged them to treat me, the dramaturg, as the docent of the little museum we constructed in the lobby of the Kasser Theater.

We envisioned the dramaturgy room as a space that would encourage audience members to not only interact with the materials and with me, but with one another. I liked the idea of having multiple stations, each devoted to a specific aspect of *Imagining O*, but also working as an installation to draw the audience in. For example, the Ophelia station was set up as Ophelia's dressing table with jars of the herbs she lists in Act IV, scene 5 of *Hamlet*: "There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that's for thoughts. There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me." The material surrounding Ophelia's dressing table featured not only the history of who this character is and where she came from, but the history of her portrayal on stage and screen. Also how she's been shown in the western oil painting tradition, what the staging conventions were at the Globe, and what the other women who die in Shakespeare's plays share with her.

The *Story of O* station was similar, with a desk and diary—maybe belonging to O or maybe belonging to Pauline Réage (and how does what we picture as Réage's desk differ from Dominique Aury's? From Anne Desclos'?) This station included biographical information on Dominique Aury,

her career, and her affair with Jean Paulhan; the scandal surrounding the publication of *Histoire d'O*; Paris in the 1950s; the history of erotic writing in France and elsewhere; the kink community today and the influence of *Story of O* on that community. Audience members were encouraged to sit down in O's chair or Ophelia's chair, to inhabit that space, read the diary, smell the herbs, pick up the riding crop.

The *Imagining O* station told the story of the play in its different incarnations, with images and video footage from the Kent and Kerala productions and the rehearsal process for the Montclair State production. I covered the floor with the butcher paper that the Montclair cast drew and wrote on during their rasaboxes training and provided materials on rasaesthetics for context. I covered the walls with images that the cast and artistic team shared with me, including work by the painter Balthus, which influenced the staging and imagery in *Imagining O*.

As part of the installation, I costumed myself in a steel-boned corset and high-heeled boots. Thus dressed I answered questions and guided the audience through the space. I invited my first year writing classes to attend a preview performance and remember seeing a nineteen-year-old student in her second week of college classes register that this was her professor in the dominatrix gear. Her eyes widened and she said incredulously "College is *different!*".

The Peep House

Playing with voyeurism is a big part of *IO*. After all, the word "theatre" derives from a root that means "a place for viewing." I wanted to take this to an extreme, and to marry it to the core themes of *IO*, as well as connect the production to the Elizabethan theatre. The peep house is a miniature Globe Theatre with holes drilled into its wooden sides. Spectators, one at a time, could press an eye against the wall of this toy theatre to catch a gander on what's going on inside. Inside the peep house were cameras looking at the eyes looking in. Around the theatre were projected those peeping eyes. What did they see?

At first, nothing. For most of *IO*, the peep house is empty. A possibility as yet unrealized. Then, during the second dispersal, Uzo, naked, sits in the peep house reading out loud from *Story of O*. Uzo meticulously performs on herself the instructions written in the book.

Her eyelids lightly shadowed. Her lips very red. The tip and areole of her breasts pink [...]. Perfume on her pudenda, perfume applied to the furrow between her thighs [...]. She looked at herself in the mirror. She started all over again. [...] She fixed her hair and freshened her face. [...] Then she put on her white shirt. She waited.

At the end of the second dispersal, all the women join Uzo inside the peep house. Leiser-Moore and Maicanescu are in tailored dark women's suits, the other women are in white shirts and underpants. Some of the women chant "Desolate, desolate, desolate, desolate" repeatedly as others recite a monolog made from the final words spoken by each of the women in Shakespeare who die. Just before the final line of the monolog, the chanting of "desolate" stops. Then in chorus the women recite, "As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle. I can no more." The Owl opens the peep house door. Maicanescu and Leiser-Moore go to the river. The other women form a circle around the peep house. Then, chanting "to bed, to bed to

bed” repeatedly, they take various routes to the river. The spectators, guided by the Owl, follow the women to the river.

The River

The river was constructed differently in each location. In Montclair, there is a small outdoor amphitheatre near the Kasser Theater. At its base is a 3’ deep orchestra pit. This pit was modified to make a 30’ long river with a bridge over it near one end. On the bridge, Maicanescu and Leiser-Moore stand. The other women kneel on both banks of the river. They remain still for at least one minute. In the silence of the night, the time seems longer. Finally, one woman, shrieking—joy, terror?—jumps in. All but one of the others follow. The women frolic happily in the river. They swim, they emerge, they run around its edge, and they plunge back in. Over and over, until exhausted. The women leave one by one. Finally only one woman is in the river, face down, dead. She leaves. Another woman remains kneeling at the river’s edge. In the river floats a single white shirt. On the bridge, Maicanescu and Leiser-Moore face each other. They are the company’s elders. Maicanescu holds a copy of *Histoire d’O*. She reads in French the novel’s last words. Leiser-Moore recites the lines in English. When finished, the women turn and stand back-to-back on the bridge. The other women—except for the one kneeling at the river’s edge—appear in their street clothes or in dripping wet white shirts. They hand out programs to the departing spectators. And they shout, “To bed, to bed! What is done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed.”

The Owl

There is only one male performer in *Imagining O*. He is in drag, garbed in a dark blood red gown, his right arm adorned with a flowing tattoo, his face and head entirely concealed by a realistic owl mask. Who is this creature? The owl is a guide who silently indicates to the spectators where they should go. The owl is a psychopomp who guides living souls—the spectators—around the space and finally to the river, a Styx. The idea of the owl came to me both from a passage near the end of *Story of O* and from Ophelia’s opaque, “They say the owl was a baker’s daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be” (*Hamlet* IV, 5: 47–49). Ophelia’s lines have been explained as referring to when Christ transformed a woman into an owl after she refused him bread. And the final chapter of *Story of O* is titled “The Owl” after the mask O wears. Réage writes:

Facing the full-length mirror, O tried on each of the masks. The most singular, and the one that transformed her most and seemed to her the most natural, was one of the little owl masks (there were two), no doubt because its tawny color blended so well with her tan; the headpiece of feathers descending halfway down her back completely hiding her shoulders, and in front, to the first curves of her breasts.

I chose to not have O wear the mask because in the owl I found an indeterminate figure with multiple deep cultural reverberations. The owl with its super open eyes seems wise and hyper-aware. It is a night bird, suddenly appearing and just as suddenly vanishing. It is friendly and

foreboding at the same time, a good omen and a bad one. But why a man in a woman's clothes? I can't answer that beyond saying that *Imagining O* is a woman's piece with a male in disguise near but not in the scenes, guiding. The director?

To Do—What?

Who is “O-Ophelia” if not the hidden and silenced part of ourselves? But these O-women are imaginary, even as they inform erotics, politics, literature, fantasies, dreams, personal, and cultural histories. *IO* is an exercise in imagining—in creating from both what is and what might be: complex domains that are simultaneously facts and fictions. Facts because the theatre is factual: performers doing real things face-to-face with spectators. These two groups agree to meet at a definite place and time to do- what? Look, feel, interact, decide. This fateful meeting is no longer only live, but saturated and modified by media. Do these webs enable us? Or do they distort who we “really” are? And even, or especially, after COVID-19, and everything else separating us, isn't there an abiding need to meet in person?

Imagining O

Production

Concept and director	Richard Schechner
Co-director	Benjamin Mosse
Movement and choreography	Roanna Mitchell
Environments and lights	Chris Muller
Costumes	Oana Botez
Films and photographs	Matt Bockelman
Dramaturg	Carrie Lee O'Dell
General manager and stage manager	Sarah Lucie
Technical director	Colin Van Horn
Additional visual design	Teresa Braun
Associate lighting design	Chris Holland
Additional films	Jake Juba
Audio system design	Marc Citelli
Assistant stage managers	Nicole Mageros, Natalia Romero
Video and projections engineer	J. Ryan Graves
Build and run crew	Heather Ball, Jeffrey Cierniak, Marc Citelli, Jesse Monahan, Rocco Terranova
Project associate	Gillian P. Holmes
Translation from French	Marianne Mayer-Thibault, Richard Schechner
Assistant to Richard Schechner	Jessica Katz
Producer	Jedediah Wheeler of Peak Performances

Performers

Agape aka Gabaccia Moreno
Madeline Barr
Julia Blauvelt
Parker Denton
Melissa Krodman
Caiti Lattimer
Deborah Leiser-Moore
Niamh Lynam-Cotter
Simona Maicanescu
Kaitlin Overton
Calista Small
Kim Snauwaert
Allison Taaffe
Maga Uzo

O, OPHELIA, GERTRUDE, RÉAGE, and other personae are shared by all the women. In the text below, the names of the performers are used. Sometimes a performer is “herself,” doing self-composed texts and actions developed during work with Schechner, Mosse, and Mitchell. The OWL, performed by a male, is mute.

The staging described below is as it was in the Alexander Kasser Theater, Montclair State University, the venue for Peak Performances. “Left” and “right” are “stage left” and “stage right.” The staging is described in detail because *Imagining O* is as much an enacted-choreographed work as it is a text. For any new production, adjust the staging to fit specific circumstances.

1

AGAPE sits on a chair at the entrance to the lobby. Every spectator must pass close by her. Her upper thighs are bare, her legs spread slightly, her underpants down around her ankles. She speaks softly and repeatedly:

AGAPE:

That sucked the honey of his music vows.

*Sometimes spectators bend close to AGAPE to hear her line; sometimes they go by unmindful. The OWL moves freely through the lobby. In addition to what is usually in a lobby—ticket booth, refreshment stand, room for waiting—there is an ample “Dramaturgy Room.” Curated by Carrie Lee O’Dell, this space displays photographs, drawings, documents, notes, articles, and other materials detailing the research that went into making *Imagining O* before and during the workshop-rehearsal process.*

2

The OWL opens two main doors to the auditorium and gestures for the spectators to enter. He guides them past the seats and onto the stage. No spectator is seated in the theatre. Instead, brightly illuminated by spotlights, the women sit or lie on the seats, on small platforms built over the seats, in the balcony, at the edge of the stage. Dressed in black or dark gray, they repeat, "That sucked the honey of his music vows" in its entirety or in fragments, building to a climax. Then they jump up, laughing, and run around the theatre. Finally, all but BARR are in the balcony. BARR, in a black slip and garter belt, sits on a chair in the right aisle, her legs slightly spread. LATTIMER comes to the front of the balcony, looks out across the empty orchestra seats to the spectators on the stage, and waves her right hand in the manner of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. The other women rush to LATTIMER from the left and right cupping their hands and whispering directly into her ears. She proclaims very loudly the words she hears. A live video stream closeup of her face is projected on two screens mounted behind her in the upper corners of the theatre.

LATTIMER:

Good my lord.

How does your honor for this many a day?

My lord, I have remembrances of yours

That I have long longed to re-deliver.

I pray you, now receive them.

My honored lord, you know right well you did,

And with them words of so sweet breath composed

As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,

Take these again, for to the noble mind

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

There, my lord.

My lord?

What means your lordship?

Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

I was the more deceived.

At home, my lord.

O, help him, you sweet heavens!

O heavenly powers, restore him!

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

After LATTIMER proclaims the last word of her speech, the spotlight on her dims, and she vanishes into darkness. BARR begins talking.

BARR:

The taxi is moving right along, and O doesn't dare ask why René is so quiet, so still, or what all this means to him, having her there so motionless and silent, so naked and so vulnerable, so completely gloved in a black car going god knows where. He hasn't ordered her to do anything, and he hasn't forbidden her to do anything. She doesn't dare cross her legs or sit with her knees pressed together. Her gloved hands on either side of her body pressing down on the seat, bracing

herself. “Here we are,” he says suddenly. The taxi stops on a lovely avenue, under a tree—it is an oak tree—outside this small mansion, nestled between the courtyard and garden, the way the mansions of the Faubourg Saint Germain are. There are no street lights outside. It’s dark inside the taxi. Outside it’s raining. “Don’t move.” René says, “Don’t move at all.” O wonders at why such a great rush of sweetness mingles with the terror inside her, or why terror should have such a sweet taste.

As she finishes, the spotlight on BARR dims. All the other women dressed in white or light colored clothes, enter the theatre from the lobby and form two lines down the left aisle. BLAUVELT enters and walks between the women. As she passes them, the other women fall in behind her. Throughout BLAUVELT’s speech, the other women perform an arm-waving dance.

BLAUVELT:

The courtier’s, scholar’s, soldier’s, eye, tongue, sword,
Th’expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mold of form,
Th’observed of all observers quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of time and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me
T’have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

The light comes up again on BARR. The other women, no longer illuminated, exit.

BARR:

Another version of the same beginning was simpler, more direct. After driving for about 30 minutes, O was taken out of the taxi and up a few steps. After going through one or two doors she was left alone in a dark room for half an hour, maybe an hour, two, I don’t know, but it seemed forever. She sinks into a dizzying absence from herself. She is someone, anyone at all; then no one, a zero. O.

BARR forms an O, a zero, with her thumb and forefinger.

To say that from the moment her lover left her, O begins to await his return is an understatement. She turns into pure vigil, waiting in the dark for light. During the day, she is a painted statue whose skin is warm and smooth, whose mouth is meek, whose eyes are always lowered. She tends the fire, pours and serves coffee and drinks, lights cigarettes, arranges flowers, and folds newspapers like- like- a little girl in her parent’s living room. So limpid, with her exposed breasts.

The light on BARR fades. She rises from the chair and exits. The OWL gestures to the spectators to follow him to the left side of the stage where in the wing the “Balthus Room” awaits.



FIGURE 1.1: The “Balthus Room,” modeled on the painter Balthasar Klossowski de Rola, known for his erotic depiction of teenage girls. From left to right, Caiti Lattimer, Allison Taaffe, Maga Uzo, Simona Maicanescu, Madeline Barr, Agape aka Gabaccia Moreno, Kaitlin Overton, Julia Blauvelt, Niamh Lynam-Cotter, Melissa Krodman, Kim Snaauwaert, Calista Small. Peak Performances, Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey, 2014. Photograph: Marina Levitskaya.

3

The Balthus Room is a carefully painted box set designed to look like a painting by Balthasar Klossowski de Rola, known as Balthus. Arranged in the room are women in poses resembling those of the figures in Balthus's paintings. At first, these women do not move. When they do move, they shift suddenly from pose to pose. The spectators sit on several rows of bleachers. Some remain standing or sit on the floor. In some poses, several of the women are partially or nearly totally naked.

*On the left side of the Balthus Room, SMALL sits on an armchair. SNAUWAERT is perched on the back of the chair. SNAUWAERT holds the novel, *Histoire d'O*. SMALL shows the audience the English translation, *Story of O*. Simultaneously, they read these texts, SMALL loudly, SNAUWAERT in an undertone. SMALL's voice is full of “innocent amazement,” as if a teenager were discovering something new, shocking, and delightful.*

SMALL: *Story of O* by Anne Desclos as Dominique Aury as Pauline Réage, page sixty-nine.

SNAUWAERT: *Histoire d'O* par Anne Desclos comme Dominique Aury comme Pauline Réage, page soixante-neuf.

As SMALL and SNAUWAERT read, the other women perform a “Balthus dance,” changing poses from time to time.

SMALL:

Every single day ritualistically soiled by saliva and sperm, by sweat mingled with her own sweat, she felt herself to be literally the vessel of impurity, the sewer mentioned by the Scriptures. And yet those parts of her body most constantly offended, having become more sensitive, seemed to her to have become more lovely as though ennobled. Her mouth clamped upon anonymous members, the points of her breasts hands were forever fondling, and between her wide-flung thighs, the twin ways leading into her belly, opening a whole wide world to pleasure. She was startled to realize that in being prostituted, the crucial point was- the crucial point was- nonetheless- one of dignity. She was lit up as though from within, and you could see calmness in her walk, serenity on her face, and the indiscernible internal smile you can read in the eyes of hermits. When René told her he was leaving, night had already fallen. O was naked in her cell, waiting to be led to the refectory. René was dressed as usual, in the business suit he wore every day. When he took her in his arms, the rough wool of his coat chafed her nipples. He kissed her, lay her on the bed, lay down beside her, his face next to her face, and tenderly and slowly and sweetly he took her, moving to and fro now in this, now in the other of the two roads offered to him, finally spilling himself into her mouth which, when he was done, he kissed again.

SMALL opens her mouth wide in an expression of delighted shock. SNAUWAERT reads more matter-of-factly.

SNAUWAERT:

Chaque jour et pour ainsi dire rituellement salie de salive et de sperme, de sueur mêlée à sa propre sueur, elle se sentait à la lettre le réceptacle d'impureté, l'égout dont parle l'Écriture. Et cependant les parties de son corps les plus constamment offensées, devenues plus sensibles, lui paraissaient en même temps devenues plus belles, et comme ennoblies: sa bouche refermée sur des sexes anonymes, les pointes de ses seins que des mains constamment froissaient, et entre ses cuisses écartelées les chemins de son ventre, routes communes labourées à plaisir. Qu'à être prostituée elle dût gagner en dignité étonnait, c'est pourtant de dignité qu'il s'agissait. Elle en était éclairée comme par le dedans, e l'on voyait en sa démarche le calme, sur son visage la sérénité et l'imperceptible sourire intérieur qu'on devine aux yeux des recluses. Lorsque René l'avertit qu'il la lassait, la nuit était déjà tombée. O était nue dans sa cellule, et attendait qu'on vînt la conduire au réfectoire. Son amant, lui, était vêtu comme à l'ordinaire, d'un costume qu'il portait en ville tous les jours. Quand il la prit dans ses bras, le tweed de son vêtement lui agaçait la peau des seins. Il l'embrassa, la coucha sur le lit, se coucha contre elle, et tendrement et lentement et doucement la prit, allant et venant dans les deux voies qui lui étaient offertes, pour finalement se répandre dans sa bouche, qu'ensuite il embrassa encore.

When the texts are finished, the women take new positions. One is entirely naked. The second reading is rapid, with explosive screams, hysterical laughter, maybe pleasure, maybe terror. The "Balthus women" keep changing poses. Then, some move slowly toward the audience, holding in their hands clothing they have taken off. The reading becomes so rapid that the words cannot be understood. The women drop the clothing very near to the spectators. At the end, SMALL speaks in a mocking tone. SNAUWAERT slams the door as she exits. Everyone freezes.

SMALL: Page two hundred and sixty-nine.

SNAUWAERT: Page deux cent soixante neuf.

SMALL:

O did not possess Anne-Marie. No one possessed Anne-Marie. Anne-Marie demanded caresses without worrying about the feelings of those who gave them. She surrendered with insolent liberty. However, she was tender and soft with O, kissing her mouth and breasts, holding her for an hour before sending her away. She had taken off O's irons. She told O, "These are the last hours you will be able to sleep without wearing irons. Those we will put on you in a few hours you won't be able to take off." She had softly and slowly moved her hand on O's loins, then had taken her into the dressing room, the only room in the house with a three-way mirror, always closed. She opened the mirror so that O could see herself. "This is the last time you will see yourself intact," he said to her. "Here, where you are so round and smooth, on the inside of your loins, we will imprint on you the initials of Sir Stephen. I will bring you back to the mirror the day before you leave. You won't recognize yourself. Go to sleep, O."

SNAUWAERT:

O ne possédait pas Anne-Marie. Personne ne possédait Anne-Marie. Anne-Marie exigeait les caresses sans se soucier de ce qu'éprouvait qui les lui donnait, et elle se librait avec une liberté insolente. Pourtant, elle fut tendre et douce avec O, lui embrassa la bouche et les seins, et la tint contre elle une heure encore avant de la renvoyer. Elle lui avait enlevé ses fers. "Ce sont les dernières heures, 'lui avait-elle dit,' où tu vas dormir sans porter de fers. Ceux qu'on te mettra tout à l'heure ne pourront plus s'enlever." Elle avait doucement et longuement passé sa main sur les reins d'O, puis l'avait emmenée dans la pièce où elle s'habillait, la seule de la maison où il y eût une glace à trois faces, toujours fermée. Elle avait ouvert la glace, pour qu'O pût se voir. "C'est la dernière fois qu tu te vois intacte," lui dit-elle. "C'est ici, où tu es si ronde et lisse, que l'on t'imprimera les initiales de Sir Stephen, de part et d'autre de la fente des tes reins. Je te ramènerai devant la glace la veille de ton départ, tu ne te reconnaîtras plus. Va dormir, O."

The OWL walks in front of the audience and gestures for them to rise and follow him.

4

As the audience returns, at the center of the stage they see a small brown wood table, two brown wood chairs, and on the table, two white tea cups in their saucers. Next to one cup, a paperback of Histoire d'O, next to the other, Story of O. Overhead, a projection on two large screens of the same table, chairs, cups, and books. A film begins. On one screen, KRODMAN as the author of Histoire d'O, on the other, AGAPE as Ophelia. KRODMAN is in a white women's business skirt and jacket, a glass-bead choker necklace. AGAPE wears a black negligée and a crucifix necklace. The film alternates between tight shots of the women's faces, and a view of them across the table from each other.

AGAPE: How did you meet Jean Paulhan?
 KRODMAN: We met during the war—
 AGAPE: War? Against Norway? Against Fortinbras's father?
 KRODMAN: The war with the Germans, the Nazis. We were both in the Resistance.
 AGAPE: How old were you?

KRODMAN: Thirty-four.
 AGAPE: And Paulhan?
 KRODMAN: Fifty-seven. He was very good looking. At least I thought so. And clever. Oh, so clever.
 AGAPE: A puffed and reckless libertine. Love at first sight?
 KRODMAN: Of course not. Did you fall in love with Hamlet at first sight?
 AGAPE: I do not know what I should think.
 KRODMAN: Jean was married, he had sick wife, a teenage daughter. And it was during the war. We had other things to do.
 AGAPE: They say the owl was a baker's daughter.
 KRODMAN: Pardon?
 AGAPE: Did he importune you with love? Did he take you by the wrist and hold you hard? Did he peruse your face as if he would draw it?
 KRODMAN: It was slow—but it went very efficiently, if I may use that word.
 AGAPE: Words, words, words.
 KRODMAN: Your author is keen with words too.
 AGAPE: Do you doubt that?
 KRODMAN: I didn't realize what was going on at first, between Jean and me. It wasn't the first time that someone had taken an interest in me and I was intrigued. At first, I thought it was a caprice. But, no, it was better than that.

Synchronously, the women take a sip of tea then carefully place the cups back in their saucers.

He was a wonderful person.

AGAPE: Did he make you many tenders of his affection? Did he importune you with love in an honorable fashion?
 KRODMAN: We became lovers. During the war. We had two secrets. Who we really were and who we were to each other. Dominique Aury is not the name I was born with.
 AGAPE: We know what we are, but know not what we may be.
 KRODMAN: I was born Anne Desclos. Pauline Réage is another name I used along with Dominique Aury. And you?
 AGAPE: I was not born. I was written.
 KRODMAN: Me, too, then.

Synchronously, each woman puts a hand on the book in front of her on the table.

AGAPE: Say you?
 KRODMAN: I was living at home with my parents. He had a wife with an incurable disease. And he had lots of girls, lots.
 AGAPE: What is it that they do when they change us for others? Is it sport?
 KRODMAN: He played his games. Was I jealous? No. Maybe, a little. I knew he was special. I knew I was special. But—
 AGAPE: But—?
 KRODMAN: Jean liked his women young. I was already past forty. I wanted to find a new way to show him my love that only I could express, a literary way for a literary man.

- AGAPE: How should I your true love know from another one?
- KRODMAN: Exactly. I looked deeply into Jean and into my own self. He had written a very scholarly introduction to the works of the Marquis de Sade. And I had these fantasies since I was a teenager, very violent, very sexual fantasies.
- AGAPE: No hat upon his head; his stockings fouled,
 Ungartered, and down-gyved to his ankle;
 Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
 And with a look so piteous in purport
 As if he had been loosed out of hell.
- KRODMAN: I began writing. Laying in bed, on my left side, with my feet tucked under me, a soft black pencil in my right hand, I was writing the way you speak in the dark to the person you love when you've held back the words of love too long and they flow at last. For the first time in my life I was writing without hesitation, without stopping, rewriting, or discarding. I was writing the way one breathes, the way one dreams.

As KRODMAN speaks, AGAPE draws deep breaths leading to a crescendo; she then relaxes.

The constant hum of the cars grew fainter, I no longer heard the banging of doors, Paris was slipping into silence. I was still writing when the street cleaners came by at the first touch of dawn.

- AGAPE: I shall the effect of this good lesson keep.

AGAPE touches KRODMAN's hand.

- KRODMAN: The first sixty pages flowed out of me, they wrote themselves. Why was it like that? I don't know. Probably because I had been dreaming. Not dreaming exactly but—anyway, I wanted to show what I had written to Jean. I was afraid.
- AGAPE: To speak of horrors, he comes before me. I do not know; but truly, I do fear it.
- KRODMAN: One rarely forgives in those one loves the vagaries and excesses one readily forgives in others.
- AGAPE: He falls to such perusal of my face
 As he would draw it. Long stayed he so;
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,

She demonstrates with her right hand.

He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
 As it did seem to shatter all his bulk.

- KRODMAN: Yes, Jean was excited by what I wrote. "Do you have any more?" he asked me. He instructed me, "Keep writing."

AGAPE: Words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich.
KRODMAN: I wrote all summer. While we were making love, right in the middle of it,
I'd read him what I'd written. Our love was physical, it was literary, it was
everything I wanted, he wanted.
AGAPE: You are merry.
KRODMAN: What?

Synchronously, they again sip from the teacups.

AGAPE: I, of ladies most deject and wretched, I think nothing.

KRODMAN:
What fascinated and excited Jean was the relationship between what I was writing and my own—
how can I say it?—real life. I saw between what I thought myself to be and the story I was telling
both a distance so radical and a kinship so profound that I was incapable of recognizing myself
in it. I no doubt accepted my life with such patience, or passivity, or weakness only because I
was so certain of being able to find whenever I wanted that other obscure life that is life's conso-
lation, that other life unacknowledged and unshared—and then, all of a sudden, thanks to the
man I loved, I did acknowledge it, and from then on would share it with any and all. If Jean was
promiscuous with girls, I was wild with words. As perfectly prostituted in the anonymity of a
book, as in the book she was that faceless, ageless, nameless O—

*As KRODMAN says "O," both women form with their index fingers and thumbs an O which
they hold in front of their faces. As KRODMAN says "zero" they drop their hands.*

—zero, nothing, everything, a multiplier.

AGAPE: What means this?
KRODMAN: The purest and wildest love sanctions—no, demands—the most absolute
surrender.
AGAPE: Could beauty have better commerce than with honesty?
KRODMAN: When I was fifteen I knew a girl named Jacqueline. She was big, blonde, and
beautiful.
AGAPE: Did you repel her? Deny her access to you?
KRODMAN: Not at all. It was quite common in France, that kind of thing. It never hurt
anyone. But Jacqueline's parents didn't like it. They took her out of school. I
got my revenge on them, didn't I?
AGAPE: And your Lord Hamlet?
KRODMAN: I saw Sir Stephen, or someone I made into him, in a bar one night, half-seated
on a stool, silent, self-composed, and with an air of some gray-eyed prince
that fascinates both men and women.
AGAPE: And will he not come again? And will he not come again? No, no he is dead.
He is dead and gone lady.

After a pause, they synchronously sip tea again.

And he never will come again.

Pause. Then, in a different tone.

You read de Sade?

KRODMAN: Not at all. Not until I finished my own book. When I did finally read the Marquis, I realized we're all jailers, all in prison. There is always someone within us whom we enchain, whom we imprison, whom we silence.

AGAPE: That's exactly what Hamlet said. But let's move on. There are two endings to *Story of O*. In one, O returns to Roissy. In the other, O commits suicide. Which is the right ending?

KRODMAN: I didn't know how to end, I still don't know how to end. So I left it open. Why not?

AGAPE: Ay, ay.

KRODMAN: Who am I finally if not the long silent part of someone, the secret and nocturnal part that has never betrayed itself in public by any thought, word, or deed but communicates through subterranean depths of the imaginary with dreams as old as the world itself?

The following speech is said both by AGAPE in the film and by her "real self" coming through the crowd of spectators.

AGAPE: Pray you, let's have no words of this. Indeed, I'll make an end on't. Young men will do't, if they come to't; by cock, they are to blame.

When the film ends, the lights come up on the stage. The OWL and five performers enter, each holding aloft a numbered sign, from "1" to "6," as when tourists are led from place to place. It is time for the first dispersal. The stage empties; all that remains are the table, two chairs, and two teacups in their saucers.

5

First dispersal. The dispersals are short scenes—10–15 minutes—devised by performers working with Schechner, Mosse, and Mitchell. They happen simultaneously in different locations in and outside the theatre. The first dispersal has six scenes. Printed on every ticket is a number from "1" to "6." Spectators follow the OWL and five other performers who lead groups according to the numbers. In the first dispersal, each spectator sees three of the six scenes. In any new production, use the dispersals below or, even better, work out your own. Perhaps keep the texts but re-invent the staging.

The only way to see all the dispersals is to attend the performance at least twice.

5.1

TAAFFE is in a rehearsal room. She is costumed in a short black slip and spike high heels. She dances on a floor covered by other high heel shoes. The scene is illuminated only by a large blank TV screen and two mini lights on the floor. TAAFFE dances with extreme physical effort, making the sounds of her effort. She tries to zip up her slip, but cannot. She dances over to a woman spectator who, when indicated to do so by TAAFFE, zips her. TAAFFE dances while picking up as many shoes as she can. As she gets to a gymnastic bar, she drops the shoes and hangs over the bar, rocking back and forth, out of breath.

TAAFFE: Quarter to eight. Time no longer stood still.

5.2

LYNAM-COTTER, in a bright green short skirt and a black slip top leads a group to an open space and low wall under arches outside the main entrance to the Kasser Theater. There she meets LEISER-MOORE, a middle-aged woman who imagines LYNAM-COTTER to be her younger self, both O and OPHELIA. LYNAM-COTTER sits on a low stone wall. The audience hears LEISER-MOORE's pre-recorded text.

LEISER-MOORE:

How could she have forgotten?

A hundred mark is a long one for a one woman to bear; and she had borne, and borne, and borne.

LYNAM-COTTER walks to a chair, sits. LEISER-MOORE moves behind her, gently touching her shoulders.

She found herself on her back, legs raised and bent back against her, fallen into the hands of the living god.

The two women dance on and around the chair which they tip back almost to falling. The dance is intimate; the two women touch each other affectionately.

He was the hand that bound her eyes, he was the chain above the bed, and all the voices giving her orders were his voice. She might well have supposed that an appeal to his pity would have been the surest way to increase his cruelty, so great was his pleasure in wresting from her decisive proofs of his power over her.

But what respite, what delight the hand of a master who lays you down on a bed of rocks, the mark which never will fade, the love of a master who knows how to seize without pity—

LEISER-MOORE sits on the chair.

—that which he loves.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

LYMAN-COTTER *sits on her lap, then starts to leave but*
LEISER-MOORE *pulls her back on.*

Didst hear her speak?
Guess at her years,
Bear'st thou her face in mind?

They continue dancing on and near the chair.

Nobody would need to teach her anything: not to stay silent, not to leave her hands open next to her, not to slightly bend her head back.

LYNAM-COTTER *leans back.*

She was alone, sole spectator to herself, but felt herself to be totally dependent on a will that was not hers.

LYNAM-COTTER *flies.*

And happy to be so.

Together they slowly turn.

She was like those wild beasts who have been made captive and who serve as bait to the hunter, or who fold for him and attack only on his order.

LEISER-MOORE *lowers her arms after running and turning.*

And will he not come again? Pray, love, remember.
Sometimes, pale and trembling, she fell against the wall, nailed fast by her silence, leashed by her silence, and so terribly

LYNAM-COTTER *sits on the chair before she falls.*

happy to be still.

5.3

A reprise of scene 4, between KRODMAN and AGAPE. But here AGAPE performs live sitting in a small room, a large shaded floor lamp near her providing light. In the room, a library stacking cart full of books, more books under the table. On the table, a paperback Story of O. There is no chair across from AGAPE. Instead, she faces a bank of five small to medium-sized video screens. All the screens show KRODMAN.

5.4

On the second floor of the theatre sitting in a circle with spectators, the lines below are shared among BLAUVELT, UZO, LATTIMER, BARR, and OVERTON.

O, never was there queen so mightily betrayed! Yet at the first I saw the treasons planted.
 Oh most lame and impotent conclusion!
 She was left for half an hour, for an hour, for two—I don't know, but it seemed it were an age.
 O, is that all? What will you give me now
 For the same handkerchief?
 O turn thy edged sword another way
 strike those that hurt, and hurt not those that help.
 And then I know that they released O's hands,
 Until that point tied behind her back,
 And told her to undress.
 O that deceit should dwell in such a gorgeous palace!
 But fortune, O,
 She is corrupted, changed and won from thee.
 I don't know
 Just how long she remained in the red boudoir,
 Nor if she really was alone as she thought she was,
 For someone maybe had been watching her through a peephole disguised in the wall.
 O wondrous thing, how easily murder is discovered.
 O never shall sun that morrow see.
 O shut the door! And when thou hast done so, come weep with me. Past hope, past cure, past
 help!
 O, what a rash and bloody deed is this! 'Tis treason.
 O, has it come to this?
 No more! The text is foolish.
 O lady, speak again! O sweet mistress, speak!
 O constancy, be strong upon my side,
 Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue!
 I have a man's mind, but a woman's might.
 How hard it is for women to keep counsel!
 The sun was already high in the heavens,
 not a breath of air stirred in the leaves of the beech.
 O wonderful, when devils tell the truth! The snow that had been falling in huge flakes for two
 hours was still coming down, but now no longer soft, but hard. They stung the face.
 O, give me leave, I have deluded you:
 They left and hour before midnight. The moon, almost full, was high, was bright—
 O, swear not by the moon, the inconsistent moon, shedding great snowy pools of light and leav-
 ing sunk in an India-ink blackness whatever it did not illuminate.
 Dogs barked
 O, could I find it now!
 The lion moved with pity did endure

To have his princely paws pared all away.
 One could sense curiosity stirring in the shadows.
 “Who is it?” people were asking. “To whom does she belong?”
 Alas, she has no speech.
 Between midnight and dawn, which was beginning to pale away in the east, as the moon
 grew ever paler people approached her, several people did come close enough to touch her
 once, formed a circle around her, then another.
 O see my women,
 the crown o’th’earth doth melt.
 She was left for half an hour, for an hour, for two—I don’t know, but it seemed it were an age.
 O, never was their queen
 so mightily betrayed! Yet at the first
 I saw the treasons planted.

The women lead the spectators in singing:

She is dead and gone, lady,
 She is dead and gone,
 At her head a green-grass tuft;
 At her heels a stone.

They pass a small bowl of glass “jewels”—small cellophane-wrapped candies—among the spectators who are free to take one or more if they wish. Then OVERTON raises a sign signaling the spectators follow her to the next dispersal scene. As the spectators move away, the performers say:

Come, my coach! Goodnight ladies, goodnight sweet ladies, goodnight.

5.5

On a path outside the back of the theatre, MAÏCANESCU dressed in a black-fringed pink negligée sits on a stool. Next to her SMALL, wearing a peaked cap, man’s shirt, and khaki pants. SMALL moistens MAÏCANESCU’s shoulders by twisting a soaked cloth.

MAÏCANESCU:

I will confess to you that I love him.
 O, these men, these men!
 I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins, that almost freezes up the heat of life.
 Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves, now I feed myself with most delicious poison.
 My true-love passion:
 As in a vault, an ancient receptacle where for this many hundred years the bones of all my buried
 ancestors are packed, my heart’s subdued even to the very quality of my lord; and to his honor
 and his valiant parts did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.

Then SMALL slowly pours a large bucket of water on MAÏCANESCU's right shoulder. As MAÏCANESCU continues speaking, SMALL pours and then throws buckets of water onto MAÏCANESCU's face, body, and feet, thoroughly drenching her.

Ay, my lord,
I love you more and more; think more and more what's best to ask. Thoughts are but dreams till
their effects be tried. Then Love and Fortune be my gods, my guide.

My good lord,
I do love you more the words can wield the matter. A love that makes breath poor and speech
unable. Beyond all manner of so much I love you.
Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth.
Is there no pity, sitting in the clouds that sees into the bottom of my grief?
Break, my heart!
Love, give me strength and strength shall help afford.
My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep. The more I give to thee, the more I have,
for both are infinite.

SMALL:
Sing willow, willow, willow.

SMALL throws buckets of water directly and forcefully into MAÏCANESCU's face.

MAÏCANESCU:
I heard the owl scream and the cricket's cry!
Come then and take the last warmth of my lips. Sir, you and I must part but that's not it. Sir, you
and I have loved but that's not it. What I have done is yours. What I have to do is yours, being
part in all I have, devoted yours. My royal lord, the love I dedicate to you ... is without end.

Drenched, exhausted, MAÏCANESCU slumps on the stool.

5.6

*At the back of the theatre orchestra section, SNAUWAERT leads spectators into a space where
KRODMAN reclines on a chaise. KRODMAN gets up, the women slap their hands twice
as if starting a Meyerhold etude. They approach each other, take hands. Then KRODMAN
reclines on a chaise. SNAUWAERT approaches the chaise, kneels on it facing KRODMAN.
KRODMAN wears a corset showing her breasts; SNAUWAERT wears a black shirt fully
open showing her whole body. The women lean in to each other, their faces almost touching.*

BOTH: The bed was made. Eternity was in our lips and eyes.

SNAUWAERT *raises herself, regards* KRODMAN.

SNAUWAERT: Look down and see. I'll draw the curtains.

She turns and looks directly at a spectator.

BOTH: Her legs spread.

SNAUWAERT *gestures for KRODMAN to spread her legs.*

Spread.

KRODMAN *spreads her legs. Then, seductively.*

Now. I am.

KRODMAN: The pink and black curtains were drawn.

SNAUWAERT: Kneel.

KRODMAN: Kneel.

SNAUWAERT: Spread.

KRODMAN: Spread.

SNAUWAERT: Be choked. O well-divided disposition!

All the gods go with you!

KRODMAN: Come, you'll play with me, sir? Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in mine ears.

She caresses SNAUWAERT's breasts.

Trust me, I could do much. Cut my lace.

BOTH: Every obstacle to her accessibility had to be eliminated.

They mockingly simulate intercourse.

KRODMAN: Unpin me here. I warrant you.

I will kiss thy lips.

Coarsely roaring.

"Hang-hog" is Latin for bacon!

BOTH: What is this?

KRODMAN: Not know me yet? O, is he more mad?

SNAUWAERT: He swung his right hand back and slapped her hard.

She does so.

BOTH: Gentle, sir. Not so hot.

Long pause, then SNAUWAERT leans down close to KRODMAN.

SNAUWAERT: I know a lady in Venice would have walked barefoot to Palestine for a touch of his nether lip.

KRODMAN: Come, do your best.
She was aware of the splendor of her mouth.
BOTH: Her mouth. Over. Worked. Seized. Gripped. Pushed. Lay. Mark. Sing. Shatter. Shaking. Waving. Come! Come!

After each word, they kiss with increasing intensity and intimacy. Passion becomes parody. Then more seriously.

KRODMAN: He took me by the wrist, and held me hard. Long he stayed so.
SNAUWAERT: At last, a little shaking as it did seem to shatter all his bulk.
KRODMAN: That done, he lets me go.
BOTH: Withered. Cast away. Repel. Weep. Did go. Go.

They rise from the couch, adjust their clothing, and formally address each other.

KRODMAN: Then up he rose and donned his clothes and dugged the chamber-door.
SNAUWAERT: Fare you well.
KRODMAN: You well.

At the conclusion of the first dispersal, dramaturg O'DELL, in a pink-and-black lace corset, awaits spectators returning from the scenes.

6

O'DELL:
Instruction awaits you. Find your place here. You don't want to miss your instruction.

The spectators assemble in the lobby in front of the main doors into the theatre. The OWL is there too. TAAFFE walks among the spectators, instructing them, directly addressing individuals. She is dressed in a black slip. There is a thin red line drawn around her neck. Her attitude is warm and pleasant. None of the instructions are enforced; no rings are distributed. TAAFFE addresses all spectators, regardless of gender, as female. TAAFFE speaks from the male perspective, but she does not try to imitate being male.

TAAFFE:
You are here to serve your masters. During the day, you will perform whatever domestic duties are assigned to you. Sweeping, putting back the books, arranging flowers, waiting on tables. Nothing more difficult than that. But, at the first word or sign from anyone, you will drop whatever you're doing and ready yourself for what is really your one and only duty, to lend yourself. Your hands are not your own, nor are your breasts, nor most especially any of your bodily orifices which we may explore or penetrate at will. You will remember at all times, or as constantly as possible, that you have lost all right to privacy or concealment. And as a reminder of this fact, in our presence you will never close your mouth completely, or cross your legs, or press your knees together. You may recall you were forbidden to do this the minute you arrived. This will serve as a reminder to you, as well as to us, that your mouth, your belly, and your

backside are open to us. You will never touch your breasts in our presence. The bodice raises them toward us so they may be ours. During the day, you will therefore be dressed, but should anyone order you to lift your skirt, you will lift it. Should anyone desire to use you in anyway whatsoever, he will use you, unmasked. But with this one reservation. The whip. Now, the whip will be used only between dusk and dawn. But beside the whipping you receive from whoever may want to whip you, you will be flogged in the evening as punishment for any infractions of the rules committed during the day. For having been slow to oblige, for having raised your eyes and looking at the person addressing you, or taking you. You must never look any of us in the face. If the costume you wear in the evening, the one I am currently wearing, leaves our sex exposed, it is not for the sake of convenience for it would be just as convenient the other way, but for the sake of insolence so that your eyes may be directed there upon it, and no place else. So that you may must learn that there resides your master for whom above all else your lips are intended. Now during the day when you are dressed in normal attire, as you are now, the same rules will apply. When requested, you will open your clothes, and close them again when we are finished with you. Another thing. At night, you will have only your lips to honor us, and your wide spread thighs, for your hands will be tied behind your back and you will be naked as you were a short while ago. You will be blindfolded only to be maltreated. And now that you have seen how you are to be whipped, to be flogged, and yes, by the way, while it is perfectly all right for you to grow accustomed to being whipped, since you are going to be every day throughout your stay, understand that this is less for our pleasure than for your enlightenment. How true this is may be shown by the fact that on those nights when no one desires you, you will wait until the valet, whose job it is, comes to your solitary cell to administer what you are due to receive but we are not in the mood to mete out. Actually, both this flogging and the chain which when attached to a ring around your collar keeps you closely confined to your bed several hours of day are intended less to make you suffer, scream, or shed tears, than to make you feel that through this suffering you are not free but fettered. And to teach you that you are totally totally dedicated to something outside of yourself. Now, when you leave here, you will wear on your third finger of your right hand an iron ring which will identify you. By this time, you will have learned how to obey those who wear the same insignia.

When they see it, they will know that beneath your skirt you are naked. And that this nakedness is for them. Should anybody find you in the least intractable, he will return you here. You will now be shown to your cells.

The OWL and TAAFFE open the theatre doors. Unsmiling, the women performers, dressed in white, emerge and guide the spectators onto the stage.

7

The tipping point is a dance-monologue fusing the situations of Ophelia and O. At the center of the stage, MAÏCANESCU sits on a high-back wood chair, LYMAN-COTTER standing behind, facing away, grasping the top of the chair. The other women stand in a circle marking the perimeter of the action. They speak and move as a chorus. The spectators stand just behind this circle.

MAÏCANESCU:

Who pities those who wait? They are easily recognized by their gentleness, by their falsely attentive looks. Attentive, yes, but to something other than what they are looking at. By their absent-mindedness. The little redhead model told her she looked like a femme fatale. "Fatal for whom?" O said to herself.

Both women leave the chair and move among the spectators. Their two voices weave together, but MAÏCANESCU's voice is much stronger. MAÏCANESCU speaks to everyone, LYMAN-COTTER speaks to herself, and from time-to-time to this or that specific spectator.

LYMAN-COTTER:

White his shroud as the mountain snow,
Larded with sweet flowers
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,
And dugged the chamber-door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie for shame!
Young men will do't, if they come to't,
By cock, they are to blame.

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.
So would I ha'done, by yonder sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.

MAÏCANESCU:

Once she had been indifferent and fickle, someone who enjoyed tempting by a word or gesture the boys who were in love with her, but without giving them anything. Then giving herself impulsively, for no reason, once and only once, as a reward, but also to inflame them even more rendering a passion she did not share even more cruel. She was sure they loved her.

She moves in and out of the circle of spectators. The other women begin to circulate among the spectators.

One of them had tried to commit suicide. When he was released from the hospital where they had taken him, she went to his place, stripped naked, and forbidding him to touch her, laid down on his couch.

She touches several spectators. Low sounds from the other women. LYMAN-COTTER continues to circulate speaking quietly.

Pale with pain and passion, silently he stared at her for two hours, petrified by the promise he had made. She never wanted to see him again. Some of them yielded to her and she would take them to some discreet hotel with its narrow hallways and paper-thin walls, while others, horrified, spurned her. What she took

WOMEN:	mistook—
MAÏCANESCU:	or mistook as desire was actually nothing more than the thirst for conquest, and neither her mauvais garçon exterior nor the fact that she had several lovers—if you could call them lovers—nor her hardness, nor even her
WOMEN:	wrists, ankles, limbs—
MAÏCANESCU:	courage was any help to her when she met René. In the space of one week she learned fear, but
WOMEN:	happiness—
MAÏCANESCU:	certainty, anguish but
WOMEN:	certainty—
MAÏCANESCU:	happiness! René threw himself at her like a pirate at his prisoner, and she reveled in her captivity, feeling on her
WOMEN:	wrists, ankles, limbs—
MAÏCANESCU:	wrists, her ankles, feeling on all her limbs and in the secret depths of her body and heart, bonds less visible than the finest strands of hair, more powerful than the cables the Lilliputians used to bind Gulliver, bonds her lover loosened or tightened with a glance. She was no longer free? Yes! Thank God, she was
WOMEN:	light—
MAÏCANESCU:	no longer free! but she was light, a nymph on clouds, a fish in water, lost in happiness. Lost because these fine
WOMEN:	wrists, ankles, limbs—
MAÏCANESCU:	strands of hair, these cables which René always held in his hands, were the only network through which the current of life any longer flowed into her.

As MAÏCANESCU sits on the chair, the other women hold their mouths open with their hands. Pause. LYMAN-COTTER rushing to one of the women, speaks in full voice.

LYMAN-COTTER: Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

Pause. Then she runs to another woman. To each she speaks a fragment.

WOMEN: How should I your—
true love—

LYMAN-COTTER: true love know from another one?
By his cockle hat and staff, and his sandal shoon.

Staying inside the circle, LYMAN-COTTER runs from spectator to spectator, addressing each "you" directly. The other women raise their right arms.

WOMEN: Pray you, mark. Pray you, mark.
Mark—

The women drop their arms. Slowly they move backwards until they are pressed against the chair, forming a tight protective circle around it. LYMAN-COTTER addresses each line or fragment to a different spectator.

LYMAN-COTTER: Say you? Nay, pray you, mark.
Pray you mark.
Well, God 'ild you!
They say the owl was a baker's daughter.
Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.
God be at your table!

The women rush away from the chair. Revealed sitting on it, MAÏCANESCU.

WOMEN: Pray you let's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it
means, say you this:
Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't.
I hope all will be well. We must be patient.
patient, patient—

The women drop to the floor, lay still, as if dead.

LYMAN-COTTER: I cannot choose but weep, to think they should
lay him in the cold ground.
My brother shall know of it!
And so I thank you for your good counsel.
Come, my coach.

The women rise.

WOMEN: Good night, ladies. Good night, sweet ladies—
sweet ladies—
LYMAN-COTTER: good night, good night.

Singing.

He is dead and gone, lady
 He is dead and gone;
 At his head a grass-green turf,
 MAÏCANESCU: The green grass—
 LYMAN-COTTER: At his heels a stone.

The women slowly extend their arms, bend, then rise; they repeat this movement several times.

MAÏCANESCU: turned black, day was no longer day; night no longer night, both merely
 infernal machines which alternately provided, as part of her torture, peri-
 ods of light and dark. Cool water made her nauseous. She felt as though
 she were a statue of ashes—bitter, useless, damned—like the salt statues
 of Gomorrah. For she was guilty.

*The women wheel and throw their hands to the floor. Through the rest of the scene, they twist
 and turn, gasp, rise, fall, then play dead.*

LYMAN-COTTER: O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward, that stole his master's
 daughter.
 MAÏCANESCU: Those who love God, and by Him are abandoned in the dark of night

LYMAN-COTTER *gives imaginary flowers to spectators.*

LYMAN-COTTER: There's rosemary—
 MAÏCANESCU: are guilty because they are abandoned.
 LYMAN-COTTER: that's for remembrance.
 MAÏCANESCU: They look back into their memories,
 LYMAN-COTTER: Pray, love, remember
 MAÏCANESCU: searching for their things.
 LYMAN-COTTER: and there is pansies.
 MAÏCANESCU: She looked back, hunting for hers.
 LYMAN-COTTER: that's for thoughts.
 MAÏCANESCU: All she found were insignificant acts of kindness or self-indulgence
 LYMAN-COTTER: There's fennel for you
 MAÏCANESCU: which were not so much acts as innate parts of her personality

*All the women rise and run toward the spectators, then back again. They fall to the floor as if
 dead. Throughout the next lines, the women rise, run toward the spectators gasp, fall.*

LYMAN-COTTER: and columbines.
 MAÏCANESCU: such as arousing the desires of men other than René.
 LYMAN-COTTER: There's rue for you;
 MAÏCANESCU: Men she noticed only to the degree that the love he gave her,

LYMAN-COTTER: and here's some for me.
MAÎCANESCU: the certainty of belonging to him, made her happy and filled her cup of
happiness to overflowing
LYMAN-COTTER: We may call it herb grace o'Sundays.

*The women gasp, jump to their feet, and pry their own mouths open with their hands. But no
sound comes out.*

MAÎCANESCU: And insofar as her total submission to him rendered her vulnerable,
irresponsible, and all her trifling acts—
LYMAN-COTTER: O, you must wear your rue with a difference.
MAÎCANESCU: but what acts?
LYMAN-COTTER: There's a daisy.

The women run and turn frantically in tight circles.

MAÎCANESCU: For all she could reproach herself with were her thoughts and fleet-
ing temptations. Yet, he was certain that she was guilty and, without
really wanting to, he was punishing her for a sin he knew nothing about
because it remained completely internal, although Sir Stephen imme-
diately detected it: her wantonness.
LYMAN-COTTER: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died.
They say he made a good end.

The women bend, open their hands as if scooping dirt from the ground.

MAÎCANESCU:
O was happy that René had her whipped and had prostituted her, because her impassioned
submission would furnish her love with the proof that she belonged to him.

*One woman sitting on the chair, another standing behind it, rock the chair back and forth. A woman
on the floor thrusts her hips up and down simulating sexual intercourse.*

But also because the pain and shame of the lash, and the outrage inflicted upon her by those who
compelled her to feel pleasure when they took her, while at the same time delighting in their
own pleasure without paying the slightest heed to hers, seemed to her the absolute redemption
of her sins.

*As MAÎCANESCU speaks, under their breaths the women say "No." LYMAN-COTTER
moves among the spectators quietly saying:*

LYMAN-COTTER:
They bore him barefaced on the bier;
He non nonny, nonny, hey honny;

And in his grave rained many a tear.
 Fare you well, my dove!
 You must sing a down a down,
 And you call him a down a.
 For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.
 And will he not come again?
 And will he not come again?
 He never will come again.
 His beard was as white as snow.
 All flaxen was his poll.
 He is gone.

Then, exhausted, drained, the women weep.

MAÏCANESCU:

There were embraces she found foul, hands that were an intolerable insult on her breasts. Mouths which sucked on her lips and tongues like so many soft, vile, leeches. And tongues and sexes, viscous beasts which caressing themselves at her closed mouth at the double furrow before and behind, which she squeezed tight with all her might, stiffened her with disgust, and kept her stiffened so long that it was all the whip could do to unbend her.

The women lay on their backs, eyes open.

But finally she yielded to the blows and opened with disgust and abominable servility.

LYMAN-COTTER: And we cast away moan.
 MAÏCANESCU: But what if, despite all that, Sir Stephen was right?
 LYMAN-COTTER: God ha' mercy on his soul.
 MAÏCANESCU: What if she actually enjoyed her debasement?

The women lay on the floor, as if dead.

LYMAN-COTTER: And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi'ye.

LYMAN-COTTER *exits through the spectators. A long moment of silence. Then KRODMAN rises to sitting.*

KRODMAN: Well, that was heavy.

The women sit up. A stage manager gives KRODMAN a hand-held microphone.

WOMEN: So, now it's time for something completely different.
 Yes! Yes!

The women get up swiftly. They and MAÏCANESCU exit through the audience.

8

KRODMAN:

We would like to invite you to our next round of dispersed imagining. Some of you may be asking, Are these just male fantasies? Well, Anne Desclos, writer of *Story of O*, said about the fantasies in her book that they were all honest, whether female or male she couldn't say. And neither can we about our own. But! Before we let you explore our dispersed imaginings, you're going to have to pass a little test.

Amusement park music, brightly colored flashing lights. Standing on the high-backed chair, KRODMAN takes on the manner and voice of a carnival barker. She turns as she speaks addressing both the entire audience and individual spectators.

Oh, yes. You, yes, you, and you, and you—each of you—are going to choose one of our imagination stations to step up to. You're going to choose one, and only one! And, folks, here they are.

She gets off the chair and goes to each of the three "imagination stations" set up on the stage. As KRODMAN gets to a station, bright lights come up on it.

Station One: "Shoot. Your. Waaad." You'll have the chance to spray one of our lovely performers—in her face.

BLAUVELT sticks her head into circle cut out of a brightly painted flat. Another performer demonstrates using an insecticide sprayer.

BLAUVELT: Don't hit my eyes!

KRODMAN: Station Two: "Choke O—phe—lia!" where you have the chance to see how many flowers you can stuff down the throat of our very hungry Ophelia!

LEISER-MOORE is bound to a board mounted on a brightly lit large disk. Suddenly, the board is tilted so her head is lower than her toes. Next to her mouth, a bowl of flowers.

LEISER-MOORE: Feed me! These false, delicious flowers!

KRODMAN pushes flowers into LEISER-MOORE's mouth.

KRODMAN: Yeah, she can take a lot, so give 'em to her.

And, finally, over in this corner we have Station Three: "Balthus's Photo Boudoir." Here you'll get your chance to have your photograph taken with one of Balthus's beautiful models.

Part of the Balthus room moved onstage: carpeted floor, a wood frame chair. SMALL is sitting on the chair, giggling and waving to spectators. LATTIMER attends to her.

SMALL: I look 14, but I'm only 12.

KRODMAN: We'll see how far on the internet that photo goes.

LATTIMER *hands KRODMAN a sheet of paper.*

KRODMAN: I passed?

LATTIMER *nods* "Yes."

I passed!

All the performers applaud and scream. KRODMAN displays the paper, which is a map showing the location of 11 second dispersal scenes and the dramaturgy room. The 12th scene is not on the map because it roams through the theatre.

When you pass our test, you will receive one of these. It's a map that explains where to find our next round of dispersed imaginings. But if you fail—or worse—if you choose not to play, then, you will be banished to dramaturgy exile under the strict discipline of our dramaturg.

KRODMAN *points to O'DELL who is costumed in a pink-and-black steel-boned corset and high-heeled boots. O'DELL raises her arm.*

And she is righteously rough, folks.

Now you're going to have one half-hour, 30 minutes, to explore this next round of *Imagining O*. So, gentlemen and ladies, step right up to one of these stations! I'll see you on the other side.

Spectators circulate among the three stations. They socialize with each other. They earn their second dispersal maps. A few do not. These are guided to the dramaturgy room where they look at the display assembled and explained by O'DELL.

9

The second dispersal not only has scenes but also soundscapes and film clips. The soundscapes are texts from Shakespeare's plays and Histoire d'O/Story of O selected by the performers, recorded, and broadcast from speakers mounted throughout the theatre. The film clips are of actions in the theatre and in New York City projected on the theatre's walls. The texts of the soundscapes are not reproduced here. For any new production, the artists should make their own.

As with the first dispersal, second dispersal scenes are devised by the performers with input from Schechner, Mosse, and Mitchell. The second dispersal lasts about 30 minutes with some scenes taking that entire time, some performed in a loop. Spectators visit as many dispersals as they wish, staying for as long as they wish. No one can see all of them in their entirety. Some dispersals are partly improvised and include

interactions with spectators. Some scenes are repeated as spectators come and go, some are performed only once. During the dispersal, the OWL roams the space, silently guiding spectators, or simply observing.

9.1

“Perfume Lost.” TAAFFE in a dressing room backstage. She is dressed in a pink slip. All around the room, bottles of perfume. Glass jewels on the dressing table. Flowers. Many notes stuck to a bulletin board. TAAFFE greets spectators in the hall, brings them into the dressing room.



FIGURE 1.2: “Perfume Lost,” Allison Taafe’s Second Dispersal. In a dressing room full of written notes and perfume bottles, Taafe recites from *Story of O*. Peak Performances, Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey, 2014. Photograph: Richard Schechner.

TAAFFE:

Come in here, come play with me! Let’s do it in a high Roman fashion and made death proud to take us.

A drink in her own hand, she offers one to a spectator.

I drink to thee. Where’s my mother?

Finally among the tubes of lipstick she had in the same drawer she found one of those kiss-proof lipsticks which she did not like to use because there were dry and hard to remove.

At Roissy O had learned to take her time: she perfumed herself three times, each time allowing the perfume to dry.

In the drawer of the dressing table she found some rouge.

I bought you a nylon nightgown, René said. You’ve never had one before.

She looked like some blissful girl who had drowned, she was so, so pale.
 René had given her an atomizer which released a heavy spray of perfume whose name she didn't know, which had the odor of dry wood, marshy plants, a slightly savage odor.
 O looked at her humbly thinking the only flowers she could offer her were magnolias because their thick lusterless petals slowly turn to blisters as they fade and wither, or else camellias because their waxen whiteness is sometimes infused with a pink glow.
 But O was afraid of making a fool of herself with melodramatic flowers. One day she bought a big bouquet of blue hyacinths whose odor is overwhelming, like that of tuberose: oily, cloying, clinging, exactly the kind of odor camellias ought to have but don't.
 The odor of earth and mud which is the odor of ancient prisons and, in old chateaux, of uninhabited dungeons.

As spectators leave.

Adieu, adieu. Farewell, God knows when we shall meet again.

Sometimes, spectators say goodbye to her.

9.2

"Dripping and Drawing." Naked and wet, LEISER-MOORE stands in the Green Room in front of the shower. Artificial flowers hang from the running shower.

LEISER-MOORE:

Come, you'll play with me sir
 I am fond of habits and rites.

LEISER-MOORE describes a surgery performed on her. Then she hands a tube of lipstick to a spectator, inviting the spectator to draw on her body the location of incisions.

Irons attached to the left lobe of the belly but coming about one-third of the way down the thigh.

When the spectator is finished drawing, LEISER-MOORE indicates a basket containing strips of paper on which are written: "Please read" or "Give to O who is facing you." The spectator either reads or gives to LEISER-MOORE who reads it aloud. After a strip of paper has been read, LEISER-MOORE attaches it to the shower wall with masking tape. These actions are repeated, spectator by spectator.

Marked "Please read":

SPECTATORS:

You will never close your lips completely, or cross your legs, or press your knees together.
 A full skirt.

A sturdy, long, stiff whalebone green satin bodice hooked at the front, crossed-laced tightly at the back, and gathered tightly at the waist.

A low-cut trapezoid-shaped neckline, running from the base of the neck to the tips of the breast.
 A skirt secured tightly with a belt leaving the buttocks free.
 Green mules.
 Marks on the thighs. Cuts swollen. Welts black.
 Collar and bracelets made of leather. Clasps like a padlock.
 Two bracelet rings fastened behind the back.
 On your third finger, an iron ring.
 An attitude of prayer.
 An ebonite shaft simulating an erect male member, inserted behind.
 Three small chains connected to a leather belt around the hips
 One little chain following the furrow of the buttocks.
 Two chains following the fold on either side of the belly's triangle.
 Irons attached to the left lobe of the belly cleft coming about one third of the way down the thigh.
 Brands burned into the smooth, rounded flesh on either side of the buttock's cleft.
 A dog's chain fastened to a ring worn in the loins, pulled up between the legs, across the buttocks,
 and wrapped around the waist.

Marked "Give to O who is facing you":

LEISER-MOORE:

A bodice, chains, my refuge of silence.
 The armor comfortable and to a certain extant restful.
 A repository of impurity, the sink mentioned in the bible.
 After eight days there is no longer any need for an instrument.
 Hands made to wear iron.
 I'll be an owl.
 I'll be taken on a leash. Naked and masked.
 An Egyptian statue.
 A captive put in a freak show.
 Caressed timidly, the way you do with an animal you want to tame.
 There is nothing real about this country, which night has turned into make-believe.
 So much sweetness mingled with the terror.
 Her body was drifting away.
 I love you.
 Quick quick good hands.

By the end of the scene, LEISER-MOORE's abdomen and right thigh are marked with lipstick.

9.3

"Roaming." Not on the map given to spectators. Moving freely around the theatre, SMALL imitates as precisely as she can the way spectators walk and gesture. She also whispers into their ears lines Ophelia speaks or sentences from Story of O. Below is a selection, because the lines change from performance to performance.

SMALL:

Don't send me away.

A three-sided mirror and a fourth mirror on the wall.

I shall th' effect of this good lesson keep

As watchman to my heart.

I think nothing, my lord.

I know very well you miss her.

You are naught, you are naught.

You're obedient beauty isn't so obedient when you're not around.

One hand under her shoulders and the other in the hollow of her belly.

I was the more deceived.

You are easy.

Larded all with sweet flowers.

You will do whatever chore is given to you.

I shall obey, my lord.

He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders

Of his affection to me.

The whip will only be administered to you between sunset and sunrise.

I want to be like you. I'll do anything you tell me.

He took me by the wrist and held me hard.

Then with his left hand he took hold of both her wrists and with his right slapped her repeatedly.

O, help him, you sweet heavens!

She found herself on her back, legs raised and bent back against her.

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

Who will pity those who wait?

Pray you, love, remember.

You kiss by th'book.

I'll mark the play.

9.4

"O's Grave." Outside the backdoor to the Green Room, BARR digs a grave. Her long white shirt and white underpants become increasingly earthy.

BARR:

I, I heard the owl scream. I, I don't understand, I don't understand, understand.

O woe is me, to have seen what I have seen! See what I see! I feel like I am lost in a dream that I have dreamt before. I'm sure the dream exists and I'm sure it will end, but I don't want it to end because I'm afraid I won't be able to bear it. But I also want it to end because I am afraid of not finding out how it will end.

She gets in the grave and digs. Then she pulls dirt down on herself from where she piled it at the grave's edge. As she buries herself, she speaks intermittently.

I have a faint cold fear that thrills through my veins, That almost freezes up the heat of life.

That hurts terribly.

She digs, then pulls more earth onto herself.

Bury, bury!

Is there no pity sitting in the clouds That sees into the bottom of my grief?

More urgent digging.

I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.

I don't understand. I wonder in my soul. The sea doesn't smell like the sea anymore.

What tongue shall soothe thy name?

More digging.

Then is it a sin to rush into the secret house of death? And make death proud to take us?

Pulls more dirt onto herself.

Bury, bury!

We must be patient. Take the last warmth of my lips.

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth.

More digging. She rolls in the grave and growls. With full strength, she pulls more earth on top of herself.

Sir, I will eat no meat, I'll not drink, sir.

I long to die! I'm not too young! I'm 15, almost 16!!

The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch, which hurts and is desired.

Oh. Oh. I feel like I am lost in a dream that I dreamt before. I'm sure the dream exists, and I am sure it will end. But I don't want it to end because I'm afraid.

More quietly.

I refuse to look further than every day's tomorrow and every tomorrow's tomorrow, I refuse to look beyond this week into the next and beyond next week into the one after that.

Exhausted, she crawls out of the grave. Sits at its edge.

I am fire and air, my other elements I give to baser life.

Then suddenly as the second dispersal ends, she gets up, shouting.

Go away! Go away! Go away! Go away! Go! Go!

9.5

"O, Ghost." OVERTON, stands in the first row of the theatre's balcony. She wears a very long white wedding gown draped over the rail, its skirt almost reaching the orchestra seating below. OVERTON partly speaks, partly sings the text. Projected on a screen in the upper corner of the balcony, a film of KRODMAN opening her mouth as wide as she can.

OVERTON:

You have to get past the pleasure stage, until you reach the stage of tears.

I shall obey, my lord.

One of the men plunged into her belly, forced his way, made her scream.

Her mouth was not to be spared.

He told her that he loved her. "I love you, darling sweetheart."

Only use the leather whip.

The whip, the whip.

They want to make her scream; they want to make lovely long, deep welts on her thigh.

I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Sweetness mingled with the terror in her. Her terror seemed itself so sweet.

How strange to not be able to touch one's own knees

The lips burned

The whipping left her so untroubled, so calm

Her heart beat wildly with terror.

9.6

"The Mouse's Trap." In a stairwell behind the stage, BLAUVELT invites spectators one at a time to perform with her by reading out loud scripts she has made by combining lines spoken by women in Shakespeare with passages from Story of O. BLAUVELT coaches each spectator. Only the first scene below records BLAUVELT's coaching, which varies from person to person. When they finish, she gives each a copy of the script they have performed.

SPECTATOR: All the mouths which had searched through her mouth, all the hands that had seized her breasts and her belly, all the members that had sunk into her, and who had so perfectly proven that she was prostituted had at the same time in a way sanctified her.

BLAUVELT: Thou art not holy to belie me so.

SPECTATOR: O had never understood but had ended up admitting, as an undeniable and important truth, the contradictory tangle of her emotions: she liked the idea of torture but when she was enduring it she would have betrayed the whole world to escape it, yet when it was over she was happy to have gone through with it, happier still if it had been more cruel and prolonged.

BLAUVELT: I am not mad, this hair I tear is mine. I am not mad, I would to heaven I were!

SPECTATOR: It is here, where you are so round and smooth, that I will imprint on you my initials, on both sides of where your loins split.

BLAUVELT: Would you?

BLAUVELT *gestures to the spectator:*
In my ear, right, here, in my ear.
SPECTATOR *whispers into her ear.*

BLAUVELT: Still better, and worse.

SPECTATOR, *very quietly:*
O, if I could.

BLAUVELT:
Say it to the world.

SPECTATOR, *louder:*
O, if I c o u l d !

BLAUVELT:
More!

SPECTATOR, *even louder:*
O, if I C O U L D !!

BLAUVELT:
Yell it!!

SPECTATOR, *at the top of his/her voice:*
O!! If I C O U L D !!!!

BLAUVELT *claps happily.*

BLAUVELT: Well done! Very well done! You are a good boy. Now you may mark the play.

Shouting after him.

Farewell!!

The next spectator joins BLAUVELT in the stairwell.

SPECTATOR: When she had been made ready, and powdered, eyelids lightly tinted pink, the mouth very red, the tips and the halos of the breasts darkened, the edges of the lips of the belly reddened, perfume heavily applied to the fur of her armpits and her pudenda, in the furrow between the thighs, in the furrow under the breasts, and in the heart of her palms, she was made to enter a room where a three-sided mirror and a fourth mirror on the wall allowed her to fully see herself.

BLAUVELT: Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have immortal longings in me.

SPECTATOR: You are here to serve your masters. During the day, you will do whatever chore is a given to you for the maintaining of the household such as sweeping the

floor, putting books away, arranging the flowers or waiting on tables. None more difficult than that. But you will always abandon what you are doing at the first word or gesture from whoever requires you for your only real function, to lend yourself. Your hands are not your own, nor your breasts, nor especially any of your orifices which we may rummage and sink into at will.

BLAUVELT: I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved.

SPECTATOR: What her lover wanted from her was simple: that she be constantly and immediately accessible.

BLAUVELT: Thou teachest like a fool.

SPECTATOR: I am fire and air!

BLAUVELT hands the spectator the script and bids him/her to leave. The next spectator joins

BLAUVELT in the stairwell.

SPECTATOR: What beast was't, then, that made you break this enterprise to me?

BLAUVELT: He had desired her earlier, now still he desires her. She sees him erect under the soft fabric of his gown.

SPECTATOR: When you durst do it, then you were a man. And to be more than what you were, you would be so much more the man.

BLAUVELT: He made her spread her thighs a bit.

SPECTATOR: What means this?

BLAUVELT: Then with his left hand he took hold of both her wrists and with his right slapped her repeatedly.

SPECTATOR: How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me. I would while it was smiling in my face have plucked my nipple from its boneless gums—

BLAUVELT: —You are merry, you are keen—

SPECTATOR: —and dashed the brains out.

BLAUVELT hands the spectator the script and bids her/him to leave. The next spectator joins

BLAUVELT in the stairwell.

BLAUVELT: You have some sick offence within your mind.

SPECTATOR: Lost in her fright, she felt the hand of Anne-Marie on her loins. Anne-Marie indicated where to apply the branding irons. She heard the whistle of a flame, and in complete silence, a window being closed. She did not have the strength to turn and look. A single abominable pain shot through her, she yelled and stiffened in the ropes that held her. She never knew who pierced the flesh of her bottom simultaneously with two red-hot irons, nor whose voice slowly counted to five, nor who gave the gesture to remove the irons.

BLAUVELT: And at thy feet I kneel, with tears of joy.

SPECTATOR: But what respite, what delight the iron ring which pierces the flesh and weighs one down forever, the mark which never will fade, the hand of a master who lays you down on a bed of rocks, the love of a master who know how to seize what he loves without pity.

BLAUVELT: Great reason that my noble lord be rated for sauciness.

SPECTATOR: Would she ever dare tell him that no pleasure, no joy, no imagining came close to the happiness she felt at the liberty with which he used her, at the idea that he knew there was no limit in the way that he could, on her body, seek his pleasure.

BLAUVELT: Good king, to be so mightily abused!

BLAUVELT *hands the spectator the script and bids him/her to leave.*

9.7

“Memory Beach.” In the narrow corridor between the sets of doors at the entrance to the theatre, LATTIMER, wearing several over-sized men’s white button-down shirts, sits in a bathtub full of sand. Tiny bottles and notes are buried, candles lit. A sign reads, “Leave a remembrance,” an instruction taken from Ophelia’s “My lord, I have remembrances of yours, that I have longed long to redeliver; I pray you, now receive them.” Next to the sign, pieces of paper and pens. LATTIMER reads each remembrance, shares a moment of non-verbal response, and then writes her response on a bit of sleeve torn from a shirt and ties it on the spectator’s wrist. Some read their personalized message immediately. Others maybe not until much later extending the performance. Some spectators’ remembrances are poetic, some deeply personal, many about death and love, and at least four have lipstick kisses on them.

In the background, from a speaker a recorded woman’s voice reads from Story of O. Only some of this text is printed here—the text may vary for each production.



FIGURE 1.3: “Memory Beach,” Caiti Lattimer’s Second Dispersal. Lattimer sits in a bathtub full of sand. On a wrist, Lattimer ties a response to a “remembrance.” Peak Performances, Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey, 2014. Photograph: Richard Schechner.

WOMAN's *voice*:

Oceans of pain and little by little, on unfeeling shores. Close to sleep or sleepwalking. She had no more leather necklaces or bracelets and she was alone. Her own soul's spectator. But never did she feel herself to be more totally dependent on a will that was not hers, more totally enslaved and more happy to be so. Was she weary? No. By virtue of being so often outraged, it seems like she should have gotten used to the outrage; by being so often caressed, to the caresses, if not to the whip by virtue of being whipped. A dire repletion of pain and sensuousness should have thrown her little by little on unfeeling shores, close to sleep or somnambulism. But on the contrary-

Samples of what spectators wrote:

I remember sex in a rainstorm in a sunflower field.
 The smell of a beach, now sweet and sad.
 Her eyes.
 I remember a time, not long ago, in a park in the dark. We left an article of clothing each.
 Kissing in the back of a minivan.
 I remember when summers were long and you were alive.
 I lost my virginity in a hotel room.
 The gods must be crazy with my father, just to hear his laugh.
 I remember my grandmother's wrists.
 I remember the first time I orgasmed I saw the color yellow.
 I remember crying—actually howling in a baseball court at night, with a bicycle and cat by my side. I cried for 48 minutes.
 Realizing I was really in love with having my nipples bitten.
 I remember her dragon eyes, six years ago, when I first walked into the room.
 Walking over the bridge with the boy I loved.
 Of three white clouds on the horizon over the sea at Bradley Beach, during the hurricane of 1938. AWE. FEAR. DELIGHT.

9.8

"The Peep House." The peep house is a miniature Globe Theatre set up in the lobby. It is called "peep" because small holes have been drilled into its walls where spectators can press an eye to see what's going on inside. Cameras installed in the peep house project the eyes of people peering in on screens deployed around the theatre. Looking in to the peep house, people see UZO, naked except for a pair of reading glasses, reading from Story of O. After she reads an instruction, she performs the action on herself.

UZO:
 Her eyelids lightly shadowed.
 Her lips very red.
 The tip and areole of her breasts pink.
 The edges of her lower lips rouged.
 Perfume on her furry armpits.
 Perfume on her pudenda.
 Perfume applied to the furrow between her thighs.

Perfume in the furrow beneath her breasts.
Perfume in the hollows of her hands.
She looked at herself in the mirror.
She started all over.

She repeats the action. Then:

Dark peony pink flowers at the tips of her breasts.
She tried in vain to make up the lips which the fleece of her loins concealed, but the rouge left no mark. Finally, among her tubes of lipstick, she found a kiss-proof lipstick which she did not like because it was too dry and too hard to remove. But down there, it worked.
She fixed her hair and freshened her face.
Finally, she sprayed on the perfume René had given her, a perfume whose name she didn't know, which carried the odor of wet wood marshy plants, a pungent, slightly savage odor.
On her skin the spray melted on the fur of the armpits and belly. It ran and formed tiny droplets.
Then she put on her white shirt.
She waited.

After completing the actions, UZO remains in the peep house until the end of the second dispersal.

9.9

"Chanteuse." On the stairway landing between the first and second floor of the theatre. MAÏCANESCU greets spectators, offers them wine, drinks with them, talks with them, and sings for them.

MAÏCANESCU:

Singing. En vérité, je finirai sans blasphème. Au secours! Ah! Fi! quelle honte!

Talking. O sentait que sa bouche était belle. O felt that her mouth was beautiful. Bouche. Mouth.

Singing. Tous les jeunes gens font ça, quand ils en viennent là. Avant de me chiffonner, dit-elle, Vous me promîtes de m'épouser. Si tu n'étais venue dans mont lit. C'est ce que j'aurais fait, parce beau soleil.

Talking. The mouths of all who had probed her mouth, the hands that had seized her breasts, her belly, all the members that had been thrust into her, had so perfectly provided the living proof she was indeed prostituted, and, somehow, in her prostitution she was consecrated.

Singing. Bonjour ! C'est la Saint-Valentin. Tous sont levés de grand matin. Me voici, vierge, à votre fenêtre, Pour être votre Valentine. Alors, il se leva et la porte lui ouvrit Et vierge elle y entra, Mais plus jamais vierge elle n'en sortit.

Talking. Would she ever dare tell him that no pleasure, no joy, no figment of her imagination could ever compete with the happiness she felt at the way he used her with such complete freedom, at the notion that he could do anything with her, that there was no limit, no restriction on how he searched for pleasure on her body?

O had never really understood, but finally had come to accept as an undeniable truth, this contrasting and yet constant jumble of her feelings: she loved the idea of torture, but while she was submitting to it she would have betrayed the entire world to escape it, and yet when it was over she was happy to have endured it, all the more happy the crueler and more prolonged it had been.

Lord, we know who we are, but know not what we may be. Que Dieu soit à votre table!

Singing. Il est mort et parti, Madame, il est mort et parti. A sa tête une motte de gazon vert, a ses talon une pierre. Son linceul blanc comme la neige des monts. Et tou garne de suaves fleur. Il est allé au tombeau sans recevoir les larmes de l'amour.

Talking. Merci. Adieu!

9.10

"Made Up for You." LYMAN-COTTER, *in a black slip, sometimes upright, sometimes crawling, dances up and down three flights of a backstage stairway. As she moves, she speaks, but not necessarily in this order.*

LYMAN-COTTER:

It was he who possessed and enjoyed her through those into whose hands she had been given. She bore her bonds cheerfully.

The chains and the silence, which should have bound her deep within herself, which should have smothered her, strangled her, on the contrary freed her from herself.

She lost herself in a delirious absence from herself which restored her to love and perhaps, brought her to the edge of death.

The corset which held her upright, the chains which maintained her in subjection, in the silence that was her sanctuary.

The wings, the most unnatural wings, which thou thyself hath given my woeful breast.

She had never felt so utterly subject to a foreign will, never so utterly a slave nor so happy to be one.

The bright day is done and we are for the dark.

Ah, for the dark.

O felt herself being weighed and hefted for the instrument she very well knew she was.

She dwelt joyfully in bondage.

Be not amazed, there's nothing hid from me.

She sank, lost in a delirious absence from herself which gave her into love and loving, and may perhaps have brought her close to death and dying.

Under those gazes she went to her doom.

But of all base passions, fear is the most accursed.

The more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite.

I charm you by my once commended beauty.

Consider it not so deeply.

She detested her own desire.

But to which her body was saying no.

The reality of the night and the reality of the day were the same reality.

She became what he wanted her to be, as smooth and as cool as a pebble in a brook.

The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch which hurts and is desired.

There was nothing left of her to cede, he had taken everything already, and made her perhaps close to death and dying.

To you I am bound for life.

She was the gift.

In complete glory, she revealed herself: she dwelt joyfully in bondage.

9.11

"Samois¹² Suite 309." Inside a backstage small room and shower, KRODMAN and SNAUWAERT interact with a maximum of five spectators at a time. KRODMAN comes out of the shower, her body and head wrapped in towels. SNAUWAERT, sitting casually on a chair, instructs KRODMAN precisely, move by move. KRODMAN takes her orders.

SNAUWAERT: Stop. Turn around. Stop. Kneel. Bend forward slowly. Speak.

KRODMAN: The first sixty pages fell out of me, they wrote themselves.

KRODMAN kneels very close to a spectator sitting in a chair.

SNAUWAERT: Stop. Put your hand on the chair, your right hand. Speak.

KRODMAN: Why was it like that? I don't know. Maybe because I had been dreaming. Or not dreaming, exactly, but. I wanted to show him what I had written.

SNAUWAERT: Stop. Turn around.

KRODMAN crawls, approaching another spectator on the other side of the room.

Give him a smile.

KRODMAN does.

Turn. Keep turning. Move faster. And take your position again.

KRODMAN turns, crawls across the room, approaches the first spectator again.

Now move your hand a little bit more up.

KRODMAN does, almost touching, or perhaps actually touching, the spectator's inner thigh.

And speak.

KRODMAN: Her lips were burning and her mouth was dry. All her saliva was gone. An anguish of both fear and desire choked her throat—

A phone rings. SNAUWAERT opens a desk drawer and silences the phone. Then, smiling, she opens the door to the room and gestures for the spectators to leave.

SNAUWAERT: You can go. Goodbye.

They do. If there is time, the scene repeats with five other spectators.

9.12

"Imaginings and Fantasies." AGAPE invites spectators one at a time into a small room behind the coat-check on the theatre's first floor.

AGAPE:

O come, come, and welcome!

Come, you'll play with me, sir/madam?

AGAPE blindfolds herself.

We all lie on sinful fantasy. On lust and luxury, on unchaste desires.

But not here my lord/my lady.

Here all riotous madness, all strange and terrible events are welcome!

And I, I nothing but to give thee my fantasy and to hear thy own.

Do you consent to share dangers with me sir/lady?

If you do, they'll be in our memories locked,

And only ourselves shall keep the key of it.

Will you like to look upon my eyes or just to deliver thy fruitful tidings in mine ears?

AGAPE removes blindfold or not accordingly. Spectator shares, either speaking or whispering to AGAPE.

So, I thank thee.

If the spectator refuses.

O, How I regret not to be able to whip you! Get thee gone! Farewell!

The scene repeats.

9.13

"The Dramaturgy Room." In an ample space at the end of the lobby, overseen by a large banner proclaiming "Dramaturgy," O'DELL, Imagining O's dramaturg, explains her research: the author of *Story of O*, *Shakespeare*, *Ophelia*, *East Coast Artists' creative process of workshop, devising, and rehearsals*. O'DELL presides over her rich repository of documents, drawings, material items, computer files, and photographs.

10

At the conclusion of the second dispersal, the performers in each of their spaces instruct the spectators to go to the peep house.

WOMEN: Go away! Go away! You must not stay here longer. Meet me at the peep house.

Once in the lobby, the OWL guides the spectators to the peep house. All the women performers enter the peep house. They chant repeatedly:

WOMEN:

Desolate, desolate, desolate, desolate, desolate—

Spectators peer through the peep-holes. LEISER-MOORE and MAÎCANESCU are in black suits. The other women wear white shirts. Shrouds. In chorus, most of the women perform a monologue made from the last lines of all the women in Shakespeare who die. In the background, a few women continue to chant: “desolate, desolate—”

Will I hence and die?

The last leave of thee takes my weeping eye.

Commend me to my kind lord.

Right glad I am he was not at this fray.

O, farewell!

Ah, beastly creature, the blot and enemy to our general name!

Drive you to break your necks or hang yourselves!

Desolate, desolate, desolate—

Why hast thou slain thy only daughter thus?

Here she lies, sir.

Confusion falls.

Nay, I will take thee too. Say, if I do?

The laws are mine not thine.

Who can arraign me for it?

I hope, in no place so unsanctified where such as thou mayst find him.

Two voices.

Bring me word what he doth say to thee.

All but a few, singing.

My blessing go with thee.

Gramercy on his soul and of all Christian souls, I pray God, God be wi' ye.

All but a few, speaking.

And no one else but the deliveréd Empress.

All but a few, singing.

My widow-comfort, and my sorrows' cure.

All but a few, speaking.

My nails are stronger than mine eyes.

“Desolate” stops. All, speaking.

My sickness grows upon me. Ay, ay.
O,O lay me by my mistress's side.

Give me my robe, put on my crown, I have immortal longings in me.

In a very high note.

Hang me up in chains. Lay me stark naked and let the water-flies bloooooow me into abhorring.
The drink, the drink, I am poison'd!

"Desolate" resumes in the background as all but a few, speaking.

Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

I'll never see 't.

This is thy sheath, there rust, and let me die.

So speaking as I speak, alas I die.

Farewell! Adieu!

Thy adversary's wife doth pray for thee.

Ask me not what I know.

What, should I stay?

"Desolate" stops. All, speaking.

As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle. I can no more.

The OWL opens the peep house door. LEISER-MOORE and MAÏCANESCU go directly to the river. The other women stand in a circle around the peep house. They chant repeatedly.

To bed, to bed, to bed. To bed, to bed, to bed—

Then the performers and the spectators, led by the OWL, leave the theatre. The women continue chanting "To bed, to bed, to bed." They proceed to an open air semi-circular theatre where the orchestra pit has been filled with water three-feet deep: the river with a bridge over the water near one end.

11

The women stand at the water's edge. LEISER-MOORE and MAÏCANESCU walk slowly on either side of the river behind the women. They ascend the bridge and meet at its center. LEISER-MOORE's recorded voice on a speaker recites Gertrude's "Willow" speech from Hamlet. The women around the river go very slowly from standing to bending toward the water's surface.

LEISER-MOORE:

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crowsflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds



FIGURE 1.4: Deborah Leiser-Moore and Simona Maicanescu on the bridge as the other women swim, frolic, and drown. Kneeling to the left, Madeline Barr. Leaping from the water, Calista Small. Peak Performances, Montclair State University, Montclair, New Jersey, 2014. Photograph: Marina Levitskaya.

Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
Which time she chaunted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element; but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

With shrieks of joy, all the women but one jump into the water. They splash, swim, cry out. Then they climb out, run around the edge, jump in again, and swim under the bridge. Happy sounds turn to terror and exhaustion. The women repeatedly jump in the water, swim under the bridge, come out, jump in again. On the bridge, LEISER-MOORE and MAICANESCU face each other silently, then turn, hold hands look at the women in the water. When a woman is too exhausted to swim, she leaves the river and goes to the theatre. Finally, one woman is left, floating face-down in the water. After some seconds, she gets out and goes to the theatre. One woman remains kneeling at the edge of the water, her hair touching its surface. Floating on the water, a single white shirt. MAICANESCU takes from her pocket a paperback of Histoire

d'O. *She reads, LEISER-MOORE translates.*

MAÏCANESCU: Dans un dernier chapitre—
 LEISER-MOORE: In a final chapter—
 MAÏCANESCU: qui a été supprimé,
 LEISER-MOORE: which has been suppressed,
 MAÏCANESCU: O retournait à Roissy,
 LEISER-MOORE: O returned to Roissy,
 MAÏCANESCU: où Sir Stephen l'abandonnait.
 LEISER-MOORE: where Sir Stephen abandoned her.
 MAÏCANESCU: Il existe une seconde fin à l'*Histoire d'O*.
 LEISER-MOORE: There exists a second ending to *Story of O*.
 MAÏCANESCU: C'est que,
 LEISER-MOORE: Which is,
 MAÏCANESCU: Se voyant sure le point d'être quittée par Sir Stephen,
 LEISER-MOORE: Seeing she was at the point of being left by Sir Stephen,
 MAÏCANESCU: elle préféra mourir.
 LEISER-MOORE: she prefers to die.
 MAÏCANESCU: Il y consentit.
 LEISER-MOORE: He consented.

LEISER-MOORE and MAÏCANESCU turn and stand back-to-back on the bridge. After a long time, they depart. So does the woman kneeling at the edge of the river.

Other women, some in their ordinary clothes, some in wet white shirts, move among the spectators at various places near the theatre. They hand out programs. They are half in and half out of character. Over and over, sometimes shouting, sometimes quietly:

WOMEN: To bed! To bed! To bed! What is done cannot be undone. To bed!
 To bed, to bed, to bed—

NOTES

1. "Io" is the name of the collective female main character of *The Prometheus Project* (this book) as well as a character in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. The coincidence though accidental is meaningful.
2. Pauline Réage is the *nom de plume* of Anne Desclos (1907–98). Desclos also used the name Dominique Aury. In this writing, I will use "Réage" because that is the name Desclos used as the author of *Histoire d'O*.
3. For *IO*, I and Marianne Mayer-Thibault translated from the French.
4. On December 22, 2018 Keats wrote his brothers George and Thomas: "it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."
5. I met Mosse when he enrolled in the NYU-Tisch School of the Arts MA program in Performance Studies, a department I co-founded. Before coming to NYU, Mosse earned a BS from Northwestern University and an MFA in directing from the Yale Drama School. Prior to *IO*, Mosse worked with

East Coast Artists (which I founded) on several productions, including as my assistant director for *YokastaS* (this book). Paul Allain introduced me to Roanna Mitchell who was teaching at Kent when I came there in 2011 as a Leverhulme Trust Fellow. Mitchell's strong choreography and her specialties in movement and psychophysical actor and dancer training harmonized well with what I needed for *IO*.

6. Jean Paulhan (1884–1968) was a well-known French intellectual, author, and editor. He edited the *Nouvelle Review Française* 1924–40 and again (in a new series) 1946–58.
7. Many of Réage's words in *IO* are taken or adapted from Jorre 1994.
8. Rasaboxes is a performer training exercise I devised in the early 1990s. It combines ideas from the Sanskrit *Natyashastra* (200 BCE–200 CE), Antonin Artaud, and how the enteric nervous system works. Rasaboxes continues to evolve. See Bowditch, Cole, and Minnick 2023.
9. Matt Bockelman made a film of the Peak Performances version *IO*. Ken Plas and Alessandra Skarlatos made a film of the Kent performance. A different short film shows a few scenes from the India iteration—I do not know who shot this film. I've worked extensively with Bockelman who has documented several of my productions: *Imagining O*, *YokastaS* (co-authored with Saviana Stanesco, this volume), and *Swimming to Spalding* (written and performed by Lian Amaris). Bockelman also filmed a three-week workshop I led in 2009.
10. A government agency charged with protecting and enhancing theatrical performances, especially traditional performances. There is a central Sangeet Natak Akademi in New Delhi and several state-level Akademis.
11. Flit, a popular insecticide from the late 1920s to the 1950s, was dispensed by a hand-pumped sprayer called a "flit gun." A flit gun looks like an erect penis and testicles.
12. Samois, the first lesbian bondage, discipline, sado-masochist (BDSM) organization in the US, existed in San Francisco from 1978 to 1983.

2

YokastaS, 2003, 2005

Introduction

YokastaS—co-authored with Romanian playwright Saviana Stanescu¹—went through two versions, both produced by East Coast Artists² and staged at La MaMa in New York. In 2003, *YokastaS*; in 2005, *YokastaS Redux*. The 2005 version, published here, is titled *YokastaS*. The 2005 version is shorter and includes the Understudy character. In 2003, the production ended with all the Yokastas dancing with Oedipus; in 2005, the performance ends with the actors sitting around a table talking with each other and spectators.

Women. So many of the plays I've written, adapted, or directed center on women.³ *YokastaS* has only one male performer. He plays Oedipus, Laius, and Media. The other five roles are performed by women. My tilt toward women goes back to my childhood where females were scarce. Except for my mother, my family home was populated by my three brothers, my father, and my mother's father. My cousins were mostly male. I had no girl playmates. Females were the fascinating unknown. What secrets to life did they keep? How could I learn what they knew? I remember being bathed when I was about three or four, maybe younger, by "Mary," a young woman who helped my mother. No details, but a wet warmth, erotic even, at least as a memory. Yono — the "perfect Yokasta" — tells how she drowned her children in the bathtub. Later she starts to make love to Oedipus as she bathes him just after he kills Laius.

There are less intimate reasons for wanting to make a play about the mother-wife of Oedipus. The ancient Greek playwrights, whom I admire, wrote many great plays about women: *The Oresteia*, *Medea*, *Antigone*, *Lysistrata*, *Phaedra*, *The Trojan Women*, *Assemblywomen*, *Electra*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *The Suppliants*, the *Iphigenia* plays — but no play centered on Yokasta.⁴ I wanted to rectify that, but in my own way, with irony and multiple points of view. I needed to situate Yokasta not "back then" where she had no future after her fated relationship, but "now" in the world of media, offering multiple identities and possibilities.

Stanescu and I imagined Yokasta the little girl, the new mother, the unhappy wife, the widow, the contented mother and wife, the dominant queen, the mythic figure, the talk show guest, the postmodern person. We explored Yokasta's marriages to Laius and Oedipus. We showed that Laius was much older than Yokasta but Oedipus was young enough — to be her son. How did she view herself? What kind of child was she? What was her relationship with Laius both before and after the birth of Oedipus? What kind of queen was she when Oedipus was king? What if she lived past the Oedipus years? What if instead of being totally screwed by fate, Yokasta were a fully realized complex person able to make her own decisions?

I've long thought that Yokasta must realize that the young man who appears in Thebes the day King Laius is killed is her son. That man is the age of her abandoned son, with scars on his ankles so noticeable that his name is "Oedipus," "swollen foot." Surely, Yokasta remembers

binding her newborn's feet? I surmised Yokasta's age when Oedipus was born as 18. In *YokastaS*, after being forced to abandon her first born son, Yokasta continues to have sex with Laius, unloving and sado-masochistic. She births more children, all boys—that determined Oracle—and murders each at birth. Bitter, unhappy, and childless when Oedipus re-enters her life, Yokasta is 36. Not old by today's standards, but well on in ancient Greece. Yokasta wastes no time marrying a man young enough to be her son. For his part, Oedipus happily accepts the wife and city awarded him. Then, in quick succession, making up what was lost, Yokasta mothers four children: sons Polynikes and Eteokles and daughters Ismene and Antigone. In *YokastaS*, she is pregnant again.

In order to show all that, and more, we needed multiple Yokastas. We decided on four: Yoyo the twelve-year-old, Yoko the young woman who births Oedipus and endures a bitter marriage, Yono the one who welcomes Oedipus back to Thebes, co-ruling with him, and Yokasta the mature person who reflects on it all. It was this multiplicity that led to the title, *YokastaS*, with the capital pluralizing “S.”

***YokastaS* 2003**

Production

Director and set	Richard Schechner
Assistant director, dramaturg, choreographer	Kilbane Porter
Lighting	E. D. Intemann
Costumes	Oana Botez
Stage manager, musical director	Meg Leary
Photographer, graphic designer	Olivier Massot
Assistant stage manager	Elizabeth Pink
Publicity	Theresa Smalec
Anthropologist observer	Regina Müller
Managing director ECA	Jeremy Allen Thompson

Performers

Yokasta	Tracey Huffman
Media, Laius, Oedipus	Christopher Logan Healy
Yoko	Suzi Takahashi
Yoyo	Kilbane Porter
Yono	Rachel Bowditch

How did Stanescu and I work together? The overall concept is mine. I wrote the final drafts of most of the scenes and the first drafts of some. Stanescu wrote “Blind Date” (scene 4) for another play, modifying it for *YokastaS*. “Tragedy’s Baddest Mamas” (scene 7) is driven by material I took verbatim or adapted as specified in notes to the text. I will have more to say about this scene later. As the performers and I workshopped and rehearsed with a plethora of materials, Stanescu and I honed the text. In 2022, I asked Stanescu to share her experience as co-author.

Yes, I remember the process of writing *YokastaS* very well—it was my very first play in English :)

I remember attending the rehearsals, observing your work with the actors, going home, doing more research, and writing first drafts of scenes, some based on improvisations. I would send them to you, and you would edit them, and/or we would edit scenes in rehearsals too.

I was doing lots of Google research for *Yokasta* (it was a vacuum cleaner, an action figure, not only the Greek character :), and I remember coming across some joke/anecdote about the “baddest mama” that I connected with the improvisations you conducted in rehearsals and wrote the first draft/sketch of that scene. I think you brought the Andrea Yates⁵ story and you wrote a first draft of the bathtub scene. I don’t remember myself writing that one. One thing that I really loved is that in previews you asked me to write a monologue for Sarah [Kozinn], the Understudy, and I put together a monologue from the lines of all the *YokastaS*.

The workshops and rehearsals of the 2003 iteration were observed by Regina Polo Müller, a Brazilian anthropologist. Müller published a detailed account of the process in Portuguese (Müller 2005). She also wrote in English an unpublished essay in which she said:

In some cases, the development of characters was based on diverse personal expressive experiences—of professionals and amateurs, of dancers and actors. At the same time, the physical training and improvisations offered a common experience, “*communitas*,” for creation (workshops), preparations (rehearsals) and staging. [...] This process results in a “work in progress” presented before an audience. The experience with the audience is incorporated and rewritten into the script and production of the play. [...] In creating and producing *YokastaS*, one is certainly aware of an emphasis upon bodily action, however in this case, the script plays the major structuring role. That is, the place where one perceives specific aesthetic solutions resulting from confrontation or dialogue in the various discursive practices. In other words, the literary theme is developed by the authors in confrontation and/or dialogue with expressive dimensions of the body in action, feeding the creation and development of characters and their interpretation. By this means, material is offered for re-writing and creating the script in conjunction with the performers (ms 5–7).

And:

The emphasis on body action [...] gave way to the script as a framing device for the process. Contradicting the expectations of both the audience and the actors, the script and the staging under this kind of direction became the foundation of the project. The original expectation was that there would be a series of workshops, with the actors participating as co-authors, with an emphasis on body action and audience intervention in the performance space. [...]

Biographic elements in Schechner’s work with a focus on feminist and didactical issues, pushing for a critical and active position from the audience, already seen in his previous productions, would explain both the theme choice and the fact of his sharing the creation process with a young female Romanian writer and with amateur as well as experienced actors. The main novelty was the importance of the text, especially as pertains to the open-ended and multiple quality of its structure (ms 39–41).

In production, *YokastaS* uses live performance, film, music, and dance to explore its themes. The “wrighting” in workshops and the responses of, and interactions with, spectators yielded

a piece of “writing” different from an orthodox play. Indeed, the script was formed during an intense process where actors, film-makers, designers, playwrights, and the director strove to find out who *Yokasta* is as a woman, a queen, a wife, a mother, a mythic figure, and a person of the twenty-first century.

At the end of *YokastaS*, the Understudy speaks—as the understudy. Usually an understudy enters a performance only if a role-playing performer is unavailable. But here the understudy is a character in her own right. Like the *Yokastas*, the under-represented understudy takes center stage as herself. Here is how Sarah Kozinn, who played the Understudy, recalls her experience (2022):

When I think back on the experience of *YokastaS*, my dominant memory is of somehow working my way into the play. I was taking a course with you [Schechner] at NYU, I believe Theories of Directing, and you mentioned that Jennifer Lim [Yoyo] was working on another project and you needed someone to stand in for her while she was away. I jumped at the opportunity because in my few years working as an actor in regional theatre and trying to cut my teeth in NYC, I knew well that sometimes the best way to get on the stage was through a side door. When Jennifer came back, you and Saviana [Stanescu] decided to let me stay on as an understudy, which soon became the role of “Understudy,” the hungry actor/*Yokasta* waiting not-so-silently in the wings, ready to take the place of any *Yokasta* that got sick or had to miss a performance. I remember thinking that this felt so correct for the show itself, the idea of these multitudes of *Yokastas* through time, and also for the way the play was informed by the actors playing all the *Yokastas* in this iteration. Me—as Sarah—became a factor in the story, and although the me that is me would never have stopped the show in its final moments to steal the spotlight, Saviana wrote that final scene as if my *Id* was in charge. The heart of this *Yokasta* “Understudy” was yearning to be seen, and she got it in the end—even if it was while the audience was getting up to go.

Long before speaking, the Understudy unobtrusively mimes the actions of the *Yokastas* and very quietly speaks their lines. She really is an understudy.

YokastaS first act ends by bringing Medea, Phaedra, and *Yokasta* together on a Jerry Springer-type show⁶ arguing the question, “Who is tragedy’s baddest mama?” (scene 7). Medea and Phaedra declaim a few of their famous lines, some in Greek, most in English—always marking them with “Quote” and “Unquote.” Then the two women physically attack each other. *Yokasta* interrupts the violent farce by reciting how she birthed Oedipus as described in *Seneca’s Oedipus* by Ted Hughes, a play I directed in 1977 with The Performance Group. Then Yono, quietly, almost solemnly, tells how she drowned all her children in a bathtub. Her account is adapted from Andrea Yates’s confession (see note 5). This ends the first half of *YokastaS*.

The second half starts with the return of Oedipus to Thebes the day he slays Laius. As shown in slides that fill the entire back wall of the stage, Yono bathes and cleanses the muddy, bruised Oedipus fresh from his deadly encounter with Laius. Oedipus sinks into the hot bath. Finally, Yono submerges him entirely, not to drown him but to make love with him.⁷ The voices are of *Yokasta* and Oedipus, the images are of Oedipus and Yono, while downstage center, sitting on stools, their feet in large bowls of water, Yoko and Yoyo wash their own feet as they discuss what is happening. Very intentionally, all four *YokastaS* are integral to this scene.

In the next scene, *Yokasta* and Yoko teach the young Oedipus how to be king. Yoyo looks on and comments. Then come “The Good Years” (scene 10), the co-reign of Oedipus and Yono,

his older, wiser queen. This long period is never dramatized. “The Good Years” are recounted in a talk show interview, as at the start of *YokastaS*, but here Media interviews Yono. I first used the talk show format in *Faust/gastronome* (this volume), twenty years before *YokastaS*. I used a televised trial—something close in effect to a talk show—even earlier in 1958 with *Briseis and the Sergeant* (this volume). I like these formats because they convey a lot of information while being entertaining. On the talk show, Yono placidly recounts her pleasant life as queen of Thebes sharing royal authority with Oedipus. She is visibly pregnant, she is always pregnant, making up for lost time. It’s no accident that at the end of the “baddest mama” scene concluding the first part of *YokastaS*, it is Yono who describes drowning her children. Those awful years were with Laius. With Oedipus, things are different. When Yono lifts the infant she’s nursing from her breast, we see it is a big foot, a literal Oedipus. The suckling foot is an embodiment of Yono’s knowing without knowing that the father of her children is her first-born. “The Good Years” depend on repression.

The next scene starts with a compressed telling of the Sophoclean catastrophe: the plague, the investigation, the discovery, Oedipus punishing himself. As Yoyo says, “A funny, hilarious, ridiculous story.” So what’s to do? Yoyo invites Oedipus to waltz with her. After the dance, Yoko and Yono say in unison, “There is no road away from it.” Yoyo rejects their fatalism. She proclaims that she will make Thebes perfect. But the other Yokastas have had enough. They want out of the drama. They change from their costumes into street clothes and sit at a snack-laden table sharing photos from rehearsals and previous performances. Just as it seems the performance will slide into the everyday, the Understudy makes a move, claiming her Warholian minutes of fame. But then she, too, joins the other performers at the table where they eat, take selfies, look at photos, and talk. The production concludes with the performers-as-themselves inviting the spectators to join them on stage. The life-of-the-stage merges with the lives of everyone in the theatre.

YokastaS uses postmodern dramaturgical techniques to explore a classical figure who has been mostly ignored. Why ignored when her story is potentially so powerful? Because deep down, everyone suspects Yokasta knows exactly who the bloodied youth is who comes to her door the day Laius is killed. Therefore, her subsequent behavior is not fit for drama. The gaze fixes on Oedipus, the “innocent” one. *YokastaS* was made to refocus the gaze.

For all this, I did not want *YokastaS* to be tragic, or even heavy, except occasionally such as Yono’s account of drowning her children. The play wonders if, after Oedipus, Yokasta had other children with Laius? If so, were they murdered? Bringing in the Yates confession implies that “perfect” Yono refuses any children by Laius; she waits for the return of her son. Despite such underlying themes, laughter and irony mark the text and the production. The emphasis on the plural opens the narrative to multiple possibilities. There is no one answer or story. Even what *YokastaS* offers is only several of so many possibilities. Each Yokasta has her own take on events. The 12-year-old will do it all differently; the very angry young woman trapped in a loveless marriage and cheated by an Oracle she does not believe in lives in rage; the blissful queen, wife, and mother turns a blind eye to the obvious so that she can enjoy what fate has brought her; and the intelligent mature woman balances irony, nostalgia, and grit as she recollects her extraordinary eventful life.

YokastaS 2005**Production**

Director and set	Richard Schechner
Assistant director	Benjamin Mosse
Costumes	Oana Botez
Lighting	Lucretia Briceno
Soundscapes	Allen Willner
Sound operator	Audrey Donohue
Photographer	Ryan Jensen
Graphic designer	Chris Mosier
Stage manager	Zhen Heinemann
Publicity	Mara Richards
Associate artistic director ECA	Michele Minnick
General manager ECA	Christine Witmer

Performers

Yokasta	Daphne Gaines
Oedipus, Media, Laius	Christopher Logan Healy
Yoko	Phyllis Johnson
Yono	Rachel Bowditch
Yoyo	Jennifer Lim
Understudy	Sarah Kozinn

Prior to the start of the performance, the stage manager or soundscapist says:

We know how important your links to the outside world are. So please feel free to leave your cell phones on. Answer them if they ring. Enjoy your conversations. We don't want to be responsible for disconnecting you. Just in case you think we're being ironic, we're not. Let freedom ring. Thank you, and enjoy the performance.

Actors and techies leave their cells on, too. If a cell phone rings, everything on stage stops. Action resumes after the phone conversation is over; or when the ringing stops. If someone takes a photo, the actors stop whatever they are doing and strike a pose.

1 Media

A table with two chairs. On the table, two microphones. MEDIA interviews YOKASTA.

MEDIA: So, let's start with the beginning.
 YOKASTA: The very beginning?
 MEDIA: Yes, when everything began. When did everything begin?
 YOKASTA: What do you mean?

MEDIA: How did you find out about the prophecy? The one that made you famous.
 YOKASTA: I got a letter from Zeus.
 MEDIA: What did Zeus say?
 YOKASTA: Do you want to hear it?
 MEDIA: I most certainly do.
 YOKASTA: I was very young when the letter arrived.

Opens a letter and reads.

Quote. "Dear Yokasta, You're such a sweet and nice girl. You still believe in me. I myself have taken a fancy to you" He's really so affectionate for a god! "But it's been a while since I took a mortal woman by assuming the guise of a bull or a swan. In fact, I am a bit perplexed about what the best shape would be for me to appear on earth nowadays."

MEDIA: Please, could you skip this part and go straight to the prophecy?
 YOKASTA: Okay.

Scanning down the letter.

Let me see. Oh, here it is. Quote. "Yokasta, sweetheart, I've got some bad news and some good news. The bad news is, you will abandon your own son the night he is born."
 MEDIA: Yes, we all know that.
 YOKASTA: Zeus writes, "But I will send him back to you, and you will fuck him."
 MEDIA: Please, the FCC is listening.
 YOKASTA: "You're going to sleep with your own son for 14 years, that's 5,113 times." Unquote.
 MEDIA: And the good news?
 YOKASTA: That is the good news. I usually don't discuss my private life in public. I was a queen after all. But I'm pretty comfortable talking about it now, after all this time.
 MEDIA: I understand. So, Yokasta, in light of what happened to you what do you make of Sigmund Freud's statement in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, and I quote, "It is the fate of all of us to direct our first sexual impulses towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father,"⁸ unquote.
 YOKASTA: Well, that's sure the way it was in my family!
 MEDIA: And here's what Dr. Freud writes about you. Quote, "King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and married his mother Yokasta, merely shows us the fulfillment of our own childhood wishes."⁹ Unquote.
 YOKASTA: That's not about me. That's about Oedipus and Laius. I'm here to set the record straight. Those feelings we have for our boys, they're natural, something that all mothers feel. Even women who aren't mothers ...
 MEDIA: Let's move on. When you married Laius. Were you in love?
 YOKASTA: It was an arranged marriage. I think I respected him a lot. He was much older than I was.

MEDIA: How was your sex life with him?
YOKASTA: Nothing compared to what I had with Oedipus.
MEDIA: So you don't regret having an intimate relationship with your son?
YOKASTA: Intimate is hardly the word for it.
MEDIA: Do you ever feel sad, depressed, suicidal?
YOKASTA: Never. He was more than just a son. He was a gift from Zeus. Being with him was, well, it's not really describable.
MEDIA: I see. And what about the report that you did all you could to keep Oedipus from finding out who he really was, and when he did, you committed suicide?
YOKASTA: Well I'm here, am I not?
MEDIA: Yes, you are.
YOKASTA: So I obviously didn't hang myself or stick a knife up my vagina. That's what those rats Sophocles and Seneca wrote. And people eat it up. They love violence, a sensational ending. Not that my life's been a bed of roses.
MEDIA: Could you talk about that a little?
YOKASTA: Listen, it really burns me up that nobody questions the fact that Oedipus got away scot-free.
MEDIA: He blinded himself, didn't he?
YOKASTA: Oh sure. He wears very dark sunglasses whenever he appears in public.
MEDIA: You sound very angry with him.
YOKASTA: Well at present we are, uh, separated. To tell the truth, I don't like the fact that he gets all the attention. Who ever puts herself in my shoes?

All the YOKASTAS laugh. An awkward pause.

MEDIA: There's a PS to Zeus's letter. Do you want to hear it?
YOKASTA: We certainly do.
YOKASTA: Quote. "Look for a boy with a swollen foot. That boy is my gift to you. Listen to his swollen foot. It will tell you stories. That foot is the true king of Thebes. Forever, Z." Unquote. The Z stands for Zeus.

2 Affidavit

YOKASTA forward to the front of the stage where she is joined by YOKO and YOYO. YONO slowly approaches them.

YOKASTA: You think I'm your toy literary, theatrical, seminal.
YOKO: You think you can keep fucking me over?
YOKASTA: Who even sees me? I live offstage And enter only to deliver dire warnings.
YOKO: Fucked by Laius the Lane, fucked by Oedipus the Swollen Foot, fucked by fate just for the hell of it.
YOYO: I'm gonna change all that!
YOKASTA: The next thing you know They make me retire ob-skene, obscenely offstage to hang myself.

YOYO: Hey, that's not me!
 YOKASTA: Not by a long shot.
 YOKO: This fucked over one, the Yokasta you know—
 YOKASTA: Is not the Yokasta who arranged for Oedipus to survive. Who hid silently behind the Sphinx. Who took in the young stranger—
 YOKO: And taught him how to be a king.
 YONO: Who brought forth Four children: Polynikes and Eteokles, Ismene and Antigone.
 YOKASTA: And Oedipus.
 YOKO: And Oedipus, him too.
 YONO: My eldest.
 YOKASTA: Against all odds.
 YONO: Perfect.
 YOKASTA: All of them.
 YONO: Perfect.
 YOKASTA: Not a defect.
 Perfect bodies, minds.

YOKASTA *and* YONO:
 Perfect.

YOKO: What are you saying, perfect!? Oedipus was abandoned, Eteokles and Polynikes went to war against each other and killed each other.
 YOYO: I know what happened next! They walled Antigone up in a cave where she said, quote, "No marriage bed, no marriage-song for me" unquote. She was so sad she hung herself.

Strangling sound.

Arrrghhh!
 YOKO: And who the fuck knows where Ismene went, who she married, or anything about her?
 YOKASTA: None of that is my fault. Blame Fate, Destiny, Zeus, my cursed family tree, whatever. But don't blame me. I did what I could to stop all the bad from happening. It just happened anyway. Finally, it doesn't matter. We are all made equal by time.
 YOYO: Hey! What do you mean, "equal"? You don't treat me as an equal. You're always hiding things from me.
 YOKASTA: You're not old enough to understand what's going on.
 YOYO: I am too. You'll see.

YOKO, *to the audience*:
 We don't always get along with each other. We're a little like sisters.

YOYO: Hello! I am not your sister!
 YOKASTA: She's Yoyo, the youngest me.

YOKO, *to* YOYO:

You don't know shit but you think you know everything.

YOYO: I'm not a goody-good like some Yokastas I know.

YONO: Are you talking about me?

YOYO: I'm not telling.

YONO: You better not be!

YOKASTA: That's Yono. She's in a state of perpetual bliss. And that's Yoko, the middle me. She's got a big chip on her shoulder.

YOKO: I heard that. So would you, if Laius was always breathing in your face.

YOYO: You mean old King Gimp?

YOKO: None other.

YOKASTA: My first husband.

YOKO: I was only 15 when they gave me to him. The next thing I knew I was pregnant. And then— Here, help me with this.

3 Giving Away the Baby

The baby Oedipus is in YOKO's arms.

YOKASTA:

Dream, little son, dream of sunny meadows, apple trees, and buzzing bees. Dream of green flying things with bright golden wings, the swift dragonflies of spring, how brief their lives are, but happy!

Singing.

Aya-papaya, my little bird sleeps,
aya-papaya, while an angel keeps,
aya-papaya, the cold night away
the cold night away.

LAIUS: I've arranged for the shepherd to get rid of the body. He's waiting at the door, Yoko.

YOKO: Let him wait. He's a shepherd.

LAIUS: Just wring its neck and be done with it.

YOKO: Not on your life. He's mine!

YOKASTA: And say "he." He's not an "it."

LAIUS: We can't keep the shepherd waiting. People will start asking questions.

YOKO: Oh, right. You're so fucking afraid of questions.

LAIUS: Don't you think this is hard for me, too? The quicker we finish the job, the better.

YOKO: When they married me to you, I didn't have the slightest idea who you really were. "King Laius," that's all I knew. And who was I?

YOKASTA: A pretty girl the king wanted.

YOKO: A pretty girl who wasn't ready to get pregnant.
 LAIUS: Listen to me. I want a son, an heir, someone to succeed me. But this—this—is a curse for you and me both. How could I know what the Oracle would say? All I was seeking when I went to Delphi was a future for my son.
 YOKASTA: Then let him have his future!
 LAIUS: Are you crazy? This baby means death to me and something even worse for you. If there were any other way—
 YOKO: I gave birth in this room by myself. I can hide him. Nobody will find out about him.
 LAIUS: How can you hide a baby in this palace? A baby!
 YOYO: Of course we can hide him!
 LAIUS: A baby cries, screams, shits, eats. Grows up.
 YOKO: So your big plan is to murder him?
 YOYO: I can hide him in the closet for you, Yoko! Or bury him in the garden!
 LAIUS: Don't you see? I'm saving him from the horror that's coming his way. I'm giving him oblivion instead of pain. Eternity instead of being alive. It will be as if he had never been born.
 YOKO: You wouldn't talk like that if your Oracle of Delphi had shut her hole.
 LAIUS: The Pythia spoke and Laius must listen.
 YOKASTA: To you he's just a carcass, a hunk of mutton. Where are your feelings for him? Isn't your blood whispering inside you: "This is my son!"?
 LAIUS: My blood is shouting: "This is the one who's going to take your life and your wife." Wouldn't you say that is the definition of a foe?
 YOKO: If the Oracle is right!
 YOYO: Why can't an Oracle be wrong?
 LAIUS: The Oracle is always right.
 YOKO: Leave me alone with him.
 YOYO: No, Yoko, you don't have to do it!
 YOKO: I'll do what you require, but I don't need your help. I brought him into this world and I will send him out of it.
 LAIUS: Tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, you'll know we did the right thing.
 YOKO: Tomorrow or the day after?

LAIUS exits. YOKASTAS dance with loud music, strong movement, passing the baby among them. Then, to YOKASTA.

YOYO: Say goodbye to him.
 Please! Let me hide him!

YOKASTA, with YONO humming behind:

You'll be all right, my baby. This world is not the place for a perfect creature like you. You're my tiny Zeus. She's sending you back to where you belong. This earth, this rotten lump of mud, is cursed. Don't hate me, please, please don't. I carried you in the garden of my body and you came out as quick as sunlight.



FIGURE 2.1: The Understudy holds the baby, as all the Yokastas dance. From the left, Yokasta/Daphne Gaines, Yoyo/Jennifer Lim, Understudy/Sarah Kozinn, Yoko/Phyllis Johnson, Yono/Rachel Bowditch. La MaMa, New York, 2005. Photograph: Richard Schechner.

YOKO begins to bind the baby's feet.

YOKO:

Hold still, you little warrior. This isn't his night for sleeping. I wonder what he's feeling? He's trying to kick the air with his funny little legs. Does the wire hurt? Is it cutting your foot? I'm sorry. The wolves will come quickly. They won't let you spend too much time in the cold.

YOKO hands the baby to YOKASTA.

YOKASTA *and* YOKO:

Aya-papaya, don't kick me so hard.

Aya-papaya, the wolf's in the yard.

Aya-papaya. good night, good night.

YOKO: I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

YOKASTA: Don't be frightened, I am with you till the end of days.

YOKASTAS dance to loud music, strong movement.

YOYO: You didn't even give him a name!
 YOKASTA: Do you want a name, my sleeping beauty? No name is good enough for you!
 No name can express how perfect you are! Names don't deserve you.
 YOKO: Let's finish with this.

YOKO hands the baby to the stage manager.

YOKASTA: You know what to do with him. I don't want to see him again.
 YONO: Be careful! He is a king!

4 Blind Date

YOKASTA: After I gave birth to my perfect son and lost him, I never gave any pleasure to Laius. He was dead to me. They both were dead to me.
 YOYO: And that was that?
 YOKO: Not exactly. I'm not as self-contained as Yokasta. I can't stand being lonely.
Pause. Even after what happened, I need Laius. We play games. Sometimes I meet him on the sly.
 YOKASTA: But always in a public place.
 YOKO: We pretend we're seeing each other for the first time.
 YOYO: Like a blind date?
 YOKASTA: Fake blind dates.
 YOYO: Awesome.
 YOKO: Here he comes. Watch this!

A park bench. YOKO with dark glasses. LAIUS enters, limping badly on his left.

LAIUS: Isn't this the 5th bench from the north?
 YOKO: It is, and the 7th from the south.
 LAIUS: Are you Yokasta?
 YOKO: Call me Yoko.
 LAIUS: What a lovely name. Is it Japanese?
 YOKO: Not really.
 LAIUS: Are you from around here?
 YOKO: No.
 LAIUS: Beautiful weather, isn't it?
 YOKO: The agreement was to not talk about the weather.
 LAIUS: Sorry. I forgot.
 YOKASTA: You've been forgetting a lot of things lately. You should have a brain scan, get yourself thoroughly checked out. Let me see your leg.
 LAIUS: Pardon me?
 YOKO: Your leg, your gimp leg.

YOKO carefully examines LAIUS's bad left leg. Then she runs her hands up and down his leg.

Walk. *He doesn't move.* I told you to walk. Up and down here, in front of me. LAIUS *does not budge.* Do you want to get to get lucky or what? LAIUS *takes a few steps.* You been a cripple all your life? *He stops.* Did I give you permission to stop? *He resumes.*

LAIUS: It's who I am. It's my name, Laius, which means "lame on the left side."
 YOKO: I know what it fucking means.
 YOYO: I didn't know.
 LAIUS: I limp, so what? I don't try to hide it. How can I hide it? A prosthetic sandal? You're the only one who makes a big deal of it. Everyone else pretends nothing is wrong. Emperor's new leg. Who cares if I limp? A lot of excellent people limp.
 YOKO: You desire me?
 LAIUS: I do.
 YOYO: He desires her.
 YOKO: I'm not exactly skinny and petite, am I? My body is a—

YOKO *and* YOKASTA:

—symphony of flesh folding and unfolding itself, an ocean tide waiting for the moon to give it direction.

YOKO: Would you like to be my moon, Laius?
 LAIUS: I want to be your moon, Yoko. I want to play your symphony, my queen.
 YOKO: You may put your left foot on my thigh.
 LAIUS: That's my bad leg.
 YOKASTA: You bet.
 YOKO: Here, right here.
 LAIUS: So what's next?
 YOKASTA: Use your imagination.
 LAIUS: I can't think of anything. My mind's a total blank.
 YOKO: Is it? Try this.

YOKO *places his leg on her pudenda. Erotic play.*

LAIUS: Oh, good, yes—

YOKO, *abruptly stopping:*

What are you doing? People are looking at us. And what kind of slut do you think I am? I'm not the sort of girl who gives it away on a blind date!

LAIUS: I thought playing blind date would help.
 YOKO: You're a catastrophe at it.
 LAIUS: Its a stupid game. Invent something else.

YOKO *and* YOKASTA:

I can't think of anything. My mind's a total blank.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

LAIUS: Lay down on the bench. *She does.* Close your eyes. *She does.* Good. LAIUS *flaps his arms.* I'm flying around you! My enormous wings are caressing your shoulders! I'm going to swoop down and take you!

YOKO *sits up and quacks like a duck.* YOYO *joins in.* YOKASTA *covers YOYO's eyes.*
LAIUS *enters YOKO from behind, using his gimpy leg as a phallus.*

YOKASTA *joined by YOYO:*
A lame duck can't cluck! A lame duck can't cluck!

LAIUS: I'm a swan, baby! YOKASTA *and* YOYO *laugh.* Leda laughed at the Swan, but that didn't stop him. I'm almost ready! I'm ready!

YOKASTA *and* YOYO:
A lame duck can't fuck! A lame duck can't fuck!

LAIUS: Oh yes he can! *He comes.* Ahh, that's good! I'm done. Thank you very much.
LAIUS *exits.*

YOYO: Oh! Is that what you call fun?

YOYO *begins to play with her action figures.*

YOKASTA: Why did you let him have his way?
YOKO: I felt like it.
YOYO: I don't understand.
YOKO: I gotta have fun sometimes.
YOKASTA: Letting Laius come is your idea of fun?
YOKO: Sort of.
YOKASTA: And how do you satisfy yourself?
YOKO: I have my ways.

YOKASTA *and* YOKO *exit.*

5 Avenger Yoyo

YOYO *plays with two dolls: Barbie's Ken and Avenger Yoyo, a girl doll identical to YOYO.*

YOYO: *As Ken.* Avenger, please don't hurt me again! Don't lock me in a closet or bury me in the garden or leave me alone in the cold!

As Avenger Yoyo, in an "artificial intelligence" voice.

Don't worry, earthling with pretty eyes, I won't hurt you. I'm Avenger Yokasta, the smartest woman in the universe. I rule the universe. My voice is beamed out to the furthest galaxies. My intelligence zips along the cosmic strings to everywhere.

As Ken. Take me with you. I will be your faithful sidekick.

As Avenger Yoyo. Sorry, earthling, but Avenger Yokasta travels solo.

YOKASTA: Why do you play those games?

YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo.* I must go to her.

As herself. I'm practicing.

YOKASTA: For what?

YOYO: To replace you.

YOKASTA: Really?

YOYO: I can do it much better than you can. I'm going to do it differently.

YOKASTA: What do you have in mind?

YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo.* Cosmic secrets cannot be revealed to earthlings. She has awakened me. She calls!

YOKASTA: Being queen is a royal pain in the ass, Yoyo.

YOYO: *As herself.* The way you've done it, sure. But not the way I'm going to do it.

YOKASTA: You're so sure you can change destiny.

YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo.* I break loose! My strength is incredible!

YOKASTA: Really?

YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo.* Time and space are mine to command.

YOKASTA: In your game, yes.

YOYO: *As herself.* All right, Ms. Yokasta know it all, you tell me what's going to happen.

YOKASTA: One day you will receive a letter from Zeus. He has already written your future.

YOYO: What does the king of the gods say about me?

YOKASTA: I can't tell you.

YOYO: Why not?

YOKASTA: Just no.

YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo turning her weapon on YOKASTA.* Rakk! Zaaappp! Ziinnnggg!

YOKASTA: *Pretending to suffer a little, and then laughing.* Ok, ok. Zeus writes you'll be just like me. His letter says that finally you will submit to marriage. You will bear children. You will be a queen.

YOYO: *As herself.* But will I be happy?

YOKASTA: Don't you think I'm happy?

YOYO: I refuse that destiny!

As Avenger Yoyo. Cosmic hordes! The war against Zeus is on! Activate all force fields! Train all super energy beams against the gods of Olympus!

YOKASTA: You know that's not going to happen.

YOYO: *As herself.* I only believe the stories I make up.

YOKASTA: In four years, you will marry an old man with bad breath. He will cover your mouth with his hand while he rips open your hymen. You will struggle, but it won't make any difference. Then he will shoot his seed into you. When your baby is born—well, you know the rest.

YOYO: No! That won't be my life!
 YOKASTA: I'm telling you so you can prepare yourself.
 YOYO: And I'm warning you: Things won't be what you say.

Silence. YOKASTA exits. YOYO picks up Ken and Avenger Yokasta.

As Ken. Brave Yoyo, what will you do when the crazy woman comes to your palace and tells you a story you don't like? *As Avenger Yoyo.* I will hang her upside down by her feet and sew her mouth shut. And then I will beam her to the 44th dimension—so far away she won't ever be able to come back.
As Ken. And what will you tell all the people who heard her story?
As Avenger Yoyo. Every day I will tell them a new story. A million days, a million stories. *As Ken.* But which story is true?
As herself. They're all true.

6 The Last of Laius

LAIUS: Do you want to play the—

Shows reins and bridle.

I brought the reins and—
 YOKO: No horse game today.
 LAIUS: It's been six months since—
 YOKO: You know very well why.
 LAIUS: A boy?
 YOKO: What else?
 LAIUS: The shepherd?
 YOKO: No, the river.
 LAIUS: Good. Cleaner.
 YOKO: This time I want revenge. I want blood for blood. I want war.
 LAIUS: War?
 YOKO: You will declare war against Delphi. You'll send 10,000 men to fight and die there. You'll conquer Delphi. Then you'll send for me. I will lead an army of women. We will grind the Oracle to dust. We'll erect a new Oracle, an Oracle under my command. Or maybe I will decide to have no Oracle at all. I will pour tons of sand down her hole and plug her up once and for all. Delphi will be famous for being the city without an Oracle.
 LAIUS: You're a very disturbed woman.
 YOKO: My women will parade that Pythia whore in the streets. The people of Delphi will stone her to death.
 LAIUS: Listen to me! None of that is going to happen, my Queen.
 YOKO: Don't call me "my Queen." I am a queen, but not yours!

LAIUS: Then wife. You are my wife, don't forget that.
 YOKO: A frozen marriage in a hot country.
 LAIUS: Don't you think I'm as unhappy as you are? I'm trying my best. I've been a good husband. A faithful husband. How many kings, or even ordinary men, are faithful and respectful to their wives?
 YOKO: I am the Queen.
 LAIUS: I made you Queen!
 YOKO: I deserve respect.
 LAIUS: I deserve gratitude.
 YOKO: I'll be grateful when you make war against Delphi!
 LAIUS: The Oracle is sacred! The gods have ears everywhere. They can punish you.
 YOKO: They already have. If you ask me, I'm owed some good times.
 LAIUS: The Pythia is more than a woman, she's the sacred mouth of Apollo.
 YOKO: I'm sure she gives blowjobs to Apollo.
 LAIUS: I'm going to Delphi again today. This time, I am sure to get a new Oracle. The Pythia will give us a different kind of son, a son with a good fate.
 YOKO: I only want daughters. And since when do Oracles change their minds? And you, my little man, you believe whatever that Pythia tells you, don't you? God Apollo speaks through her lips, does he? She's in trance, is she? And you lap it up like a cat does cream, don't you? You kill whatever she says you should fear: your cows, your horses, your servants, your sons.
 LAIUS: I'll be gone for a few days.
 YOKO: Have fucking fun with your Pythian whores!
 LAIUS: When I get back, we can talk. I know we can find a reasonable way out of this.
 YOKO: Out of what? Out of the past? Out of my own skin?
 LAIUS: If you just let me, I can make you happy.
 YOKO: You know what would make me very happy? For you not to exist. In fact, you don't exist. I'm inventing you just by talking to you. And now that I'm finished talking to you, you are instructed to make yourself scarce.
 LAIUS: The Oracle can change things. I will ask her to forgive you.
 YOKO: I don't need to be forgiven. I can't be forgiven.
 LAIUS: I can make up for everything, if the Oracle permits.
 YOKO: You? Not in a billion years. Now for the absolute last time. Go! Vanish! Disappear! Poof!

7 Tragedy's Baddest Mamas

MEDIA: In Greek tragedy, there are no mothers more famous than Yokasta, Phaedra, and Medea. They think bad thoughts and then they go out and do bad things. They are "Tragedy's Baddest Mamas." Which one of you is the baddest?

They all raise their hands. They each carry texts of their tragedies.

Medea?

YOKO, *as MEDEA here and throughout the scene:*

I'm the worst. I murdered my kids without blinking. Killed them all. In a wink. You should've seen my husband's face!

YOYO, *as PHAEDRA here and throughout the scene:*

That doesn't make you bad—it just means you're crazy. Any good lawyer could get you off with a plea of temporary insanity.

MEDIA: It seems that Phaedra and Yokasta have a lot in common. They both had a thing for their sons.

YOKASTA: Hers was a stepson.

PHAEDRA: My Hippolytus was as good as my own flesh and blood.

YOKASTA: Come on, who are you kidding?

MEDEA: I don't understand what either of you have for boys—your own boys, I might add. Boys are so inexperienced, they need to be taught everything, the whole erotic alphabet. What a waste of time!

PHAEDRA: You haven't the slightest idea! Me and Yokasta know what it's like to run your fingers through the hair of a young warrior in a sensuous battle, in a tender wrestling. To press your flesh against his quivering muscles, to teach his hands to speak the language of your body.

MEDIA: Yokasta, you were a real bad mama. You married your own son and had four children with him.

MEDEA: Does this make her a bad mother?! From what I've been able to find out, you were a good mother, Yokasta, a perfect mother. You loved all your children. You did the best you could under the circumstances. You don't belong on this show.

YOKASTA: Didn't I hand little Oedipus over to the shepherd?

MEDEA: But you wrapped him up real warm. And the kicker is, he survived.

PHAEDRA: Yeah. Given the circumstances, you acted very responsibly. You went into that marriage with Oedipus with your eyes wide open. Now my case is different. I know what passion can drive a woman to do! I know what it's like to live in guilt and inner torment.

YOKASTA: You think I don't feel guilty and tormented?

PHAEDRA: I know I don't have the right to live! I go to sleep each and every night in a doomed bed. I am aware that I am going to pay for my desires.

MEDIA: Do you think that—

PHAEDRA: Listen to what my author wrote for me, quote: "At first when love struck me, I reflected how best to bear it. Silence was my first plan, for the tongue cannot be trusted. Then I thought I could conquer love with discretion and common sense. And when that too failed me, I resolved to die. Death is the best plan of all. Let no one dispute that. I know what I have done. I know the scandal. And all too well I know that I am a woman, an object of hate to all. I betrayed my husband with my son, and in him betrayed all my children."¹⁰ Unquote.

MEDIA: You mustn't blame yourself. Your author also wrote, quote: "So you will? And all the others, who love, and who will love, must they die too? We should not in the conduct of our lives be too exacting."¹¹ Unquote.

PHAEDRA: Still, finally, I decided that hanging myself was the right thing to do.

MEDEA: You're off topic. Your story is dripping with self-pity and self-justification. The question we are dealing with, we are supposed to be dealing with, is who's the baddest mama. In this regard, you girls should just go away and do some shopping. Neither of you can hold a candle to me. I am the baddest mama in tragedy!

PHAEDRA: Don't make me laugh! Even Clytemnestra, who's plenty pissed off she's under contract to another network and can't be here, is a lot badder than you. She sent her daughter to her death, murdered her husband, and drove her son into exile.

MEDEA: He came back and killed her, didn't he?

PHAEDRA: Exactly.

MEDEA: So she wasn't bad ass enough to save her own life.

YOKASTA: And you? Didn't you hang yourself?

MEDEA: There you are mistaken. I told Jason where he could get off. It was you who took the rope.

YOKASTA: That's a dirty lie!

MEDEA: You're delusional, Yokasta. You think you're so famous. But let me tell you, lots of people have never heard of you. They wouldn't know you if they fell over you. But me, Medea, everyone knows. Listen to me talking to my children just before I murdered them, quote,

MEDEA plays a tape of Euripides's Medea in Greek. YOKASTA snatches the tape recorder and turns it off.

YOKASTA: I don't want to listen to your garbage!

MEDEA: You stupid bitch! That's Euripides in Greek, the bleeping original! Do you have any idea what words he put into my mouth?

YOKASTA: No, and I don't give a bleep either. You make me sick.

MEDEA: Give me my tape recorder!

YOKASTA: Not on your life. Who wants to hear some dumb dead language nobody understands?

MEDEA: You're jealous, that's what you are. Anyway, I know my lines in English. Quote, "Why, children, do you look at me with your eyes? Why do you smile so sweetly that last smile of all? Come, children, give me your hands so I may kiss them. Oh, your small hands! And how dear your lips. How delicate the skin, how sweet the breath of children! I wish you happiness, but not here in this world."¹² Unquote. Did you ever say such words, Yokasta? No one thought you worth writing these kind of words for. There are so many plays about Oedipus, but not one about you. You don't count.

YOKASTA: Don't I? Listen to what just one of my authors wrote for me. Quote:

When I carried my first son
did I know what was coming
what ropes of blood were twisting together what
bloody footprints
were hurrying together in my body
did I know what past and unfinished reckonings
were getting flesh again inside me
did I think that the debts of the past
were settled before I conceived
I knew the thing in my womb was going to have to
pay for the whole past
I knew the future was waiting for him like a greedy
god a maneater in a cave
was going to ask for everything happiness strength
and finally life
as if no other man existed I carried him for this
for pain and for fear
for hard sharp metal for the cruelty of other men
and his own cruelty
I carried him for disease
for rottenness and dropping to pieces
I carried him for death bones dust I knew
but I carried him not only for this I carried him to be
king of this
and my blood didn't pause
didn't hesitate in my womb
considering the futility
it didn't falter reckoning the odds it poured on
into him blood from my toes my finger ends
blind blood blood from my gums and eyelids
blood from the roots of my hair blood from before
any time began
it flowed into the knot of his bowels, into the knot of his
muscles
the knot of his brain
my womb tied everything together, every corner of the
earth and the heavens
and every trickle of the dead past
twisted it all into shape inside me
what was he what wasn't he
the question was unasked
and what was I what cauldron was I
what doorway was I what cavemouth
what spread my legs and lifted my knees
was he squeezing to hide

was I running to escape
the strength of the whole earth
pushed him through my body and out
it split me open and I saw the blood jump out after him
was I myself but what was he
a bag of blood a bag of death
a screaming mouth
was it asking a question
he was a king's son he was a man's shape
he was perfect.¹³
Unquote.

MEDIA: We're just going to have to leave it at that. And while you're thinking it over,
we'll take a commercial break.

YONO:
No. Not yet. Um-humm.

As YONO speaks, a silent film or slides showing a bathtub filling with water.

I fill the bathtub with water, a regular size bathtub, not a big one, just regular.
I put Peter in face down. He struggles for a couple of minutes. But I hold him under until there's
no more movement. When I take him out of the water, he's pale as Jesus. I cover his entire body
with a clean, freshly laundered white sheet.
Then I put Joseph in. He struggles less than Peter. When I take Joe out of the water his face is
blue like a violet. I put him on the bed. I cover him with the same sheet I cover Peter with. Peter
and Joseph are on the bed together. But I know they are not sleeping.
Then I put Matthew in. He's a feisty kid, he's my favorite. Um-humm. I wrap my arms around
him, give him a goodbye kiss on his neck, and put him in. He struggles a lot longer than the
others. But I use all the strength God gave me to hold him under. Eventually he stops. When I
bring Matt out of the water he's limp like a cooked noodle. I cover him like I did Joe and Peter.
Then I put John in.
John's in the bathroom already, crying the whole time I put the others in. Um-hmm. I pick John
up under his arms and just sink him down in a sitting position. He's small, he goes right under,
but he kicks and puts up a good fight for a little baby. Um-humm.
I leave John in the bathtub and go get Adam. He tries to get away. Adam's real strong, but I catch
him by the hair, drag him over, and throw him in the tub. I push his face down under the water.
He flips over and comes up for air. Um-humm, um-humm. He gasps a couple of times before
I force him back under. He struggles for I don't know how long. Um-humm. Maybe a minute
or two. Finally, there's no sign of life from him. He won't come back anymore. I leave his body
there on the water. I take John out. I put him on the bed. I cover him. I leave Adam in the tub.
He makes me angry. Um-humm, um-humm.¹⁴

*Intermission***8 The Bath**

A slide show projected on a large screen upstage depicts OEDIPUS, covered with mud and blood, stepping into a bath. OEDIPUS's right foot is swollen, misshapen. YONO washes him carefully and tenderly. Gradually her touch grows more erotic. Meanwhile, downstage center, facing the spectators, YOKO and YOYO bathe their own feet. YOKASTA and OEDIPUS speak their lines into microphones, as in a radio drama. They are on opposite sides of the stage. Their intimacy is in how they speak.

OEDIPUS: You shouldn't be doing this, you are the queen. Let them do it.
 YOKASTA: Your foot is all swollen. It must hurt a lot.
 OEDIPUS: That's the way it's always been.
 YOKASTA: No. It's swollen because you had to walk so far, because the road is full of stones, because your sandals wore out, because the sun was scorching ...
 OEDIPUS: I tell you my foot has always been this way. Scarred, swollen, awful. I don't want you to look at it. I don't want you to touch it.
 YOKASTA: This is how we honor our heroes. Our kings. Our conquerors.
 OEDIPUS: Don't look at it.
 YOKASTA: I want to look at it and to touch it. I have a thing for swollen feet.
 OEDIPUS: You're kidding me.
 YOKASTA: No, really.
 YOYO: She is a little weird.
 YOKO: Shut up!
 YOKASTA: I want to study the map of its veins. That map will teach me about you, where you came from, why you are here.
 OEDIPUS: I told you already. I'm from Corinth.
 YOKASTA: And what was the reason you left, what was the purpose of your journey?
 OEDIPUS: That I can't tell you.
 YOKASTA: Why not?
 OEDIPUS: I just can't, that's all!
 YOKASTA: And you're hurt—you've been bleeding.
 OEDIPUS: I had an accident.
 YOKASTA: What kind of accident?
 OEDIPUS: What difference does it make?
 YOKASTA: This wound was made by a blade. You've been in a fight.
 OEDIPUS: Maybe. So what?
 YOKASTA: Don't you want to talk about it?
 OEDIPUS: This is all happening too quickly. One minute I'm on the road, the next I'm being bathed by a queen who tells me I am the King of Thebes.
 YOKASTA: It wasn't my decision. It's what was told to us.
 OEDIPUS: What was told to you?
 YOKASTA: To- to- send the old king away. To get rid of him. To wait for some brave hero who could solve the riddle of the Sphinx. To make that hero our king.
 YOYO: A silly riddle

YOKO: A fucking stupid riddle. I could have solved it in a flash.
YOKASTA: What has four legs at dawn, two legs at noon, three legs at dusk, and is weakest when it has the most?
YOYO: I know! I know!
YOKO: Gimme a break.
YOKASTA: The human being, who crawls as a baby, walks as a grown up, and needs a cane when she gets old. Her life is a journey of the day into the night.
OEDIPUS: I didn't give such a fancy answer. I just said, "Me!" Then the Sphinx growled a little bit, got up, stretched her wings, and flew away. I was tired. Really tired. I'd been on the road for four days. So I came here.
YOKASTA: You were meant to come here. To be our king.
OEDIPUS: Who told you that?
YOKASTA: Zeus.
OEDIPUS: But you have your own king!
YOKASTA: Didn't I just explain that to you? We did, we used to, we don't anymore. Thebes used to have a king, I used to have a husband. A long time ago I even had a baby, a baby boy.

In the slides, YONO tries to submerge OEDIPUS, to drown him. He thinks it is rough sex play.



FIGURE 2.2: Oedipus/Christopher Logan Healy embraces Yono/Rachel Bowditch after she bathes him the day he returns to Thebes. From the slide show that opens scene 8, "The Bath." La MaMa, New York, 2005. Photograph: Matt Bockelman.

OEDIPUS: What happened to him?
 YOKASTA: He went away.
 OEDIPUS: Is he dead?
 YOYO: He's got so many questions he should be on *Law and Order*.
 YOKASTA: I don't know.
 OEDIPUS: How can you not know? He's your son. You're keeping something from me!
 YOKASTA: You've got a temper. Give it a rest. You can't tell me why you left Corinth and I can't tell you what happened to my son. It's all right for us both to have secrets.

In the slides YONO forces OEDIPUS under the water. They struggle, then they kiss.

OEDIPUS: Why should I believe you?
 YOKASTA: This is from my heart. You don't need to know everything to be happy. I'm a lot older than you, and I'm giving you good advice.
 OEDIPUS: Older but so beautiful.
 YOKASTA: Queens are always told they're beautiful.
 OEDIPUS: But you really are. I'm not lying. I can't lie.
 YOKASTA: I know you can't. You're perfect. Just close your eyes and let me take care of everything.
 OEDIPUS: I don't know why I get so mad sometimes. It just happens. But now, I'm dreamy, I'm floating away. What did you put in the water? The steam is full of perfume.
 YOKO: It's the hot water.
 YOYO: There's magic in the water.
 YOKASTA: A few hours ago I was a mummy, dry as the African desert. Then you came, my thunderstorm, and now I'm sprouting branches and leaves and blossoms. Everything inside me is inviting me to a huge party, a long overdue celebration. Dance for me.
 OEDIPUS: I'm pretty clumsy, my foot.
 YOKASTA: Dance, go ahead, I want you to.

In the slides, OEDIPUS dances.

OEDIPUS: See I told you! How can I dance with this foot of mine?
 YOKASTA: You're perfect just the way you are.

Pause.

OEDIPUS: Go away now, Oedipus. Tomorrow is a very busy day for you.
 OEDIPUS: I want to stay here with my queen.
 YOKASTA: The king has his own room. Go to your room.
 OEDIPUS: Do I have to?
 YOKASTA: You have to.
 OEDIPUS: If I'm the king, you can't tell me what to do.
 YOKASTA: Tomorrow you can rule. Tonight you belong to me.

OEDIPUS: I don't belong to anybody!
YOKASTA: You're are so used to getting your own way.

Pause.

OEDIPUS: I need to be alone. Please.
Just for tonight, promise?
YOKASTA: Promise.

OEDIPUS *exits.*

YOKO: I am the new queen of a new country among new people. I am not old, I
am not young. I'm evaporating.
YOYO: The hot water.
YOKASTA: The magic water.
He's so full of himself with his boy's muscles and boy's sweet breath, like rose
water, like lemons and honey. Every night, when I stretch out my hand, I will
touch his skin. I'll be able to teach him—not his first words as a baby, but his
first laws as a king. We will have children, princesses and princes.
YOYO: Go for it!
YOKASTA: My conscience is clear.
YONO: I have done nothing wrong.
YOKASTA: What Zeus has sent me, I will not reject.

YOKASTA *exits.* YOKO *starts to go.*

YOYO, *to* YOKO: Hold on, stay here a minute.
YOKO: What's up?
YOYO: So this Oedipus, do you like him?
YOKO: What do you mean?
YOYO: He's hot, don't you think?
YOKO: He's ok.
YOYO: C'mon. He's a lot more than ok. Did you see those muscles? He must work
out a lot. Or fight in wars or something.
YOKO: What business is it of yours?
YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo.* Avenger Yoyo demands all knowledge! Avenger Yoyo—
YOKO: If you want to talk with me, cut all that shit.
YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo.* It was funny, seeing him naked like that. I've never seen a
grown up man naked before.
YOKO: Well now you have. No big deal.
YOYO: It looked like a pretty big deal to me.
YOKO: This is not sex ed class, Yoyo. I'm tired. I need some shut eye.

YOYO: Yokasta's always telling me what's going to happen. But she never talks about herself. I really don't know anything about her. She acted so surprised when Oedipus showed up. I thought she knows everything that's going to happen.

YOKO: She wants to forget a lot of it. She wants to pretend it's all happening for the first time.

YOYO: Because?

YOKO: So she can enjoy it more.

YOYO: How's that?

YOKO: If you know everything that's going to happen to you—well, what's so fun in that?

YOYO: But that's what happens in a play. The actors know exactly what they are going to do and say—and what the other people are going to do and say. And actors have tons of fun!

YOKO: What makes you so fucking sure?

YOYO: Don't treat me like I'm a total idiot.

Pause.

I don't know if I like him. Oedipus, it's such a weird name. And he limps, have you noticed that?

YOKO: I didn't.

YOYO: And those scars on his foot. You couldn't have missed them.

YOKO: I wasn't looking.

YOYO: He must've been in a terrible accident.

YOKO: Maybe.

YOYO: What do you know about him?

YOKO: Next to nothing.

YOYO: You're lying. You know I know when you're lying. I'm going to find out more about him.

YOKO: You aren't ready for boys yet, no less men.

YOYO: That's what you say. But you don't control me. *As Avenger Yoyo.* My powers are unlimited!

YOKO: I'm going to bed. The future will arrive soon enough.

YOYO: You are released from the grip of my superior mental powers!

YOKO: Waw, thanks. I feel much better now.

9 Teaching Oedipus to be King

YOKASTA: So what do you know?

OEDIPUS: I know that last night was the best.

YOKO: No, fatfoot, about being a king.

OEDIPUS: What's there to know?

YOKO: To start with, sit up.

OEDIPUS: Like this?

YOYO: Like this!
YOKASTA: You're slouching. Straighten your shoulders. Yes, that's better. Now stand up. Let me see you walk.

OEDIPUS *takes a few steps.*

YOKO: Can't you walk without lurching?
OEDIPUS: It's my foot.
YOKASTA: We'll get that fixed.
OEDIPUS: Last night you said you loved it, my foot.
YOKASTA: The foot, yes, the limp, no.
YOKO: We can work around it. Mostly, I'll keep you seated. When you have to walk, in a parade or something, keep your head high and turn your eyes from one side to the other, like this, like you're checking people out to see if anyone's making a mistake.
OEDIPUS: Hey, I can do that!
YOKASTA: Not bad. But don't smile.
YOYO: He's cute when he smiles.
YOKO: His face is too soft.
OEDIPUS: Too soft for what?
YOKASTA: We can backlight him.
YOKO: Ok, now turn your head back and forth. Imagine that there are hundreds of people here, all of them looking at you, each one wanting something from you.
OEDIPUS: I don't like crowds.
YOKO: You'll get used to them.
YOKASTA: I'll always be next to you. If I squeeze your hand this way say, "Yes" —
OEDIPUS: Yes—
YOKASTA: And if I touch you on your back this way say, "I will take it under advisement."
OEDIPUS: I will take it under advisement.
YOKASTA: Let's practice.

YOKASTA *squeezes his hand.* OEDIPUS *pulls his hand away.*

OEDIPUS: If I'm king, why do I have to take orders from you?
YOKASTA: Because I know a lot more than you do.
OEDIPUS: Is that so?
YOKO: We'll work out a whole system of signals.
OEDIPUS: Stuff your signals! I may be young, but I've been around. I know what's what.
YOKASTA: Hold your horses.
YOYO: And being king is fun! You can send people into exile or even kill them!
OEDIPUS: I've already killed someone.
YOKO: Now listen, here's something really important that every king knows by heart. If things start to go wrong, if a lot of people lose their jobs or the crops fail or people find out that your ministers are stealing bunches of money, what do you do?

OEDIPUS: Send to the Oracle for advice.
 YOKO: Absolutely not. You go to war.
 OEDIPUS: War?
 YOKASTA: Right away. A tenacious enemy is a king's best friend.
 YOKO: Never forget that.
 OEDIPUS: That's not my kind of king.
 YOYO: *As Avenger Yoyo.* People of Thebes! King Oedipus rules in his own particular way!
 YOKO: We'll see. All right, let's review.

With each instruction, OEDIPUS does his best to perform well.

Get up. Walk. Try not to limp. Ok, better. Sit down. Focus your eyes over the heads of your subjects. Don't look anyone in the eye.
 OEDIPUS: I like to look people right in the eye. Like this.
 YOKASTA: Why are you so stubborn? Can't you just once do exactly what I tell you to do?
 OEDIPUS: Just once—for you. And then, can we—
 YOKO: Raise your chin, look up over their heads. That's better. Now cross your legs. Good. Cross your arms. Look a little bored, not with yourself, not at all, but with "them," with all those people who depend on you.
 OEDIPUS: You know, I don't think I'm cut out to be a king.
 YOKASTA: Ridiculous. You are the King! It's in your blood. You don't have any choice about it.
 OEDIPUS: I could abdicate. We could run away together. I know how to live on the road.
 YOKO: That's crazy talk.
 OEDIPUS: Ok. Then why don't you be the queen and run everything? That's what you want to do anyway.

YOKASTA *and* YOKO:
 I am already queen.

OEDIPUS: I mean the real queen. A queen-king.
 YOKASTA: There's no such thing around here.
 OEDIPUS: What about the Amazons? They had a queen! And the bees? They still have queens!
 YOKASTA: Why are you so afraid of becoming who you really are?
 OEDIPUS: What I want, the only thing I really want, is to not become the boy the Oracle once told an awful story to. Do you want to hear it?
 YOYO: I do!
 YOKO: I don't want to hear anything that makes you weak and pathetic. There are people who rule and people who are ruled. The ones who lay down the law and the ones who obey it. We don't listen to the Oracle around here, understand? I want you to forget every fucking thing that happened to you before last night. You need new memories, king's memories.
 OEDIPUS: You really don't know a thing about me!

YOKASTA: Tonight we can be alone together again, just you and me. I'll give you another bath.

OEDIPUS: And tomorrow?

YOKASTA: We'll walk in the royal garden, feed tame deer from our hands, eat lunch with our governors, listen to reports from our generals, send Kreon on a long trip somewhere, take a nap, and while I'm having my hair done you will sign decrees. You'll be surprised how fast the day will go by. Then it will be night again, and the palace doors will close leaving us to ourselves, Oedipus and Yokasta, the way it's meant to be.

10 The Good Years

Two chairs at a table. Two microphones on the table. From one wing MEDIA enters, from the other YONO. They meet at the table, shake hands, sit. YONO is in the late stage of pregnancy.

MEDIA: My goodness! It seems like—. Congratulations! How long have you been—?

YONO: Oh, 8 months.

MEDIA: OK. Great! So you don't mind if we talk about it?

YONO: Oh, no, no.

MEDIA: Is there anything you want to put off limits before we get started?

YONO: No, I'm fine.

MEDIA: Wide open.

YONO: Totally open.

MEDIA: Great. So this is your first interview?

YONO: My very first.

MEDIA: Excellent, we have an exclusive. I thought we did, but I wanted to hear it from your lips. *To the live audience.* Please turn off all your cell phones and pagers, thank you. *To the television public.* Yono, the perfect Yokasta, the unique mother and wife, is with us today ready to reveal everything about herself. So this is your very first interview?

YONO: Very very.

MEDIA: And this will be your—

YONO: My fifth child.

MEDIA: Number five! Congratulations! They say five's a charm.

YONO: I've always been very very lucky.

MEDIA: It's a blessing. It's a miracle!

YONO: It's not a miracle. It's a lot of hard work, love, and luck.

MEDIA: And, so, the proud father, King Laius—

YONO: Oedipus.

MEDIA: Oh, yes, of course. Sorry. Oedipus the King. Is he happy too?

YONO: Oh, he's thrilled even though we were thinking of taking a little bit of a break, with five already, almost. You know it's not easy bringing a new baby into the house just 11 months after the last one.

MEDIA: Who is that?

YONO: Who?
 MEDIA: The fourth one.
 YONO: Oh that would be Antigone.
 MEDIA: Antigone.
 YONO: Here she is.

Lifts the infant from her breast. It is a huge foot.

MEDIA: I'm still breast feeding her. She's only 10 months old. Isn't she a darling?
 And already you're—?
 YONO: I told you, eight months pregnant.
 MEDIA: And your oldest, how old is it—
 YONO: He's not an it. He's a he. Polynikes is a boy. He's very athletic. He and his brother Eteokles are always fighting. They're twins you know. Polynikes is older—by about 35 minutes.
 MEDIA: Twins, eh? I guess that explains why they fight a lot.
 YONO: Oh yes, they're little warriors.
 MEDIA: I remember that age as being a very tough time.
 YONO: Oh, no, it's really a joy. Motherhood is a blessing.
 MEDIA: I meant for them.
 YONO: Oh, I see.
 MEDIA: People say a woman is most beautiful when she's pregnant. Would you agree?
 YONO: Well, what I've heard people say is that a queen is always beautiful and a beautiful woman is always a queen.
 MEDIA: How true, how true. And the twins' sister, what's her name?
 YONO: They have two sisters, Ismene and Antigone, my baby for now. Antigone's a real darling.
 MEDIA: She is, a darling.
 MEDIA: And your husband—?
 YONO: Oedipus?
 MEDIA: Oedipus.
 YONO: Oedipus is especially fond of little Antigone. He insists on giving her a bath every evening.
 MEDIA: Isn't he a devoted father! And a king too.
 YONO: Yes, he puts aside all his official duties in order to have supper with his family and give Antigone her bath.
 MEDIA: He does that every day?
 YONO: Well not if there's a war, of course.
 MEDIA: Of course. What's that amulet around your neck? It looks like an oracular image.
 YONO: I'm glad you noticed. And you are right. I only wear it on public occasions.
 MEDIA: Like your very first interview.
 YONO: It's from Laius, my first husband.
 MEDIA: Laius was assaulted by bandits on the road to Delphi, wasn't he? Some people say it wasn't an accident, that it was part of a conspiracy.

YONO: I begged him not to go that morning. With him it was Oracle this, Oracle that. Laius wouldn't make a move without consulting the Oracle. And he was always on the lookout for a new Oracle.

Pause.

MEDIA: If I may say so, he was not a happy man.
 Things happened very fast after Laius was killed. You had to take on the responsibilities for the whole city.

YONO: Not for long. My new King Oedipus was right there to pick up where Laius left off.

MEDIA: Do you—?

YONO: Miss Laius?

MEDIA: Well do you?

YONO: Things happened so fast, like another life.

MEDIA: May I?

YONO: What?

MEDIA: Oedipus. He's a lot younger than you are.

YONO: That's right.

MEDIA: Does that make a difference?

YONO: What do you mean?

MEDIA: Well, you know—

YONO: Of course, a young man is very potent, very fertile.

MEDIA: You don't mind discussing it?

YONO: Why should I? It's a fact of life.

MEDIA: So you met this young man right after you'd been widowed.

YONO: The same day, actually.

MEDIA: What was that like? It must've been difficult to make that adjustment.

YONO: Not really.

MEDIA: Did you know right from the start how happy you'd be with Oedipus? Because you're obviously happy now! So affable and always pregnant!

YONO: My motto is: Don't look back!

MEDIA: Did you have any chance to mourn?

YONO: Not really.

MEDIA: Is there anything that you do now in remembrance of Laius?

YONO: Well there is the annual holiday in his honor.

MEDIA: Yes, but is there something more personal, something you do for you alone?

YONO: I can't say that I do. But there is this: I see a lot of my first husband in my second husband.

MEDIA: Is that so?

YONO: Oedipus is a natural leader.

MEDIA: He is.

YONO: Training him to be king was easy. I did it all by myself.

MEDIA: Indeed, yes. He's not from royal stock himself, is he?

YONO: His background is not public knowledge.

MEDIA: But surely you know it.

YONO: It's a matter of national security. I'm sorry, but that's all I can say. What I can assure you of is that Oedipus hails from a long line of leaders.

MEDIA: And your family, you're from a noble family, aren't you?

YONO: Oh, yes. Without a doubt.

MEDIA: And your brother, Kreon?

YONO: He tends to keep his distance. He and my husband don't always see eye to eye.

MEDIA: And what about the other Yokastas?

YONO: Other Yokastas?

MEDIA: There's one in Marvel Comics you've probably heard of.

YONO: I'm afraid not.

MEDIA: Well, I'd like to get your reactions to her. She's an Avenger with complete defensive capabilities, including a force field, energy beams emitted from her eyes, and some mysterious internal workings that enables her to resist being disrupted by the Vision's intangibility powers.

YONO: What are you talking about?

MEDIA: So you never heard of her?

YONO: She doesn't sound like someone I'd want to know.

MEDIA: And what about Yokasta Nu from Star Wars? She's a Jedi librarian.

YONO: A what?

MEDIA: A Jedi.

YONO: I'm afraid you've lost me.

MEDIA: Well then, let's get back to your story, your exclusive very first interview. Oedipus is such a funny name.

YONO: It means swollen foot.

She raises the infant-foot from her breast. Switches it to the other breast.

MEDIA: How did he get that name?

YONO: I suppose his mother gave it to him.

MEDIA: His mother? But why?

YONO: I suppose because he had a swollen foot.

MEDIA: The King was born with a swollen foot?

YONO: He told me it was a farming accident.

MEDIA: A farming accident? He wasn't born with it then. But you just said his mother gave him that name.

YONO: Well, that's the story he told me.

MEDIA: Which? His mother or the accident?

YONO: The accident, the accident.

MEDIA: Because it's such a strange name, Swollen Foot. No one's ever heard of a name like that. A nickname maybe, but not a person's real name.

YONO: You know, I never thought about it much. Honestly, it was a farming accident.

MEDIA: So what was his name before that?

YONO: What difference does it make? I didn't know him then. Everybody called him Oedipus. You know how sometimes a nickname just sticks like that. Red because you have red hair or Dimples because you have dimples. So Oedipus just stuck!

Pause.

I think it's a beautiful foot. I love both his feet.
MEDIA: Are both of them swollen?
YONO: No, just the one.
MEDIA: Which one?
YONO: Now you're asking for an intimate detail that I don't feel comfortable sharing.
MEDIA: I'm sorry. But people want to know.
YONO: Well, all I can say is that his swollen foot is my favorite foot.
MEDIA: You really won't tell us which foot it is?
YONO: Please don't insist. His foot is very special to me.

Pause.

Sometimes I talk to it, and it answers me.
MEDIA: The foot?
YONO: Oedipus had lots of insecurities growing up, a lot of teasing about the foot. He had some trouble learning how a person like him, with a swollen foot, could play the role of a leader. What he did, what he and I did, to encourage a more confident leader thing in him was to name the foot "King Oedipus" and have him speak from the throne as a foot.
MEDIA: So you—?
YONO: Made something good out of something bad.
MEDIA: That's wonderful! And whose idea was that?
YONO: Mine. One-hundred-percent mine.
MEDIA: Very very original.

Pause.

But what does the public think? And Oedipus's inner circle?
YONO: Oh they really can't tell that it's the foot speaking.

Pause.

I'm a little sorry I told you.
MEDIA: Don't be. The public has a right to know.
YONO: I guess so.
MEDIA: And that's the kind of originality we expect from a queen! Ladies and gentlemen, won't you give it up for Yono, the Yokasta of the Good Years!

MEDIA leads the audience in applause.

Do you want to know what Oedipus first said about the foot?
MEDIA: What did he say?
YONO: Don't touch it! He said, I don't want you to touch it. But now I touch it all the time.

Pause.

YOKASTA: There were more good years. And then the good years came to an end.

Very loud music. Everyone calmly changes into their street cloths.

11 Supper with the Yokastas

As the YOKASTAS change from costumes to street clothes, they become their non-character selves. Lines are said with less theatrical commitment. Finally, all of them are sitting at a snack-laden table downstage. They may carry their scripts giving the scene a rehearsal-like feeling. Only OEDIPUS, still in costume, is totally into his role.

YOKO: The plague. The draught. The dust.
 YOYO: Dust, dust, dust!
 YOKASTA: The city's a wreck.
 YOKO: An open wound-
 YOYO: Dust. I can't see.
 YOKASTA: Far enough into the future.
 OEDIPUS: The plague is swallowing our city, Yokasta. Corpses rot in the streets. Everything is blighted. I can't close my eyes, Yokasta. The light all around me is red. I hear voices asking me terrible questions.
 YONO: Zeus is jealous of us.
 YOKO: Zeus's snoring, Zeus's mumbling, Zeus's farting. That's what you hear, Oedipus!
 YOYO: Zeus is dead!
 YONO: Something has to be done.
 YOKASTA: Kreon goes to the Oracle.

YOKASTA, YOKO, YONO:

The Oracle instructs Oedipus: Find the killer of Laius. Punish the one who struck down Old King Gimp.

YOKO: Oracle this, Oracle that!
 YOKASTA: And so the end begins.
 YOYO: Which end?

YOKO, *pointing at* YOKASTA:
 Her end!

YOKASTA: I feel the future raping me, taking away everything I love. I see the ghost of King Gimp grinning at me with his ugly teeth. Oedipus knows who he is, who I am, who we are. He's groaning, he's muttering. Sweat pours over his forehead and neck. His fingers stab deep into his eyes! I see his eyes spilling out on a carpet of blood.

Pause.

It's over.

Taking out a letter.

Zeus writes, quote, "You mortals are nothing but short journeys of the flesh through pain into oblivion. Sorry about that. Forever, Z." Unquote.

Folds the letter, puts it on the table.

These are the last words you will hear from me.
YOKO: But not from me. Oedipus pokes out his eyes and goes off to Colonus to become a saint, does he? And I'm supposed to hang myself out of guilt? What bullshit! No one has pulled the tongue from my mouth.
OEDIPUS: Don't touch me! The gods are punishing me.
YOKO: Fuck the gods!
OEDIPUS: We cannot hide from the truth.
YONO: I am your truth. Our children, the people of Thebes who love and respect you.
OEDIPUS: My children are my sisters and brothers!
YOKO: Come to bed, Oedipus. I'm tired of this melodrama.
OEDIPUS: Did you know?
YONO: Know what? That at noon on a hot day at the place where three roads meet, a handsome boy kills a hot-headed old man who insults him, chases the Sphinx away, and is rewarded by marrying the Queen of Thebes. End of story.
YOYO: *laughing.* A funny hilarious ridiculous story.
OEDIPUS: You think it's funny?
YOYO: Yes, it's an absurd story. But it's not my story. Let's dance.
OEDIPUS: Dance?
YOYO: Dance.

They waltz. When they finish, OEDIPUS is at the table, eating with the others. YOYO remains standing separated from the others.

12 The Understudy

UNDERSTUDY: Quote.

YOKO, YONO:
You were my husband you are my son you
killed my husband I bore your daughters and sons
everything that has happened is here
there is no road away from it.¹⁵

UNDERSTUDY: Unquote.

YOYO:

I know a road. People of Thebes! Brave Yoyo is now your queen and your oracle. She will make Thebes perfect. Everyone can do whatever she wants. Each of you can be a queen, a short order cook, ballerina, astronaut, hockey player, pope, Avenger, trapeze artist, clone, professor, hair stylist, accountant ... whatever! People of Thebes! I am Zeus! You women out there, cross your legs before I teleport my sperm straight into your wombs. Too late! Right now you have a tiny something sprouting inside you. What is it? Not a fetus, not an action figure, not a swollen foot. It's your future. Inserted there by me, the genuine, the one and only Yoyo. And what future is it? What's your fate? You don't think I'm going to tell you, do you? There's no Yoyo ex machina coming down from the sky to clue you in.

YOKO: Hey, Yoyo, you're giving me a fucking headache. Come over here and have something to eat with us.

YONO: Let me tell you what happened to me today.

YOYO: But what about the future?

YOKASTA:

The future's right now.

Goes upstage. The others watch her expectantly.

Do you think I'm going to hang myself or something? Nope. I just want to grab this camera.

She hands an instant camera to someone in the audience—but not in the first few rows.

Can you please take some pictures of us?

The YOKASTAS pose.

Thank you all for coming. You've been so, uh, supportive. Without you it would just be me and me and me and me and me. I'm going to put this picture right here in my photo album, next to the others. I have lots of pictures. Each night I add another one or two. Here's Yoyo, me at that age with all those questions, when everything is possible and impossible at the same time. And look at Yoko, me very angry because I married much too young and to the wrong man. And there's Yono, me when I was able to do it all over again and get it right. And this is Yokasta. The character I play. She's the alpha and omega of it all.

UNDERSTUDY: Hey, what about me? I've been rehearsing for weeks!

YOKASTA: Take it easy. Your time will come. Here we are, the Yokastas. In the flesh. Take a careful look. We're not going anywhere. We're going to stay here awhile.

As the cast eats, joined by the designers, crew, director, playwright, etc., maybe even some spectators, the UNDERSTUDY comes forward.

UNDERSTUDY:

People of Thebes! People of Thebes! I am the Understudy. Whoever puts herself in my shoes? I only believe the stories I make up. None of that is my fault. Blame Fate, Destiny, Zeus, my cursed family tree, whatever. But don't blame me. This earth, this rotten lump of mud, is cursed. I will pour tons of sand down her hole and plug her up once and for all. Or bury him in the garden. You're my tiny Zeus. A maneater in a cave. You women out there, cross your legs before I teleport my sperm straight into your wombs. I only want daughters. Perfect bodies, minds perfect. Your leg, your gimpy leg. A lot of excellent people limp. I have a thing for swollen feet. Sometimes I talk to it and it answers me. And have him speak from the throne as a foot. My blood is shouting. He's limp like a cooked noodle. We are all made equal by time. You are released from the grip of my superior mental powers. Everything inside me is inviting me to a huge party.

Then UNDERSTUDY joins the others at the table. Curtain call from the table. The eating continues. Perhaps more spectators join in. No blackout.

NOTES

1. Already a professional playwright in Romania, Stanescu restarted her career in the United States. A Fulbright scholar in the academic year 2001–02, she earned her MA in Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts, NYU, where I was a Professor. We began working on *YokastaS* at that time. After Performance Studies, Stanescu got her MFA in 2004 from TSOA's Dramatic Writing Program. After *YokastaS*, she continued to work with East Coast Artists, the company I founded in 1992. In 2007, ECA produced Stanescu's MFA thesis play, *Waxing West*. Stanescu is Associate Professor of Playwriting and Theatre/Performance Studies, Ithaca College.
2. I founded East Coast Artists (ECA) in 1992. Unlike The Performance Group which I began in 1967 and headed until 1980, ECA is not a full-time permanent company. It is a not-for-profit corporation under whose aegis I have convened and reconvened a number of artists. *Faust/gastronome*, *YokastaS*, and *Imagining O*—all published here—are ECA productions. I have directed, but not authored or devised, several other ECA productions.
3. Eight of the twelve texts in this book focus on women: "Lots Daughters," *Briseis and the Sergeant*, *Dionysus in 69*, *Richard's Lear* (a woman plays King Lear), *The Prometheus Project*, *Faust/gastronome* (a woman plays Mephistopheles), *YokastaS*, and *Imagining O*. Many plays I've directed focus on women: August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, Jean Genet's *The Maids*, Henri Becque's *Woman of Paris*, Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, David Gaard's *The Marilyn Project*, Moliere's *Don Juan* (a woman played Sganarelle), August Wilson, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*.
4. Why *Yokasta* with a "Y" and "k" instead of the conventional *Jocasta* with a "J" and "c"? In ancient Greek, of course, the name looks altogether different—its spelling in English is a matter of convention and choice. Not only did I want the English to map the pronunciation of the name but also I wanted the character—and the play's title—to be unique.
5. On June 20, 2001 in Houston, Texas, Andrea Yates drowned in a bathtub her four sons and one daughter, aged six months to seven years. Originally convicted of murder, the verdict was overturned in 2005. In 2006 Yates was found not guilty because of insanity. Since then, Yates has been confined to secure mental hospitals. Yono's speech is adapted from a transcript of Yates's confession as published by the Associated Press on February 21, 2002.

6. *The Jerry Springer Show* (1991–2018) sensationalized often sexualized topics such as incest and adultery. The show featured guests in heated arguments with outbursts of physical fighting. Note adapted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Jerry_Springer_Show. Accessed November 18, 2024.
7. Typically, Greek heroes returning from battle were bathed by women. In this way, Agamemnon upon his return from the Trojan war was murdered in his bath by his wife Clytemnestra, according to Aeschylus in *Agamemnon*, the first play of the *Oresteia* trilogy. *Yokasta* echoes this ancient theme and action.
8. Sigmund Freud. 1961. *Interpretation of Dreams*, 262.
9. Sigmund Freud. 1961. *Interpretation of Dreams*, 262.
10. Adapted from Euripides 1955. *Hippolytus*, ll. 393ff. Translated by David Grene.
11. Euripides. 1955. *Hippolytus*, ll. 440–41, 466–67. Translated by David Grene.
12. Euripides. 1955. *Medea*, ll. 1040–41, 1070–73. Translated by Rex Warner.
13. Ted Hughes. 1969. *Seneca's Oedipus*, 16–18.
14. Yono's monologue is adapted from Andrea Yates's confession. See note 5.
15. Ted Hughes. 1969. *Seneca's Oedipus*, 54.

3

Faust/gastronome, 1993–1994

Introduction

Faust/gastronome is the first production of East Coast Artists (ECA). It ran at La MaMa in New York from February 18 to March 7, 1993. In January–February 1994, it toured the United Kingdom. From October 9–23, 1994, it was performed at the Riverside Church in New York.

ECA was the fourth group I founded or co-founded. Before ECA were the East End Players of Provincetown, the New Orleans Group, and The Performance Group. I was a producing director of the Free Southern Theater, but not a founder. In January 1980, after more than twelve years as TPG's artistic director, I resigned. The Performance Group became The Wooster Group led by Elizabeth LeCompte.¹ I began directing elsewhere. In 1981, I accepted Joseph Papp's invitation to stage Michael McClure's *The Red Snake* at New York's Public Theatre. Papp closed that production in previews because of differences between McClure and me. Next, in the summer of 1981, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I combined two Shakespeare plays into *Richard's Lear* (this volume). In 1983, I went to New Delhi, India, to direct the Repertory Company of the National School of Drama in *Cherry Ka Bagicha*, a Hindi translation of Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*. In 1985, I made *The Prometheus Project* (this volume). In 1987, I translated-adapted and directed Moliere's *Don Juan* at the University of Florida, Tallahassee. In 1989, before and during China's Democracy Movement, I co-directed (with Stephen Chan) Sun Huizhu's *Mingri Jiuyao Chu Shan* ("Tomorrow He'll Be Out of the Mountains") at the Shanghai People's Art Theatre. *Mingri* was about the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese authorities closed the production before it completed its run. In 1992, I directed August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* for the Grahamstown National Arts Festival, South Africa. This was the first African American play performed in South Africa. None of these seven productions were with my own company. After a decade of freelancing, I wanted my own company, again. Enter ECA. Therefore, in December 1991 I began work on what would become *Faust/gastronome* (*F/g*), ECA's first production.

When I started TPG, many of the performers were students, some enormously talented but none fully trained. A large part of making *Dionysus in 69* and subsequent TPG productions was ongoing training. With ECA, all of the performers were well trained before joining the company. Although I did some training with them—notably *rasaboxes*² which I was developing at the time—I concentrated on directing. Also, ECA was not a community or a collective as was TPG in some ways. In ECA, the artistic and administrative structures were more conventional. Performers and others worked with other groups or independently. ECA provided an umbrella, a not-for-profit tax status, and a productively loose association in which to make theatre. Over the years, I directed eight productions with ECA. Four of these premiered at the La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York. Ellen Stewart, La MaMa's founder and hegemonic

“mama,” welcomed ECA, providing us not only with theatres to show our work but also with much needed rehearsal space. After *Imagining O* (this volume), I shared ECA’s artistic leadership with Benjamin Mosse. Sarah Lucie became general manager. ECA continues today, hibernating, but able to wake when needed. Mosse is no longer involved in ECA.

In early 1992, I auditioned performers for what was to become *F/g*. Opera trained Rebecca Wilenski, who played Goneril in *Richard’s Lear*, and who played Mephistopheles in *F/g*, recalls:

In Dec 1991, I moved to NYC. You called the day after I arrived and said you had a Faust project and wanted me to be in it and that you wanted me to help you create your new group. I said yes to all of it.³

Some actors came from the Graduate Acting Program and from the Performance Studies Department of the Tisch School of the Arts, NYU. I was a professor of PS. Others were professional actors. As noted, all of the performers selected were trained. This was very different from those who formed The Performance Group in 1967.

F/g was staged at La MaMa as a work in progress in April 1992. The “finished”⁴ production played in February and March 1993, also at La MaMa. Quotation marks because no live performance is ever finished, each instance is different to some degree from every other. Why *Faust* for ECA’s first production? I can’t say for sure beyond my deep interest in the Faust story. In writing the script, I drew on multiple sources starting with what little we know about the actual Johann Georg Faust (ca. 1480–1540), an alchemist, astrologer, magician, and itinerant professor. J. G. Faust had one foot in the Middle Ages, the other in the Renaissance. He was shady and entertaining, the kind of person who generates gossip and tales elaborating the trajectory of his intentions rather than what he actually did. Faust was a contemporary of Martin Luther (1483–1546) who labeled Faust as “one lost beyond all hope.”⁵

In 1587, the anonymously authored *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* was published in Frankfurt. This short book in German mixed fact and fiction. In 1592, an English version appeared as “The Faust Book.” This was the basis for Christopher Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (1592). Marlowe’s play is a tragedy only at its finish. The meat of the play enacts Faustus’s adventures, with hardly a dark thought. Marlowe was 28 years old when he wrote *Doctor Faustus*.⁶ *Doctor Faustus* vehemently celebrates the exuberance of an individual who has no social conscience or concern for the state or any other collective entity (so different than Shakespeare). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote his deeply humanist *Faust: A Tragedy*⁷ in two parts, the first published in 1808, revised 1828–29, and the second published in 1832. While working on *F/g*, I and my colleagues read Marlowe and numerous texts by and about Goethe’s great work.⁸

Goethe’s *Faust* is from European literature’s Romantic period, full of striving, love, suffering, and ultimately redemption. With Goethe, Gretchen enters the tale as Faust’s paramour, courted, abandoned, but ultimately saved. Faust too ends in heaven. Goethe’s full two-part drama is rarely staged in its entirety, but Peter Stein did just that in Hanover, Germany, in July 2000. The performance took 21 hours over two days. Among many operatic treatments of the story are Hector Berlioz’s *The Damnation of Faust* (1849) and Charles Gounod’s *Faust* (1859). Richard Wagner’s *Faust Overture* (1840) never graduated into a full-blown opera. Gertrude Stein’s *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938), somewhere between a libretto and a play, is an often staged text. Of novels, the best known are Nikolai Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* (1928–40) and Thomas Mann’s

Doctor Faustus (1947). In addition, there are numerous other Faust retellings in music, drama, puppet theatre, manga, poetry, and fiction. From this plethora, I used Marlowe, Goethe, a little Gounod. Even speeches by Adolf Hitler. The rest is invention by me and the performers as we workshopped in 1992 and rehearsed in 1993.

The core Faust narrative is popular and compelling. Would you mortgage your “eternal soul” to obtain now and throughout your life all you desire? Who can resist the “Faustian bargain”? What matters tomorrow if today is all? The Faust story informs capitalism, colonialism, and individualism. It excites the appetite for unending production and consumption.

Faust's journey

Alchemy and cooking are close, if not identical. Transforming one substance, or a pot-pourri of substances, into something else is the essence of both the alchemical and the gastronomical arts. Cooking requires both knowledge and improvisation as the cook applies the pressure of fire to induce chemical changes. Recipes are formulae, the kitchen is a laboratory. Faust the gastronome is versed in the myriad ingredients of a well-stocked kitchen, some as common as salt others as precious as saffron. Herbs, meats, fruits, vegetables, fungi, liquids, powders: the raw materials of magical transformations. The blood-red or gold of some sauces, the sizzle of frying, the bubble of boiling, the warmth of roasting, the tingle of savory on the tongue, the burn of peppers. Chewing then swallowing, the fullness in your belly. The process engages the total sensorium. All to satisfy a primal urge, hunger. And yet, finally, what does cooking lead to? As Mephistopheles reminds Faust, “In just a few hours the richest banquet turns to shit.”

Once out of the kitchen and in possession of his devil-given powers, Faust performs both trivial and stupendous acts. He calms a herd of lowing cattle, rides a keg of beer as if it were a horse, argues with scholars, humiliates the famous and powerful, affiliates with iconoclasts and rebels. He cavorts, drinks, whores, and travels around the world magically. He seduces then abandons Gretchen. He never rests. His apex in *F/g* is as CEO of the Fist Group of corporations (“Faust” in German means “fist”). Underneath this striving is a serious Renaissance and then modern theme: knowledge acquired by means of research and experiment surpasses the powers and dogmas of the ruling classes and religions. At first, Faust knows his powers are not his own doing. But later he convinces himself of his autonomy. All the more reason then that when Mephistopheles comes to collect him, Faust is astonished, then angry, and finally terrified. The repressed returns: the pact with the devil has to be honored. But when will the future arrive to make its claim? How long can incessant activity keep what’s to come out of sight, out of mind? In our Faustian world, climate change, species extinction, pollution, and population growth press on humankind. We, like Faust, are ontologically insecure.

Faust is driven by his desire to exert total control over nature. In *F/g*, he proclaims “I tell you God made the world for me to use and improve.” If during the Renaissance and Romantic epochs this claim could be taken seriously, by now it stinks of irony—even if many still believe that “science and industry” will stop climate change, reverse species extinction, end pollution, stabilize or lower population, genetically engineer an “improved” human species, and get us all to utopia—or at least out of the mess we’re in. To what degree is this attitude

European/Euro-American? And to what degree is the story gendered? Faust's outlook and actions are those of a European man: they are phallic—that is, dedicated to gaining control and asserting power. But Faust's story is not so easily pigeonholed. Many women, in many parts of the world, desire what Faust desires. The underlying Faust problem may be cultural or gendered but it is also ethical and moral.

Two interviews frame *F/g*. In the Prologue, the performer who will play Mephistopheles interviews the performer who will play Faust about their belief in God. In the Epilogue, any performer interviews the performer who played Faust about how they feel “right now.” Both interviews are spontaneous. The performers speak as themselves, not as characters. In December 2023, I emailed Jeff Ricketts, who played Faust, about his experience. His reply:

I was invited to play Dr. Faustus by Richard Schechner and his East Coast Artists in 1993. I had been acting in NYC for 4 years and I was definitely in my prime. I embraced the gluttony, extremity, lechery, and poetry of it and pushed it as far as it could go, nay further. Richard is brilliant and impulsive. An incredible academic, but not in the rehearsal hall. He set up a creative, sometimes contentious, environment where “good taste” was tossed out in favor of bold choices.

I don't think we could have accomplished *Faust/gastronome* without such a stellar company. A group of trained actor/singer/dancers who pushed to have a heightened experience of selling one's soul and reaching for more, more, more. I think the pleasure we had in making *Faust/gastronome* made some audience members a little disgusted, but ENVIOUS.

Speaking of audience members, nobody was turned away. If there were no more seats, Richard would affectionately seat the overflow on the stage. It was the most natural thing to do.

I could write reams and reams about playing Faust, the master chef/chemist conjuring at his food table using texts from Christopher Marlowe and courting and fucking Gretchen from Goethe's *Faust* and giving birth to Hitler from my dyspeptic asshole, to attending a talk show with Albert Speer as guest. A half lifetime ago and still the jewel in my crown.⁹

Mephistopheles, Hitler, Speer, the Hasid

In *F/g*, Mephistopheles, Satan's representative on earth, is a woman. Almost. She is garbed in a modified tuxedo with two white-feathered wings bursting through her jacket from her shoulder blades. One of her feet is a hoof, making her walk with a slight limp. Her tail ends in an erect penis which Mephistopheles uses as a microphone when interviewing Faust. I wanted Faust's enabler and antagonist to be a gender ambivalent beautiful creature, the author and holder of the contract Faust signs in blood. Assisting Mephistopheles is Adolf Hitler, performed mainly in German by Ulla Neuerburg. By making Hitler a subservient devil performed by a woman in reverse drag, this monster is to some degree circumscribed by farce, a parody.¹⁰ The other major Nazi figure in *F/g* is Albert Speer,¹¹ Hitler's architect, the “good Nazi.” Speer appears on the “Vernice Minsky Miller Show,” a late night TV broadcast (a format I first used in *Briseis and the Sergeant* and much later in *YokastaS* (both this volume). Speer boasts of the edifices he designed for Hitler's “Thousand Year Reich” as if World War II had a different outcome. Miller then welcomes on to her show the “boundary-busting industrialist-anthropologist-philanthropist-scientist-futurologist, Dr. John Fist.” Fist is a

smooth-talking ruthless man intent on remaking the world: an aspect of Goethe's *Faust* part two. Is *Fist* a force for good? Or will his projects destroy the world? Goethe is ambivalent, and so is *F/g*. *Fist* is followed on the "Minsky Miller Show" by a "neo-Nazi cheerleader from Texas" and then by Hitler who orates his "speech to Hitler youth" from the 1934 Nuremberg Rally.¹² Hitler's rant is translated into English by means of placards held aloft by an actor dressed as a Hasid sitting on the floor in front of the Führer. What is the intent of all this? To show the conflation of fascism, neoliberalism, and populism: displayed, enabled, and driven by media. Looking back at *F/g*—especially the "Minsky Miller Show"—I see how much was correctly forecast, 30+ years before now (2023).

Gretchen

Opposing Faust-the-developer is Goethe's Gretchen. Her story is a Romantic era tragedy of a naive religious young woman who falls in love with a rich powerful man only to be exploited and abandoned. Faust pursues her partly from genuine affection and partly because he wants her as a conquest, another "thing." Immediately after she births their child, a girl in *F/g*, Gretchen drowns it. She is condemned to death. Faust offers to magically free her from jail, to rescue her from execution. But Gretchen refuses. Why? Because she truly has a good soul. Goethe admits her to heaven, despite the murder she's committed. Ultimately, Goethe saved Faust, too; but I could not bring myself to do that. In the next to last scene of *F/g*, Gretchen confronts Faust: "Don't you understand? What you describe is incredible, but what you have made is a mess. Look around you. Smell the disease, the hunger, the misery. Do you know anyone who is happy?" In *F/g*'s final scene, Gretchen taunts him: "What avails all thy riches, pleasures, and pomps?" (the Good Angel in Marlowe). Faust is then submerged by devils in a huge pot of "boiling" marinara sauce.

German

A considerable number of lines in *F/g* are German, from Goethe and Hitler. An amazing contrast, those two. Because the Faust story is first a German mythos, I wanted that language strongly heard in *F/g*. Ulla Neuerburg, born German, helped select the German texts, Hitler and Goethe. And she played Hitler. Because my German is poor at best, I worked with English translations and depended a lot on Neuerburg. Also, I assumed that most of the spectators for *F/g* at La MaMa in New York where it premiered did not understand German. Therefore, putting substantial amounts of German into the production, I was promoting a theatricalization of speaking, words as sounds not meaning. When German is spoken, audiences hear and see, but they can understand only by inference, staging, and context. This functions, to some degree, as a *Verfremdungseffekt* (another German word, this time from Brecht)—an "alienation effect" or "distancing" that requires a critical apparatus in order to comprehend what's going on. The most extreme example is Hitler's speech in the Vernice Miller Show. This is triply alienated, first by being in German, next by being translated visually by a Hasid holding up placards with the English translation written on them, and finally by being part of a TV talk show that is part of a stage play. I hoped that Hitler's oratorical power would be

turned against itself, sabotaged by the Hasid and the placards, and quarantined by being, this time, only “make believe.”

Workshops, staging, design, and music

F/g, like all my productions, was a showing of an integrated process. Every production element—environment, staging, music, costumes, music—supported each other, even as they each also maintained their independence, their artistic integrity. As always (when given the time), I started with workshops exploring the basic themes and actions. Rebecca Wilenski remembers the workshops that kicked off both *F/g* and ECA:

My memory is that a producer had contacted you about doing something for a festival in Italy and was willing to throw some money at it to get it started. [...] You brought us a book of Faust prints from which you were building your story. One had some weird rooster in it, or maybe the rooster kept popping up on different plates. You created various scenes and Ralph [Denzler] brought in original music. I think you created 5–6 scenes at that time. It was so much fun, you told the group that you were definitely creating a new performing company and wanted everyone in it. We all agreed and tried to come up with a name. [...] Brett Rickaby shouted, “It should be The Rooster Group”—playing on the weird rooster in the Faust pictures and Wooster Group. After we stopped laughing, Chris [Muller] suggested East Coast Performers. You amended it to East Coast Artists, because you liked ECA better than ECP. I think Maria [Vail] asked to be the president, we agreed and she worked with you and maybe Ulla [Neuerburg] to start the 501(c)3 process.

A few weeks later we performed for the producer. He was enthusiastic, but said the festival was cancelled and disappeared. I don’t know if you had asked Ellen Stewart to be at the performance or if you contacted her after, but the two of you talked and she put *F/g* on the season at La MaMa. We had more auditions and filled out the cast with Jeff Ricketts who played Faust after Brett left the group to do *Carousel* at Lincoln Center. You asked me to find a piece of classical Faust music to add in (I found Gounod’s “Vin ou bierre”) and it became the cow dance. You then asked me to be the vocal coach for both singing and stage work for the group. I said yes, adjusted the Linklater¹³ stuff I’d learned for our purposes. We rehearsed and performed at La MaMa in New York.¹⁴

F/g was staged frontally at La MaMa. The movement was fluid ranging from realism to dance numbers, adjusting to each scene. In the “Vernice Minsky Miller Show,” the audience was directly included, as they might be in a live television broadcast. Three large wood cook’s tables, designed and painted with Faustian scenes by Chris Muller, were the most important scenic feature. The tables could be moved to form different configurations, and stood on their sides or up-ended to suggest walls or to become a scenic backdrop. The multiple scenic possibilities of the tables ranged from Faust standing behind them performing the work of a chef, to Faust or others standing on the tables, or the tables being turned upside down to make Gretchen’s prison cell. The interview scenes used a table and simple chairs. The costumes designed by Constance Hoffman ranged from Meph’s ornate configuration through a wide panoply of clothing styles fully visible on an onstage clothing rack. The performers changed costumes as needed, in view of the spectators.

F/g's music includes instrumentals, ballads and arias, an opera chorus from Gounod's *Faust*, and a lullaby. The music is not incidental but fundamental to the performance because the tone of many scenes is set by the music, as in the movies. Ralph Denzer wrote most of the music. Michelle Kinney wrote songs for Mephistopheles. At one point, performers wearing cow heads (the same were used seven years earlier in *The Prometheus Project*) sing a chorus from Gounod's *Faust*. Denzer, Kinney, and Doug Andrews perform on a prominent and well-lit platform upstage right. Denzer situates the music in *F/g*:

The music for this show was partly inspired by cellist/co-composer Michelle Kinney's song, "Ay Faustus." Her use of intriguing chromatic harmonies and occasional dissonances which seem to appear as ghostly musical presences and then resolve themselves into concord was inspiring, reminding me of similar uses of dissonance in 16th century British vocal anthems.¹⁵

The score was also informed by the rich variety of northern European folk and popular music from the Renaissance to the present. Richard's deeply held belief in theatre as a continuum, abandoning the convention of blackouts during scene changes, allowed the music to be deeply and intimately embedded in the structure of *Faust/gastronome*.

Very importantly, the commitment of the company to maintaining and improving their vocal skills, guided by the highly gifted Rebecca Ortese [Wilenski], kept the songs fresh and inspired throughout the entire run in New York and on tour.

Once while performing in Glasgow, Scotland, we began the Overture, and there was a terrible SNAP—the bridge on Doug Andrew's bass had collapsed. Richard immediately jumped in and gave an inspired talk about his belief that actors should not pretend and ignore when something goes wrong on stage, but should instead acknowledge the problem and deal with it. By the time he finished speaking, the bridge was re-set, the bass tuned, and we began playing from the beginning of the Overture, with warm appreciation and applause from the audience.¹⁶

The Faustian Past and Future

In working out the text of *Faust/gastronome*, I used Marlowe's great poetry as bookends. But Faust's journey inside these bookends is closer to Goethe than Marlowe—with Goethe's narrative extended to include Hitler and Speer because history teaches that progress as exemplified by Goethe's Faust can, and did, lead to "improving" humankind by selective breeding, sterilization, and genocide. Eugenics might not have been a German invention,¹⁷ but it had its most virulent application in Nazi Germany. Faust's hubris projects the creation of a "master race" taking total control from planet earth to the solar system and beyond. Will artificial intelligence foster or forestall this? And what about that pact with the devil? Is climate change and the other catastrophes threatening human civilization the cost of "energy"? What happens when we literally burn our past? From the ancient Greeks, we know that ultimate hubris will exact an equally ultimate tragedy. But I do not intend *Faust/gastronome* to be a thesis play. It—like *Dionysus in 69* (this volume)—is a "cautionary tale" enacting problems for which there are no technical solutions. Problems of "soul," "psyche," "values," ... whatever. And I hope *F/g* not only warns but also entertains.



FIGURE 3.1: Using their tail-penis as a microphone, Mephistopheles/Rebecca Wilenski interviews Faust/Jeffrey Ricketts. The Narrator (David Letwin) looks on. La MaMa, New York, 1993. Photograph: Richard Schechner.

Faust/gastronome

Production

Director	Richard Schechner
Assistant directors	Sheldon Deckelbaum, Dawn Hoffberg
Set	Chris Muller
Music	Ralph Denzer, Michelle Kinney, Charles Gounod
Costumes	Constance Hoffman
Lights	Russell Champa, Lenore Doxsee
Choreography	Leigh Brown
Vocal coach	Rebecca (Ortese) Wilenski
Stage manager	Dawn Hoffberg
German text editor and translator	Ulla Neuerburg
Managing director	Anne Vitiello
Co-Sponsor	Goethe House, NY, German Cultural Center

Performers

Faust	Jeffrey Ricketts
Mephistopheles	Rebecca (Ortese) Wilenski
Hitler	Ulla Neuerburg
Gretchen	Maria Vail, Shaula Chambliss
Vernice Minsky Miller	Vernice Miller
Narrator, Albert Speer	David Letwin
Martha	Dan Berkey
Angels, Devils, Sins, Priest, Mother,	Frank Wood, Drew Barr, Dan Berkey, Shaula
Magician, Lieschen, Andy,	Chambliss Maria Vail, Leigh Brown
Cheerleader, Spectator Dan, Hasid	
Musicians	Ralph Denzer, Michelle Kinney, Doug Andrews

Prologue

The performer playing MEPHISTOPHELES interviews the performer playing FAUST about their belief in God.

1 Faust's Kitchen

NARRATOR:

We will now perform
The form of Faustus' fortunes, good or bad.
In Germany, born to working class parents,
Young Faustus soon left home for Wittenberg
There to study cooking and divinity.
He mastered cacciatore and steamed dumplings,
Fudge macaroons and Scandinavian coffee cake
Along with Aristotle's sweet analytics,
Heisenberg's indeterminacy, and the rantings
Of Martin Luther.

FAUST prepares to cook. He assembles different ingredients, combining them. Pouring flour, FAUST makes a magic circle on the floor. Etc. In other words, FAUST does alchemy.

FAUST:

Settle thy studies Faustus.
Begin to stir up what thou wilt profess.
Why not be a master chef and heap up gold,
Selling your sauces to five star hotels?
Why Faustus hast already attained that!

Are not thy recipes hung up as maps
 Whereby whole cities have escaped hunger?
 Yet art thou still but Faustus and a man.
 Could'st thou make men to live eternally
 Or being dead raise them to life again,
 Why that's a profession to be esteemed!
 Grind wheat to flour, flour to semolina
 And with garlic, turmeric, and sage form
 That pungent vegetarian golem
 Who will serve me all the days of my life.
 These cook books I love, the metaphysics
 Of wise French chefs, the necromantic arts:
 Lines, circles, letters, characters.
 Ay, these shapes are what Faustus desires.
 O, what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honor, and omnipotence
 Is promised to the studious gastronome!

FAUST conjures. He uses bags of rice, of flour, and many colored powders. He pours liquids, lights small fires. He chants and dances. Figures appear in the air & voices whispering, talking, singing.

NARRATOR:

So Professor John Faust took from his books how the ascending and descending spirits differ and divide among themselves, some being inclined to plain magic, some given to whoring, murder, and thievery. Faust could relate to these inclinations. Working long hours in his kitchen, Faust saw shadows run along the walls. Deep in the night he was often suddenly assaulted by many strange translucent bodies flying about here and there, pushing him back, while the air vibrated with multiple human presences and voices giving him great pleasure as if he were one body with those spirits.

GOOD ANGEL:

Faustus, lay that damned recipe aside
 And gaze not on it lest it tempt thy soul
 And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head!

BAD ANGEL:

Go forward John, in that famous art
 Wherein all of nature's treasures are contained.
 Be you on earth as God is in the sky,
 Lord and commander of all the elements!

FAUST pulls down his pants, squats at the end of his cooking table, and conjures-shits.

FAUST:

Faustus, begin thine incantations

And try if devils will seek thy farts.
Into this circle I blow out the names
Of holy saints and call on Beelzebub.
I shit Yahweh's name forward and backward
Anagrammatized in Hebrew, Sanskrit,
Greek, and Latin. Devils beneath my bum
Arise! I call you, I command you come!

Various items issue from FAUST's bum, coming from under the table.

How am I gluttled with conceit of this!
Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?
Resolve me of all ambiguities?
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
I'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for oil and magnesium
And search all the corners of Africa
For diamonds, coconuts, and dark-skinned slaves.
I'll have them read me strange philosophy
And spill the secrets of all scientists.
I'll levy soldiers and make Germany
The fieriest power in all the world.

Finally HITLER.

HITLER: Nichts hatte mich in kurzer Zeit so nachdenklich gestimmt als die langsam
aufsteigende Einsicht in die Art der Betätigung der Juden auf gewissen
Gebieten.
FAUST: Marschieren!
DEVILS: Rechts, links!
HITLER: Gab es denn da einen Unrat, eine Schamlosigkeit in irgendeiner Form,
vor allem des kulturellen Lebens ...
FAUST: Mach einen Purzelbaum!
HITLER: Jawohl! Gab es denn da einen Unrat, eine Schamlosigkeit an der nicht
wenigstens ein Jude beteiligt gewesen wäre? Sowie man nur vorsichtig
in eine solche Geschwulst hineinschnitt, fand man, wie die Made im
faulenden Leibe, oft ganz geblendet vom plötzlichen Lichte, ein Jüdlein.
Das war Pestilenz, geistige Pest—

MEPHISTOPHELES *appears, not from FAUST, but independently. MEPH is dressed
formally, but with a hoof, wings, and a long tail whose final inches is an erect penis. MEPHIS-
TOPHELES silences HITLER.*

MEPH: Now, Faustus, what wouldst' thou have me do?
FAUST: And who are you?

MEPH: Mephistopheles, servant to great Lucifer.
 FAUST: How pliant is this Mephi—Mepho—
 HITLER: Mephistopheles!

FAUST:
 Mephistopheles,
 Full of obedience and humility,
 Such is the force of magic and my spells!
 I charge thee wait upon me whilst I live
 To do whatever Faustus shall command,
 Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere
 Or the ocean to overwhelm the world.

MEPH: Without Lucifer's leave, I may not serve thee.
 FAUST: Did not my conjuring raise thee? Speak.
 MEPH:
 That was the cause, but yet per accidens.

Singing.

I am the servant to great Lucifer
 What he commands, I perform.
 For when we hear one rack the name of God,
 Abjure the Scriptures and his savior Christ,
 We fly in hope to get his glorious soul.
 Therefore the shortest cut for conjuring
 Is stoutly to abjure the Trinity
 And pray devoutly to the prince of hell.

Speaking.

That's me—

HITLER: That's him.
 MEPH: Forever damned.
 ALL: Nema.
 FAUST: Forever, damned? How comes it then that thou art out of hell?

MEPH *singing*:
 Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.
 Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God
 And tasted the eternal joys of heaven
 Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
 In being deprived of everlasting bliss?

FAUST: But tell me, who is Lucifer, thy lord?

MEPH *speaking*:

Arch-regent and commander of all spirits.

FAUST: Was not that Lucifer an angel once?

MEPH: Yes, Faustus, and most dearly loved of God.

FAUST: How comes it then that he is prince of hell?

MEPH:

By hungry pride and thirsty insolence

For which God threw him from the face of heaven.

FAUST: And what are you that live with Lucifer?

MEPH:

Unhappy beings that fell with Lucifer,

Conspired against our God with Lucifer,

And are forever damned with Lucifer.

FAUST:

Go bear these tidings to great Lucifer:

Say Faustus surrenders to him his soul

So he will spare him four and twenty years

Letting him live in all voluptuousness,

Having thee ever to attend on me,

To give me whatsoever I demand,

To slay mine enemies and to aid my friends

And always be obedient to my will.

Go and return to mighty Lucifer

And meet me in my kitchen at midnight,

There to inform me of thy master's mind.

MEPH: I will, Faustus.

Exits.

FAUST *singing*:

Had I as many souls as there be stars

I'd give them all for Mephistopheles.

By him I'll be great emperor of the world!

My fiery rockets will fly through the air.

Rivers I'll bend and forests cut naked.

I'll construct a bridge making Africa

Continent to Spain. Then next all Asia

And America will be mine to possess!

HITLER *echoes elements of FAUST's song.*

HITLER: I can teach you how to turn yourself into a dog or a cat or a mouse or a rat or anything!

NARRATOR: As Faustus was being lathered and shaved for the time of his life, he began to think.

FAUST:
Now chief Faust must thou needs be damned!
What boots it then to think on God or heaven?
Away with such vain fancies and gossip.
Despair in God and trust in Beelzebub!

BAD ANGEL: Go not back, Dr. Fist. Be resolute!
GOOD ANGEL: Abjure this magic, turn to God again.
FAUST: Yes, yes, Faustus will turn to God again.

BAD ANGEL:
To God? He loves you not. The god you serve
Is your own appetite wherein is fixed
The love of Beelzebub!

FAUST:
To him I'll build
An altar and offer lukewarm blood
From newborn babes baked fresh in my ovens.

BAD ANGEL: Go forward, Faustus, in your famous art.
GOOD ANGEL: Sweet Faustus leave that execrable profession.
FAUST: Contrition, prayer, repentance, what of these?
GOOD ANGEL: They are the means to bring thee unto heaven.
BAD ANGEL: Illusions, the wild fruits of fantasy.
GOOD ANGEL: Darling John think of heaven and heavenly things.
BAD ANGEL: No Faustus, think of stardom, fame, and wealth

FAUST:
Excellent!
Oscars will be mine! And all Hollywood.
With Mephistopheles standing by me
What producer can hurt me?
Veni, veni my Mephistopheles!

As the clock strikes midnight, MEPHISTOPHELES enters.

Now tell me, what says Lucifer your lord?

MEPH:

That I shall wait on Faustus while he lives
So he will buy my service with his soul.

FAUST: Already Faustus has hazarded that for thee.

MEPH:

But now you must bequeath it solemnly
And write a deed of gift with your own blood.
For that security craves Lucifer.

FAUST: What good will my soul do Lucifer?

MEPH: Enlarge his kingdom.

FAUST: Is that the reason why he tempts me so?

MEPH: Misery loves company.

FAUST: Do the pots of hell boil continuously?

MEPH:

Everlastingly.
But tell me, Faustus, shall I have your soul?
So I will be your slave and wait on you
And give you more than you have wit to ask?

FAUST: Ay, Mephistopheles, I'll give it to you.

MEPH:

Then, John, stab your neck
And become as great as great Lucifer.

FAUST *carefully cuts his own neck.*

FAUST:

Look, look, my darling friend, Faustus assures
With blood his soul to be great Lucifer's,
Chief lord and regent of perpetual night.
View here this blood that pours from my neck
And let it be the sign of my good faith.

MEPH: But Faustus, sign with blood this deed of gift.

FAUST: So I will. But my blood congeals.

MEPH: Here's fire from your stove to dissolve it!

FAUST:

What might the staying of my blood portend?
Is it unwilling I should sign this bill?

Why streams it not that I may write afresh:
 “Faustus gives to you his soul”?

MEPH: Cook your blood till it runs.

FAUST:
 Look it is liquid again.
 Now I will do it. Consummatum est!

For the first time, FAUST sees the devils clearly.

Are all these mine to do with what I please?

MEPH:
 Yes, Faustus, and greater than these too!
 Listen: I swear by hell and Lucifer
 To effect all promises between us both.

FAUST:
 Mephistopheles, when four and twenty
 Years are expired, I give you full power
 To fetch and carry Faust:
 Body and soul, flesh, blood, guts, and goods
 Into your habitation forever.
 Done in blood by me, John Faust, the Fist!

2 A Field

NARRATOR: Testing out the powers he acquired from Mephisto, Faust performed many
 tricks and wonders. In Halebrown—

HITLER, *correcting the NARRATOR's pronunciation*:
 Heilbronn!

NARRATOR: Heilbronn. Faust transformed a herd of lowing cows into opera singers.

*Performers wear the heads of cows strapped to their butts. When the performers face upstage,
 the cows look at the spectators.*

COW: I used to get the best grass.
 COW: My tits hurt, I could use some milking.
 COW: You smell like buttermilk!
 COW: Human!
 COW: There he is.
 COW: My horns up his ass!

COWS: Stampede! Stampede!

COWS stampede, but FAUST first calms them and then leads them in singing “Biere et Vin” from Gounod’s Faust.

3 An Open Place

MEPH: Well Faustus, what would you desire?

FAUST: Let me have a wife for I am wanton and lascivious and cannot live without a wife.

MEPH: And what kind of wife would you have?

FAUST, interviewed by MEPHISTOPHELES, describes the kind of wife he—the performer—desires. MEPHISTOPHELES repeats the description back to FAUST phrase by phrase. Then MEPHISTOPHELES abruptly stops the interview.

MEPH: No, Faustus, thou shalt have such a wife as I choose.

As each wife is described, she appears and is presented to FAUST.

FAUST: How about Meike, a pregnant Dutch dairy queen whose full breasts are fountains of sweet cream?

MEPH: No. What else have you got?

MEPH: Why not try an eight year old boy from Bombay who knows more than most boys his age? Look at his soft tawny skin. This young master of kama yoga smells of sandalwood and saffron. He lives only to serve you.

FAUST: But will he—?

Whispers in MEPHISTOPHELES’s ear.

MEPH: Of course, of course. But I know what you really desire.

A woman appears.

FAUST: What sight is this?

MEPH: John, this tender morsel has come from hell in person to show thee some pastime. Nicole is a brilliant twenty-two year old French intellectual in charge of rare manuscripts at the Bibliotheque de l’Arsenal. Look how prim and proper she is! She never wears makeup, she speaks four languages, and she swims 50 laps a day. You can follow Nicole up into the stacks where she will quickly disrobe, neatly fold her Givenchy suit, and moan softly as you eat sushi from her firm chocolate thighs and lick tangy wasabi from her closely trimmed bush.

NICOLE: Vite, vite! Plus!

FAUST: Here's a hot whore indeed!
 MEPH: So now Faustus, wilt thou still have a wife?
 FAUST: No, I'll no wife.

MEPH:
 Marriage is but a ceremonial toy,
 And if thou lovest me, think no more of it.
 I'll cull thee out the fairest courtesans
 And bring them every morning to thy bed.
 She whom thine eye shall like, thy heart shall have
 Were she as chaste as was Penelope,
 As black as Sheba, or as beautiful
 As was bright Lucifer before his fall.

GRETCHEN *appears*.

FAUST: God, now there's a creature worth wanting! The sight of her is as pleasant to me as Paradise was to Adam the first day of his creation!
 MEPH: Which one?
 FAUST: That one. I've never seen a woman like that before. How dark she is, with April rains in her face and thunders all through her hair! Look at those eyes like black angels, her brows like bended bows. And the way she walks! Her ass, like two round apples! I can't wait to sink myself in her!

Approaching GRETCHEN.

Mein schönes Fräulein, darf ich wagen,
 Meinen Arm und Geleit Ihr anzutragen?
 GRETCHEN: I'm not a lady, let alone pretty. And I can get home without your help, thank you.
 FAUST: Those lips and teeth, her mouth is like a rosebud filled with snow! That voice! And the way she dropped her eyes when I spoke to her, shy yet inviting. And the way she brushed me off! Oh! She knows what to do. Get me that girl.
 MEPH: That one's just come from her priest. I stood next to him in the confessional—my hand under his cassock as he pronounced her free of sin. Without a blemish, she had nothing to confess, not even a bad thought. Over her, I have no power.
 FAUST: Is this the same Beelzebub who promised me chaste Penelope? Is this the Mephistopheles who boasted, "She whom thine eye shall like thy heart shall have?"
 MEPH: I tell you this young female person cannot be won in a flash.
 FAUST: When then?
 MEPH: Oh, bravo, now you are on fire! But she's as cool as November. I'll need at least two weeks to warm up her fantasies.
 FAUST: Two weeks! I'll never last. You'll have to do better.
 MEPH: Two days then, my impetuous Lothario. I need to visit her vis-a-vis so I can myself test her ins and outs while with deep looks I release into her eyes such magic that she turns restless over you. Her bed I need to trouble, giving her the

deepest itches a woman can scratch. Her carnal fires, though lit and burning, crave lots of stoking and blowing on.

FAUST: Hear me, tailcock, if I'm not inside her by midnight, our little contract's null and void. You're not the only fork-tongue in hell! I conjured once, and I can turn that trick again.

MEPH: What's signed in blood can't be unsigned with semen. You're talking like Don Juan, but I tell you to wait. What's left of supper after you've eaten? In just a few hours the richest banquet turns to shit. But I like how excited you are. Your agony warms me up, as if I required any external cooking. So let's not linger, I'll convey you to this Gretchen's room tout suite.

4 Gretchen's Room

FAUST: Where is she?

GRETCHEN: Mutti?

MEPH: She's about to come home.

FAUST: Can she hear me? Can she see me?

MEPH: Don't worry, Faustus. Prepare thyself for mirth.

HITLER: Pssst! Faust! This Gretchen of the dark eyes, she is not of pure Aryan blood. I smell the Jew in her! I can get you Helen of Troy, pure Aryan stock, with a face that launched a thousand ships.

GRETCHEN: I'd give a few pennies to know who that man was back there. A gentleman, that I know. Very noble looking.

MEPH *to* FAUST: Take this casket full of all the things this young woman desires. Though pure, she is not beyond temptation.

GRETCHEN: What was that? It's so hot in here.

HITLER *muttering in German throughout the scene, from Mein Kampf, 61–62, 629–30.*

HITLER:
 Gab es denn da einen Unrat, eine Schamlosigkeit in irgendeiner Form, vor allem des kulturellen Lebens, an der nicht wenigstens ein Jude beteiligt gewesen wäre? Sowie man nur vorsichtig in eine solche Geschwulst hineinschnitt, fand man, wie die Made im faulenden Leibe, oft ganz geblendet vom plötzlichen Lichte, ein Jüdlein. Das war Pestilenz, geistige Pestilenz, schlimmer als der schwarze Tod von einst, mit der man da das Volk infizierte. Und in welcher Menge dabei dieses Gift erzeugt und verbreitet wurde! Natürlich, je niedriger das geistige und sittliche Niveau eines solchen Kunstfabrikanten ist, um so unbegrenzter ist seine Fruchtbarkeit, bis so ein Bursche schon mehr wie eine Schleudermaschine seinen Unrat der anderen Menschheit ins Antlitz spritzt. Dabei bedenke man noch die Unbegrenztheit ihrer Zahl; man bedenke, dass auf einen Goethe die Natur immer noch leicht zehntausend solcher Schmierer der Mitwelt in den Pelz setzt, die nun als Bazillenträger schlimmster Art die Seelen vergiften. Diese Verpestung unseres Blutes, an der Hunderttausende unseres Volkes wie blind vorübergehen, wird aber vom Juden heute planmäßig betrieben. Planmäßig schänden diese schwarzen Völkerparasiten unsere unerfahrenen, jungen blonden Mädchen und zerstören dadurch etwas, was auf dieser Welt nicht mehr

ersetzt werden kann. Bleibt auch nur ein Staat in seiner nationalen Kraft und Größe erhalten, wird und muss das jüdische Weltsatrapenreich, wie jede Tyrannei auf dieser Welt, der Kraft des nationalen Gedankens erliegen.

GRETCHEN:

It's so hot in here, and the thunder storm is coming, I can feel it. I feel - not right. I wish my mutti was home.

Singing.

In Norway lived a king
The truest of his breed
His lover as she lay dying
Gave him a golden cup.

This king adored that cup
Drinking from it every night
And every time he drank up
Tears flowed from his eyes.

At last when he lay dying
His kingdom he foretold
Giving to each knight a share
But not that cup of gold.

His vassals all came to him
For nightfall's final feast
They drank the old king's ending
In his castle by the sea.

GRETCHEN *and* FAUST:
The old man rose to drink
His life's last libation
Then threw his sacred cup
Into the flooding ocean.

GRETCHEN:

He watched his cup drink water
And sink into the sea
His eyes also were sinking
And never again drank he.

As GRETCHEN finishes singing, she sees the box. She reaches in bringing out desired items. The final thing is a delicacy to eat. The exact dialog here is improvised as GRETCHEN unpacks the box.

GRETCHEN: What is this? Gott im Himmel! Wow! This is just what I wanted! But this stuff isn't mine. How did all this get here? I shouldn't touch any of it, not a single thing. But what's the harm in trying on this little thing? Or having a bite of this?

FAUST:
Willkommen, süßer Dämmerchein,
Der du dies Heiligtum durchwebst!
Ergreif mein Herz, du süße Liebespein,
Die du vom Tau der Hoffnung schmachtend lebst!
Wie atmet rings Gefühl der Stille,
Der Ordnung, der Zufriedenheit!
In dieser Armut welche Fülle!
In diesem Kerker welche Seligkeit!

HITLER: Faust is making a big mistake, giving in to these womanly sentiments. Süßer Dämmerchein! Du süße Liebespein! German men must be hard, not soft.
MEPH: Remember you are new to hell, only an apprentice.
HITLER: Ja, mein Führer!

NARRATOR:
Poor Faust, I don't know him anymore.
Why is Faust's heart beating so hard?
Why does he feel so sick?
What magic smells engulf him?
A quick fuck was all he wanted
But now he dreams only of love.
Are we all just puppets?

HITLER: Look, he wants to crawl close to her
And lay at her feet like a dog.
GRETCHEN: I like this, I love this, I want more! You see, it's true, it's really true! God helps the poor!

5 An Open Place

MEPH: Beydelus, Demeymes, Adulex, Matucgayn, Atine, Ffex, Uquzuz, Gadix, Sol,
Veni cito cum tuis spiritibus!
FAUST: What's the matter?
MEPH: I wish I could think of a more effective curse!
FAUST: I've never seen you so down in the mouth.
MEPH: I'd damn my soul to hell if I weren't already damned to hell. You know all the good things we gave Gretchen? The nightie, the pizza, the diamond tiara? Some filthy priest has got it all. Gretchen's mother comes home, right? She sees the girl stuffing her face with pizza, wearing a diamond crown, pushing rubies into her belly button, and fuck knows what all. The old lady starts to shake.

MOTHER: I smell the devil's work in all this!
 MEPH: She moans.
 MOTHER: You'll be made a whore of in a flash!

MEPH:
 She thunders. She has a nose for sin. You can bet her skanky old quim's been locked in a prayer book these 30 years. Anyway, she takes the booty and runs off to her favorite priest. Gretchen is thinking bon voyage to her gift horse. Even as she knows that whoever left it can't be all bad. The priest takes one gander at the stuff and oozes thanks to the Virgin Mary.

PRIEST *chanting*:
 Child, you've done Christian thing, which is its own reward.
 Only the all-ingesting mother Church, who without a burp
 slurps up entire countries but is always ready to feast again,
 can lubricate sufficient digestive juices to dissolve all sin
 from these items.

MEPH: And so, drooling, this fart of a priest picks up necklaces, rings, and anklets as if they were foul toadstools or greasy crumbs and sweeps them off the table into his skirts. He doesn't even thank Gretchen's mom. He just promises her some heaven after she dies. To think I pleased him just last week!

FAUST: And Gretchen?

MEPH: Depressed.

FAUST: Gretchen depressed?

MEPH: She doesn't know what to do. She thinks day and night of pizza and rubies. And she wonders about the man who brought her these good things.

FAUST: Go fetch her another box richer than the first!

MEPH: You think it's just child's play, don't you?

FAUST: Just do it!

After FAUST exits.

MEPH: Yes, my lord, such a pleasure, my great sir. What a fool is a man in love! For his lady's sake, the sun and moon and all the stars he'd evaporate.

6 Martha's House

NARRATOR: Mephistopheles, in order to acquire Gretchen for Faust, romanced her best friend, Martha, a woman of middle age. Soon after the devil knocked on her door, Martha's heart went out to him.

MARTHA: May God forgive my husband, dem Hund! I know I never will. That crazy fucker's roaming the world while I'm stuck here in this dump. The Lord knows I never cheated on him. What a dumb bitch I am! But, Willi, I love you, dearly, I do, mmmmmmm Willi, Willi. What if he's dead? Oh, no, my dear husband dead! If only it were certified, in black and white, I could go on welfare.

GRETCHEN enters dressed in finery and jewels.

GRETCHEN: Martha! Martha!
 MARTHA: Oh my God, Gretchen, look at you!
 GRETCHEN: My legs are weak. This morning I found another box right in my bed! Look, the stuff in this one is more better, super finer and richer than the first!
 MARTHA: Don't you look first class?! Hide everything from your mom or she'll give it all to that piss off priest again.
 GRETCHEN: I can't go to church looking like this.
 MARTHA: Church? You just visit friend Martha whenever you go the itch. You can parade up and down in front of my mirror and we'll have a grand time together playing dress up. *Eating.* These are Swiss chocolates, the very best kind!

MARTHA keeps getting her hands on stuff. GRETCHEN keeps pulling it back. But MARTHA gets away with a few things.

GRETCHEN: Who can be leaving this stuff for me?
 MARTHA: Who cares? But when Easter comes, you can wear a thing or two, and me too, this necklace maybe, then a pearl in your ear for Corpus Christi and this small diamond in mine! Who'll notice? And then on Assumption Day we can wear these little silk scarves and a few rings. For All Saints we'll try on some garters, new skirts, and these two gold bracelets. By Christmas we'll be all decked out.

A knock on the door.

GRETCHEN: Shit! It's my mom! I gotta take these off!
 MARTHA: No, it's not. It's a stranger, a person with a limp.
 MEPH: If you ladies will allow me, it's Frau Martha Schwerdtlein I'm looking for.
 MARTHA: And why does your honor seek Frau Schwerdtlein?
 MEPH *noticing* GRETCHEN: I didn't expect to find myself among such elegant company!
 GRETCHEN: Elegant? Not us. We're working people.
 MEPH: It's not the jewelry or the silks, but your eyes, your manner, your whole being. So you are Frau Schwerdtlein?
 MARTHA: No, that one's me. This is my friend, Gretchen. Would you like a drink?
 MEPH: Not at the moment, thank you. I am very pleased to make your acquaintance. I only wish I brought better news. Don't be angry with me when I tell you, Frau Schwerdtlein, your husband's dead—
 MARTHA: Tot! Oh shit. I'm going to faint. I need a drink.
 GRETCHEN: Martha, Martha!
 MEPH: —and he sends you his best.
 MARTHA: Tell me how my dear boy met his end! Leave out no detail!

- MEPH: I can tell you the story first hand because I was next to him when he died. "I'm a hateful sinning son-of-a-bitch!" he cried out. "My life has been one string of fuckups and dirty double crosses. I kicked over my job, abandoned my wife and children, and went to sea. I can die in peace only if I know my Martha forgives me!"
- MARTHA: I do, I do!
- MEPH: But then, with his dying gasp, he said: "Bad as I was, God knows that cunt was far worse than me."
- MARTHA: Der verlogene Schwanzlutscher!
- MEPH: He said, "Every time I had a hard-on, that bitch dropped another kid on me. They needed bread and more than bread. We were poor and sick and dirty. We coughed away the freezing as fuck winters and sweated like pigs in the summer. And always that asshole of a wife hammered me like I was a nail."
- MARTHA: I don't believe it.
- MEPH: Those were his final words, madam.
- GRETCHEN: Like a nail?
- MEPH: Like a nail. But hear me out. Your husband was so fervent in his prayers, so devoted to the saints and the Holy Trinity, that Heaven rewarded him. Only two years before his death, he enlisted with pirates and seized tons of the infidel Turk's gold.
- MARTHA: Is it buried somewhere? Where's the map? Have you brought it?
- MEPH: Blown to the four winds, who knows how? A whorehouse in Naples, a slim girl from Palermo who sucked him when he had no friends. Your husband died penniless.
- MARTHA: The fucking ungrateful tiny-dicked pimple fart. And he with a wife and five children!
- MEPH: His bones are buried close to St. Anthony's church in Padua. I saw to it that the ground where he sleeps his everlasting sleep was properly consecrated.
- GRETCHEN: I thank my Lord for that.
- MARTHA: Surely there's something more? You didn't come all this way to drop this bag of shit on me?
- MEPH: One thing more to tell. With his last flicker of energy he pressed into the palm of a boyish Padua priest enough cash to underwrite the singing of three hundred masses. At the end, his purse was empty but not his soul.
- MARTHA: Was sagst du? Not a single gem? No artwork? Not even a sketch by da Vinci or a Fra Angelico miniature? I need liquid assets!
- MEPH: Madam, my heart bleeds for you.
- GRETCHEN: Oh, these poor unfortunate people! I'll sing Requiems for his soul.
- MEPH: What a fresh being. You deserve to be married sofort.
- GRETCHEN: Excuse me, but I'm in no hurry.
- MEPH: Maybe a lover then? My darling, one of life's great pleasures is to take full measure of your sweetheart's charms.
- GRETCHEN: That's not the custom around here.
- MEPH: Custom or not, plenty get fat on it, my dear.
- MARTHA: Wasn't he always running after foreign women and drinking French wine and throwing dice? What a louse! Ach Gott! Wie doch mein erster war, find ich nicht leicht auf dieser Welt den andern!

MEPH: You wouldn't be crying now if you had spread your liberty at home as he unfurled his abroad! If there were time, I'd go few rounds with you myself.

MARTHA: Oh, es beliebt dem Herrn zu scherzen!

MEPH: But I'm lame, madam, can't you see? And my organ, long as it is, is of no use whatever. *To* GRETCHEN. And how is your heart beating?

GRETCHEN: What do you mean?

MEPH: Du gut's, unschuldig's Kind! Farewell, ladies!

GRETCHEN: Lebewohl.

MARTHA: Not so fast, clubfoot. I want a death certificate! I'm entitled to a little state aid, you know. For that I need to show exactly where my hubby died and where buried. I want it in black and white.

MEPH: You fortunate madam. "What is sworn by two must always be true." Is that not so? I happen to have a friend close by who will happily swear he stood next to me that morning in Padua. Shall I bring him here?

GRETCHEN: Please do.

MARTHA: As soon as you can!

MEPH: And will this young person be here too? My handsome travelling companion is eager to show such young ladies every courtesy.

MARTHA: In the garden we'll meet you and your friend. Be quick about it.

MEPH: Till then, then.

GRETCHEN: I can't wait.

7 An Open Place

FAUST: So? How did it go? Can I have her soon?

MEPH: Oh you are on fire! Yes, Gretchen will be yours. Later this afternoon you will meet her behind Martha's house. That woman is a born pimp. But something's required of us in exchange.

FAUST: One good turn deserves another.

MEPH: We have to testify that Martha's husband is buried in St. Anthony's church in Padua.

FAUST: Padua? We have to go to Padua?

MEPH: My innocent Faustus. Going to Padua? Just sign the affidavit and be damned if it's true or not.

FAUST: I won't lie under oath.

MEPH: You've never sworn a lie? This afternoon won't you deceive poor Gretchen without thinking twice about it? Won't you be swearing your everlasting love—

FAUST: With all my heart!

MEPH: Hard-on, you mean. Does it spring from your all-truthful soul?

FAUST: Shut up!

NARRATOR: Then Faust protested he was a slave to the love urge which had no name.

FAUST:
Nach Namen suche, keinen finde,
Dann durch die Welt mit allen Sinnen schweife,

Nach allen höchsten Worten greife,
 Und diese Glut, von der ich brenne,
 Unendlich, ewig, ewig nenne,
 Ist das ein teuflisch Lügenspiel?

NARRATOR: And he called the erotic fire in which he burned, endless, perpetual, eternal.
 But the devil said:
 MEPH: Despite all that, I am right.
 NARRATOR: To which Faust replied:
 FAUST: You are right because I have no choice.

8 A Garden

NARRATOR: Walking through a garden, the devil teases Martha while Gretchen falls deeper in love with Faust. To please Gretchen, Faust catches a rainbow in his hand and gives it to her.

The two couples, FAUST and GRETCHEN, MEPHISTOPHELES and MARTHA, stroll, sometimes crossing each other's paths; a quadrangular dance.

GRETCHEN:
 You're just being kind to me, I know. How can the way I talk give pleasure to a well-travelled gentleman like you? Tell me the truth, that magic box was from you, wasn't it?

FAUST *kisses her hand.*

Don't, it's so ugly and rough! I work, you know. I get up each morning so early it's still dark and I wash out my mother's clothes and cook her breakfast. Then I run to the market and haggle the prices down. Und immer fort wie heut so morgen. Da geht's, mein Herr, nicht immer mutig zu; doch schmeckt dafür das Essen, schmeckt die Ruh.

FAUST: I can make life better for you.
 MARTHA: You're on the road all the time? I know about men like you.
 MEPH: My business keeps me hopping all over the place.
 MARTHA: That's ok for the young, so um und um frei durch die Welt zu streifen. But sooner or later old age closes in, you've got to settle down. No man wants to die a bachelor.
 MEPH: Mit Grausen seh ich das von weitem.
 MARTHA: Then take my advice before it's too late.
 GRETCHEN: My family is very small, just my mother and me. Except for Martha, I have no friends.
 FAUST: I'm your friend now.
 GRETCHEN: Are you? My father died such a long time ago I hardly remember him. I had a little sister I was very close to, but she died too. I adored her. I was her real mother. I fed her warm milk at night. It was my lap she curled up in.

FAUST: That must've made you happy.
 GRETCHEN: Yes, but she was a lot of trouble too. Her crib was next to my bed and when she made the slightest stir or cough or cry I'd wake up like a bolt. I'd scoop her up into my bed—she was so frail and burning with fever!—and sing her back to sleep. Sometimes I carried her around the room. Still, no matter what the night was like, I'd get up early in the morning and run to the market. You know, I do everything around the house: cook, sew, sweep, knit. My mother doesn't help. She's at church all day lighting candles. And when she comes home she pokes her nose into everything. According to her, I never do anything right!

MARTHA: Convincing a bachelor to marry is fucking impossible.
 MEPH: If anyone could do it, it would be you.
 MARTHA: Haven't you ever been attracted to someone?
 MEPH: A good wife, even worn and old,
 Is worth her weight in pearls and gold.
 MARTHA: You think I'm old!
 MEPH: Mit Frauen soll man sich nie unterstehn zu scherzen.
 FAUST: When I stopped you in the street—
 GRETCHEN: I couldn't look you in the eye. I wanted to come home with you then and there. But I didn't want you to think I could be had for the asking. Honestly, I didn't know my own feelings. They just grew inside me.

FAUST: I love you.
 GRETCHEN: I'm shivering!

FAUST *kisses her lightly.*

FAUST: Here, let me give you a rainbow.
 NARRATOR: Faustus ergreift einen Regenbogen mit der Hand.
 GRETCHEN: Look at the colors!
 FAUST: For you.

They kiss again, passionately.

MARTHA: Your friend seems to like my friend.
 MEPH: And she him. That's the way of the world.
 GRETCHEN: Oh, Johannes, I love you so!

MEPHISTOPHELES *stamps with his hoof signaling that it is time to depart.*

FAUST: Who's there?
 MEPH: A friend.
 GRETCHEN: A beast.
 MEPH: We must be on our way.
 FAUST: One more kiss.
 GRETCHEN: You've got to go?
 FAUST: I will see you again.
 GRETCHEN: If my mother wasn't such a light sleeper, I'd leave my door open tonight.

FAUST: Du Engel, Faust the master chef can fix that. Take this syrup and sweeten her warm milk with it. Your mother will sleep so deeply even the groans of hell wouldn't wake her up!

GRETCHEN: This won't hurt her?

FAUST: Dearest, would I lie to you?

MARTHA: Gretchen, it's time to go home.

GRETCHEN: No, no, no, no, no!

MEPH: Come, Dr. Fist, we must be on our way.

FAUST: Nein!

MEPH: Yes. Tomorrow's another day.

FAUST: Till tonight, then. He owns my soul, and you my heart.

FAUST *and* MEPHISTOPHELES *exit*.

GRETCHEN: That man! Martha, Martha! Do you see the rainbow he put into my hand? How bright its colors are!

9 An Open Place

HITLER: Listen, Dr. Fist. Though our party consists of only seven men, it already has two great principles. First, it wants to be a party with a true ideology. And, second, it wants to be the one and only power in Germany and in the world.

FAUST: I want Gretchen, you funny man!

HITLER: But I am offering you—the world!

10 Gretchen's room

NARRATOR: Soon night came, and the desired woman waited for him in her bedroom. Gretchen did not suspect that the sweet syrup from Faust's kitchen had sent her mother straight to heaven. So when Faust slipped through the door carrying a bag of his best pastries, she was all his. At last, he took Gretchen in his arms, embraced her, and satisfied himself with her. Before making love, the lovers talked philosophy.

GRETCHEN: Nun sag, wie hast du's mit der Religion? I know you are a good man, but do you believe in God?

FAUST: Child, don't think about God. That I love you is enough.

GRETCHEN: No, it's not. You don't respect the holy sacraments!

FAUST: I do, I do.

GRETCHEN: Then again I ask, do you believe in God?

FAUST: Mein Liebchen, wer darf sagen:
Ich glaub an Gott?

NARRATOR: My darling who can say "I believe in God?"

FAUST: Priests, rabbis, mullahs, and gurus evade that question, or answer it by mocking the questioner.
 GRETCHEN: So you don't believe?
 FAUST: You and I are here together. That's all I know. Call what I feel Glück! Herz! Liebe! Gott!
 NARRATOR: Bliss! Heart! Love! God!
 FAUST: I don't have a name for it. Feeling is all. Names are just noise and smoke.
 GRETCHEN: That's noble hot air. The fact is, you have no religion.
 FAUST: Liebes Kind!
 NARRATOR: Dear child.
 GRETCHEN: And I don't like that man you hang around with, he has a tail. Such a tail! And his eyes are disgusting, like a goat's.
 FAUST: Liebe Puppe, nothing to fear in him. He's my friend.
 NARRATOR: My doll.
 GRETCHEN: Just being near him makes me vomit. He's always wearing that mocking grin. I can tell he has no sympathy for anything, he hates love. When you hold me, I feel so good, so free! But when he approaches—. I want you to stop seeing him.
 FAUST: Don't be an angel of doom!
 GRETCHEN: When he's nearby I stop loving you. And I can't pray. He swallows my heart.
 FAUST: Ok. I won't see him anymore if you give me just one more kiss.
 GRETCHEN: You're making fun of me.

They kiss.

FAUST: You've got to go. My mother will wake up.
 Don't worry about it.

First FAUST, then the devils, then GRETCHEN laugh uproariously. FAUST and GRETCHEN make love.

GRETCHEN: When I look at you, my heart trembles, my will dissolves. I've already done so much for you there's hardly anything left to do. It's morning. You've got to go.
 FAUST: I love you.

Exits GRETCHEN's room.

11 An Open Place

HITLER: Stupid young female thing!
 FAUST: You were spying?
 HITLER: Learned Doctor, she just circumcised you. These young religious girls like their lovers' cocks clipped.
 FAUST: A ghoul like you can't see her sweet soul, her belief in salvation!

HITLER: Du übersinnlicher sinnlicher Freier,
Ein Mägdelein nasführet dich.
FAUST: You abortion of shit and fire!
HITLER: Come, I'll show you something better.

12 A Road

NARRATOR: Doctor Faustus entlehnt Geld von Luzifer im Industriellengewand, und setzt ihm seinen Fuß zu einem Unterpfand. Lucifer, disguised as a magician, loans Doctor Faustus a deadly sin. Faustus leaves his leg as collateral.

Throughout this scene, HITLER quietly rehearses his "Speech to the Youth Concerning the 1000 Year Reich."

MAGICIAN: I have many tricks hidden in my great coat.

From behind the MAGICIAN's coat, the SEVEN DEADLY SINS appear.

FAUST: Here is Lechery and there Covetousness.

LECHERY *and* COVETOUSNESS:
Suck it, suck it! Give it to me, it's mine!

FAUST: But I desire them not. How about Envy then? What sayest thou, Envy?
ENVY: I cannot read and therefore wish all books burned. I am lean with seeing others eat. Oh, that there would come such a famine over the world that all might die and I alone live!
FAUST: Not a very pleasant fellow, this Envy. And what's here, so hot in my hand?

WRATH, *chanted as a rap*:
Wrath!

ALL: What?
WRATH: Wrath!
ALL: What?
WRATH: I'll smoke you in yo' bath!
I leapt out of a lion's mouth!
I'll stab ya in the north
And slay ya in the south.
I don't take no shit
ALL: See!

WRATH: Even when it comes from me!
 ‘Cause I’m towerin’, overpowerin’
 The baddest of the sins!
 So don’t you ever forget
 My name is Wrath!

ALL: Who?

WRATH: Wrath!

ALL: What?

WRATH: I’ll cut yo’ ass!

FAUST: Be gone, Wrath, I have plenty spleen of my own.

GLUTTONY: Great chef, slurp me, Gluttony, the sin whose father was a slab of bacon and mother a bulging barrel of claret. My godfathers were Peter Pickle Herring and Old Homestead Roast Beef. My godmother was the ancient Barbara Becks-beer. Now Faust, to taste my pedigree, dial 1-900-GLUTTON for pounds and pounds of hot live phone food.

GLUTTONY 2: Not a recording—a real live piece of meat!

FAUST: And who are these drowsy sisters?

MAGICIAN: Speak, Sloth.

SLOTHS: Sleep through the morning, snore through the day,
 Can’t keep my eyes open, no more to say.

FAUST: And this stiff fellow?

PRIDE: Call me Pride. I ride a white horse and tread on a purple carpet. I fight only just wars. I rule mighty Exxons and Mitsubishis. You need me to get things done. I am always right.

FAUST: Oh how the brightness of your coat doth delight my soul.

MAGICIAN: But, Faustus, in hell is all manner of delight.

FAUST: And can I take all these with me?

MAGICIAN: Choose one only.

SINS: Hot live phone food! Suck it, suck it! Gimme, it’s mine! I live alone! I’ll smoke you in yo bath!

FAUST: This I’ll have, mighty Pride, to wear through all my struggles that lie ahead.

MAGICIAN: And for it, your leg.

FAUST: Done. Saw away, great Shylock of demons.

As FAUST and the SINS sing, the MAGICIAN saws off FAUST’s leg.

13 In the Town

LIESCHEN: Have you heard about Barbara?

GRETCHEN: Not a word. I rarely go out these days.

LIESCHEN: She’s feeding two when she eats and drinks!

GRETCHEN: Oh!

LIESCHEN: What do you expect? Dancing away whole nights while we get up and go to work! Well, her little flower’s wilted.

GRETCHEN: But surely he'll marry her?
 LIESCHEN: Don't make me laugh. Such a handsome boy tied down to pimpleface? He's scarce already.

Exits.

GRETCHEN: Once I was the first to rant against some girl who got knocked up. I couldn't find enough bad words to call her. I blessed myself and boasted I was free of sin. Now I'm in the same pickle myself.

Doch—alles, was dazu mich trieb,

Gott, war so gut! Ach, war so lieb!

NARRATOR: Yet everything was urging me on,
 God, it was so good! Ah, he was so fine!
 Gretchen said.

GRETCHEN: Weh! Weh!
 Wär ich der Gedanken los,
 Die mir herüber und hinüber gehen
 Wider mich!

GRETCHEN gives birth to a girl, sings a lullaby to her baby, then drowns her.

Wär ich hier weg!

Mir wird so eng!

Die Mauernpfeiler

Befangen mich!

Das Gewölbe

Drängt mich!—Luft!

GRETCHEN is pursued, caught, and thrown into a cell.

Meine Mutter, die Hur,

Die mich umgebracht hat!

Mein Vater, der Schelm,

Der mich gessen hat!

Mein Schwesterlein klein

Hub auf die Bein,

An einem kühlen Ort;

Da ward ich ein schönes Waldvögelein.

Fliege fort, fliege fort!

14 On the Road

BAD ANGEL: Too late.
 GOOD ANGEL: Never too late, if you repent.
 BAD ANGEL: If you repent, devils will tear you to pieces.

FAUST: O, savior Christ, save my soul
So I might deliver it to Gretchen.
NARRATOR: Christ cannot save thy soul, for He is just.
There's none but I have interest in your soul.
FAUST: And who are you whom I cannot see?
NARRATOR: Lucifer.
FAUST: You cannot have my soul! I will give it to her.
NARRATOR: Your child she murdered, her they will hang.
See Mephistopheles carrying your foot?
MEPH: Think on the Devil and redeem your leg.

15 A Jail Cell

FAUST: Gretchen! Gretchen!
GRETCHEN: It's the hangman! Couldn't you wait till morning? I'm still so young, really
very young. Must I die?
FAUST: Shhhh! We've come to set you free!
GRETCHEN: Ich bin nun ganz in deiner Macht.
Lass mich nur erst das Kind noch tränken.
Ich herzt es diese ganze Nacht;
Sie nahmen mir's, um mich zu kränken,
Und sagen nun, ich hätt es umgebracht.
Und niemals werd ich wieder froh.
Sie singen Lieder auf mich! Es ist böß von den Leuten!
Ein altes Märchen endigt so,
Wer heißt sie's deuten?
Sieh! Unter diesen Stufen,
Unter der Schwelle
Siedet die Hölle!
Der Böse,
Mit furchtbarem Grimme,
Macht ein Getöse!
FAUST: Gretchen! Liebs Kind!
GRETCHEN: That's my lover's voice! Where is he? Ich bin frei! He called, "Gretchen!"
FAUST: Yes, it's me!
GRETCHEN: Du bist's! Kommst, mich zu retten! Ich bin gerettet!
I see the road where I first laid eyes on you. And Martha's house. And that
garden where you gave me a rainbow when we first kissed.
FAUST: Come out, I will break your chains, melt the bars! Me and my friend, we can
do anything!
GRETCHEN: Then kiss me now! Have you forgotten how?

They kiss through the bars.

Ugghh! Your mouth is cold! As icy as death! Johannes, where are you? Who took your life from you?

MEPH: Doctor, we must go! If day breaks, I cannot save you.

FAUST: Step through the bars, dearest! Don't worry about my temperature!

GRETCHEN: I've laid my mother in her box and drowned our little one, don't you know? Give me your hand. Oh, God, it's wet with blood! Is it mine?

FAUST: Let the past die. Come with me into the future!

HITLER: Gretchen, you must never falter!

FAUST: Come out!

GRETCHEN: To what place?

FAUST: To the new world I will make!

GRETCHEN: Only death is there.

FAUST: I will take you by force!

GRETCHEN: Lass mich! Nein, ich leide keine Gewalt!
Fasse mich nicht so mörderisch an!
Sonst hab ich dir ja alles zulieb getan.

MEPH: It is dawn.

GRETCHEN:
My wedding day. Tell no one you've seen Gretchen. My veil. We shall meet again, but not to dance.
Wir werden uns wiedersehn; Aber nicht beim Tanze.

Singing.

Meine Ruh is hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer;
Ich finde sie nimmer
Und nimmermehr.

MEPH *and* DEVILS *singing*:
Mein armer Kopf
Ist mir verrückt
Mein armer Sinn
Ist mir zerstückt.

HITLER: Herr Doctor Fist, our horses are waiting!

MEPH: We must ride for many miles before we stop!

FAUST: I set my hoofs next to yours, comrades! Ride on!

HITLER: Links, rechts, links, rechts!

FAUST: The future belongs to us!

GRETCHEN *singing*:
Wo ich ihn nicht hab,
Ist mir das Grab,
Die ganze Welt
Ist mir vergällt.

16 A Television Studio

ANDY: Quiet everyone, we're on in thirty seconds.

MEPH: This is the media's goodly palace. And because you are no common guest, you can talk freely, no one can hear us. Here babble kings, cons, clowns, and presidents. Heads of conglomerates and crooks, comely beauties and jocks, professors and pundits all striving for a place in the tossed salad of entertainment.

FAUST: Have you made all the arrangements for my appearance? Has everyone been paid? Are we hooked up to my satellite networks?

MEPH: Of course, my corporate raider merger master. Enjoy your fifteen minutes of fame.

ANDY: Five, four, three—

DAN: And now, the star of The Vernice Minsky Miller Show, the undisputed queen of the late night scene, the Jamaican scream, Verniiiiice Miiiiinsky Miller!!!

SPECTATOR: Tumultuous applause.

VERNICE: Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!

SPECTATOR: Continuing unstopping applause.

VERNICE: Thank you and welcome to the Vernice Minsky Miller show. Any color in the house tonight?

SPECTATOR: Wha gwaan?

VERNICE: Mi deh yah, yuh know. Me from Jamaica. No way me from Haiti—I can't swim!

SPECTATOR: Big laugh.

VERNICE: Been tuning in on the trial? That OJ's one Juice they'll never squeeze into the can. Wha him say? Slice and dice and everything'll be nice.

DAN: You're too much, Vernice.

VERNICE: Think so, Dan? What did St. Peter say to Nicole Simpson when she arrived at the Pearly Gate?

DAN: Tell me.

VERNICE: Your waiter'll be right up, ma'am!

SPECTATOR: Moans, groans, and sour laughter.

VERNICE: Okay, okay, let's get on with our show. Tonight we've got something very special direct from the white world. I mean snow white, Cinderella, fairy-queen, squeaky-clean white. I'm talking pure ivory snow, ethnically cleansed Judenfrei, Aryan white. I'm talking Nazis.

DAN: Nazis?

VERNICE: You heard me. N-A-Z-I-S. The real thing. We have a dynamic Hitler impersonator, a neo-Nazi cheerleader from Loobock, Texas—

DAN: That's Lubbock, Vernice.

VERNICE: Thank you, Dan. From Loobock, Texas. And ole Adolf's main man in the architecture line, none other than Albert Speer. Plus a special surprise guest from Wall Street. I mean big bucks, free trade, and a future of unlimited opportunity. I'm talking the broad sweep of history, the reorganization of the post Cold War world. I mean the man at the helm of the new world order. Now how's that for a lineup?

- SPECTATOR: Excited applause and intoxicated cheers.
- VERNICE: So let's serve up our first tidbit, that genius behind the Nuremberg Rallies, the overlord of industry who ran Germany's slave labor war machine in the 1940s, the master builder of the 1000 Year Reich, Albert Speer!
- SPECTATOR: Polite applause.
- VERNICE: How do you do, Herr Speer.
- SPEER: Ya, okey-dokey, if you excuse my English.
- VERNICE: Let's get down to business, Speer. Why was Hitler—a military man and a politician—so interested in architecture?
- SPEER: Fräulein Vernice, the Führer was a painter, an artist. Our creations in stone and steel—Adolph's and mine—will stand out as the major monuments of the political will and cultural ability of the twentieth century. Our works are beginning to rise again in many places, ja, ja, expressing a movement destined to dominate the world.
- VERNICE: Hey, mon, don't burn the place down! Didn't I read somewhere you goose-steppers lost that war?
- DAN: Tell it like it is, Vernice.
- SPEER: The war was only a step, eine phase. Hitler knew the master narratives of the master race would endure for thousands of years.
- VERNICE: Even one hundred years from now will people remember you?
- SPEER: Regimes are not remembered except for their art and architecture. Who when gazing at the great pyramids along the Nile questions what the Pharaohs did to build them? The Great Dome of the Iron Eagle is our pyramid, our Pantheon. I remember giving Adolph the renderings, ground plans, cross-sections, and a scale model on his birthday, April 20th. The Iron Eagle is the greatest assembly hall in the world. Its slightly parabolic curve erupts at a height of 323 feet and rises to 726 feet. The vast round interior has the almost inconceivable diameter of 825 feet. The building's hall holds 180,000 persons, standing. This hall's only sculptural feature is a stupendous iron eagle grasping in his flashing steel claws a swastika of gold. This symbol of Aryan sovereignty might be said to be the very fountainhead of Hitler's City of God—for the building is essentially a place of worship. The idea is that over the course of centuries, by tradition and venerability, it will acquire an importance greater than that of Mecca's Kaaba or Rome's St. Peter's Basilica. In fact, Madame Vernice, our "church" is 16 times the volume of St. Peter's.
- VERNICE: Very impressive, my Nazi warlord, but how are you brownshirts going to bankroll all that stone, steel, and gold?
- SPEER: Lend me your ear, my Nubian friend. Near each city undergoing a structural transformation we build concentration camps. This solves not only the labor problem but the problems of homelessness, drugs, inner city kids hanging loose with nothing to do. Round 'em all up, take 'em away, put them to work. Identification, transportation, concentration. Those who are able, labor. The others go for special treatment, sonderbehandlung. You know what I mean? Then send in the bulldozers, the street cleaners. The best, the simplest, the most efficient way to get rid of slums is to get rid of the people living in them! Himmler—

VERNICE: The Woody Allen-looking guy with the coke bottle glasses who ran the Gestapo?

SPEER: Ja, that far-sighted one came up with the idea first. Heinrich offered his prisoners as slave labor brick-makers, ja? Natürlich, he set up his own private corporation to market the bricks and since labor costs were nil, Himmler made a fortune.

VERNICE: Kinda like using third world labor today, huh?

SPEER: Ja, a similar principle, of course. But who wants to linger on that aspect of things?

VERNICE: Do you know what all those people out there are thinking? They're thinking you're a Nazi, that your Iron Eagle and your Führer belong on history's garbage dump.

SPECTATOR: Murmurs of anger.

VERNICE: Face it, Al, you're a relic, a thing of the past. The young, upwardly mobile people of color watching the Vernice Minsky Miller show demand someone more dynamic, more far-sighted, a man of tomorrow! So, ladies and gentlemen, let's welcome a man truly ahead of his times, that boundary-busting industrialist-anthropologist-philanthropist-scientist-futurologist, Dr. John Fist!

SPECTATOR: Outcries of surprise and delight.

FAUST *and* MEPHISTOPHELES *enter*.

FAUST: Please accept, Ms. Miller, my personal check, made out to cash, for two million dollars. Support the charity of your choice.

MEPH: Or keep it yourself.

VERNICE: That's very white of you, my generous Dr. Fist!

Holding up the check.

SPECTATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, two million dollars!

SPEER: Gasps of admiration.

FAUST: Nice to see you again, Speer.

SPEER: Ja, mein Freund.

VERNICE: So tell us, John, what's the future?

FAUST: The future is getting more interesting every day. Fusion energy is just around the corner. Can you imagine it? Endless power, unlimited electricity. Now that our tokamak accelerator is on line, soon the super-colliding super-conductor whizzing around its 30 mile track under Waxahachie, Texas will be fully operative and we'll be on our way.

VERNICE: How does it work?

- FAUST: Let's not get too scientific. The end result is water gets smashed into electricity leaving no nuclear wastes whatsoever. Think of it. Unlimited production and consumption. The end to poverty, hunger, and disease. I—that is, my Fist Group of corporations—promise you that kind of world. Factories hum along, the air is clean, the population stabilizes, infant mortality drops to zero, everyone in the third world whirs along in tiny electric cars, and people like you enjoy enormous popularity.
- VERNICE: No need for Speer's slave laborers?
- FAUST: Vernice, you and I both recognize that Speer represents the past, a clumsy effort at reorganization. We of the future are much happier. We don't exterminate people or exploit them. We change them. I know you will agree with me that the world is full of inferior breeds. But that won't stop us. We simply genetically engineer a better type of person.
- SPEER: Mein Gott, eugenics! You have perfected it?
- FAUST: We're already identifying and controlling diseases and conditions that spring from genetic mistakes. Soon idiocy, homosexuality, paranoid psychosis and schizophrenia, aggressive behavior, heart failure, Alzheimer's disease, criminal tendencies, alcohol and drug abuse, many types of cancer, political instability, and hundreds of other ailments and peculiarities will be totally eliminated. People will be able to change their skin color, ending racism. Mothers and dads will choose the kids of their dreams at one of my Betterbabies For You outlets. I'm not making any of this up—it's all in the prototype stage as we speak. I assure you, in no time at all, the world as we experience it will be an Eden. I personally invite you, Vernice, to put aside the rigors of your famous show. Spend a few weeks playing an innocent Eve to my intoxicated Adam in one of my fabulous Gardens of Virtual Reality!
- VERNICE: Gardens of Virtual Reality?
- FAUST: I have under development on several far away Pacific atolls Getaway Worlds where discriminating individuals may explore various combinations of massage, sex, banqueting—remember I was a cook once, yes, a common cook—water sports, and bodymind-enhancing pharmaceuticals of the most potent and delicious variety. Or if you prefer more rigorous entertainment—
- MEPH: Try one of our Sahara Warworlds—
- FAUST: Or a launch from the Andes on one of our Offplanet Expeditions. I personally guarantee that the Fist Group will surpass your wildest imaginings.
- VERNICE: This will be for everyone?
- FAUST: For different levels of spending, different programs of pleasure. But all this will be in reach, I promise. At the present moment, my companies employ, at the legal minimum wage, Herr Speer, everyone who wants a job. My politicians rip down all trade barriers while my scientists design nanobots—
- VERNICE *and* SPEER: Nanobots?

FAUST: Extraordinarily cunning artificial life systems. My teams of managers scour the world like prides of lions, hunting land and material, seizing and developing, controlling, improving, and renewing.

VERNICE: Doctor, just how do you renew the planet? We all want to participate.

SPECTATOR: Indications of eager interest.

FAUST: Why burden the viewing audience with technical details? But let me assure you, when my men are finished what's left is a paradise. All materials biodegraded, all wastes recycled, all landscapes brand new—just as nature intended.

SPECTATOR: Applause like clean rain.

VERNICE: That's amazing, Doctor Fist. I'd like to accept your offer to visit one of your Gateway Worlds right now. But that little blinking light is telling me it's time for a commercial break. And when we come back we'll bring on our special mouth-watering treat, a neo-Nazi cheerleader from Loobock Texas, yeah, yeah, yeah!

SPECTATOR: Happy, expectant prurient applause.

FAUST *to* MEPH:

You know my palate! I like this talk show. Charcoal Vernice, isn't she attractive? What a smile! I'll send a limo for her. Do you think she likes me? What a question! But poor Speer, an anachronism! Still, I'll help him out, he's German like me. I'll put him on two boards, nothing serious.

MEPH: Check your Rolex, professor. Your time here is almost up. We've got to make tracks.

FAUST: Not yet, not yet!

DAN: And now, ladies and gentlemen, once again, the star of our show, *Ebony's* Woman of the Year, Veeeernice Miiiinsky Milllller!!

SPECTATOR: Uproarious applause and cheers.

VERNICE: Thank you, thank you, thank you very much and welcome back! We can't talk to our next guest because she's illiterate, inarticulate, and full of hate. She's the product of a broken home, child abuse, drugs, alcohol, incest, and a welfare system that doesn't give a shit! I'm talking third generation useless, doubly deviant, the hottest flash on the rave circuit, The Neo-Nazi Cheerleader from Loobock Texas!

SPECTATOR: Screams, whistles, big fucking applause.

CHEERLEADER *singing*:

I believe in my country
 I believe in a land that is clean
 Wave my banners before me
 Held high for all to see
 I believe in the white race
 I believe in its purity
 Hey Kikes, Gooks, and Niggers
 Tomorrow belongs to me!
 Race & Nation! Yeah, yeah.
 Race & Nation! Yeah, yeah.

Race & Nation! Yeah, yeah.
Race & Nation!

VERNICE: That's enough, sister.

ANDY *forcibly removes* CHEERLEADER.

CHEERLEADER: Take your fucking hands off me, you mother fucking faggot!

VERNICE: Ship that wacko back to Waco!

VERNICE: Let's move on. Our next attraction, straight from Trump's International Hotel in Las Vegas, is the one, the only, the unique Adolf Hitler!

The band plays the Horst Wessel song as HITLER marches up to his podium. A HASID sitting at HITLER's feet holds up large cards with the translation of HITLER's speech, sentence by sentence.

FAUST: Hey, look! It's your apprentice. Did you know he was going to be on the show?

MEPH: Of course, of course.

HITLER: Meine deutsche Jugend!
Nach einigen Jahren kann ich Euch hier wieder begrüßen!
Ihr seid heute! nur ein Ausschnitt dessen
Was für die ganze Welt steht!
Und wir möchten nun dass ihr in euch
All das aufnehmt was wir uns dereinst erhoffen!
Wir wollen ein Volk sein.
Und ihr, meine Jugend, sollt dieses Volk nun werden.
Wir wollen daß, dieses Volk einst nicht verweichlicht wird, sondern daß es
Hartheit hat.
Und ihr müßt euch in der Jugend dafür stählen.
Und wenn von uns nichts mehr übrig sein wird
Dann werdet ihr die Fahne,
Die wir einst aus dem Nichts hochgezogen haben,
In euren Fäusten halten müssen.

FAUST: Fist!

HITLER: Und weil dieser beste Rassenwert der deutschen Nation
Die Führung des Reiches und des Volkes forderte,
Hat sich das Volk in immer größerer Zahl dieser Führung angeschlossen und
unterstellt.
Die Partei wird in Ihrer Lehre unvergänglich,
In ihrer Organisation stahlhart, in ihrer Taktik schmiegsam anpaßungsfähig,
In ihrem Gesamtbild aber wie ein Orden sein.
Es ist unser Wunsch und Wille, daß dieser Staat und dieses Reich
Bestehen sollen in den kommenden Jahrtausenden.
Wir können glücklich sein zu wissen, daß diese Zukunft restlos uns gehört!
Denn die Jugend ist uns verschrieben

Und verfallen mit Leib und Seele!
Und ich weiss, dass kann nicht anders sein, denn ihr, meine Jugend,
Seid Fleisch und Blut von unserem Fleisch und Blute,
Und wenn die großen Kolonnen unserer Bewegung
Heute wieder siegend durch Deutschland marschieren,
Dann weiß ich, ihr schließt euch den Kolonnen an.
Es lebe die nationalsozialistische Bewegung!
Heute Deutschland, morgen die Welt!

The cards translating HITLER's speech:

CARDS: My German Youth!
After some years I again greet you!
You here today are only a part
Of what is spreading
All over the world!
We want to be one people
Without ranks or classes
And you will be that people!
Strive for hardness in your youth!
And when nothing remains of me
You will hold in your fist

FAUST: Fist!

CARDS: The flag we tore from nothing!
The racially best demands
To lead the people.
And the people subordinate themselves
In ever-growing numbers!
Its doctrine unchangeable,
Its organization hard as steel,
The party is like a holy order.
Our state shall endure
For thousands of years.
The future belongs to us!
Because the youth is devoted
To us in body and soul.
You, my youth, are flesh and blood
Of my flesh and blood.
As our movement marches
Through Germany today
I know you will join it.
Long live National Socialism!
Today Germany, tomorrow the world!

FAUST *applauding alone*:
Why isn't everyone cheering their heads off?!

MEPH: Come, Dr. Fist, we must be on our way.
 FAUST:
 Don't these stupid idiots understand what's going on?
To ANDY. I want you to make everyone clap, brother!

MEPH: He can't hear you.
 FAUST: Make them obey me!
 MEPH: We can't waste our time here. Our horses are nervous. They want to gallop.
 FAUST: Do I have all the power or don't I?
 MEPH: You are tumbling in confusion.
 FAUST: I don't understand what's happening to me.
 MEPH: Your lease is not renewable.
 FAUST: What?
 MEPH: Let's go, we have lots of ground to cover.

The Vernice Minsky Miller show dissolves. MEPH and FAUST ride their horses. Wild music. Devils, joined by HITLER, dance a dance like Mary Wigman's Hexentanz.¹⁸

17 On the Road

FAUST: Why are they dancing around that big pot?
 MEPH: God only knows what they're cooking up.
 FAUST: Floating here, floating there, swirling and bending—
 MEPH: A witches' brew.
 FAUST: —stewing and consecrating. I'm dizzy!

NARRATOR:

Travelling up and down the world, Faust and Mephistopheles arrive in China. There they buy a young boy, barely nine years old. They chant hymns in an unknown language over him, light candles, and burn different kinds of incense until the whole place fills with smoke. Then Faust draws his cleaver and with one slice cuts off the boy's head. Blood spills all over but mostly over the dead boy's body.

18 A Quiet Place

GRETCHEN: Hello, Johannes.
 FAUST: Gretchen?
 GRETCHEN: What's cooking?
 FAUST: I'm a general now, and an industrialist. Hard to tell the two apart, actually. I'm into digital electronics, robotic mining, and I've got lots of futures locked up in colonizing the solar system. My people tell me the true final solution is to stop using human workers altogether. How's it where you are?
 GRETCHEN: Not so hot. You know our girl would be nearly grown up by now.
 FAUST: It was you who murdered her!

- GRETCHEN: Yes, if you think so.
 FAUST: Well didn't you?
 GRETCHEN: That's what the judge said, didn't he?
 Alles Vergängliche
 Ist nur ein Gleichnis;
 Das Ewig-Weibliche
 Zieht uns hinan.
 The stars still move. Time runs, the clock will strike,
 The devil comes, and Faustus must be damned!
- FAUST: You hate me that much? What happened was a long time ago, in a different world. You loved me then.
- GRETCHEN: Love? Herr Professor Doktor Johannes Faust, The Fist. How can you talk to me about love? You have your menus, your recipes, your disguises, your rationalizations. After they hanged me, I was free to walk up and down the world. I followed close behind you, invisible. I kept inside your shadow. I saw what you became. Faust the developer, Faust the builder, Faust the scientist, Faust the thinker, Faust the leader, Faust the Renaissance Man.
- FAUST: Stuff it! Who are you to complain? You didn't even have the guts to walk through the bars of your jail cell when I melted them. You're soft. You're afraid of the future. I'm an optimist, always was, always will be! I tell you God made the world for me to use and improve. There are more dams to erect, more roads to pave, more mountains to mine. Think about it: A million tomorrows full of adventure, risk, and profit! My companies merge and combine, tumbling through stock exchanges like so many flies in the summer sun. Imagine it: sex among the corporations! Trading, buying, selling, inflaming, consuming, desiring. I can assure you, the pleasures at this level of intercourse are so much hotter than what you and I experienced as individuals! What I feel these days is the multiplication of imagined possibilities made real by technology, mathematics, and money. And when I use this world up, the galaxy is teeming with other worlds inviting me. My movement will not be stopped. We're in your churches, we're in your colleges, we're in your armies, we're in your police forces, we're in your technical areas.
- GRETCHEN: Ah, my Johannes, you are so full of words! Don't you understand? What you describe is incredible, but what you've made is a mess. Look around you. Smell the disease, the hunger, the misery. Do you know anyone who is happy?
- FAUST: Can you do any better? I hear you preaching, but I don't see you doing. I'm a man of action, of plans, of hope in the future. You're just a crybaby.
- GRETCHEN: You don't have an inkling, do you?
- FAUST: I'll scour and scourge everything that stinks, everything putrid, rotten, and spoiled. And if my plans go to shit, I'll leap up to my clean, white God!

He tries a jump, but doesn't get very high.

- Who pulls me down?
 GRETCHEN: It's time for supper, my famous chef.

FAUST: Then I will headlong run into the earth.
Gape earth!

He throws himself on the ground.

Oh no, it will not harbor me!
GRETCHEN: Gaia rejects you because you have raped her.
FAUST: Don't give me that feminist bullshit! Mephistopheles.
Mephistopheles! Mephisto—
GRETCHEN: Their waiting for you in the dining room.
FAUST: I still have lots of work to do.
GRETCHEN: Nein. The supper bell rings.
And after soup, salad, and potatoes
They'll feed you the specialty of the house:
A flaming dessert.

19 Faust's Kitchen

As the DEVILS and SINS prepare FAUST's kitchen for a banquet—FAUST's final meal—they sing a reprise of Gounod's "Vin et Biere." At the downstage end of the table, a huge cauldron.

NARRATOR:
Faust can no longer rule the powers
Of the underworld summoned by his spells.
Lounging naked at his kitchen table,
Waited on by demonized domestics,
Feasting on pungent delicacies,
Faust has but one bare hour left to live
And then must be damned perpetually.

The following dialog is adjusted to suit the circumstances of each performance. DEVILS and ANGELS—now interchangeable—coddle and massage FAUST. They help him out of his clothes until he is naked. At first, FAUST relishes what's happening to him.

FAUST: Hey, blackbird, do you know any reflexology?
VERNICE: Give me your foot and I'll show you what I know.
ANGEL: Gustas un masaje, Jefe?
FAUST: How many times do I have to tell you: only English spoken here!
ANGEL: Massage?
FAUST: Yes, sure.
DEVIL: I know what the good doctor wants to eat.

The DEVILS scoop pasta and marinara sauce from the cauldron and feed FAUST respectfully, to please him.

DEVIL: Taste these sesame noodles, they won you three Michelin stars.
ANGEL: Esta todo bien, Jefe?
FAUST: One more syllable in Spanish and its back on the boat to Cuba, boy!
ANGEL: ¡Puedes comerme el culo!
DEVIL: Shhh! Here's some more of your favorite things, my good doctor.

Little by little the feeding becomes abusive. Someone spills food on FAUST.

ANGEL: Ooops!
FAUST: Fuck, do that again and I'll have your other ball!
DEVIL: I know what you want, Dr. Fist. You want your food pre-chewed.
FAUST: Yes, yes. But from Ebony lips here, not the Spic. Come on, big mama, bird me.

A DEVIL puts food into VERNICE's mouth. She chews it thoroughly and then drops it into FAUST's mouth on his command of "bird me." Then when FAUST wants someone to "bird him" again, the person spits the food on FAUST's face and his hair.

FAUST: I've fed the poor, clothed the naked, loved Jews, turned the other cheek, found a cure for AIDS—!

Someone discovers "mouths" all over FAUST's body. People feed those mouths, forcing food on and into FAUST, choking him, messing him up. Finally, they brutally haul naked FAUST on to the table.



FIGURE 3.2: Faust at his final banquet pays off his debt to the devil—eternal damnation. From left to right, David Letwin/Narrator, Frank Wood/Waiter, Dan Berkey/Devil, Rebecca Wilenski/Mephistopheles, Ulla Neuerburg/Hitler, Jeffrey Ricketts/Faust, Shaula Chambliss/Devil. La MaMa, New York, 1993. Photograph: Richard Schechner.

Ah, Mephistopheles! Ahh, Mephistopheles! Ahhh!!

MEPH, *singing*:

Ay, Faustus, now thou hast no hope of heaven
Therefore, despair! Think only upon hell,
For that must be thy mansion, there to dwell.
Oh, dear friend, let your eyes with horror stare
Into that vast perpetual torture-house
Where the flaming furies toss damned souls
On burning forks.

GOOD ANGEL:

Now, poor soul, must thy good angel leave thee
As the jaws of hell open to receive thee.

MEPH:

These, that are fed with sops of flaming fire,
Were gluttons, and loved only delicacies,
And laughed to see the poor starve at their gates.
But yet all these are nothing; thou shalt see
Ten thousand tortures that more horrid be.

FAUST:

O, soul, be changed into little water drops
And fall into the ocean, ne'er to be found.

GRETCHEN:

What avails all thy riches, pleasures, and pomps?

FAUST:

My god, my god, look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while!
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!

MEPH *singing*:

Faust is done.

ALL *singing*:

Done, done, done, done, done, done, done.

MEPH:

Done!

Epilogue

The performer playing FAUST is interviewed by another performer about acting FAUST in this particular performance, about how the performer feels "right now."

NOTES

1. When I incorporated The Performance Group in the winter of 1968, I chose “Wooster Group” as the corporate name. I could not use “Performance Group” because there was already a New York corporation by that name. Our theatre, The Performing Garage, was on Wooster Street, so the name was appropriate.
2. For a history, theories, and applications of rasaboxes, see Bowditch, Cole, and Minnick 2023.
3. Email to me from Rebecca Wilenski, January 12, 2023.
4. Inside quotation marks because no production I devise or direct is ever finished, at a stand-still the way a painting or writing might be. Whenever possible when I direct, I attend every performance and give notes before the next performance. In addition to these more or less top-down changes, a defining quality of live performance are the changes—some tiny, some substantial—that performers are always making on the spot.
5. Cited in <https://www.bju.edu/events/fine-arts/concert-opera-drama/archive/faust/faust-smart.pdf>. Accessed November 18, 2024.
6. Marlowe was 28 when he wrote *Faustus*. He was fatally stabbed shortly after turning 29. The circumstances of his death are not certain. *Dr. Faustus* is the work of a young man.
7. Goethe worked on the *Urfaust*, his earliest take on the Faust story, from 1772 to 1775, when he was 23–26 years old. The original manuscript is lost but a copy exists. The “Urfaust” has 22 scenes mostly in rhymed verse. See Goethe 1958 and 1985.
8. Among the texts we studied: Bates 1969, Goethe 1941, Goethe 1958, Goethe 1962, Goethe 1978, Goethe 1985, Goethe 1988.
9. Email to me from Jeff Ricketts, January 7, 2024.
10. Around the time I was working on *F/g*, I also worked on a “Hitler-Jew Play,” which starts with Hitler saying, “I am Hitler. A very farcical man. You’ve read about me. Therefore there’s no reason for me to act accurately. I will try to act truly; as my author sees me. But he is a Jew, and cannot be trusted.” I wrote a few scenes including, “Hitler Marries Eva Braun” (the ceremony is performed by a rabbi) and “Hitler Eats Supper and Plans the Overthrow of Weimar.” I never finished the play.
11. Albert Speer (1905–81) was the German Minister of Armaments and War Production during World War II. Speer joined the Nazi party in 1931. He designed the Nuremberg rally grounds. Convicted in 1946 of war crimes and sentenced to twenty years, he was released in 1966. During his life, Speer burnished his image as the “good Nazi.” After his death, plenty of evidence shows he was as bad as the other top leaders of the Third Reich.
12. Part of the Rally and Hitler’s speech are in Leni Riefenstahl’s film, *Triumph of the Will* (1935).
13. Kristin Linklater (1936–2020) was a respected and effective voice teacher who at one point trained members of The Performance Group. She also taught from 1965 to 1978 at the Tisch School of the Arts which is where I first met her. I still use some of Linklater’s techniques when I train performers.
14. Email to me from Rebecca Wilenski, January 12, 2023.
15. An anthem is a polyphonic vocal work used as part of Anglican church liturgy.
16. Email to me from Ralph Denzer, December 27, 2023.
17. Eugenics goes hand-in-hand with racism and genocide. The term was coined by Francis Galton in 1883 as an application of Charles Darwin’s “survival of the fittest” (though Darwin himself rejected this use of his theory). The eugenics movement spread from Britain to both mainland Europe and North America. The underlying idea was that “superior” people could be bred; and that inferior individuals

and groups ought not be allowed to reproduce. They ought to be sterilized, maybe exterminated. The Nazis horrifically practiced eugenics on a heretofore unthinkable scale: the Shoah.

18. German choreographer Mary Wigman (1886–1973), a pioneer of dance expressionism, performed versions of *Hexentanz* (Witch Dance), her signature work, from 1914 to the 1930s—from Imperial Prussia through the Weimar Republic to Nazi Germany (Kolb 2016). The angular movements and mask of *Hexentanz* can be seen in a film of the dance shot in 1930. (<https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2012/inventingabstraction/?work=238>. Accessed November 18, 2024.)

4

The Prometheus Project, 1985

Introduction

The idea for *The Prometheus Project*¹ first came to me in 1982 while leading a workshop at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City. I was taken by Nicolas Nunez and Helen Guardia to the Sculpture Garden near UNAM's performing arts center. The Sculpture Garden is a circle of monoliths around a field of naked black cold lava: frozen liquid—twisting, bulbous, living, primeval. Immediately I proposed doing Aeschylus's *Prometheus* on this site. But when the peso was devalued shortly after I left Mexico, the project died. In the summer of 1983, Carol Martin and I led a workshop on *Prometheus* at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. On the final day of that workshop, the students showed more than three hours of dances and theatre scenes. In January 1984, I and assistant director Matthew Silverstein went to the University of Texas, Dallas, where we devised and staged a version of *The Prometheus Project* with students and professional performers from the Dallas area. This work in progress was performed three times on February 7, 8, and 9, 1985. Later that year, I reworked the production prior to its opening in New York on December 12, 1985. *The Prometheus Project* closed on December 29. For this publication, I've slightly edited the production script.

The Prometheus Project exemplifies the composition practice I began in 1968 with *Dionysus in 69*. That is, to not bring a more or less finished play to rehearsal, but to compose a performance collage from materials brought and devised, combining existing texts with the experiences and writing of the performers. The texts, images, sounds, music, physical objects—anything that can be staged—are “worked,” that is, adapted to the needs of the project. The whole process is “wrighting” as discussed in my preface to this book, “From Writer to Wrighter.” In every case, I make the final cut, what is published here. But before a piece is deemed “final,” it is modified many times during a months-or-even-years-long workshop-rehearsal process. In this vein, *The Prometheus Project* incorporates not only words and experiences of my colleagues and me but also the speculation of E. Margaret Burbidge, director of the Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences UCSD, about extra-terrestrial life, images from Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita's animé, *Pica Don*,² “Sex Education” and “Pornstistics”—aka “The Annie Sprinkle Show”—composed and performed by Annie Sprinkle, lines from Shakespeare's sonnets, and paragraphs from Doris Lessing's *Re: Colonised Planet 5, Shikasta*. The women performers bring their own personal experiences of abuse and rape. A man—the only male with lines in *The Prometheus Project*—recounts his being “under torture” in Iran. As we explored these often painful materials, we infused them with images, actions, media, and music. We composed and shaped a coherent performance. Of course, most of what we tried, we rejected. The published text is the least rejected of everything tried.

Let me share some 1983 work-in-progress texts: concrete examples of the creative process that went into making *The Prometheus Project*. These are “open,” text not (yet) made into drama. They are “free,” not attached to specific scenes or actions. These texts can be added to, subtracted from, played with. They are spoken by Escape Artists and Walls [characters later dropped]. An Escape Artist gets away with things, like Houdini. A Wall is what words crash into.

Tell me everything there is to know
 I'm looking at you as if I'm seeing you for the first time.
 We got the light wrong.
 This is a given, it is not learned.
 I can see the future.
 There are only three things you need to think about: heat, blast, and radiation.

SPEAKER 1: There are four legends about Prometheus. According to the first, because he betrayed the gods, he was chained to a rock in the Caucasus and the gods sent eagles that devoured his liver, which always grew again.
 SPEAKER 2: According the second, Prometheus in his agony, as the eagles' beaks hacked into him, pressed deeper and deeper into the rock until he became one with it.

Laughter.

SPEAKER 3: According to the third, in the course of thousands of years, Prometheus's treachery was forgotten, the gods forgot, the eagles forgot, he himself forgot.
 SPEAKER 4: According to the fourth, everyone grew weary of what had become meaningless. The gods grew weary, the eagles grew weary, the wounds closed wearily.

Long pause.

What remained was the inexplicable range of mountains.
 (From Kafka)

ESCAPE ARTIST: Shadows lay across the sands reaching my feet. Deep tormenting shadows, full of memories. One of them bulged, moved, separated itself. Out came a man, and at the first sight of him, I felt a movement of my heart like a leaking of strength that means sorrow.
 PROMETHEUS: Suddenly it was dark.
 WALL: This is the world's limit you have come to.
 WALL: You stole fire and now you must pay.
 PROMETHEUS: Against necessity no one can fight and win. The second integral experiment was carried out on a pile containing a mixture of uranium and a hydrogenous moderator. In this first form, the pile was a slow neutron chain. The pile was rebuilt several more times, less hydrogen being used each time. By such a series of reconstructions, the reaction

was successively altered, so that thermal neutron fission became less and less important while fast neutron fission became more and more important—approaching the conditions found in the bomb.

ESCAPE ARTIST: This is a catastrophic universe, subject to sudden reversals, upheavals, changes, and cataclysms. Things change, that is all we can be sure of.

PROMETHEUS: I cannot die.

WALLS: Yours is a madman's song.

PROMETHEUS: I can see the future. Don't you forget it.

BLINDFOLDED ONE: Eye of god watching me, pay my fee, set me free.

PROMETHEUS: I make people stop seeing doom, doom, doom.

WALL: What cure do you prescribe for that sickness?

PROMETHEUS: I infect them with blind hopes.

PROMETHEUS: They didn't know how to build houses or how to work wood. They lived like swarming ants in holes in the ground. All their doings were fucked up until I showed them the rising of the stars and their settings, and how to yoke animals and saddle them, and how to build ships and sail them. It's me, Prometheus, no one else, who teaches them how to interpret dreams, how to mine silver and gold and iron. One word tells the whole story: all the arts and crafts that people have come from me, Prometheus.

WALL: Remember our warning. When you are caught by calamity, don't blame fate.

WALL: God.

WALL: Zeus.

WALL: The state.

WALL: Somebody else.

WALL: Bad luck.

WALL: Don't say Zeus has dumped disasters on you. Catastrophes you could not foresee, you foreseer. Don't do that.

Most of what's written above is from sources other than me. I am not certain today (2023) who wrote what, except for the Kafka. I find things; the performers bring in things; we invent; we steal, we adapt. Is this plagiarism? Parody? It is a practice as old as the Greeks and the Elizabethans. Every culture's deepest stories are amalgamations. There is no original. Whatever the sources, once "material" is dumped into the process, it is grist for the mill. On the printed page, the words are concrete, specific. But in the workshop-rehearsal room, they are fluid, played with, passed back-and-forth joining gesture, song, and dance.

This process led to a workshop improvisation and to a rumination on the function of art in the time of nuclear war. From my notes:

Last night I asked five performers to transform themselves into cows and the other five into Prometheuses: stones. It was very nice.

But when the cows come to Prometheus what do the cows say? They moo. What does Prometheus say? He speaks the cows' future. I don't know what that future is, what Prometheus will tell the cows.

Nuclear war is the only human catastrophe we can avoid by performing it rather than doing it. I mean we usually learn by experience. Finger in the fire, fire burns, keep finger away. But with atom

bomb war if our fingers get in the fire we will be destroyed. No chance to avoid next time. No next time. So we must have a simulated or pre-experience as powerful as the experience (we must never have); a pre-experience strong enough to teach us as much as the experience itself would teach us; an “as if” as powerful as an “is.” This makes artists very important socially, very very. Makes them really into seers and shamans. Not mystical but postmodern. Seers and shamans who must provide a powerful enough pre-experience to serve as the experience itself. A frightful Bateson paradox^[3]: the performance of nuclear war must denote nuclear war but not denote what nuclear war denotes (extinction) but instead point to its opposite (collaboration with/for the whole planet). So we must play our way out of war this time.

In addition to what’s brought in from “sources,” the workshop-rehearsal process calls on the performers, and me, to delve into ourselves and bring forward our own experiences, our memories, and what is elicited by working together for many hours. In that space we interact with each other, with our past and present lives, and with the materials we bring. This is what it means to “devise.” If theatre dares to call itself an art, it must reveal at least some of the actual lives of those who make the performances. This can be directly and/or in terms of the performance itself. That’s what shamans do. And we performers, scenographers, costumers, musicians, directors, dramaturgs, and writers must find our own ways of doing the same. I know many performances lack such intense, intimate investments. Much commercial theatre—both live and on media—is low risk. But some performance art, experimental theatre, dance, and music is revelatory. Also, the master performers of traditional genres—kathakali, noh, gelede, pansori, candomblé, voodoo, deer dancing, and many more—put their selves on the line. They perform closely guarded techniques passed down generations. Person-to-person training puts the actions, dances, characters, words, and songs into the body, the past is made present. The history of the genre culminates here, in this person, performing now.

The Prometheus Project is an active meditation on the atomic bomb, the future (or non-future) of humankind, Promethean fire, and Io, a woman desired by Zeus, prototype of a sexual predator. Zeus visits Io in her dreams. When Hera, Zeus’s wife, objects, the god changes Io into a cow. Hera responds by having 100-eyed Argus watch the heifer-woman. Zeus sends Hermes to murder Argus. Hera sets a stinging gadfly on Io—and off she goes, dancing to the very limits of the world the Greeks knew, across the Bosphorus (cow-crossing) and on to Mount Caucasus where she finds Prometheus, chained to his rock. He tells Io that to end her suffering she must go to Canopus at the mouth of the Nile where Zeus makes her human again. Io returns Prometheus’s favor. Zeus fathers children with Io, and one of her descendants, Heracles, frees Prometheus. This story is barely alluded to in *The Prometheus Project* where the emphasis is on the sexual abuse Io suffers and on the torture of Prometheus. But, for me, the whole myth is operating in the background. The deep reciprocity; the power of story-doing. Prometheus’s and Io’s circumstances are made contemporary without losing the myth. Io is represented by women performers wearing masks cast from the head of a slaughtered calf.⁴ Each night, two of them tell their own stories of rape and abuse. Prometheus tells of his torture by Iranian authorities. These are true accounts, and each production of *The Prometheus Project* ought to find its own real life examples. But they are also myths. *The Prometheus Project* concludes with a reading from Doris Lessing’s *Canopus in Argos: Archives. Re: Colonized Planet 5: Shikasta I* (1979). I do not doubt that the novelist was aware not only of the star Canopus but also of Io’s story.

There are two scenes in *The Prometheus Project* that complicate the account I give above. First, Tomoko Kusuhara’s reaction to *Pica Don*. In 1983, Kusuhara was a visiting scholar in the Performance Studies Department at New York University. When I screened *Pica Don*, she reacted

strongly. Old enough to remember, Kusuha knew that Japan during World War II was not the peaceful society the anime shows, but a rigidly militarized one. She recalled:

As children we were taught there could be no defeat for Japan. Yet we vaguely knew the day would soon come when American armies would land on our mainland and a hundred million Japanese would die in an honorable defeat. Even adults believed they would be killed, or treated cruelly by the invaders, [...] an unfamiliar race, 'white devils,' as we were taught.

I wanted Kusuha's viewpoint in *The Prometheus Project*.

And Annie Sprinkle. In 1984, I taught a course that included studying "sex performances in New York now." An assignment was to report on one of the sex shows then rampant in Times Square. I divided the students into teams, each team assigned to a venue. I led a team to the Triple Treat Theatre on the top floor of a building on 8th Avenue and 42nd Street. There I saw Sprinkle sabotage and celebrate pornography simultaneously. After her show, I gave Sprinkle my card. "If you want to be in an off Broadway theatre production, give me a call." She did, and I invited her into *The Prometheus Project*. Sprinkle (2022a) recently emailed me:

The burlesque show you saw I called "Nurse Sprinkle's Sex Education Class." It was one of several "strip speak" skits I created with Willem DeRidder (Fluxus artist) because I wasn't a very good dancer! But could tell sexy stories. Willem coined the genre we created "strip speak." But for you, we added the "Pornstistics." And the IO part. And we added my song, "I'll Fuck Anything that Moves" which I had recorded with a friend who was a recording engineer with a studio.

Sprinkle's work in *The Prometheus Project* was not her first venture into the art world, even if it was her first theatre piece. In a second email (2022b), she explained:

I had done performance art stuff around downtown NY before that. Mainly at Franklin Furnace. Did "Bosom Ballet" really early on. Maybe it was in the 70s. But also at some little galleries. I did some performance art stuff with Spider Webb. So it wasn't my first performance art with you. However, I would say it was my first theatre performance piece experience. I had not done any "acting" on stage before or a play. (Other than acting in porn and B movies). You could say it was my first play I was in. Or first theatre piece. But not first performance.

Sprinkle brought her sardonic take on sex work to *The Prometheus Project* countering the horror of *Pica Don* and the accounts of rape, abuse, torture, and extinction. Also, Sprinkle embodied how at least one sex performer mastered those who would master her.

In the years I made *The Prometheus Project*, I kept a "doomsday" file with clippings of the dead-ends humans seemed intent on heading toward. These were times before social media was everywhere and before climate change was on my radar. For me, back then, "doomsday" didn't mean only the dead-ends that lead to extinction, but also deprivations of quality, decline in empathy. I noted what I called a "new medievalism," the rise of magical and mystical belief systems; and a stability born from profound but nearly inexpressible fears. I felt that humanity was going to hell because of our stupidity and greed. Prometheus who can see the future knows this hell, and suffers its consequences in advance. So the "past" in *The Prometheus Project* is the inescapable future rushing to meet humankind. I felt then that we were in a convergence of epochs:

one which we thought we had escaped from—pre-industrial caste-bound theocracies and states forever at war with each other—and one coming at us from the nuclear and ecological tomorrow: a crowded, dangerous world where people can be controlled by arousing and exploiting their deepest fears or by offering them narcotic pleasures.

Some might say that *The Prometheus Project* is an unfunny parody of Aeschylus mashed together with other classics and seasoned by intimate testimonies of violence. In his review of the Dallas version, John Dolan wrote:

Two basic assumptions underlie *The Prometheus Project*: first, that any political justifications whatsoever for nuclear war are totally unacceptable and morally abhorrent; and second, that art can bring people to a new level of awareness, a level in which the need for harmful experiences is recognized for what it is, and as it were, deactivated, defused. [...] Based in part on Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* and *The Suppliant Maidens*, the fourth section (IO) dynamically reinterprets the core of the Prometheus myth, in essence subverting and dislocating its usual focus. This reordering, infused as it is with ritualistic overtones which connect it to the ancient theatre, has nonetheless a very contemporary feel. [...] *The Prometheus Project* is permeated through and through with a profoundly moral, almost religious sense of the global nature of all decisions, particularly those which relate to the use of nuclear weapons. Moving beyond the limits of its construction along an overtly didactic plane, its basic message supported by a complex interweaving of texts and ingenious staging techniques, *The Prometheus Project*, notwithstanding some rough edges, illuminates powerfully the collective soul of our times.

(1986: 108–10)

Aeschylus is western drama's first (known) playwright and director. With Aeschylus, the actor displaced the dancer. *The Prometheus Project* restores the dancer without rejecting the actor. And the themes of *The Prometheus Project*? In the 1980s, I felt humankind was at the end—of what?—patriarchy for sure, of the world, maybe. But everyone knew that even with nuclear war it would not be the “end of the world.” What we were up against was the end of human life. But now, almost 40 years later, it seems that indeed many more species than homosapiens are under threat of extinction. Humanity needs to act swiftly. This is the message many of our artists, scientists, intellectuals, and even politicians are delivering. Economic arrangements, social arrangements, political arrangements, and the structures of consciousness are on the cusp of change, must change, maybe have already changed. Or else.

The Prometheus Project

Production

Director	Richard Schechner
Associate director	Matthew Silverstein
Set	Jerry Rojo
Choreography	Terry Beck
Costumes	Sally Young
Computer graphics	Greg
“Sex Education” and “Pornstistics”	Annie Sprinkle
“Tomoko’s text”	Tomoko Kusahara

Performers

Io, MC, Interviewer, Cows Backups	Robin Carbone, Michelle Couture Molly Glazer, Anne James, Ellen Osburn, Joyce Romano, Shelly Scheibman, Rebecca (Ortese) Wilenski
Nurse Sprinkle	Annie Sprinkle
Tomoko	Tomoko Kusuvara
Prometheus	Mahmood Karimi-Hakak
Men in Raincoats	Thomas Ericson, Lionel Chute
Cellist	Molly Glazer

1

Enter an unmasked IO and PROMETHEUS, on different sides of the stage. After 30 seconds, other IOs, wearing cow masks, forming a diagonal line. On two screens, two identical slides:

If life is common throughout the Milky Way, why haven't we already detected it? And that leads to the further question: For what length of time could living creatures in another solar system exist once they had the necessary technology to send out signals? Perhaps the development of highly organized living creatures is always accompanied by competition, struggle for scarce resources, and warfare. Acquiring the technology to send out strong enough radio or microwave transmissions would presuppose an advanced knowledge of physics, including nuclear physics and the ability to build nuclear bombs. Perhaps any such civilization has but 50 years or so before it annihilates itself. Should we ask instead whether the development of a civilization as contentious as ours is an unavoidable consequence of the possession of intelligence and, if so, how many such civilizations have had the wisdom to pass safely through the dangerous warfar- ing phase to an era of cooperation?⁵

The words of these slides are spoken just above a whisper by the chorus of IOs. Then the Pica Don slides begin on both screens. They run in slow motion until the atomic bomb is dropped. Then they accelerate. They go slowly again as Hiroshima is rebuilt.

As the slide show ends, TOMOKO Kusuvara's recorded voice is heard speaking in Japanese. TOMOKO's words, translated into English, are spoken softly by a cow-masked IO and loudly by an unmasked IO who spins slowly as she speaks. TOMOKO's points are illustrated by reprise projections of those slides she says contain "small lies."

TOMOKO:

I became uncomfortable when I saw my American friends moved by these slides. Being a little confused by the different reaction of mine from the others I wondered if I was biased because I was Japanese. I know artistic works have their own worlds different from reality. Yet I asked myself: what sort of imagination does the painter have who could draw peaceful scenes like those in the first half of the slides? My question is: can these pictures be said to express war

as it really is? The more I watched the slides over and over, the more keenly conscious I was of small lies in the details of the pictures.

What does it mean that not only small boys but also adult men have hair on their heads? In those days those who didn't have their hair cut very short were called "enemies of the nation." I clearly remember my father coming home with his close-cropped head. And how can the artist show people in short-sleeved shirts and kids in skirts or short pants? Our clothes were all shabby thick long-sleeved shirts and specially designed loose ill-cut long pants. And we put our name patches on our breasts and always carried emergency bags. How we dressed was not only a matter of physical protection but also a sign of our patriotism.

As children we were taught there could be no defeat for Japan. Yet we vaguely knew the day would soon come when American armies would land on our mainland and a hundred million Japanese would die in an honorable defeat. Even adults believed they would be killed, or treated cruelly by the invaders, as our country had never experienced military occupation by foreigners, especially whites, an unfamiliar race, "white devils," as we were taught, bigger than we.

And the scene at the schoolground. Morning exercises at school were tough military practices. Small kids were often punished by being made to stand up a whole day in the summer sun because they raised their hands to wipe sweat off their faces or something else.

And those faces, especially kids' faces, looking up at the sky. If you heard a whir in the sky it meant B-29. Even children knew no Japanese planes flew over us to protect us against American B-29s which came over us and destroyed cities days and nights. As a small child I believed it was dangerous even to look at a B-29. I never dared look up.

And the scene of a group picture being taken in the street. There may be some passages about such a scene in the survivors' memoirs, but a scene like that was very unusual.

What are these pictures about? Are they of a peaceful life at a local city in Japan? The atomic bomb is nothing like a natural calamity or sudden violation that unexpectedly attacks people and destroys their peaceful life.

I don't want people who see these slides to be innocently moved to tears. That sentiment won't motivate people or produce the wisdom in conduct which is far more important now when people have to deal with nuclear problems with great prudence.

At the end of TOMOKO's speech there is a siren-like sound. All the performers look up. Two slides of Hiroshima are shown: One of the utter devastation at ground zero, the other of survivors. Both photos were taken within hours after the bomb.

During the 15–20 minutes that follow, the performers move in extreme slow motion from one side of the stage to the other. Slowly the stage lights brighten until the devastation slides are no longer visible. At the same time, a cellist wearing an IO cow mask plays Max Bruch's "Kol Nidre," about ten minutes. A cow-masked IO dances a mudra (hand) dance to the Bruch. Her mudras describe the atomic bomb explosion. Throughout, a siren sounds in the background. At the end of the Bruch the siren fades. An unmasked IO who has been spinning slowly in the center switches on a tape recorder she is holding in her hand. It plays Felix Mendelssohn's "Höre, Israel" ("Hear Ye, Israel"). She sings the aria in sync with the recording. After the aria:

PROMETHEUS: They got the light wrong.

Stage lights fade revealing the devastation/survivor slide once again.

2

Multi-colored lights, disco music, the curtains open revealing a small screen upstage center proclaiming “The Annie Sprinkle Show.”

MC, *holding a microphone*:

Good evening. Steinberg productions is proud to present “The Annie Sprinkle Show.” This is the story of a very unique and talented woman who had big dreams and fantasies which she made into realities. This dramatization traces the path that Ms. Sprinkle took on her search for the answers to life’s questions. Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, some of you may find the following shocking or hard to believe—but it happened just this way.

On stage right sitting on folding chairs, an audience of three or four men (or IOs as men) wearing rain-coats. Slides projected on the screen upstage center illustrate the following text.

Little Annie was born in Philadelphia. She moved to Hollywood when she was five years old. She was a seemingly normal tot. She had a kitten named Tarzan and two goldfish named Mark and Dino. Her favorite food was chocolate chip cookies and her hobbies were ceramics and ballet. There’s a picture of her grandma—a painter. And there’s the rest of her family. That’s Annie en the top row next to her brother. Like most girls Annie went to her high school prom. Isn’t she cute?

After graduating high school Annie went on to college to study nursing. Her special areas of interest were the psychological, cultural, and physical components of human sexuality—especially regarding multiple orgasm. After her career as a nurse, Annie went into show business where she had her ups and downs as a singer, dancer, and film star before becoming a performance artist. Tonight in a very rare stage appearance, the leading role of Annie Sprinkle will be played by Annie Sprinkle herself. So please, relax, unzip your pants, and join me in welcoming, Nurse Sprinkle!

ANNIE enters, dressed as a nurse wearing a sexy garter-belt. She takes the microphone from the MC. ANNIE uses the mic not only to amplify her voice but as a multi-purpose prop. Two women are ANNIE’s backup. They mime and in other ways support much of what ANNIE says. ANNIE addresses both the real and the raincoat-garbed audience.

ANNIE:

Hi boys and girls! Welcome to Nurse Sprinkle’s Sex Education Class. Now I know that some of you out there already know a little about the birds and the bees, but most of you look like virgins to me. Are you virgins?

ANNIE nods “yes” to coax spectators to nod “yes.” Throughout her scene, ANNIE always treats the audience with great, even exaggerated respect. And whenever she reacts to what they do, she does so exaggeratedly.

Ok. So we are going to go over some very important facts of life here in class today. What it’s all about is when a boy meets a girl. *Slide of line drawing of boy-meets-girl.* When they like each other a lot, they get this overwhelming desire to do what is called “make love.” They find they want to press their lips together and slide their eager tongues into each other’s mouths. This is

called “french kissing.” *Slide of a french kiss.* Then they want to press their bodies together and give each other big, hard hugs.

Let’s try a class experiment. Who wants to try a big hug? ANNIE *finds a willing participant.* You do? OK. Just wrap your arms around me like this ... good ... squeeze hard ... ummmph ... yeah, that’s nice. Isn’t that nice?

ANNIE puts the microphone near the participant’s mouth—she interviews even while the person is hugging her. After the spectator says something, ANNIE improvises dialog with the spectator. When she deems the interaction completed, ANNIE disengages. Sometimes the spectator is surprised to be dropped so abruptly. But ANNIE’s voice is always comforting and approving.

Let’s all give this student a great big hand. *The BACKUPS here and everywhere when called for lead the audience in applauding.* That was an excellent hug. This brings us to a most important topic. Tits! These are tits. *Slide of breasts.* I have two tits. Let’s all count them together. Oooooonnnne, twwwwoooo! *The BACKUPS flash their breasts.* I didn’t hear you. Louder. Ok, again, Oooooonnnne, twwwwoooo!!! That’s better. Very good. Hey, would you boys and girls like to see a pair of tits for real right here in class? Would you? Ok, I’ll show you mine. *The BACKUPS help her take off her nurse’s dress. Then she pulls her bra to the side revealing a nipple.* This thing here is called the niiiipppllllle. Can you say that? All together now: “niiiipppllllle.”

The BACKUPS urge spectators to imitate ANNIE. ANNIE pinches her nipple and sighs.

Ooohh, you’re a wonderful class. You’re so smart! Now when the male and the female are making love her nipples become very, very,very sensitive when they are touched. Let’s see what happens when the male touches the female nipple.

ANNIE selects a man from the audience to touch her nipple.

Just put your fingers on it ... good, rub it, maybe pinch it a little, yessss, oooohhhh, ahhhh, yeah! Let’s give this man a big hand.

Applause.

Here, have one of my 8 by 10 nude glossy photos, autographed.

The BACKUPS hand out photos.

Now, let’s examine the nipple a little more carefully. Do you boys and girls see what happened? My nipple got all hard and erect, all pebbly. Isn’t that fascinating? And it feels all tingly. Now let’s take a look at what the rest of a pair of titties looks like. Who wants to help me take off my bra?

As a spectator unbooks ANNIE’s bra, the MEN IN RAINCOATS simulate masturbating.

Now I’ll just let my big, bulbous boobies dangle free. The female’s titties just love to be massaged and caressed by a nice pair of strong hands Who would like to try that? ANNIE *picks a*

spectator. Go ahead, put one hand here and one hand there and roll them around ... yes, that's it ... roll, roll, squeeze ... Oh! I love that! Hey, are you sure that this is your first time? You do that so well! Let's give this person a big hand.

Applause.

That was excellent. An A+! Here's my "Bazoombas" magazine to take home and study.

The BACKUPS give out the magazine.

Now we come to something especially interesting. No one can explain why but for some reason the male loves to wrap a woman's tittles tightly around his head. They don't know why this is so. Who would like to try that?

ANNIE picks a man wearing glasses. She wraps her breasts around his head.

You better take off your glasses first. Good. Put your face in there and ... that's it. Isn't that nice? What does it feel like?

ANNIE puts the microphone to the man's mouth to get an answer—which is usually muffled.

Can you actually breathe down there? Let's give him a big hand!

Applause.

The next topic is very important. It's where to kiss the female.

A slide with dozens of tiny red arrows pointing to many spots around the female body. There's a closeup of the genitals.

Now as you can see from the diagram, just about every spot likes to be kissed with a pair of warm, loving lips. But when making love there is an area that is particularly sensitive. Can any student guess what that is? No, it's not the elbow ... take another guess. No, it's not the toes, though that can be very nice too. Give up? Ok, it's the area right between the female's legs—this area here called the "love hole." Can you all say that with me? Looooovvvvve hoooooollle. Very good. Hey? Would you boys and girls like to see what a love hole looks like for real? Ok, I'll show you mine.

The BACKUPS bring ANNIE a magnifying glass and a flashlight.

Let's look at it under the microscope.

ANNIE hands the magnifying glass and the flashlight to a spectator.

I'll pull my panties down and spread my lips so you can get a nice close look. There, can you see it? Don't be afraid. You can get much closer than that. Closer. How does it look? Can you describe my love hole to the people in the back who can't see it from where they are sitting?

ANNIE brings the microphone to the person's mouth for the description, which is usually awkward—eliciting laughter from the audience. ANNIE improvises depending on the response she gets.

Very good. Let's give this eager student a big hand.

Applause.

That was an excellent description. Another A+. And I'm going to give him a copy of my magazine *The ABCs of Sexual Lusts and Deviations*.

The BACKUPS give out the magazine.

Our next topic in class today is the male genital area. *Slide.* This is located between the male's legs. This part is called the "love pole." Can you all say that with me? Looooovvvve Pooooooooo!!!!!!le. Good! The male likes to have his love pole played with while making love. Now this may come as a big shock to many of you, and you may even find it thoroughly disgusting, but the female sometimes likes to suck on the male's love pole. Who would like to volunteer their love pole for a little demonstration of cock sucking?

Usually no one volunteers.

Nobody?? OK, I'll demonstrate on the class dummy.

The BACKUPS bring out a big dildo.

Now, I like to get down on my knees and the man stands up in front of me, and I start by gently stroking and caressing his love pole.

ANNIE demonstrates on the dildo. As she does, the MEN IN RAINCOATS get more and more excited, finally climaxing, sighing as they throw crumpled tissues into the air.

Then I look up into his eyes and I tell him how much I love and adore him and how wonderful and sexy he is ... that's very important. Then I gently plant a big kiss right on the love pole's head.

Just as ANNIE is about to kiss the dildo all the lights come up brightly. ANNIE and all the performers freeze and stare at the spectators. The MC enters carrying a camera and begins to take pictures of the spectators. The lights remain very bright for about 30–45 seconds. Then the bright lights go off and the theatre lights come on again. Just as ANNIE is about to begin sucking, the MC stops her.

MC:

Sorry, Annie, but we're out of time. There's a lot more to the show than this shit. MC *takes the dildo away, pushes ANNIE offstage*. Annie's job as a nurse gave her a lot of satisfaction but it wasn't what she really wanted to do. Her big dream was to become a singer. So she decided to go for it. She packed her bags and took a train to New York City—where anything is possible.

Slides of ANNIE from her arriving in New York to finally performing at Studio 54. The MC narrates ANNIE's progress.

Annie realized that the first thing she had to do was fuck all the right record producers. In no time, she had a record contract. Then she wrote her first single and performed it at the famous and fashionable Studio 54.

ANNIE re-enters, dressed in a shimmery spangled dress. Using the dildo as her microphone, backed by her BACKUPS and the IOs in cow masks, ANNIE lip-syncs the song while dancing disco-style.

ANNIE:

People tell me I've got an angel's face,
Oh, I'm sweet as apple pie,
And really rather shy.
They never think that I'd ever lie.
But what a big surprise
When I look them in the eye
And tel1 'em—

I'll fuck anything that moves,
Oh yeah, I'll fuck anything that moves.
Why should I be picky
When I want a bit of dicky?
I'll fuck anything that moves.

Once there was a time when I was innocent,
I was afraid of boys.
I was a virgin till I was twenty-one,
I never had no fun.
But now I'm completely and indiscreetly
Out of my mind.

At the end of the line "Out of my mind," the theatre lights suddenly come on again, the action freezes, and ANNIE, the BACKUPS, the cow dancers, and the MEN IN RAINCOATS stare blankly at the audience. This freeze lasts about 10 seconds, then the song resumes with the refrain, "I'll fuck anything that moves." The song grinds down as the MEN IN RAINCOATS boo ANNIE. They shout they don't want to hear her sing, they want to see her strip. After making a commotion, they exit in disappointment.

I wanted to sing but all they wanted was to see my pussy. There I was, broke and alone. What's a girl to do? Become a stripper, of course.

ANNIE starts to strip-tease. But before she finishes she takes control of the slide projector for "Pornstistics." Everything ANNIE describes is illustrated by the slides. ANNIE uses the dildo as her pointer

Pornstistics. The average American woman working outside the home makes an average weekly income of \$243 dollars. I made about \$4,000 dollars a week some weeks. The average American woman working outside the home has to work about 40 hours a week—and still do housework once she got home. I only had to work approximately 17 hours a week. That gave me a lot of spare time to do fun things, and to spend all my money.

In my ten year porn career I had sex with about 3,000 men. Now assuming the average erection to be about 6 inches, and if you placed all these hard-ons end-to-end, that would make 1,500 feet of cock I sucked. Now, coincidentally, that is almost the exact height of the Empire State Building—not including the antenna.

Sex act motives. There were a lot of different reasons that I had sex with those men. For example, kicks, thrills, and fun were big ones. Exhibitionism. Also sex was a great barter system. And there were things like mercy fucks, which is when you meet someone you really don't want to have sex with, but you feel sorry for them and you think they could really use a little sex, so you give it to them. There were a lot of advantages to my sex career. As you can see, money was a large slice of the pie. It was a good creative outlet, and basically I'm a creative type person. And media is media. Also it helped me overcome my shyness. I loved the costumes. And at that time I didn't know what else I wanted to do with my life. In spite of what people might think, I wasn't so stupid that I didn't realize there were disadvantages to the job. I knew there were negative aspects. For example, I met some horrible people. It really hurt my parents when I told them. I'm sure there was some irreversible psychological damage. And sometimes I did feel sexually jaded and confused. I weighed the advantages against the disadvantages—maybe today it would be different—but at the time the advantages seemed to far outweigh the disadvantages. So I did it.

After Pornstistics, a clip of a porn film of ANNIE masturbating with a voice-over of a porn film director telling ANNIE every move to make. As the film runs, the curtains parted for "The Annie Sprinkle Show" close. IOs wearing cow masks and pink nightgowns over pajamas enter. The porn movie is projected onto them. The BACKUPS help ANNIE into a cow mask, pajama, and nightgown. ANNIE joins the other IOs.

3

The cow-masked IOs run back and forth across the stage or in a circle around the stage. When any IO speaks, she goes to a microphone held by the INTERVIEWER. The mythic stories are interspersed with personal stories. Two personal IO stories are told each performance. While the story-teller speaks, the other IOs run.

IO:

This is what Io said: At night in my own room the image of a man appeared. He spoke. "Most lucky woman, why are you still a virgin? Love waits for you. I am excited by you. I want to lay on top of you. Do not reject me, woman, but allow my body to rest from its hot longing. Satisfy me." I was tortured by these dreams every night until I told my father about them. He sent wise men to learn how to interpret my dreams. All reports were obscure, full of unsolvable riddles, hard to understand, until a final clear command came. Expel me from my home, my city. Put me out to wander to the ends of the earth. If my father refused, destruction would crush his city to the last person. So my father agreed. He sent me away. He locked his doors against me.

At once my shape changed, my mind distorted. Horned, as you see me now, a cow, crazed, running, running, running, running this way and that way. A heifer chased by a gadfly over steep rocks, across wide waters, I fly as far as the stars stretch over the earth. That is what Io said.

IO, personal story.

IO:

This is what Io said:

Zeus, do you hear my voice? This is Io, the girl with horns. I have run without rest in a leaping frenzy filled with pain and hunger. Tell me clearly what remains for me to suffer? What can save me? Tell me, if you know.

That is what Io said.

IO, personal story.

At the end of the second personal story, the IO who tells it claps five times. The IOs stop running and begin to dance. When the IOs have finished dancing, they exit.

4

PROMETHEUS enters. He is stripped naked. Three IOs tie him, pinning his hands behind his back, a ball-gag in his mouth. Because he is gagged, PROMETHEUS is hard to understand. His muffled words are reported by the INTERVIEWER. Stage right, witnessing the scene are several cow-masked IOs.

PROMETHEUS and INTERVIEWER:

I was picked up at 5am. They were waiting out in the alley. It was still dark. They threw me face down on the ground. They handcuffed my hands behind my back. They searched me, ripped my clothes off.

INTERVIEWER: He remained quiet. There was no need to resist. It wouldn't help to resist. They asked him where he was going. "For a walk," he said. One of them punched him in the mouth, "Oh, a walk, huh? How about if we take a walk together?"

PROMETHEUS *and* INTERVIEWER:

They smashed my head against the ground. They threw me in the car and took off.

INTERVIEWER: He tried to map the road in his mind. His eyes were closed. He remembered a friend saying, "It always helps if you know where they take you." The friend died under torture.

PROMETHEUS *and* INTERVIEWER:

They threw me into a cell. I opened my eyes.

INTERVIEWER: He saw the walls: cold, gray, heavy. He wondered which torture they would begin with this time. He wondered what his reactions would be. Would he be able to endure it? For how long? He knew he wasn't going to say anything but he also knew he had a limit to his endurance. He was taken to the torture room.

PROMETHEUS *and* INTERVIEWER:

There were two men and a woman. I had heard about them. I knew I was going to be beaten. They punched me. They threw me around. They smashed my head against the wall. My head cracked open. Blood streamed down my forehead. Blood ran into my left eye. The blood burned. I closed my left eye while trying to keep the right one open. I wanted to see everything. She wiped the blood from my forehead. She was gentle, she had a soft look. One of the men was smoking a big cigar. He grabbed my hair, pulled my head back, and bit me on my neck as he raped me. He pushed his lit cigar into my side. It burned. I opened my mouth to scream but no sound came out. She said, "You gonna talk anyway, so why not save yourself the pain?" I wanted to cry, to put my head on her shoulder and cry.

INTERVIEWER: The rope was cutting through his skin. Movement was impossible. They brought in the whips. They began whipping him. He didn't cry, he didn't scream. He remembered a friend saying, "Sometime you wish you weren't so strong, you wish you could die". That friend, too, died under torture.

The INTERVIEWER leaves. The cellist enters, plays again a section of Bruch's "Kol Nidre," breaking off suddenly after about four minutes. The cellist exits.

5

A cow-masked IO enters to witness the scene. An unmasked IO enters and removes the gag from PROMETHEUS's mouth, unties him, hands him his clothes. In silence, he dresses.

PROMETHEUS:

One day I said to myself, "I'm tired, I'll sit." So I sat down on a rock. After a while, I said to myself, "I'm hungry, I'll get up and find something to eat." But I didn't move. I was glued to

that rock. Then I said to myself, "I am sorry I sat down, but here I am, I'll sit here a little longer. Then I'll get up and find something to eat." But I didn't get up. I just stared at the wall in front of me. After another while, I said to myself, "I'll close my eyes and catch a little sleep." So I closed my eyes. When I opened them the wall was gone. The rock was gone. All around me, in every direction, side to side, front and back, up and down, endless emptiness. All the resurrected dead of all the Hiroshimas couldn't fill that emptiness. And here I remain, a little bit of emptiness in the midst of an endless emptiness. *Pause.* One day you'll be like me.

IO: It's not certain.

Pause.

PROMETHEUS: How will I know if you are still nearby?
 IO: Just call me and if I don't come it means I've left you.
 PROMETHEUS: You won't kiss me goodbye?
 IO: No.
 PROMETHEUS: But what if you die?
 IO: It's the same, dead or not dead.
 PROMETHEUS: I don't want you to die.
 IO: It's the same, the one way or the other.
 PROMETHEUS: But if you die, no one will help me.
 IO: Call out. Someone is sure to come.
 PROMETHEUS: Before you, no one came. At least say something as a farewell.
 IO: I have nothing to say.
 PROMETHEUS: A few words, to enter my heart.
 IO: Your fiery heart?!

PROMETHEUS: My heart is cold. Something from your heart to warm my heart.
 IO: My heart?!

PROMETHEUS: Even a single sentence. Less. Five words.
 IO: Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the edge of doom.⁶

PROMETHEUS: More.
 IO: Beyond all time, even to eternity. And death once dead, there's no more dying then.⁷

PROMETHEUS: Enough.
 IO: I say to myself, "Io, you must teach yourself to smile even when you have nothing to smile about. When they beat you, smile. When they stop beating you, smile." Even when you have no teeth left for smiling, smile.

PROMETHEUS: They got the light wrong.

Pause.

They got the light wrong.

IO:

For never-resting time leads summer on to hideous winter. At the end of time, I will stop. I will keep smiling until the end of time.

IO exits.

PROMETHEUS:

Io.

Pause.

Nothing.

Long pause.

Io!

PROMETHEUS *stands in silence.*

6

The upstage curtain opens revealing the company, some in street clothes, some in costume, however they are at the moment. They come downstage to join PROMETHEUS. The following is addressed directly to the audience.⁸

PERFORMER:

The species dwindle everywhere, the stock of genes is being destroyed.

PERFORMER:

It is the nursery of life itself that is poisoned, the seeds of life, the springs that feed the well.

TWO PERFORMERS IN UNISON:

Crash go the empires and the civilizations, and the explosions that are to come will lay waste seas and oceans and islands and cities, and make poisoned deserts where teeming detailed inventive life was, and where the mind and heart used to rest but can no longer.

PERFORMER:

Yet it all happens, it goes on, nothing seems to stop it. I think: Well the ice stretched down as far as here, not so long ago, ten thousand years, and look, it has all remade itself. But an ice age is nothing, it is a few thousand years—the ice comes, and then it goes.

THREE PERFORMERS IN UNISON:

So we repose in our imaginations on chaos, making strength from the possibilities of a creative destruction.

PERFORMER:

We are weaned from everything but the knowledge that the universe is a roaring engine of creativity, and we are only temporary manifestations of it.

ALL:

Creatures infinitely damaged, almost lost. Animals far removed from what was first envisaged for us by our designers, we are being driven back and away from everything we had and held and now can take a stand nowhere but in the most outrageous extremities of—.

They all open their mouths. No sound comes out. After 10 seconds, blackout.

NOTES

1. I discuss the origins, themes, and development of *The Prometheus Project* in “Uprooting the Garden: Thoughts Around *The Prometheus Project*” (1986). Some of this introduction is taken from that article.
2. Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita’s 1978 ten-minute animated film opens on a pleasant sunny summer morning in Hiroshima. Then an American bomber appears. Soon after, the city is nuclear hell—graphically depicted in *Pica Don*. The film ends showing a little boy’s paper airplane flying over the rebuilt postwar city. The title denotes “pica,” the flash, and “don,” the boom of the atomic bomb.
3. In “A Theory of Play and Fantasy” Gregory Bateson wrote: “[...] the statement ‘this is play’ looks something like this: ‘These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions *for which they stand* would denote.’ [...] The playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote what would be denoted by the bite” (2000: 180). Art is, or can be, the “playful nip.”
4. The calf’s head mask originated in 1977 when I was rehearsing *Seneca’s Oedipus* with The Performance Group. Wanting to find out what it meant, physically, to gouge out one’s eyes, I obtained the head of a slaughtered calf. Then on the roof of The Performing Garage the actors tried to pull the calf’s eyes out of its head. Later I had the head cast and masks made from the cast. I used the calf’s masks not only in *The Prometheus Project* but also in *Faust/gastronome* (this volume).
5. From E. Margaret Burbidge’s 1983 presidential address to the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Burbidge was director of the Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences, University of California at San Diego.
6. From Shakespeare, sonnet 116.
7. From Shakespeare, sonnet 146.
8. From here to the end of *The Prometheus Project*, the text is adapted from Doris Lessing’s *Re: Colonised Planet 5 Shikasta* (1981).

5

Richard's Lear, 1981

Richard's Lear was performed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison 10 times from July 2 to July 30, 1981. The production then toured to the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis, where it was performed three times, August 6, 7, and 8, 1981.

Introduction *By Phillip Zarrilli*

Zarrilli was the associate director of Richard's Lear. He also played Kent and choreographed the fight scenes. Schechner adapted this introduction from Zarrilli 1981.

The text for *Richard's Lear* combines Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Richard III* with a few lines from other Shakespeare plays and a few new lines. Richard Schechner made the text montage prior to beginning rehearsals. He made some revisions during rehearsals. But *Richard's Lear* was not devised from improvisations and workshop exercises the way *Dionysus in 69*, *Makbeth*, *Commune*, *The Prometheus Project*, and *Imagining O* were (all this volume). Nor was there any improvised text during the performance as in *Dionysus in 69* and the dispersals of *Imagining O*.

In *Richard's Lear*, a caged Richard III controls the staging of a stripped-down *King Lear*. Using the large, adaptable black box theatre at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Schechner created a surround of tiered seating built from scaffolding which looked over the performance area on three sides. This arrangement resembled what he had done in *Dionysus in 69* and other Performance Group productions at The Performing Garage. Most of the audience sat high on platforms so that the majority of viewers watched the action below them. Four platforms were placed in the performance area. On the highest platform, Lear's throne. The other three platforms varied in height: Gloucester's castle at six inches, Goneril's kingdom at two-and-one-half feet, and Regan's fort at five feet. The visual impression from above was of pieces of a jigsaw puzzle broken apart. The action of the performance took place either on one or more of these platforms or on the floor of the theatre in the spaces between the acting and audience areas. Another major scenic unit was the cage inside which Richard III was locked, a pentagon-shaped heavy metal prison, constructed of welded steel and burglar-proof, sharp-edged, heavy-gage wire. The cage was on rubber casters so that on Richard's command the imprisoned king could be wheeled as close to the action, or as far from it, as he wanted.

As the audience enters, they hear a taped interview between Schechner and a local newspaper writer. Schechner presents his ideas about the production. As he speaks, Richard III, or rather, the two actors playing Richard III appear. An adult Richard is costumed identically to his child coun-

terpart, a twelve-year-old Young Richard. Young Richard is alternatively adult Richard's clone, his alter-ego, sidekick, and adult-Richard-to-be. Both wear heavy metal corrective braces on their left legs, and each has a flesh-colored hump protruding through his black shirt. On entry Young Richard locks adult Richard into his cage. After the Richards are in place, the remainder of the cast, alone or by group, take their places. These characters are from *King Lear*. First comes Kent, dressed as a much decorated army major in summer dress uniform, accompanied by a "microphonist"—a person managing a hand-held microphone, one of several such extras who make sure that performers are miked without using their hands. With the exception of the two Richards, the entire performance is microphoned so that all voices come both from the actors' mouths and from the clusters of speakers hanging from the central ceiling of the performance space. The music is also amplified, and often very loud. The mediated sound and managing the microphone and cords make the production simultaneously a radio play aurally (with the sound disembodied from the action), a television news broadcast, and a cabaret show with a microphone always hand-held in front of a speaking face. It is also, of course, a live environmental theatre production.

Next to take positions are Gloucester, dressed as a scientist with lab coat and bow tie and Edmund in the first of his courting of Goneril costumes, a white tux jacket, lavender shirt, grey ascot, and black boots with spurs. Cordelia enters as a fashionable 1980s version of a 1960s flower child, casually taking up her position along the back wall behind Lear's throne accompanied by another microphonist. Cordelia is soon joined by Goneril, wearing a maroon evening robe, her hair in rollers, elegant high suburbia, and Regan, a Soho mod-punker in red and black. Next come two Fools, another adult/child double. The adult Fool is a transvestite, the Little Fool a half-traditional Elizabethan fool and half-transvestite. Finally, in shuffles Lear, played by Deborah Holmes wearing a heavy cape, her head and face completely covered by a mask of an old-man. Young Richard gives the key to Richard's cage to Lear who wears it as a necklace. Other characters appear later: Poor Tom, "dressed" in his own nakedness clothed only with a casting of his own (the actor's) penis—and several minor characters, a Man, Servant, etc.

As the tape-recorded interview with Schechner ends, from inside his cage Richard calls the actors to their places. Immediately he and Young Richard begin reciting:

There is no creature loves me. And if I die, no soul shall pity me. Wherefore should they, since that I myself find in myself no pity to myself?

Richard, coaching his young counterpart in this monolog of self-examination, makes his first intervention in the performance. The actor playing Richard has the freedom to stop the action at any point—he is the onstage director—no accident that his given name is the same as Schechner's. Schechner gave the performer playing Richard liberty to intervene in the production as it proceeds. Richard's interventions range from side coaching, calling for a repetition for effect, to replaying a scene because of a mistake, miscue, etc. Or even because the caged Richard likes the scene and wants it performed again simply for his delight. Though few interventions by Richard are noted in the published text, anyone staging *Richard's Lear* should make clear to the performer playing the role that Richard must use his powers several times during the performance. Even Young Richard can intervene once or twice. These interventions are crucial. They underline the performance's "like a filming with retakes" as well as the contingency of live theatre where every instance is different from every other. They also, perhaps most importantly, demonstrate Richard's authority. Which Richard? All of them.

As the Richards finish their monolog, adult Richard sees his “executioner”—Cordelia/Anne. Grasping for her from the cage, he calls out, “‘Twas thy beauty that provoked me.” When Cordelia coldly rejects him, he is quickly wheeled away in his cage as hard loud punk rock music blares from the overhead speakers. This kind of music is a major media element shaping *Richard’s Lear*. Featured are groups like the B-52’s and the Dead Kennedys. Played at ear-splitting levels, the music blasts in some scenes and also between scenes. Late in the performance, the punk music is a harsh underscore for Gloucester’s blinding.

The *Lear* play opens with the division of the kingdom, the banishment of Kent, and the giving of Cordelia, not to France, but to Young Richard—an action that brings *Richard’s Lear* back to Richard’s courting/grasping for Anne from *Richard III*—“To take her in her heart’s extremest hate, with curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes, and I no friends to back my suit, but the plain devil and dissembling looks, and yet to win her, all the world’s nothing. Ha!” Here, Cordelia and Anne are conflated.

The *Lear* story played for Richard is a stripped-down version of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. Occasionally, modern slang is mixed in, a jarring disjuncture, as is the punk music. Richard III’s presence is strong. He forces his desires—and lines—into *Lear*. There is also the meta-theatrical situation in which Richard from his cage-on-wheels directs the production. Kent and the Fools serve as *Lear*’s court. The Gloucester subplot is stripped to its barest essentials. The starkness of the skeletal text forces focus onto the sisters, especially Goneril’s and Regan’s dealings with their father and on the bastard Edmund who courts them both.

The production’s running time was approximately one hour and 50 minutes with no intermission. Many of the scenes are short; some only two or three lines. Physical actions take the place of narrative. For example, as soon as *Lear* gives away his kingdom to Goneril and Regan, and the daughters pledge their love to him, *Lear* literally leaps off his throne as the music blares. “Unburthened” he can now “crawl toward death” in his own style, wildly dancing. *Lear*’s Fools are his sounding boards, mocking him, goading him with their taunts. But they are also his revelers, the core of his entourage who burst into dance to punk rock music as they swarm over Goneril’s “castle” interrupting her latest encounter with Edmund. As she violently shakes *Lear*, Goneril admonishes him:

Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires. Men so disordered, so debauched and bold that this our court, infected with their manners, shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust make it more like a tavern or brothel than a palace.

There is nothing in this exchange that indicates *Lear* is performed by a woman. The gender of the performer is acknowledged only once, when *Lear* removes the mask, declaring, “Does any here know me? This is not *Lear*!” Before putting the mask back on, the actress pokes her fingers through its eye holes.

Rejected first by Goneril and then Regan, *Lear* and his party wander from place to place. The sculptural platforms house the various characters frozen in attitudes that provide counterpoint images to the actions of *Lear* and his party on the move. Schechner finally awards *Lear*’s throne to Goneril and Regan together. Stripped of his dignity, and now his train (“What need you one?” Regan asks), *Lear* steps out of his cloak so that he is costumed only in the mask and long underwear. A woman’s body, maybe; the mask of a man. *Lear* stands before all as “a poor old man, as full of grief as age, wretched in both.” But there is no pity in this *Lear*. He immediately

curses the sisters, and in the major deviation from the two original texts, Schechner has Lear release Richard from his cage. Stepping onto the stage floor, Richard boldly thrusts his metaled leg forward, shouting "My turn, my turn!" The Fool gives Richard a sword and shield. Rock music blares, stage attendants race to make preparations for the impending fight, and the three sisters gird themselves in metallic-colored breast plates ready to defend what they have seized. They are an Amazonian triumvirate armed to the teeth with swords, shields, and spear prepared to face Richard. No timid Cordelia here.

Richard, still in control, commands, "Ready! Action!" (as if directing a film). Lear immediately begins a diatribe against his daughters, "Butchers and villains, bloody cannibals!" Richard launches into his curses against women, and Schechner has the three sisters respond in kind with a montage of curses drawn from several Shakespeare plays. The culmination of these mutual curses is Goneril viciously attacking Richard, a prelude in words to the actual combat which follows:

No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, unless it be while some tormenting dream affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils. Thou evilish marked abortive rooting hog, thou heap of wrath, thou foul in-digested lump, as crooked in thy manner as in thy shape!

Goneril immediately attacks Richard with sword and shield. He is fighting for the kingdom he has always so dearly desired. Next Cordelia joins the fray with her sword and shield and then Regan with spear.¹ The sisters corner and disarm Richard.

Richard, captured and deprived of his kingdom, seeks to redeem himself. On his knees, he implores Lear, "You say there is no kingdom for Richard? What other pleasure can the world afford!" Getting no help from Lear, Richard turns to Cordelia, "I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap, and bewitch sweet slits with my words and looks." When Cordelia rejects him, Richard recounts the murders he undertook—driven, he says, by her beauty. As she presses her sword's point to his heart, Richard offers his life. "Take up the sword again. Or take up me." Cordelia replies, "Arise, dissembler: though I wish thy death, I will not be thy executioner." Then Goneril orders: "Back into your kennel, hellhound!"

After being rejected by Cordelia and locked back into his cage, Richard shouts, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no!" Then a long silence. Lear slowly turns to Regan and Goneril who are sitting on his throne. Looking them in the eyes even as he distances himself from them by using the third-person pronoun, Lear curses his daughters, "[...] into their wombs convey sterility, dry up in them the organs of increase [...]" In slow motion, Regan and Goneril leave the throne. Again the crash of rock music, signaling the great storm on the heath. Lear, surrounded by his motley train, shouts, "Blow, winds and crack your cheeks. Rage, blow!" His words are miked and reverberated. Lear meets naked Poor Tom, and they go to Gloucester who first shelters them and then sends them on to Dover. Gloucester is captured. Goneril puts out one of his eyes with her spiked heel and Regan puts out the other with her dagger.

The final scenes bring Poor Tom and Gloucester to the "cliff" of Dover where Lear in his madness meets them and Cordelia. Edmund arrives and takes control. He orders Lear and Cordelia to prison. Then he orders Cordelia hanged. Grieving over dead Cordelia, Lear gives out and dies. Installed on the throne, Edmund who has sworn love to both Goneril and Regan, asks Young Richard, "Which of them shall I take? Both? One? Or neither?" Young Richard, urged on by adult Richard, calmly replies, "Conscience is but a word that cowards use; our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law. Shall I be plain? I wish the bitches dead."

As the performance comes to its end, Young Richard releases adult Richard from his cage. They walk among the Lear players who are frozen in place, the dead. When adult Richard reaches Cordelia, he takes her hand and pulls her out of death. He asks her, "But, shall I live in hope?" She replies, "All men, I hope, live so." "Wear this ring," he says; to which she replies, "To take is not to give." Richard puts the ring on her finger. Both Richard and Cordelia freeze. Only Young Richard remains animated. He tours through the wax museum of characters, examines them, touches them. Young Richard takes Goneril's half crown, then Regan's half, puts them together to form one whole crown, and sets it on his head. It is too large. He takes it off, weighing it in his hands. Looking at the spectators, the boy says:

The weight of this sad time we must obey,
 Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
 The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
 Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

Young Richard runs from the theatre. His leg braces hit the floor as he runs. Slowly the performers unfreeze. In silence they leave the theatre. No curtain call. The audience disperses.

Richard's Lear²

Production

Director and text montage	Richard Schechner
Associate director & martial arts	Phillip Zarrilli
Assistant directors	Karen Bauer, Jamie Beranic, Todd A. Covert
Environment	Michael D. Cottom, Richard Schechner
Costumes	Ray Ray
Sound design	Ted Klug
Sound designer assistant	Krista Hueffed
Lighting design	David Bruce Brovarney
Lighting design assistants	Judith Daltsman, Pat Miller, Pamela Niebauer
Technical design	Michael D. Cottom
Stage Manager	Claude Pensis
Scenery construction	Scott J. K. Hedblom, Melina Lozano, Paul Newton
Costume construction	Monica Frank, Barbara Novak, Barbara Butt
Head mask maker	Jamie Beranic
Mask construction	Carolyn Harris, Ray Ray, Kahiel Slick
Additional music	J. H. Caulkins

Performers

In order to conceal the gender of Deborah Holmes who played King Lear, the performers were listed with initials instead of full names.

Richard	P. M. Nelson
Young Richard	W. R. Jordan
Cordelia	E. A. Ruf
Lear	D. Holmes
Goneril	R. (O.) Wilenski
Regan	K. A. Slick
Kent	P. Zarrilli
Edmund	B. Reed
Gloucester	D. Maier
Fool	B. Cihlar
Little Fool	J. H. Caulkins
Man	M. M. Miller
Edgar/Poor Tom	M. S. Woicek
Head microphonist	T. A. Covert

The music is mostly punk from the 1970s. The music sets the tone of many scenes. The storm near the end of the play ought to be made of music, other sound, and lighting—but not be banally realistic.

All the characters except RICHARD and YOUNG RICHARD speak into microphones held close to their mouths by MICROPHONISTS who move as seamlessly as possible through the space.

Best staged in a blackbox theatre; or in a large proscenium theatre using only the stage, converting such a theatre into a blackbox. Seating on platforms, some low but many rising above the action. No seating on the floor.

As spectators and performers enter the space, they hear Richard Schechner talking about the production on a recorded interview with a local newspaper reviewer. The performers place themselves in predetermined positions and freeze. At one end of the space, three platforms up against each other. On the center platform LEAR, guarded by KENT, sleeps on his throne. At the other end, GLOUCESTER stands on a platform covered with books and scientific equipment. In the center of the space, a tall metal cage on wheels. Locked inside is RICHARD, prosthetically humped and wearing a leg brace. YOUNG RICHARD, a pre-teen boy dressed identically to RICHARD stands outside the cage. When the Schechner interview is over, fifteen seconds of silence. Then the house or stage manager slams the metal shop door closed with a bang, as if there were no escape. Fifteen more seconds of silence.

RICHARD:
Ready? Ready! Action!

All performers unfreeze. They watch RICHARD speaking to YOUNG RICHARD.

There is no creature loves me. And if I die, no soul shall pity me. Wherefore should they, since I myself find in myself no pity to myself? Methought the souls of all that I had murdered came to my tent, and everyone did threat tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard. I, me, this one, myself, Richard, he, me, I that am not shaped for sportive tricks nor made to court an amorous looking glass; I that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty to strut before a wanton ambling nymph; I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion, cheated of feature by dissembling Nature, deformed, unfinished, sent before my time, before my time, my time, into this breathing world, scarce half made up, and that so lamely and unfashionable that dogs bark at me as I halt by them. Why I, me, this one, Richard, me, myself, he, why I have no delight in this weak piping time of peace? No delight have I to pass away the time, pass away the time, unless to see my shadow in the sun.

CORDELIA *crosses to RICHARD's cage.*

What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.

Seeing CORDELIA.

But soft, here comes my executioner. *To CORDELIA.* 'Twas thy beauty that provoked me.

CORDELIA: If I thought that, I tell thee, homicide, these nails should rent that beauty from my cheeks.

RICHARD: These eyes could not endure that beauty's wrack; you should not blemish it, if I stood by. As all the world is cheered by the sun, so I by that. It is my day, my life.

CORDELIA: Black night o'r shade thy day, and death thy life!

RICHARD: A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

Throughout the performance, RICHARD's cage is moved by MICROPHONISTS, people who hold microphones to whomever is speaking. With few exceptions, the entire performance is miked. Only RICHARD and YOUNG RICHARD are unmiked.

RICHARD's cage arrives at LEAR's throne platform. RICHARD and YOUNG RICHARD watch the story unfold. All the performers gather around the throne. The old king wakes.

LEAR: Meantime we shall express our darker purpose. We have this hour a constant will to publish our daughters several dowers that future strife may be prevented now. Know that we have divided in three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent to shake all care and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths, while we unburthened crawl towards death. Goneril, our eldest-born, speak first.

Opening her robe seductively, GONERIL steps forward.

GONERIL: Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter; dearer than eyesight, space and liberty; beyond what can be valued, rich or rare; no less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor; as much as child e'er loved or father found; a love that makes breath poor and speech unable; beyond all manner of so much I love you.



FIGURE 5.1: Lear/Deborah Holmes curses Cordelia/Elizabeth Ruf as Richard/Paul Nelson looks on from his cage. From the left, standing Microphonist, kneeling Microphonist, Kent/Phillip Zarrilli, Cordelia, Lear, Young Richard/William Jordan, Fool/Barbara Cihlar, Head Microphonist/Tod Covert, Richard. University of Minnesota-Minneapolis, 1981. Photograph courtesy of Walker Art Center.

LEAR: Ahhh. Of these lands, even from this line to this.

He gestures to the platform representing GONERIL's portion of the kingdom. It is pulled away.

With shadowy forests, and with rich fields, with plenteous rivers, and wide-skirted meads, we make thee lady. To thine and thy issues be this perpetual.

GONERIL heads off to inspect her kingdom.

What says our second daughter, our dearest Regan?

REGAN: I am made of that self same metal as my sister, and prize me at her worth. In my true heart I find she names my very deed of love; only she comes too short.

LEAR: To thee and thine heredity ever remain this ample third of our kingdom.

LEAR gestures to the platform that represents REGAN's portion of the kingdom and it is pulled away to a place opposite GONERIL's.

No less in space, validity and pleasure than that conferred on Goneril.

REGAN *goes to her platform*. LEAR *turns to CORDELIA*.

Now, our joy, although our last and least, what can you say, Cordelia, to draw a third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

CORDELIA: Nothing, my lord.

LEAR: Nothing?

CORDELIA: Nothing.

LEAR: Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA: Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth. I love your majesty according to my bond, no more, no less.

LEAR: How now, Cordelia. Mend your speech a little lest you mar your fortunes.

CORDELIA: Father: you have begot me, bred me, loved me. I return those duties back as are right fit.

LEAR: But goes thy heart with this?

CORDELIA: Yes, my good lord.

LEAR *to* RICHARD:
So young, and so untender.

RICHARD *to* LEAR:
There is no creature loves me. And if I die, no soul shall pity me.

CORDELIA: So young, my lord, and true.

LEAR: Let it be so. Thy truth be thy dower. For by the sacred radiance of the sun, the mysteries of Hecate and the night, by all the operation of the orbs from which we do exist and cease to be, here I disclaim all my paternal care, and as a stranger to my heart and me hold thee from this forever.

KENT: Good, my liege—

LEAR: Peace, Kent! Come not between the dragon and his wrath: I loved her most and thought to set my rest on her kind nursery.

KENT: What would'st thou do, old man? Check this hideous rashness.

LEAR: Kent, on thy life, no more!

KENT: Be Kent unmannerly when Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man? Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak when power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound when majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state, and in thy best consideration check this hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment, thy youngest daughter does not love thee least, nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds reverb no hollowness.

LEAR: Out of my sight!

KENT: Fare thee well, King. Thus Kent, O friends, bids you all adieu; he'll shape his old course in a country new.

KENT *exits*. LEAR *to* CORDELIA.

LEAR: Better thou hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

YOUNG RICHARD, *taking CORDELIA's hand*:

Fairest Cordelia, that art most choice forsaken, most loved despised. Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon.

To LEAR.

Be it lawful: I take up what's been cast away.

LEAR: Thou hast her, Richard, let her be thine, for we have no such daughter, nor shall ever see that face of hers again.

YOUNG RICHARD: Bid farewell to your sisters.

CORDELIA *to her sisters*:

Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are.

CORDELIA exits.

RICHARD: To take her in her heart's extremest hate, with curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes, and I no friends to back my suit, but the plain devil and dissembling looks, and yet to win her, all the world's nothing. Ha!

LEAR:

Let pride which she calls plainness marry her. Goneril! Regan!

They run to him.

I do invest you jointly with my power, pre-eminence, and all the large effects that troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course with reservation of an hundred knights, by you to be sustained, shall our abode make with you by due turn. Only we shall retain the name and all the addition to a king. The sway, revenue, execution of the rest, beloved daughters, be yours, which, to confirm, this crown part between you.

LEAR removes his crown, breaks it in half, gives GONERIL and REGAN each a half.

GONERIL: Beyond all manner I love you.

REGAN: I profess myself an enemy to all other joys and find I am alone happy in your dear highness's love.

Punk music. GONERIL and REGAN go to their platforms, each wearing a half crown. GLOUCESTER and EDGAR go to GLOUCESTER's platform. The music stops, everyone freezes but EDMUND. Standing center stage, EDMUND speaks while putting on an elegant dinner jacket.

EDMUND:

Why bastard? Wherefore base? When my dimensions are as well compact, my mind as generous, and my shape as true as honest madame's issue. Why brand they us with base? With baseness? Bastardy? Base? Base? Who in the lusty stealth of nature, take more composition and fierce quality than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed, go to the creating a whole world of fops got 'tween asleep and awake? I grow, I prosper. Now, gods, stand up for bastards.

RICHARD *to audience*:

Therefore he is determined to prove a villain.

GLOUCESTER *to EDMUND*:

These late eclipses of the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and thus, yet, I'm still bummed out. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide. In cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all the ruinous disorders, follow us quietly to our graves.

EDMUND:

What a bunch of horseshit, that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our behavior, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon and the stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and traitors by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star.

Crosses toward GONERIL's platform.

My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Fuck! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.

YOUNG RICHARD, *to EDMUND*:

Psssst. Come here.

RICHARD *rattling his cage looks toward EDMUND*:

Give me thy hand and thy assistance, thus high, and by thy advice is King Richard seated.

EDMUND ignores RICHARD. GONERIL welcomes EDMUND to her platform where they make out. Loud punk music. LEAR leaps from his platform delighting in his newfound freedom. He energetically dances his way around his severed kingdom.

REGAN:

Idle old man, that still would manage those authorities that he hath given away. Now, by my life old fools are babes again.

REGAN, GONERIL, and EDMUND *laugh at wandering LEAR, who hearing them, turns away and sees KENT who has returned in disguise. KENT shadows LEAR for the rest of the performance—a witness, a guardian. Throughout the following dialog between KENT and LEAR, the other characters freeze in place.*

LEAR: What art thou?
KENT: A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.
LEAR: If thou be'st as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou art poor enough. What would'st thou?
KENT: Service.
LEAR: Who would'st thou serve?
KENT: You.
LEAR: Dost thou know me, fellow?
KENT: No, sir, but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.
LEAR: What's that?
KENT: Authority.
LEAR: What services canst thou do?
KENT: I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in the telling, and deliver a plain message bluntly.
LEAR: How old art thou?
KENT: Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for anything.
LEAR: Follow me; thou shalt serve me. If I like thee no worse after dinner I will not part with thee.

More punk music. The characters unfreeze. GONERIL studies EDMUND.

EDMUND: Well, madam?
GONERIL: Let the old man's knights have colder looks from you. What grows of it, no matter. Advise your followers so. I'll write straight to my sister.

EDMUND tries to kiss GONERIL. She cuts him short.

Go, prepare for dinner.

EDMUND leaves, runs into LEAR and KENT. EDMUND laughs at LEAR. LEAR grabs him, soils his dinner jacket.

LEAR: You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?

EDMUND breaks away from LEAR.

EDMUND *singing*, RICHARD *joining in*:
Hit the road Jack, and don't you come back no more no more no more no more. Hit the road Jack, and don't you come back no more.

EDMUND *sits on the far edge of GONERIL's platform.*

LEAR *to KENT*:

What says that fellow there? Call the clotpoll back. Where's my Fool? Ha! I think the world's asleep. Ha!

RICHARD *mocking* LEAR:

Am I king? Ha!

LEAR: Well, well, where's that mongrel? Why came not the slave back to me when I called him? And where's my Fool?

KENT: Since Cordelia's going to France sir, the Fool hath much pined away.

LEAR: No more of that. Go tell my daughter I would speak with her. And go fetch my Fool.

GONERIL *notices EDMUND on the edge of her platform, his jacket soiled.*

GONERIL: Did my father strike you?

EDMUND: Aye, madam.

GONERIL:

By day and night he wrongs me. Every hour he flashes into one gross crime or other. I'll not endure it. His knights grow riotous and he himself upbraids me on every trifle. When he returns, I will not speak with him.

She pulls EDMUND to her for a kiss.

Say I am sick.

They continue to fondle during the next scene.

FOOL *and* LITTLE FOOL *come to* LEAR.

LEAR: How now, my pretty knave; how dost thou?

FOOL: Sirrah, we'll teach thee a speech.

LEAR: Do.

LITTLE FOOL: Mark it, nuncle.

FOOL *and* LITTLE FOOL, *alternating lines*:

Have more than thou showest,

Speak less than thou knowest,

Lend less than thou owest,

Ride more than thou goest,

Learn more than thou trowest,

Set less than thou throwest,

Leave thy drink and thy whore,

And keep in-a-door,
And thou shalt have more
Than two tens to a score.

LEAR: This is nothing, Fool.

RICHARD *taunting*:
Nothing will come of nothing, King.

LITTLE FOOL: Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?
LEAR: Why no, boy. Nothing can be made of nothing.

FOOL, *to RICHARD indicating* LEAR:
Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to.

RICHARD *to* LEAR:
Nothing, nothing, nothing.

YOUNG RICHARD: A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!
FOOL: He will not believe a fool.
LEAR: A bitter fool.
LITTLE FOOL: Dost thou know the difference between a bitter Fool and a sweet one?
LEAR: No, lad, teach me.

LITTLE FOOL:
The lord that counseled thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me

FOOL *stands next to* LITTLE FOOL.

Do thou for him stand. Ta Da!
The other found out there.

Indicating LEAR.

LEAR: Dost thou call me a fool, boy?
LITTLE FOOL: All thy other titles thou hast given away.
FOOL: That, thou was't born with.

Punk music. LEAR dances his way to REGAN's platform.

LEAR: Are you our daughter?
REGAN: Come, sir. I would you would make use of your good wisdom and put away
these dispositions which of late transport you from what you rightly are.

RICHARD: Move!

He commands his cage be moved closer to the action. As it rolls, he shouts:

But yet I run, I run, I run, I run ...

FOOL *to* RICHARD:

May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse? Whoop, Jug, I love thee!

Simultaneously with FOOL's lines, and violently shaking his cage.

RICHARD: I run, I run, I run, I run before my horse to market!

Everyone freezes. LEAR takes off the mask. Holds the mask next to her face, looks at individual spectators, then addresses the audience.

LEAR: Does any here know me? This is not Lear! Does Lear walk thus? Speak thus?

She pokes her fingers through mask's eyes from the inside. Addresses RICHARD.

Where are his eyes?

LEAR *and* RICHARD:

Who is it that can tell me who I am?

FOOL: Lear's shadow.

RICHARD: Even if all obstacles were cut away, the crown were as the ripe revenue and due of birth, yet so much is my poverty of spirit, so mighty and so many my defects that I would rather hide—

LEAR puts mask back on.

YOUNG RICHARD: —from my greatness.

FOOL: Nuncle, give me an egg and I'll give thee two crowns.

LEAR: What two crowns shall they be?

FOOL:

Why, after I have cut the egg in the middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown in the middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away.

LITTLE FOOL *singing*:³

People that are just a little bit crazy

Need a little help to live along

People that are just a little bit crazy

Need a little help to live along
 People that are just a little bit crazy
 Need to know what's right from wrong
 People that are just a little bit crazy
 Need a little help to live along.

LEAR: When are you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?
 LITTLE FOOL: I have practiced singing ever since thou mad'st thy daughters thy mothers:
 for when thou gav'st them the rod and put'st down thy own breeches—

FOOL:
 Then they for sudden joy did weep,
 And I for sorrow sung,
 That such a king should play bo-peep
 And go the fools among.

LITTLE FOOL: Prithce, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy Fool to lie. I would
 fain learn to lie.
 LEAR: If you lie, I'll have you whipped.
 LITTLE FOOL: I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll have me whipped for
 speaking true; thou'lt have me whipped for lying.
 FOOL: And sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace.

Punk music and party. GONERIL and EDMUND stop making out and start dancing on GONERIL's platform. LEAR and the MICROPHONISTS dance exuberantly on the floor between platforms. Then LEAR steps onto GONERIL's platform and invites her to dance with him. She refuses, pushes LEAR off her platform. The music stops. Everyone stops dancing except LEAR.

LEAR: Are you our daughter?
 GONERIL: Come, sir.
 LEAR: Your name, fair gentlewoman?

He reaches to touch her face, she slaps his hand away.

GONERIL:
 Understand my purposes. Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires. Men so disordered,
 so debauched and bold that this our court, infected with their manners, shows like a riotous inn.

GONERIL grabs LEAR by the collar, shakes him.

Epicurism and lust make it more like a tavern or brothel than a palace.

Shocked, no longer dancing, LEAR stumbles away.

LEAR: Saddle my horse! Call my train together! Degenerate bastard, I'll not
 trouble thee! Yet have I left a daughter.

RICHARD, *shaking his cage*:

O Lear, Lear, Lear! I'd beat at this troubled gate that let thy folly in!

FOOL: If thou wer't my Fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

LEAR: How's that?

LITTLE FOOL: Thou should'st not have been old before 'til thou had'st been wise.

LEAR: O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven. Keep me in temper, I would not be mad. Are the horses ready?

MICROPHONIST: Ready, my lord.

LEAR *to* FOOLS: Come boy.

Music. GLOUCESTER *watches* LEAR *wander the space accompanied by* FOOL, LITTLE FOOL, MICROPHONISTS, *and* KENT, *in disguise.* REGAN *calls out to* GLOUCESTER.

REGAN: How dost, my lord?

GLOUCESTER: O madam, my old heart is cracked, it's cracked.

Music. EDMUND *and* KENT *arrive at the same time to* REGAN's *platform.*

EDMUND, *to disguised* KENT:

Good dawning to thee, friend. Art of this house?

KENT: Aye.

EDMUND: Where may we set our horses?

KENT: In the mud.

EDMUND: Prithee, if thou lov'st me, tell me.

KENT: I love thee not.

EDMUND: Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

KENT: Fellow, I know thee.

EDMUND: What dost thou know me for?

KENT:

A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking knave, a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable, finical rogue; a one-trunk inheriting slave; one that would'st be a bawd in the way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pimp, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deniest the least syllable of what I say,

GONERIL *puts on her half-crown and heads to* LEAR's *throne.*

REGAN: Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault?

KENT: His countenance pleases me not.

REGAN: No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

REGAN *points at GONERIL about to sit on LEAR's throne. Caught, GONERIL sits on the edge of the platform.*

KENT: Madam, 'tis my occupation to be plain. I have seen better faces in my time than stands on any shoulder that I see before me at this instant.
REGAN: Fetch forth the stocks! You say that again, and I'll have your nuts cast in bronze!
KENT: Madam, I am too old to care.
REGAN: To the stocks!

MICROPHONISTS *shove KENT to the ground, put his legs in stocks.*

GLOUCESTER *to the spectators:*

The king must take it ill that he, so slightly valued in his messenger, should have him thus restrained.

REGAN: As I have life and honor, there shall he sit 'til noon!
GONERIL: 'Til noon? 'Til night! And all night, too!

Music. GLOUCESTER goes to KENT.

GLOUCESTER: I am sorry for thee friend. I'll entreat for thee.
KENT: Pray, do not sir. I have watched and traveled hard. Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.

KENT *whistles. Punk music, "Oh Bondage, Up Yours" by X-Ray Spex. Wild dancing, chaos. LEAR loves it. EDMUND and REGAN have sex on REGAN's platform. LEAR spotting KENT asleep in the stocks, dumps booze on him. KENT jolts awake. Music stops. Everyone in a soft freeze. CORDELIA is MICROPHONIST for LEAR in this scene.*

KENT: Hail to thee, noble master.
LEAR: Ha! Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?
KENT: No, my lord.
LITTLE FOOL: Ha, ha, he wears cruel garters.

FOOL *and* LITTLE FOOL:

Horses are tied by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by the legs. When a man's overlusty at legs, then he wears wooden leatherstocks.

LEAR: What's he that so much thy place mistook to set thee here?
KENT: It is both he and she. Edmund and your daughter Regan.
LEAR: No.
KENT: Yes.
LEAR: No, I say.
KENT: I say yea.
LEAR: No, no they would not.

KENT: Yes, they have.
 LEAR: By Jupiter, I swear no!
 KENT: By Juno, I swear ay!
 LEAR: They durst not do it; they could not, would not do it!
 FOOL: Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way.

FOOL, LITTLE FOOL, GLOUCESTER, *and* CORDELIA *sing in a round:*

Fathers that wear rags
 Do make their children blind
 But fathers that bear bags
 Shall see their children kind.
 Fortune, that errant whore,
 Ne'er turns the key to the poor.

FOOL: But for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours for thy daughters as thou can'st
 count in a year.
 LEAR: Where is this daughter?
 KENT: With Edmund, sir, within.

LEAR *realizing CORDELIA is his MICROPHONIST, shouts at her.*

LEAR: Follow me not, stay here!

LEAR *moves around the edge of REGAN's platform, searching for an entrance.*

FOOL: We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no laboring in the winter.
 LITTLE FOOL: All that follow their noses are led by their eyes but blind men, and there's
 not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking.

FOOL *and* LITTLE FOOL:

Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy neck with following.

*All freeze, except LEAR, who walks around examining the characters as though they were wax museum
 pieces. He ends at REGAN's platform.*

LEAR *in rage:*

Vengeance, plague, death and confusion! I'd speak with Regan and her servant. The King would
 speak with Edmund! The dear father would with his daughter speak!

To RICHARD.

Are they informed of this?

To MICROPHONIST.

Go tell that bastard and his whore I'd speak with them! Now! Bid them come forth and hear me, or at their door I'll beat the drum 'til it cry sleep to death!

LEAR *mimes pounding on REGAN's door, while the sound is made by YOUNG RICHARD beating on a pan with a wooden spoon.*

FOOL: Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put 'em in the paste alive. She knapped 'em on the coxcombs with a stick and cried "down wantons, down!" T'was her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay.

REGAN *jumps up from her throne, crosses to LEAR.*

REGAN: I cannot think my sister in the least would fail her obligation.

LEAR: My curses on her.

REGAN: Sir, you are old. Nature in you stands on the very verge of his confine. You should be ruled, and led by some discretion that discerns your state better than yourself. Therefore, I pray you, return to Goneril. Say you have wronged her.

LEAR: Ask her forgiveness? Do you mark how this becomes the house: "Dear daughter, I confess I am old. Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg that you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food."

REGAN: Father, no more. These are unsightly tricks. Return you to my sister.

LEAR: Never, Regan.

REGAN *defiantly putting on LEAR's crown leaves her platform and heads to GONERIL, who is wearing the other half of the crown. Together the sisters sit on LEAR's throne.*

REGAN: I pray you, father, being weak, seem so. If 'til the expiration of your month you will return and sojourn with my sister, dismissing half your train, come then to me.

LEAR: Return to her and half my train dismissed? No! Rather I abjure all roofs and choose to wage against the enmity of the air, to be a comrade with the wolf and owl, necessity's sharp pinch.

Pointing at GONERIL.

Return with her?

GONERIL: At your choice, sir.

LEAR *to both*: I gave you all!

GONERIL, REGAN:

In your own good time you gave it.

REGAN: If you will come to me—for now I spy a danger—I entreat you to bring but five-and-twenty. To no more will I give place.



FIGURE 5.2: Goneril/Rebecca Wilensk (left) and Regan/Kahlei Slick confront King Lear in *Richard's Lear*. University of Minnesota-Minneapolis, 1981. Photograph courtesy of Walker Art Center.

LEAR: I made you my guardians, my depositaries, but kept a reservation to be followed by such a number. What, must I come to you with five-and-twenty? Regan, said you so?

REGAN: And speak it again. No more with me.

GONERIL: Hear me. What need you five-and-twenty? Ten? Or five? To follow in a house where twice so many have a command to tend you?

REGAN: What need you one?

LEAR:
O reason not the need! Our basest beggars are in the poorest thing superfluous. Allow not nature more than nature needs and man's life is as cheap as beasts. Thou art ladies: if only to go warm were gorgeous, why nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear, which scarce keeps thee warm. But for true need—you heavens, give me patience, patience I need. You see me here, you gods, a poor old man, as full of grief as age, wretched in both.

LEAR drops his cloak. For the rest of the performance he wears only his mask and his long-johns underwear.

No, you unnatural hags, I will have such revenges on you both that all the world shall—I will do such things—what they are yet I know not, but they shall be the terrors of the earth! You think

I'll weep. No, I'll not weep. I have full cause of weeping, but this heart shall break into a hundred thousand flaws ere I'll weep. O Fool, I shall go mad!

LEAR turns in desperation to RICHARD's cage.

Richard! Richard! Richard!

LEAR tears the key off his neck and throws it to the FOOL.

RICHARD, *rattling his cage*:
My turn! My turn!

FOOL unlocks RICHARD's cage. GONERIL, REGAN and CORDELIA arm themselves with swords and shields as does RICHARD. MICROPHONISTS clear the area to prepare for battle.

FOOL: He that has a house to put his head in has a good headpiece.

FOOL puts LITTLE FOOL in the cage and shuts the door but does not lock it.

LEAR: No, no, my heart will burst if I speak, and I will speak, that so my heart will burst! Butchers and villains, bloody cannibals!

RICHARD *and* YOUNG RICHARD:
Ready?

GONERIL, REGAN, *and* CORDELIA:
Ready!

RICHARD: Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible. Thou sisters are stern, flinty, rough, remorseless. Bid'st thou me rage? Thou hast thy wish. Your hearts I'll stamp out with my horse's heels, and make a quagmire of your mingled brains.

CORDELIA *to her sisters*:
Take heed of yonder dog. When he fawns he bites; when he bites, his venom tooth rankles to the death. Have not to do with him, beware of him. Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him.

RICHARD:
Women, ha!

To the spectators who MICROPHONISTS have gathered to see the fight.

Love foreswore me in my mother's womb; and for I should not deal in her soft laws, she did corrupt frail nature with some bribe, to shrink up mine arm like a wither'd shrub; to make an envious mountain on mine back, where sits deformity to mock my body; to shape my legs of unequal size, to disproportion me in every part, like to a chaos or an unlick'd bear whelp. Am I then to be loved?

LEAR *and* CORDELIA:
Devil's butcher, hard-favored Richard.

RICHARD *to* CORDELIA:
Teach not thy lip such scorn for it was made for kissing, lady.

To spectators.

Here I am that have neither pity, love, nor fear. For I have often heard my mother say I came into the world with my legs forward. Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste? The midwife wonder'd and the women cried:

ALL THE WOMEN: O Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!
RICHARD: And so I was. Which plainly signified that I should snarl and bite and play the dog. Then, since the heavens have shap'd my body so, let hell make crooked my mind to answer it. I have no brother, I am like no brother; and this word "love," which greybeards call divine, be resident in men like one another and not in me. I am myself alone.
YOUNG RICHARD: Richard loves Richard. That is I am I. I, me, this one, myself, Richard, he, me.

GONERIL *confronts* RICHARD. *He turns away from her.*

GONERIL: Stay, dog, for thou shalt hear me. If heaven have any grievous plague in store exceeding those that I can wish upon thee, O, let them keep till thy sins be ripe, and then hurl down their indignation. On thee, troubler of the poor world's peace; the worm of conscience begnaw thy soul. No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, unless it be while some tormenting dream affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils. Thou evilish marked abortive rooting hog, thou heap of wrath, thou foul in-digested lump, as crooked in thy manner as in thy shape!
RICHARD: Goneril!
GONERIL: Richard!

RICHARD *and* LEAR:
Am I King? Ha!

CORDELIA: Richard, thou hast made the happy earth thy hell, filled it with cursing cries and deep exclams.
REGAN: Richard yet lives. Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray to have him suddenly conveyed from hence.
CORDELIA: I pray that I may live and say, the dog is dead.
GONERIL: Cancel his bond of life!

GONERIL *strikes the first blows.*

YOUNG RICHARD: Richard, do think how sweet a thing it is to wear a crown!

RICHARD, *driving GONERIL back*:
I will be king or die.

REGAN and CORDELIA *join in fighting RICHARD. Then, before the struggle is resolved, everyone freezes.*

YOUNG RICHARD:
His horse is slain, and all on foot he fights. Seeking these women in the throat of death. Yet all his followers turn back and fly, like ships before the wind, or lambs pursued by hunger-starved wolves. Three times did Richard make a lane to me, and thrice I cried, "Courage, Richard, fight it out!"

LEAR and YOUNG RICHARD:
Courage, Richard, fight it out!

The fight resumes.

RICHARD:
Charge, give no foot of ground; a crown or else a glorious tomb! A scepter, or an earthly sepulcher!

The sisters drive RICHARD back.

YOUNG RICHARD:
Withdraw, Richard! I'll help thee to a horse!

RICHARD: A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

REGAN *grabs RICHARD, handcuffs him. GONERIL ascends the throne.*

REGAN: Come, make him stand upon this molehill here.

CORDELIA *forces RICHARD toward REGAN's platform.*

CORDELIA: Are you he that raved at mountains with outstretched arms, yet parted but the shadow with his hand? What?

GONERIL: Was it you that would be England's king?

REGAN: Stamp, rave and fret, that I may sing and dance.

RICHARD: I am not in the vein.

GONERIL: Speak! Nothing?

RICHARD *spits on the ground.*

Nothing will come of nothing. Again, speak.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

REGAN: Thou would'st be paid, I see, to make me sport. Richard cannot speak unless he wear a crown.

GONERIL: A crown for Richard!

CORDELIA *brings out a paper Burger King crown.*

Bring him to me while I set it on.

RICHARD *is forced to kneel as GONERIL sets the paper crown on his head.*

GONERIL: Ladies, bow to him.

REGAN: Ay, marry, now he looks like a king!

RICHARD: I do but dream on sovereignty like one that stands upon a promontory and spies a far-off shore where he would tread, wishing his foot equal to his eye. So do I wish the crown. For a kingdom, any oath may be broken. I would break a thousand oaths to reign one year.

LEAR: Thou art a traitor, off with his head!

RICHARD: You say there is no kingdom for Richard? What other pleasure can the world afford?

To CORDELIA.

I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap, and bewitch sweet slits with my words and looks.

CORDELIA *presses the tip of her sword into RICHARD's heart.*

CORDELIA: Never, never, never.

RICHARD: Nay, do not pause: for I did kill King Henry—but, 'twas thy beauty that provoked me. Nay, now dispatch: 'twas I that stabbed young Edward—but, 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on.

CORDELIA *lowers her sword.*

Take up the sword again. Or take up me.

CORDELIA: Arise, dissembler: though I wish thy death, I will not be thy executioner.

GONERIL: Back into your kennel, hellhound.

LITTLE FOOL *leaves the cage and holds the door open while CORDELIA forces RICHARD back inside. FOOL locks RICHARD in the cage, then hands the key to YOUNG RICHARD who gives it to CORDELIA.*

RICHARD: Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep to undertake the death of all the world, so that I may live one hour in your sweet bosom.

CORDELIA *locking RICHARD in the cage:*
Never!

RICHARD: No, no, no, no, no, no, no!

CORDELIA gives the key to YOUNG RICHARD. The cage is rolled to the side, far from the action. Music. GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA change from their battle wear into royal regalia. GONERIL and REGAN reseal themselves on LEAR's throne. LEAR approaches them.

LEAR: What is it o'clock?

They do not answer.

KENT *still in the stocks:*
It is supper time, my lord.

LEAR:
I will not sup tonight.

Approaching REGAN and GONERIL.

Hear, Nature, hear. Dear Goddess hear: suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend to make these creatures fruitful. Into their wombs convey sterility, dry up in them the organs of increase, and from their derogate bodies never spring a babe forth to honor them. If they must teem, create them children of spleen, that they may live and be a thwart disnatured torment to them. Turn all their mother's pains and benefits to laughter and contempt, that they may feel how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child.

During LEAR's curse, storm sounds begin. GONERIL and REGAN rise in slow motion, leave the throne and go to their separate platforms. Music. LEAR wanders around the space, but does not take shelter. The FOOLS follow LEAR, taking what shelter they can.

GONERIL to REGAN:
Sister! Come out of the storm. 'Tis a wild night. Shut up your doors.

Thunder, lightning, and rain. With sympathy GLOUCESTER watches LEAR.

KENT: Who's there besides foul weather?
MICROPHONIST: A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

MICROPHONIST *frees* KENT.

KENT: Dost thou know me, fellow?
MICROPHONIST: No.
KENT: Where's the king?

MICROPHONIST: Contending with the fretful elements. He bids the wind blow the earth into the sea, or swell the curled waters 'bove the main, that things might change or cease; tears his white hair, which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage, catch in their fury and make nothing of; strives in his little world of man to outscorn the to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain. This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch, the lion and the belly-pinched wolf keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs, and bids what will take all.

KENT: But who is with him?

MICROPHONIST: None but the Fool.

Storm and music. GLOUCESTER addresses RICHARD.

GLOUCESTER: Alack, alack, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired the sisters leave that I might pity him, Goneril and Regan took from me the use of mine own house, charged me on pain of perpetual displeasure neither to speak of Lear, entreat for him, or in any way sustain him.

RICHARD: Most savage and unnatural.

GLOUCESTER: Say you nothing. There is a division between the sisters, and a matter worse than that. I have received a letter this night—'tis dangerous to be spoken – I have locked the letter in my safe. These injuries the King now bears will be revenged home; there is part of a power already landed at Dover. I must incline to the King. I will look for him and privily relieve him. If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the King, my old master must be relieved.

He turns, looking for LEAR.

REGAN: How dost my lord?

GLOUCESTER: The King is in a high rage.

REGAN: Whither is he going?

GLOUCESTER: He calls for his horses, but will I know not whither.

REGAN: 'Tis best to give him room. He leads himself.

GLOUCESTER: The night comes on, and the high winds. For many miles about there's scarce a bush.

REGAN: Gloucester, to stubborn old men the injuries they themselves procure must be their schoolmaster. Be not as foolish as my father. Shut up your doors. Keep warm in your house. My father is attended by a desperate crew. And what they may incense him to, the gods only know.

Ear-shattering music. CORDELIA is LEAR's microphonist. His miked sound reverberates as if he is shaking the world apart.

LEAR: Blow, winds and crack your cheeks. Rage, blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks. You sulph'rous

and thought-executing fires, vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts, singe my white head. And thou, all-shaking thunder, strike flat the thick rotundity of the world, crack Nature's molds, all germains spill at once, that makes ingrateful man!

FOOL: O Nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain water out of doors. Good nuncle, in. Ask thy daughters' blessing. Here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools.

LEAR: Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire. Spout, rain! Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters. I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness. I never gave you kingdom, called you children, you owe me no subscription. Then let loose your horrible pleasure. Here I stand, your slave, a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.

To the FOOLS.

Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold, my boy? I am cold myself.

FOOL *and* LITTLE FOOL *singing:*

He that has a little tiny wit,
With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain,
Must make content with their fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day.

LEAR: True, my boy.

They wander off. Focus shifts to GONERIL's platform.

GONERIL *to* EDMUND:

This kiss, if it durst speak, would stretch thy spirits up into the air: Conceive and fare thee well.

EDMUND: Yours in the ranks of death.

GONERIL: My most dear Edmund.

Music. KENT joins LEAR. He tries to find him shelter under a platform where spectators are seated.

KENT: Good, my lord. Enter here.

LEAR: Let me alone.

KENT: Enter.

LEAR: Wilt break my heart?

KENT: I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

FOOLS *eagerly take shelter. But not* LEAR.

LEAR:

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee. But where the greater malady is fixed, the lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear; but if thy flight lay toward

the roaring sea, thou'dst meet the bear in the mouth. When the mind's free, the body's delicate. The tempest in my mind doth from my senses take all feeling else, save what beats there.

As the storm rages, KENT wraps himself about LEAR to protect him.

Filial ingratitude, is it not as if this mouth should tear this hand for lifting food to it? But, I will punish home. No, I will weep no more. In such a night, to shut me out! Pour on, I will endure! In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril, your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all. O that way madness lies; let me shun that. No more o' that!

KENT: Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR:

Go in thyself; seek thine own ease. In, go first. Nay, get thee in. I'll pray and then I'll sleep.

KENT goes in. LEAR, alone arches his back into the yoga bridge, his face looking up to the heavens.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are, that bide the pelting of this pitiless storm, how shall your houseless heads and your unfed sides, your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you from seasons such as these? O, I have taken too little care of this! Take physic, pomp; expose thyself to what wretches feel, that thou mayst shake the superflux to them, and show the heavens more just.

FOOL and LITTLE FOOL rush from under the platform.

FOOL: Come not in here, nuncle! Here's a spirit.

LITTLE FOOL: Help me, help me!

KENT: Give me thy hand. Who's there?

LITTLE FOOL: A spirit. A spirit.

FOOL: He says his name's Poor Tom.

KENT calling under the platform:

What art thou that dost grumble there in the straw? Come forth.

POOR TOM who is EDGAR in disguise emerges. He is naked except for a penis covering which is a cast of his penis.

POOR TOM: Away! Who gives anything to Poor Tom? Whom the foul fiend hath led through flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow and halts in his pew, set ratsbane by his porridge, made him proud of heart to ride on a bay trotting horse over four-inched bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor. Tom's a-cold. O, do, de, do, de, do.

LEAR: Did'st thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

POOR TOM: Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting and taking. Do Poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes.

POOR TOM *crawls around the base of LEAR's throne.*

There could I have him now—and there—and there again—and there!

LEAR *runs to* POOR TOM. FOOLS *and* KENT *follow, crowding LEAR's throne.*

- LEAR: What? Has his daughters brought him to this pass? Could'st thou save nothing? Would'st thou give 'em all?
- KENT: He hath no daughters, sir.
- LEAR: Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued Nature to such a lowness but his unkind daughters. Is it the fashion that discarded fathers should have thus little mercy on their flesh? Judicious punishment—'twas this flesh begot those pelican daughters.
- POOR TOM: Pillicock sat on pillicock hill. Alow, alow, loo, loo!
- FOOL: This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.
- POOR TOM: Tom's a-cold!
- LEAR: What hast thou been?
- POOR TOM: A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust of my mistress and did the act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, broke them in the sweet face of heaven. One that slept in the contriving of lust, and waked to do it. Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly; and in woman outparamoured the Turk. False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silk betray thy poor heart to woman. Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from the lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind. Says suum, mun, nonny. Dolphin my boy, boy sessa? Let him trot by.
- LEAR: Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's ones are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. *He begins to undress.* Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here.
- FOOL: Prithee, nuncle, be contented, 'tis a naughty night to swim in.

GLOUCESTER *sees the cluster of bodies around LEAR's throne and calls to them.*

GLOUCESTER: What are you there? Your names?

POOR TOM *and* RICHARD:

Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the well-newt and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow dung for sallets, swallows the old rat and the ditch dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stocked, punished and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his backs, six shirts

to his body. Horse to ride, and weapon to wear, but mice and rats and such small deer, have been Tom's food for seven long year.

GLOUCESTER, *approaching* LEAR:
What, hath your Grace no better company?

POOR TOM: The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo he's called, and Mahu.
GLOUCESTER: Go in with me.
POOR TOM: Poor Tom's a-cold.
LEAR: First let me talk with this philosopher. *To* POOR TOM. What is the cause of thunder?
KENT: Good my lord, take Gloucester's offer; go into the house.
LEAR: I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban. *To* POOR TOM. What is your study?
POOR TOM: How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.
LEAR: Let me ask you one word in private.
POOR TOM: Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER, *pushing* POOR TOM *under the platform*:
In fellow, there, into the hovel. Keep thee warm there.

POOR TOM *rushes madly around*. LEAR *follows him*.

LEAR: Come, let's in all.

KENT, *trying to restrain* LEAR:
This way, lord.

LEAR: With him. I will keep still with my philosopher.

KENT *to* POOR TOM:
Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

LEAR: Come, good Athenian.

Finally they all move onto GLOUCESTER's platform and collapse in exhaustion.

GLOUCESTER: No words, no words! Hush.
POOR TOM: Child Rowland to the dark tower came; his word was still, "Fee, fie, foh, fum, I smell the blood of a British man."

They all fall asleep. The storm ends. LITTLE FOOL plays "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" on the violin. Then, silence until LEAR suddenly jumps up.

LEAR: It shall be done; I shall arraign them straight. *To TOM.* Come, sit thou here, most learned justice. Thou, sapient, sir, sit here. *He turns, looks up into the empty air.* Now, you she foxes—

POOR TOM: Look where he stands and glares. Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam? Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me.

FOOL: Her boat hath a leak
And she must not speak
Why she dares not come over to thee.

POOR TOM: Croak not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

LEAR: Bring in the evidence. Thou, robed man of justice, take thy place.
And thou, his yoke fellow of equity, bench by his side.

POOR TOM: Let us deal justly. Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd? Thy sheep be in the corn: and for one blast of thy minikin mouth thy sheep shall take no harm. Purrr, the cat is gray.

Makes his hands into a cat.

LEAR: Arraign her first. 'Tis Goneril.
RICHARD: Goneril!
YOUNG RICHARD: Goneril! Goneril!

From her platform, GONERIL *watches the mock trial.*

LEAR: I hereby take my oath before this honorable assembly, she kicked the poor King her father.

FOOL: Come hither, mistress.

Addressing POOR TOM's "cat."

LEAR: Is your name Goneril?
She cannot deny it.

LITTLE FOOL: She cannot.

LEAR: And here's another.

RICHARD: Regan, Regan!

REGAN *also watches.* LEAR *picks up a stool and talks to it.*

LEAR:
Whose warped looks proclaim what stone her heart is made of.

LEAR *throws the stool as far as he can.*

Stop her there. Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place! *He grabs POOR TOM.* False justice, why hast thou let her escape?

POOR TOM: Bless thy five wits!

LEAR: The little dogs and all. Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart. *The FOOLS bark.* See, they bark at me.

POORTOM, *protecting* LEAR:
 Tom will throw his head at them.
 Avaunt, you curs,
 Be thy mouth or black or white,
 Tooth that poisons if it bite;
 Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,
 Hound or spaniel, brach or lym,
 Or bobtail tike, or trundel-tail
 Tom will make them weep and wail,
 For with throwing thus my head,
 Dogs leaped the hatch, and all are fled.
 Do, de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to the wakes and fairs and market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

POORTOM *crawls back under the platform.*

LEAR: Then let them anatomize Regan. See what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?

LEAR *collapses into KENT's arms.*

KENT: Now, my good lord, lie here and rest a while.
 LEAR: Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains. So, so. We'll, go to supper in the morning.
 LITTLE FOOL: And I'll go to bed at noon.

ALL freeze for 60 seconds. RICHARD counts the time.

RICHARD: 15, 30, 45, 55, 6, 7, 8, 9, 60. Ready? Action!

YOUNG RICHARD *to* GONERIL:
 Seek out the traitor, Gloucester.

RICHARD *to* REGAN:
 Seek out the traitor, Gloucester.

REGAN: Hang him instantly.
 GONERIL: Pluck out his eyes.

GONERIL *kisses* EDMUND, *then sends him after* GLOUCESTER. *She puts on her half-crown and meets* REGAN, *also crowned, at the throne, they sit together.* EDMUND *brings* GLOUCESTER.

GONERIL: Is that the traitor Gloucester?
 REGAN: Ingrateful fox, 'tis he.
 GONERIL: To that chair, bind him.
 GLOUCESTER: What means your graces? Good friends, consider you are my guests.
 GONERIL: Bind him, I say.
 REGAN: Hard, hard! O, filthy traitor.
 GLOUCESTER: Unmerciful ladies, I am none.
 GONERIL: Bind his arms.

REGAN *running her fingers through his hair*:
 So white, and such a traitor?

GLOUCESTER: Lady, these hairs will quicken and accuse thee. I am your host. What will you do?
 GONERIL: Come, sir, what letters had you from France?
 REGAN: Answer simply, for we know the truth.
 GONERIL: And what confederacy have you with the traitors lately landed in this kingdom?
 REGAN: To whose hands have you sent the lunatic King, our father. Speak!
 GLOUCESTER: I have a letter from one that's of a neutral sort, and not from one opposed to you.
 GONERIL: Cunning.
 REGAN: And false.
 GONERIL: Where hast thou sent the King?
 GLOUCESTER: To Dover.
 REGAN: Why to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril?
 GONERIL: Why to Dover? Let him answer that!
 GLOUCESTER: Forget it, girls. You can fry your tits in butter before I'll talk.
 REGAN: Why to Dover?
 GLOUCESTER: I shall see winged vengeance overtake such children as you.
 GONERIL: See it, shalt thou never.

GONERIL *flies from the throne to* GLOUCESTER.

Edmund, put down that chair.

EDMUND *lowers the chair to the floor so that bound* GLOUCESTER *is on his back*.

Upon these eyes of thine, I'll set my foot.

GONERIL *raises her spiked heel and drives it into* GLOUCESTER's eye. *He screams*.

GLOUCESTER: Help, help! O, cruel! You gods!
 REGAN: One side will mock the other. The other, too.

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MICROPHONIST: My lady, hold! I have served you since I was a child: but never better service have I done you than now to bid you hold.
REGAN: What? You dog!

Crossing to RICHARD.

Give me thy dagger. A peasant stand up like this?

Through the bars of his cage, RICHARD hands her two daggers. REGAN throws one on the floor in front of the MICROPHONIST, who picks it up. They fight. REGAN mortally wounds the MICROPHONIST.

YOUNG RICHARD: In the clout! In the clout!
MICROPHONIST: I am slain. *To GLOUCESTER.* My lord, you have one eye left to see some mischief on her! O! *Dies.*

REGAN, *dagger in hand*:
Lest it see more, I prevent it.

She puts out GLOUCESTER's other eye. He screams.

Out, vile jelly. Where is thy luster now?

GLOUCESTER: All dark and comfortless.

REGAN, *to EDMUND*:
Go thrust him out the gates and let him smell his way to Dover.

She returns the daggers to RICHARD, pushes the MICROPHONIST with her foot.

Throw this slave upon the dunghill.

RICHARD: Thou singest sweet music.

GONERIL goes back to her platform, stares at her bloody spiked heel. GLOUCESTER puts on dark sunglasses and feels his way to the edge of REGAN's platform.

MICROPHONIST: You cannot see your way.
GLOUCESTER: I have no way and therefore want no eyes. I stumbled when I saw.
MICROPHONIST: Fellow, where goest?
GLOUCESTER: As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods: they kill us for their sport.

POORTOM comes out from beneath the platform. He spots blind GLOUCESTER.

POORTOM: The worst is not, so long as we can say this is the worst.
GLOUCESTER: Is that the naked fellow?

MICROPHONIST: Ay, my lord.
 GLOUCESTER: Sirrah, naked fellow! Know'st thou the way to Dover?
 POOR TOM: Both stile and gate, horse-way and footpath.
 GLOUCESTER: There is a cliff there whose high and bending head looks fearfully
 in the confining deep. Bring me but to the very brim of it, and I'll
 repair the misery thou dost bear with something rich about me.
 From that place, I shall no leading need.
 POOR TOM: Give me thy arm. Poor Tom shall lead thee.

*Music. TOM leads GLOUCESTER through the space. They pass LEAR and his troupe, also moving
 through the space.*

GLOUCESTER: 'Tis the time's plague, when madmen lead the blind.

Music continues.

POOR TOM: When shall I come to the top of that same hill?
 GLOUCESTER: You do climb it now. Look, how we labor.
 POOR TOM: Me thinks the ground is even.
 GLOUCESTER: Horrible steep. Listen, do you hear the sea?
 POOR TOM: No, truly.
 GLOUCESTER: Why your other senses grow imperfect by your eyes' anguish.
 POOR TOM: So may it be indeed. Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st
 in better phrase and matter than thou did'st.
 GLOUCESTER: You are much deceived; in nothing am I changed.
 POOR TOM: Methinks you're better spoken.
 GLOUCESTER: Come on, sir, here's the place: stand still. How fearful and dizzy 'tis to
 cast one's eyes so low. The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
 show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down hangs one that gathers
 samphire, dreadful trade! Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
 The fishermen that walk upon the beach appear like mice; and yond
 tall anchoring bark diminished to her cock; her cock a buoy almost
 too small for sight. The murmuring surge that on the unnumber'd idle
 pebbles chafes, cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more lest my
 brain turn and the deficient sight topple down headlong.
 GLOUCESTER: Set me where you stand.
 POOR TOM: Give me your hand. You are now within a foot of the extreme verge;
 for all beneath the moon I would not leap upright.
 GLOUCESTER: Let go my hand. Here friend's a purse—in it, a jewel well worth a
 poor man's taking. Prosper. Go thou further off; bid me farewell,
 and let me hear thee going.

POOR TOM *pretending to leave, echoes his voice:*
 Gone, sir, farewell.

GLOUCESTER *leaps forward on the flat floor and collapses*. POOR TOM *rushes to him, pretending to be a passerby*.

POOR TOM: Ho you, sir! Friend! Alive or dead? Hear you, sir! Speak! Yet he revives. What are you, sir?

GLOUCESTER: Away and let me die!

POOR TOM: Had'st thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air, so many fathoms down precipitating, thou'dst shivered like an egg; but thou dost breathe; hast heavy substance; bleedst not, speak'st, art sound. Ten masts at each make not the altitude thou hast perpendicularly fell, thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

GLOUCESTER: But have I fallen, or no?

POOR TOM: From the dread summit of this chalky bourn. Look up a-height, the shrill-gorged lark so far cannot be seen or heard; do but look up.

GLOUCESTER: I have no eyes.

Music. LEAR, *wearing a crown of weeds and flowers, rushes out with his troupe*.

LEAR:
No, they cannot touch me for coining. I am the King, himself. Nature's above art in that respect.

He takes some flowers from his crown and tosses them in the air.

Here's some money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper. Draw me a clothier's yard.

He points under GLOUCESTER's platform.

Look, look a mouse.

LITTLE FOOL *winds up a toy mouse and sets it free*. LEAR takes more flowers from his crown.

Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will do it. There's my gauntlet. I'll prove it on a giant. Bring up the brown bills. Well-flown bird! In the clout; in the clout: give the password.

YOUNG RICHARD: Butter.

MICROPHONIST: Parkay!

LEAR: Pass.

GLOUCESTER: I know that voice.

LEAR to GLOUCESTER *whose beard is bloody*:

Ha! Goneril with a red beard! They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say "ay" and "no" to everything that I said. "Ay" and "no" too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not cease at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men 'o their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.

GLOUCESTER: That voice I do remember well. Is it not the King?

LEAR:

Ay, every inch a King. When I do stare, see how that subject quakes. *To RICHARD.* I pardon that man's life. What was the cause? Adultery? Thou shalt not die? Die for adultery! No: the wren goes to 't, and the gilded fly does lecher in my sight. *To the FOOLS.* Let copulation thrive: for Gloucester's bastard son was kinder to his father than my daughters got between lawful sheets. To 't, luxury, pell-mell. For I lack soldiers. *He points at GONERIL.* Behold yond simpering dame, whose face between her forks presages snow, that minces virtue and does shake the head to hear of pleasure's name. The fitchew, nor the soiled horse goes to 't with a more riotous appetite. Down from the waste they are Centaurs, though women all above: but to the girdle do the gods inherit, beneath is all the fiend's. There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah! *To GLOUCESTER.* Give 'em an ounce of civet, good apothecary, sweeten my imagination. There's money for thee.

Throws more flowers.

GLOUCESTER: O, let me kiss that hand!

LEAR: Let me wipe it first, it smells of mortality.

He wipes it across his long underwear.

GLOUCESTER: O, ruined piece of nature. Dost thou know me?

LEAR: I remember thy eyes well enough. Dost thou squint at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid, I'll not love.

He offers GLOUCESTER the palm of his hand to be read not noticing that GLOUCESTER is blind.

GLOUCESTER: Heed thou this challenge, mark but the penning of it.

LEAR: Were all the letters suns, I could not see.

LEAR: Read!

GLOUCESTER *taking his sunglasses off:*

See? I have no eyes!

LEAR:

A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears:

LITTLE FOOL *mimes whipping FOOL.*

See how justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear.

LEAR *whispers inaudibly into GLOUCESTER's ear.*

Change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

GLOUCESTER: Ay.

LEAR:

And the creature run from the cur? There thou might'st behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.

LITTLE FOOL *keeps whipping* FOOL.

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand! Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back; thou hotly lusts to use her in the way for which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the swindler. Through tattered clothes small vices appear; robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold, and the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks; arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it. None does offend, none, I say, none. *To* GLOUCESTER. Get thee glass eyes, and like a scurvy politician seem to see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now.

LEAR *pushes* GLOUCESTER *down onto hands and knees and sits on top of him, speaks to* KENT.

Pull off my boots. Harder, harder: so.

POOR TOM: O, matter and impertinency mixed: Reason in madness.

LEAR *to* GLOUCESTER:

If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes. I know thee well enough: thy name is Gloucester. Thou must be patient: we came crying hither. Thou know'st the first time we smell the air we wawl and cry. I will preach to thee, mark. When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools. *To* RICHARD. It were as delicate stratagem to shoe a troop of horse with felt, when I have stol'n upon these daughters, then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

LEAR *collapses into* FOOL's *arms*. CORDELIA *appears, searching for* LEAR.

CORDELIA: 'Tis he. Why he was met even now as mad as the vexed sea singing aloud: crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds, with hardock, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers, darnel, and all the weeds that grow in our sustaining fields.

Music. CORDELIA *approaches* LEAR.

CORDELIA: How does my royal Lord? How fares you Majesty?

LEAR: You do me wrong to take me out of the grave. Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears do scald like molten lead.

CORDELIA: Sir, do you know me?

LEAR: You are a ghost, I know. Where did you die?
CORDELIA: Still nutty as a fruitcake.
LEAR: Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight? I know not what to say. I will not swear these are my hands: let's see, I feel this pin prick.

He pinches himself.

CORDELIA: O, look upon me father, and hold your hands in benediction o'er me.

LEAR starts to *kneel*.

You must not kneel.
LEAR: Pray do not mock me: I am a very foolish old man, fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less; and to deal plainly, I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

EDMUND *steps toward* LEAR and CORDELIA.

EDMUND *to a MICROPHONIST*:
Some officer take them away. Guard them.

MICROPHONISTS *surround* LEAR and CORDELIA.

LEAR:
No, no, no, no! *To* CORDELIA. Come let's away to prison: we two alone will sing like birds in a cage: when thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down and ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live and sing and tell old tales, and laugh at gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too, who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out: and take upon us the mystery of things, as if we were God's spies.

YOUNG RICHARD *unlocks the cage*. LEAR and CORDELIA *are put in*. YOUNG RICHARD *locks the cage*. RICHARD *starts pawing at* CORDELIA.

EDMUND *to MICROPHONIST*:
Come hither, captain. Listen: take this note, follow them to prison. If thou dost as this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way to noble fortunes. Know thou this, that men are as the time is: to be tender-minded does not become a sword: thy great employment will not bear questions; either say thou'lt do it, or thrive by other means.

MICROPHONIST: I'll do it, my lord.
EDMUND: About it, then.
MICROPHONIST: I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats. If it be man's work, I'll do it.

EDMUND *to REGAN*:
He hath commission to hang Cordelia in the prison. *To* GONERIL. And to lay the blame on her own despair.

Blackout, 30 seconds. Music comes up to full in the darkness. As lights come up, YOUNG RICHARD unlocks the cage. LEAR drags CORDELIA's dead body out. YOUNG RICHARD locks the cage.

LEAR:

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones: had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so that heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever. I know when one is dead and when one lives. She's dead as earth. *To KENT.* Lend me a looking-glass.

KENT pulls a small feather from LEAR's flower-crown.

If that her breath will mist or stain the stone, why then she lives.

He takes the feather from KENT.

This feather stirs; she lives. It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows that ever I have felt.

LEAR wants to place the feather at CORDELIA's mouth. KENT stops him.

KENT: O, my good master.

LEAR: Away!

LEAR loses the feather. He cradles CORDELIA.

POOR TOM: 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

LEAR: A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all! I might have saved her: Now she's gone forever. Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha, what is it thou say'st?

He bends his ear to her mouth.

Her voice was soft, gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman. I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.

YOUNG RICHARD: 'Tis true, my friends, he did.

LEAR: Did I not, Richard? I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion I would have made them skip. I am old now. *To KENT.* Who are you? Mine eyes are not of the best. Are you not Kent?

KENT: The same. Your servant.

LEAR *to all*: He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.

KENT: I am the very man that followed your sad steps.

LEAR: Ay, so I think. And my poor fool is hanged? No, no, no life? Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more, never, never, never, never, never. Pray you undo this button. Thank you, sir. Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips. Look there, look there!

LEAR dies.

POOR TOM: He is gone.
KENT: The wonder is he hath endured so long.

EDMUND *ascends LEAR's throne, sits.*

EDMUND *to* RICHARD:
Thus high, by thy advice and thy assistance, is King Edmund seated.

RICHARD: But shall we wear these glories for a day? Shall they last, and we rejoice in them?

REGAN *to* EDMUND:
Now, sweet man, you know the goodness I intend upon you. Tell me truly: yes, speak the truth: Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND: In honored love only.
REGAN: Never once have you found your way to her forefended place?
EDMUND: That thought does you dishonor.
REGAN: I think you've fucked her more than once, you slimy doublefucker.
EDMUND: No, never, by my honor, lady.

GONERIL *to* EDMUND:
Now, sweet man, you know the goodness I intend upon you. Tell me truly: yes, speak the truth: Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND: In honored love only.
GONERIL: Never once have you found your way to her forefended place?
EDMUND: That thought does you dishonor.
GONERIL: I think you've fucked her more than once, you slimy doublefucker.
EDMUND: No, never, by my honor, lady.

To YOUNG RICHARD *who is sitting behind the throne.*

To both these sisters have I sworn my love. Each is jealous of the other. Which of them shall I take? Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed if both remain alive.

GONERIL *and* REGAN *exchange looks, agreeing to kill EDMUND when the time comes.*

RICHARD: Conscience is but a word cowards use: our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law. Shall I be plain? I wish the bitches dead.

ALL freeze, except the RICHARDS.

YOUNG RICHARD:
So wise so young, they say, do never live long.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

YOUNG RICHARD *frees RICHARD from his cage. RICHARD moves around the space.*

RICHARD: Soft. I did but dream. The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight. What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.

RICHARD *takes CORDELIA by the hand, bringing her out of death. He looks her in the eyes.*

CORDELIA: Richard loves Richard. That is: I am I. Is there a murdered here? No.
Well, then, put up your sword.

RICHARD *for the first time on mike:*
Say then my peace is made.

CORDELIA: That shalt thou know hereafter.
RICHARD: But, shall I live in hope?
CORDELIA: All men, I hope, live so.

YOUNG RICHARD *gives RICHARD a small box containing a ring.*

RICHARD: Wear this ring.
CORDELIA: To take is not to give.

RICHARD *puts the ring on CORDELIA's finger, they both freeze. The MICROPHONISTS exit.*
YOUNG RICHARD *moves about examining the frozen characters as in a wax museum. He takes GONERIL's half crown, then Regan's, and makes one crown. He crowns himself. The crown is too big. He takes it off, addresses the audience.*

YOUNG RICHARD:
The weight of this sad time we must obey,
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

For a moment, YOUNG RICHARD sits on the throne, the crown in his lap. Then he gets up, puts the crown on the throne, and runs as fast as he can out of the space. Slowly, the characters unfreeze and leave. No curtain call.

NOTES

1. This combat scene was choreographed by Zarrilli using kalaripayattu, the Kerala, India, martial art he studied deeply and practiced/taught for decades. Kalari is also the basis for the dagger fight between Regan and her servant who unsuccessfully tries to prevent Regan from putting out Gloucester's second eye.
2. The text published here was made from Schechner's and Rebecca (Ortese) Wilenski's scripts.
3. This song was composed by J. H. Caulkins, who played Little Fool.

6

Commune, 1970–1972

Introduction

Commune was the third production of The Performance Group. It opened on December 17, 1970 at The Performing Garage. The basic text remained the same, but I made revisions throughout its run, into 1972. *Commune's* actions, affects, and meanings are still relevant. The production was devised amidst a plethora of crises, artistic and political, within The Performance Group and in American and global societies. At the same time, I was working on *Environmental Theater* (1973), a book exploring my emerging ideas about performance.

After *Macbeth* closed early in 1970, The Performance Group that made *Dionysus in 69* disintegrated. During the spring, I had dark doubts. Should TPG continue? What were my creative abilities? What work could renew the Group? Still, I began the workshops that led to *Commune*—work that was re-formative for TPG. Outside the Garage, American society was torn apart by the Vietnam War. In March, B52 bombers began heavy air attacks on Cambodia. In April, South Vietnam and American troops went into Cambodia. On May 1, vast protests against the rapidly expanding war swept American campuses. On May 4, Ohio National Guard troops shot and killed four student protestors at Kent State University. In response, I and some TPG colleagues made guerrilla theatre in New York streets. I also joined students and faculty at NYU's School of the Arts boycotting and cancelling classes demanding the University end all defense research and ROTC. In the evenings, I continued to work on what would become *Commune*. My notebooks from those days of turmoil are full of new performer training exercises,¹ group meetings, street actions, and my experiences researching and visiting communes. Later in this introduction, I will share some of this material, depicting the journey from despair to renewal and then back to doubt when *Commune* failed at the box office. In decisive ways, the making of *Commune* paralleled and expressed what was happening to me, to the Group, and to America.

Commune examines the American experience by drawing parallels between Charles Manson's murderous gang, the Vietnam War, particularly the My Lai massacre,² the nineteenth-century Brook Farm³ commune, and the contradictions between American utopianism and American history. What drew me to Manson was the paradox of "The Family" based on what its members called love realized in bloody violence. Also their crazy anarchist utopian rhetoric: "We creep into people's houses and take things that belong to us, because everything belongs to everybody." Ahead of its time theatrically, *Commune's* themes and texts constitute and disturb American society. *Commune* combined devised scenes with texts from William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, Emma Lazarus, The Bible, advertising, testimony before Congress, reports from early European settlers, statements of Charles Manson and his "family," newspaper stories, and other sources. I and others did a lot of research and reading.

A strong recurring theme brought in to *Commune* by Spalding Gray is the hunting and killing of whales as described by Melville in *Moby Dick*. But this sea-hunt is displaced to the desert, to Death Valley, Spahn Ranch, and Hollywood. Another recurring motif is American exceptionalism and religiosity embodied in the many communes populating American history. The performance is suffused with music ranging from Samuel Sennet's eighteenth-century hymn, "Bound for the Promised Land" to Harry McClintock's 1928 hobo paradise song, "The Big Rock Candy Mountain" and Molly O'Day's rendition of Grady and Hazel Cole's 1939 homage to Jesus, "Tramp on the Street."

A driving themes of *Commune* is the contradiction between American idealism—expressed as "manifest destiny"⁴—and American practices of slavery, racism, and imperialism. Of course, there are splendid aspects of Americanism also, such as multicultural diversity, a genuine striving for improvement, and myriad opportunities for individuals and groups. Despite its contradictions, American idealism is seductive, literally. And also religious, the belief in America as the "shining city upon a hill," Ronald Reagan's appropriation of John Winthrop's 1630 sermon. *Commune* engages all that—as well as bringing forward the personal stories of each performer. One by one, they each sing a "song of myself"—a phrase taken from Walt Whitman's 1892 poem. And then they enact "what happened last night" taken from the American experience both recent and historical. The performers also embody the "commune," an imagined community which The Performance Group aspired toward.

The theatrical environment for *Commune*, designed by my long-time colleague Jerry Rojo, is focused on The Wave—an undulating wood structure that dominates the center of The Performing Garage. Around the wave are towers and cubicles for the spectators—modeled on the cliff dwellings of the ancestral Pueblo People at Mesa Verde, Colorado. Next to The Wave is a large circular tub with a blue plastic lining representing the swimming pool at 10050 Cielo Drive, Los Angeles, where Sharon Tate and four others were murdered by the Manson Family. These murders, repeatedly alluded to in *Commune*, are acted out twice, once at the start of the performance (in version 2 of *Commune*'s start) and near the play's end. At the outset, upon entering the theatre, every spectator must remove their shoes. During the performance, the performers "steal" as much as they can from spectators—coats, purses, whatever. For the murder scene, the performers wear the spectators' shoes and other items. In a penultimate scene, fifteen spectators are selected at random and told to sit in the dip of The Wave to represent My Lai villagers. Some of Lieutenant William Calley's testimony is recited. The "My Lai" spectators remain in place for the rest of the performance.

With regard to Manson, what happened at and from The Spahn Ranch⁵ seemed to me a paradigm of the layering of contradictions that America had become during the Vietnam War years. Citizens were instructed to live "normally," while watching nightly on TV a brutal war. Society was rife with dope and hope in the aftermath-extension of the storied 1960s. Everything was being ripped apart, including the theatre group I founded.

During the winter of 1969–70, I reorganized The Performance Group, professionalized its management, auditioned and selected new performers, accepted bookings for workshops and in-process performances, and began calling a new work that I was conceptualizing, the "commune piece." I committed to opening it in New York at The Performing Garage on December 16, 1970. By late March, everyone who would premiere *Commune* was on board. Elizabeth LeCompte was there not because she wanted to be part of The Performance Group but because she was Spalding Gray's significant other. No matter, as the work developed LeCompte became the production's

graphic designer, then my assistant, and finally when Joan MacIntosh and I left in October 1971 for a six month journey through Asia, *Commune's* interim director.

To give a sense of the process that led to *Commune*, and of what was going on outside of the rehearsal room and inside my head, let me share some notebook entries from 1970. What follows is a fraction of the hundreds of pages I wrote from February 1970 to January 1971.

February 27, first mention of Manson:

Spahn wants the secret of how Manson gets the girls to be so domestic and docile. "All you gotta do, George, is grab 'em by the hair, and kick 'em you know where!" Scene—girl training. What is it that makes the women worship Charlie so much? Spahn doesn't talk much about/against Manson. Afraid.

On March 2—in notes for lectures at McGill University in Montreal and York University in Toronto—I talked about a piece tentatively titled, *From Brook Farm to Spahn's Ranch*.

Nearly two months later, after many workshops, on April 27,

Crisis in my head about the performance. No set narrative yet, no sure way of using the people. [...] The tone of the work is established, and good. Its performance structure is still amorphous, tentative. [...] Kinds of Communes. Hippy/contemporary. Brook Farm. Early colonies. Families.

The next day I wrote, "Counterpoise Ripley's reasons for Brook Farm with Charlie's [Manson] or Susan's [Atkins] reasons for Spahn's Ranch."

May 2:

The "name saying" scene. The triumphant dance—by raising up the brother/sister/leader you are, as it were, fattening him/her for the slaughter. When he is killed by sound—you may partake of him—grabbing with your mouth a piece of his flesh. Take this flesh away—eat, be satisfied, and die. Either poisoned or in satisfaction and triumph. [...] Those resurrected and gathering the others—you have all the power—a collective, triumphant, celebratory, group power. The myth of the scene is simple and true:

THE DEATH OF THE INDIVIDUAL
THE BIRTH OF THE GROUP.

Whole sequence needs condensation. Avoid self-indulgence—that is, prolonging something simply because you enjoy it. Do something as long as it is an exploration—that is, takes you to where you have not been before; or as it sets (or starts to set) a score—that is, reveals physical actions that you will or have already repeated.

The movements are:

Inside self, silence, and isolation
Sound. Outside or inside
Articulation of sound in voice and body
Body, whole self, moving with sound

SCHECHNER PLAYS

Search for leader
Finding him/her—celebration, fattening up,
procession. All energy to and for the leader
Killing with sound the fat, luscious, lovely, delicious leader
Taking some of his/her mana by eating or sucking
Enjoyment/death
Name calling: wanting to be a group
Awakening. Do not wait forever, one will stir—become the initiating germ of the group
Gathering in as a group
Climax
Dispersion

Also—do not be afraid to experience, if it is true, as it may be for some of you, the identification of the leader with RS. To fatten him up for killing—and in doing away with him as leader to create the group.

The gathering may be not only “friendly” but very “sexy”—do not avoid this—it is natural and normal. To kill the leader and birth the group is also to liberate sexual energies that were previously locked up in the relationship to the leader. In one sense, the same could be called—if we face it personally—the death of RS and the birth of the group—. With that birth comes a dramatic release of sexual energy.

May 6, two days after National Guard troops killed four Kent State University students:

NATIONAL STRIKE DEMANDS

An immediate and unconditional withdrawal from SE Asia.
The immediate release of Bobby Seale, other Black Panthers, and all political prisoners.
An immediate end to university war-related research, and the abolishment of ROTC.

May 21:

The difficulties of constructing a text—to get it into narrative shape—not as an operatic conglomerate, or a pitiable anthology of scenes—but as something organic to us. The outline is OK, it is a start; but we do not have the nuts and bolts of scenic structure yet.

May 26:

In Chinese, “crisis” is written with two characters, one for “danger” the other for “opportunity.”

June 12:

Whole feeling. Confident. I don’t know why. There has been no breakthrough, no separation from the problems of self-composition, or solution. Just a deep in-sense of wholeness and a knowing that time will permit the piece to develop outwardly as I collaborate with the others to structure it inwardly.

June 13:

At a certain point—have people take on *new names*. Very important that the aspects of selves developed here have new full identity.

New names.

Mischa—Mik [Cribben, left the Group early in the run]

Bruce—Bruce White

Susan Belinda Moonshine—Patric [Epstein]

David Angel—Steve [Borst]

Lara⁶—Patricia [Bower]

Deidre (Leticia) Ariadne⁷—Joan [MacIntosh]

Jim⁸—James Griffiths

(Ichiee) Chan⁹—Spalding Gray

Jayson Bornman—Jayme Daniel

Borok, Richard, Ritzard—Richard Schechner.¹⁰

Jim feels very strongly that he should—at some point in the play—kill Jayme.

June 16 [at the Fort Hill Community¹¹ in Boston]:

Around 7 pm. At Fort Hill. Melinda is doing my chart. “There are mysteries and forces weaving here. They are good, but there are also dark webbing. These too are good. The children laugh and eat and the coffee is good on my tongue.”

10:50. Alone in the kitchen. Haven’t stirred from here since 8:30. Shaken by experience of supper and after supper. Like an encounter group, a fusion—that kind of inside look, attack, put down—and also exciting and lift up. I didn’t answer—people here speak softly, but their voices are charged. No one “Takes care” of someone else—but everyone evaluates—by examination, astrology, feel—new people, strangers—me. The criterion is very simple: either you accept the life on the Hill, and that means accepting the spirit, and accepting Mel Lyman (Mel or Melvin, never Lyman) or leaving. Like tissue transplant. I did not accept, and so was rejected. I didn’t consciously reject—but what else for me when someone is offered in all simplicity and directness as god—“The one truth now.” “Truth comes many times on the earth, there are many instruments—but now, and at each time, there is only one way. Melvin.”

More difficult to say what the spirit is. It is the pounding of the heart inside—and yes it rushed and pounded very hard in me. It is the rising anger and the expression of it. It is the quick taking in and rejecting/accepting of someone. I could not give back anything but fear and anger. I controlled myself and then they gave back more fear and anger—but not straight; rather quietly—with the heart beating. But the alternatives—crystal clear at each moment—were impossible for me: to scream, to deny everything, to accept Melvin/the spirit.

June 21:

Basic Themes
Commune

Individuality	vs	Commune
Given names	vs	Taken names
Work	vs	Play
Finished/polished	vs	Process/exercises
Mask/hypocrisy	vs	Imagination/truth
Straight-line stories	vs	Free structures
Tragedy	vs	Celebration
Separate/walls	vs	Together/contact
There-then	vs	Here-now
Myth-history book	vs	Immediate history of US
False gesture	vs	Physical, actual contact

Program for Commune ought to be a map.

June 23:

No longer a theatre of telling a story—or even doing a story. But doing/showing something here and now. The audience as partner-participant. Most impassioned speeches not dialog but addresses to audience. Ritual vis-à-vis audience. Not to search for story but for themes and gestures, for sounds and dances vis-à-vis audience and with ourselves. To be at once absolutely personal and absolutely collective—communal.

June 23: First drawing of the Wave. Under the drawing:

Terrain environment.
Some hills.
The world's fair. Tell the group.

July 2:

In real time: All this takes place after supper night after Sharon Tate murder. Keeping the knowledge of violence from each other. It keeps coming in.

July 3:

Another name for the piece: White Exorcism. The night after the murder, the day after the war—how do we cope with the immensity of the crime? How do we face up to it—and confront it and know it—and get rid of it—and learn from it? The existential crime of being born in America, the rich land, of being born white, the oppressor class/race? Not through guilt, but through a new birth

and new symbols new ways of handling experience. We kill again and again—as the blacks kill—to make the other whites think it was the blacks who killed.

July 6:

Outlined to the Group the view I have of the piece now: Last night (= American history = killing of Sharon Tate) something awful and terrible happened. We—the Group, out of our needs, dreams, fears, hopes, fantasies, activities—did it. Tonight after supper we are trying not to look last night in the eye—we are trying to avoid. But each thing we do brings us closer to the event—we circle it with a number of avoidance gestures, but return to it.

These are our scenes. The event is both—or triply—our own private murders and events; the Sharon Tate/Manson syndrome; America and the world—the founding, settlement, over population, and crisis of the new world. Only by experiencing last night can we earn our rights to the possibilities—the symbols of possibility which are ours.

CRITICISM AND ANALYSIS IS THE INDIVIDUAL FUNCTION
CREATIVITY AND WHOLENESS IS THE GROUP FUNCTION

[...]

The gestures are so private they dare not occur with someone watching. They take so long to rise up, few if any in our society will have the patience to wait and see them rise.

This afternoon as they work—I want their time span to open up—to see the world without clocks. To go from start to finish without a break, without knowing that all the time is gone and there's none left—three hours as if it were one flash. Like the bombs and the knives and after that their giving up and giving in.

Do use all the material all have so far—but I have it organized in a new way each time.

Who cares on which side a wheel starts rolling?

During the opening scene, as spectators enter the theatre and get settled, Lizzie collects papers and documents from them.

July 15:

Spalding dances with SBM.¹² Jayson says as he burns her driver's license and other documents. "When I burn these papers and documents this ceremony signifies your destroying the evils in your past life—cutting all connections—so there will be no trace."

"Funny, I laugh like hell when I come over this hill and this broad's down in the dip, flat on her back, bare ass, this guy's fucking her, and fucking her, and her legs dangling up in the air, rocking and rocking, with that knife strapped on. So I watched and I watched and I wondered if they'd come first or if they'd bounce that knife loose."¹³

RACISM OF COMMUNES, SOME OF THEM. E.G. MANSON AND FORT HILL
FEAR AND HATRED OF BLACKS

LSD PEACE IS NOT PEACE BECAUSE THERE IS AN AFTER-CONSCIOUSNESS OF
HAVING HAD THE HELP OF THE DRUG.

Like at an amusement park—the roller coaster is dangerous and pleasurable. But the “danger” is
hyped up and false. LSD is also pleasure its “peace” is hyped up and false.

To see/sense the whole mind working is the task of a lifetime; its completion is achieved by very
few. It is a function of submission to what goes on in your person. To not shut out, interpret, rear-
range, amplify, or diminish.

July 17:

Commune

(Being Several Well-Known Scenes Enacted After Supper by the Youth of Our Nation)

The Performance Group

July 21, first mention/detailed description in my notebook of the My Lai massacre. Fifteen pages
of notes, from *The New York Times*. Very detailed, with dialog later used in *Commune*.

July 24:

This week I have not been able to sit myself down at the typewriter and construct the
Lara [Lizzie]-Murder-[My Lai] Massacre scene. I have not even been able to elevate my efforts to
the abyss, the crisis of despair and negativism which precedes creation. (Is that why, I wonder, the
Genesis story begins in “the void”?) It will come—it must come. It is an additive process. All the
stuff for the piece will be there soon pretty much. We stop. We rest. We look over what we’ve made.
We take time. I make time to look it over coldly and critically. We ask our critical friends. Then in
Stratford we run the piece—all 2–3 hours of it. We make it tight and coherent. We work on details.
Then we come to N.Y. and examine it again. This time subtractively. What is necessary? What gives
the piece its essential and fundamental feels? What can be spared? What can be cut? As we move
on tour and as we approach Toronto we begin to pare down. The 3 ½ weeks in Toronto are for
paring down and precisioning. For scoring this detail and that. For sensing the shape and flow of
the whole, as an architectural event—Then back to N.Y. for previews in which what we have made
is watertight and totally functional.¹⁴

August 1:

The work must be done in such a way, and with such a whole sense of process—that were it
to be interrupted by any outside agency—the police, a fire, whatever—performers and
audience alike would say, “This part of it is whole; I do not regret the interruption; I submit
to it.”

August 3, after watching the performers do their association exercises¹⁵:

There is a furious energy to the association exercises tonight. [...] Spoke to the group about each of us being responsible to the work; the work is not responsible for us. We must create the work new, fresh each time; and that is the ultimate, the final, the absolute risk—to come into the space—not knowing which, if any, association exercises to do; anticipating none; feeling no obligation to do any; with no one watching from the outside, no one controlling from the outside. And then to *do* the work; to make it; to create it there and then—here and now.

It is hard to watch them work now. They are into it so personally that my presence seems like an intrusion.

Private = alone
Intimate = in contact

[...]

The piece moves through its heart of darkness—into the bellies of its whales.

August 8:

Actors are interpreters, performers are creators. Only the creator conceivably created from nothing. All others, create from something. Only the creator conceivably invented his own creative process. All others, adapted and developed processes already existing. The questions are—from what does the performer create? And what is his process of creativity?

August 9:

Steve Borst at end of workshop on Saturday.

“There are little parts of you in each of me.”

August 27:

How much of eternity ought we to swallow? the coming and going of seasons— the ceaseless never the same and never different drumming of the tides and seas— the running orbit of earth, the swinging galaxies? All in God’s eye unknown here and there. My atheism creaks as an old boat on a long draft in a high wind over an uncharted sea.

My notebook for September has many pages of notes to the performers about particular rehearsals. Included are three pages in Elizabeth LeCompte’s handwriting. By mid-September, we had open rehearsals at The Performing Garage. The environment was only part-finished. The Wave was installed, but not all of the surrounding structures. The audience was a mix of paying ticket holders and enter-for-free friends, professional theatre people, scholars, and critics. I loved open rehearsals because I can work over a few scenes, repeat them, see how

audiences react. This is particularly important for performances like *Commune* that depend on audience participation.

October 7:

Workshop at the Garage

Upstairs—doing the association exercises. Feelings of violent triumph. Here I am again—here—in this space; and those who contested me for it are not here. They are gone, dispersed.

October 13:

Commune: For the Group

Thru:

The point of death is rebirth
 Death of the death culture
 Violence in the belly (of the whale) (of birth)
 babies murdered babies
 pain and orgasm and ecstasy
 noise
 ecological stress

To possibilities:

Experience whole man—not just his “good” or his “bad” but all, whole

That is the fundamental aim of my work, and the strong basic direction of TPG—to experience the whole man; to be of value to society by being part of it, of the human experience. To accept mankind and to show him.

theatre = teatron = show

I note in 2024, more than a half-century after I wrote the above, that although in my notebook I used male designators, I meant “the whole person” and “humankind.”

October 15:

All this apocalypse feeling. It is not the end of the world, but of a society; the transformation of one culture into another—a time of many and intense and swift changes. But it is not the end of all individuals—rather the end of individualism. God is not at hand; the world is not cracking open. We are at hand.

October 22:

We're still in rehearsal—a lot remains to be done. RS may interrupt rehearsal if he feels it is necessary. We need to:

- complete environment
- tighten script
- work at least five more weeks on details.

No date, but probably late October.

Audience in NY is different.
Last night good audience.
Shouldn't be lifted up or put down by audience.
Must relate to each other.
Read each audience. Integrity of the work—not the audience reaction to it. To be hung up on audience reaction is to look in the mirror for a sense of self = narcissism and self-indulgence.

No date, but probably early November, written for a group meeting:

The nature of single space environmental theatre is inclusive. Its normal mode is inclusion—not exclusion. Exclusion is the normal mode of 2 room and fixed seating theatre. To include in the old theatre is unusual and calls attention to itself. To exclude in the new theatre is unusual and calls attention to itself. However, most of you still have to learn this for yourselves because your first and strong training is to exclude. You feel it is sometimes unnatural to include. But in our theatre everything from text to environment to lighting to the age of our audience indicates inclusion.

Even when they are not physically included they are concretely and psychologically included. And at certain key moments they ought to be physically and totally included. We are working hard toward these moments. They will not disrupt your emerging scores but complement them—complete them.

This matter of inclusion is one which definitively separates us from Grotowski.

November 16–19. Notes for a lecture in North Carolina, I don't know where:

Hair.¹⁶ Everything is all right. Change is here. A kind of pseudo-radical advertising. Similar in intent to the thesis of [Charles] Reich's *The Greening of America*¹⁷—that change has taken place—we don't have to do anything—we can ride on it and enjoy it. Rock musicals. Copout.

Commune. A hard look from a specific viewpoint not only at American history but at American experience. Not a down trip as [Arthur Miller's] *Death of a Salesman* was twenty years ago [1949]. But not a dope head trip like *Hair* either. A real trip which forces choices on the audience.

December 2:

To make *Commune* environment warmer, more lived in.
1. Incense

2. rugs to sit on scattered about
3. foam rubber

A good secure world—temporarily rescued from the rest of America. Sequestered. Cloistered.

Then what is done in the Commune is the other America. We show the interpenetration of the two worlds—demonstrate they are part of one world. Dimensions of one world. And if we want to change one world we have to recognize both.

December 13:

The great struggle is not to have the mind master the body or vice-versa, but to overcome the conviction that the mind and the body represent (or are) two separate systems. They are not separate. They are not two. But the struggle to experience this is unending and incalculably difficult in a culture whose language supports/corroborates the mind/body dichotomy.

Commune opened on December 17 with [mixed to negative] reviews appearing on and after December 20.

December 21:

To simplify, make meaningful, and clarify the whole piece. To bring into focus and full being.

What the piece lacks is my fault. I have good and willing performers and have not realized all I ought from their work. The play remains diffuse and unclear—and this is my fault—the fault of a disjointed and unfinished mise-en-scene.

December 24:

I realize now that the critics fail to perceive irony, ambivalence, bitterness, rage within our work. They wish to see it, and they do see it, as another assertion by “youth” of a “perfectable dream,” they feel this dream is stale—not perceiving that *Commune* is an examination of the mechanisms that lead to having such dreams. That *Commune* calls into question all such dreams whether they be technological or Christian; and that the only celebratory element of *Commune* is its insistence on transindividual experience and continuity.

January 1, 1971. A snowstorm. I am writing as spectators enter:

Depressed—there aren’t enough people here. We are not making it as an alternative structure. How do we get more people? What do we do? What do I do about my depression which paralyzes and humiliates me? The audiences we have are warm and very tiny. I feel I have let the whole Group down—and I am paralyzed vis-a-vis them. I must conquer this demon. [...] Less than 30 people here tonight right now. Even if all those who have tickets show up it will be just about 50. Not enough. I am frightened for the existence of our theatre. I see the same fear in other people—it is contagious. It can’t be hidden.

Changes in mis-en-scene. Shorten “Day at the Ranch” by about 1/3 to 1/2. Shorten the rest by about 1/5—in other words, about 15–30 minutes out of the whole play. Then make themes clearer. Manson stuff as culmination of American history. More knowledge of murder earlier. Perhaps fragments of murder scene played earlier?

More people coming in now. Success—how sweet it feels and how it would cure my miseries! Nearly 40 people here now. But we ought to 5x that many—at least 200.

I just gave two people their \$\$ back and asked them to leave because they would not take their shoes off. It didn’t make me feel good. It did cheer up Steve, Joan, and Jim.

This terrible depression eating me out from deep within. This feeling of rejection, smallness, humiliation, and betrayal/guilt—I have betrayed my dear performers who I promised success, if not of \$\$ at least of esteem. Now they have neither.

January 5, 1971:

How the members of the Group instruct me and support me! Spald speaks about seeking, again, our “centers”—and focusing in on ourselves to the degree necessary and desirable now after *Commune*. [...] As Jim Schevill¹⁸ says in his letter to me this morning, speaking of getting knocked by the critics—“No matter. You’ll survive.”

Didn’t we ever?

Commune
Being Several Well-Known Scenes
Enacted after Supper by the Youth of Our Nation

Production

Director	Richard Schechner
Associate director	Paul Epstein
Assistant Director	Elizabeth LeCompte
Dramaturg	Lado Kralj
Environment	Jerry Rojo
Stage manager	Elizabeth LeCompte
Assistant environment design	Robert Adzema
Assistant stage manager	Jodie White
Technical director	Jerry Powell
Vocal coach	Linda Ewing Gates
Construction	Frank Davis
Administrative director	Catherine Farinon

Performers

Bruce	Bruce White then Timothy Shelton
Clementine	Joan Macintosh then Maxine Herman
David Angel	Stephen Borst
Fearless	James Griffiths
Jason	Jayne Daniel
Lizzie	Patricia Bower then Converse Gurian then Maxine Herman
Spalding	Spalding Gray
Susan Belinda Moonshine	Patric Epstein
Mischa	Mik Cribben ¹⁹

There are two versions of the beginning.**Start, version 1:**

As each spectator enters The Performing Garage, they have to duck under a hanging American flag and then take their shoes off and leave them near the entry. If anyone refuses, they are not admitted to the performance. The Songs of First Encounter are each performer's account of how they became part of Commune. These songs are sung as the audience enters in groups of four or five controlled by a tick-et-taker. Not every song is sung each night. These songs are embedded in actions related to "the ranch" adapted to the Garage: lounging, eating, putting on costumes, greeting spectators, performers talking to each other, taking photos, etc.

FEARLESS:

I came and I didn't know the people
 And I was very nervous.
 In fact when I am nervous
 I want to make everyone an en-e-my
 So I won't have to worry about them
 And they don't get next to me.
 So I was sitting there real hostile
 Watching everybody waggle their heads.
 I thought that it was real phony stuff
 To wave your head and swing your hips
 And I'm still not sure.

DAVID:

So I put my name on the list
 He said I didn't know what the work was.
 And so, of course, I agreed solemnly
 That it wouldn't be fair for me to go.
 I rushed down to the Garage
 And had a little workshop with Bill Shephard.

We-eeeeh-ll! It almost killed me.
In Yugoslavia I was happy to see Joan.

CLEMENTINE:
I fell in love in a Margaret Mead movie
His eyes were very gentle.
He showed me his pussies
Cats and he asked me out to dinner.
Grotowski workshop November 15, 1967
2H at the School of the Arts
Ninth Street and Avenue B.
The Real Great Society Building
Then the Garage.
Big trucks, greasy cement, cold, dirty, loft upstairs
Real scared:
Soon we put our money down.

BRUCE:
I came to New York in January
To get a job in movies or *Hair*,
His legs were up, his stomach was out
So I called the lady and I got a date,
We said much but spoke not a word
The first workshop's over
And I'm here now.

LIZZIE:
I came and decided to become an actress
Looked at me, looked me up and down.
Oh, no, you'll never do, you won't be one of those
Very superior, an actress.
Liked it. Wasn't going to capitulate.
Really sick of commercial theatre:
Open calls, turn around, show your legs,
Never for myself.
Heard about *Dionysus*, people taking off their clothes.
Wear a leotard with no tights
Embarrassed, I had fat legs.

SUSAN BELINDA MOONSHINE:
I left Franconia!
They said what's your name
And I said Patric
I wasn't very good
My brother for money

Things weren't happening
 The way they were supposed to!
 Max—we just didn't get along
 I put mascara on
 But I was so unsure
 He got me so nervous
 I called myself a boy!
 I didn't like his wife
 And I didn't like him.
 I told him who I was.
 And he had some misconceptions!

SPALDING:

Oh the entrances from the wings
 The sniffing on the brandy.
 From the Rhode Island shore I wandered back
 Squat little man in a yoga position.
 Oh more like a congenial chat
 Into a production of *Makbeth*
 Saying my words very well.
 What was behind all of that?
 A roaring lion of a man
 Or a little black spider?

JAYSON:

New York City twenty years old, Allan Miller!
 Follow your sensory tasks. In the Park doing bits.
 Frustrated cat.
 Stratford Connecticut. Circling in frustration.
 Off Broadway. I sat and looked in his eye
 And he looked back unafraid.
 Performance Group.
 I went to the first workshop expecting a freakout.

MISCHA:

Larry Lillo became my friend
 I don't know why.
 And I like killing people
 And I like being killed
 In New England they don't let you say how you feel.
 So I went to film school
 But I kept on acting.
 There was a guy named Bill Shepard I used to juggle with.
 I graduated from school
 But I didn't want to go into the world yet.

Loved him very much
Sad and cried when he left.

BRUCE *hands out different colored large pieces of chalk to spectators inviting them to write whatever they like wherever they like—on the walls, the wooden environment, anywhere. LIZZIE gathers papers from the spectators that she says will later be burned. BRUCE selects spectators and lines them up on the Wave in the center of the environment. One by one the performers join the line up. When the lineup is complete LIZZIE leaves it and faces the lineup. As she identifies the performers from among the people in the lineup, the identified performer takes one step forward.*

LIZZIE: Him. Her. Him. Him. Him. They're the ones. They did it.

After being identified, the performers leave the lineup and begin the "March Through Death Valley" song and dance. Spectators—those who were in the lineup and everyone else—are invited to join the dance.

ALL *singing:*

I shall march through Death Valley with my angelic band
I shall pass through your cities with my fan in my hand
And around thee, Oh, Los Angeles, my armies will encamp
While I search my holy temple with my bright burning lamp.

After the dance, the performers disperse making animal sounds. These ultimately lead to sounds of horses galloping. FEARLESS rides out with CLEMENTINE who is attracted to SPALDING. A shoot-out—as in classic Western movies—develops between FEARLESS and SPALDING.

SPALDING: Bang! Bang! Bang!

FEARLESS *falls mortally wounded.*

ALL *singing:*

Olé-olé-ana! Olé-olé-ana! Olé-olé-olé-olé-olé-olé-ana!

CLEMENTINE *cradles FEARLESS in the Pietá pose while singing Molly O'Day's version of "Tramp on the Street."*

CLEMENTINE *singing:*

Jesus who hung from Calvary's tree
Shed his life's blood for you and for me
They pierced his sides, his hands, and his feet
Then they left him to die like a tramp on the street.

He was Mary's own darling, he was God's chosen son
Once he was fair and once he was young
She rocked him, her darling, her little Jesus to sleep
Then she left him to die like a tramp on the street.

ALL *singing*:

Olé-olé-ana! Olé-olé-ana! Olé-olé-olé-olé-olé-olé-ana!

CLEMENTINE *pushes FEARLESS off her. He gets up and joins the others.*

CLEMENTINE: I need two changes of clothing and a knife. A big, good, shiny, clean knife!

SPALDING: Look, this is the desert, this is Death Valley. It's really paradise you know. An old legend, an old dream.

CLEMENTINE: I didn't relate to the pregnant lady as anything but a store mannequin. She sounded like an IBM machine. She kept begging and pleading, begging and pleading ...

LIZZIE *joining in*:

... begging and pleading, begging and pleading, begging and pleading!

BRUCE: In the beginning all the world was America!

Start, version 2:

When the spectators enter, after surrendering their shoes they see the performers laid out on the Wave in a row, corpses. Once everyone is in the theatre, SPALDING, standing at the crest of the Wave, speaks directly to the audience.

SPALDING:

All visible objects, brothers and sisters, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event, the living act, the undoubted deed, there some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the shape of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, then let him strike through the mask. How else is the prisoner to reach outside except by shoving his arm through the wall!?!

CLEMENTINE:

Spalding! Remember what happened last night because you were there! Remember how we got into the Pontiac and drove to the big house on the hill! You went to the top of that same hill, Lizzie, a big white house on the hill!

The murders are enacted exactly as they will be enacted at the end of the play, only swifter, as if a film were projected at double speed. The dialog is also spoken unnaturally quickly.

BRUCE: American history ended last night. We in this room are all that's left.

CLEMENTINE: Yes, Bruce, you were there too. And Fearless, I saw you there!

DAVID: Me, too, I was there too!

CLEMENTINE: That's right, David, you were there too. Remember how we drove up the canyon alongside the ocean, then we zipped into the canyon again, we dove just like Montezuma down into the hole in the desert.

LIZZIE: I was in the car listening to the radio.

CLEMENTINE: Remember the song they were singing? Somebody opened the gate.

FEARLESS: I got it.
 LIZZIE: There were lots of trees around the house. I couldn't see inside.
 CLEMENTINE: Spalding, you parked the Pontiac and Fearless you went up a telephone pole and cut the wires. Then we walked up the gravel path to the house.
 SPALDING: Did you ever see a coyote in the desert—watching, tuned-in, completely aware? Christ on the cross, the coyote in the desert, it's the same thing. The coyote's beautiful, he walks through the desert delicately. He smells every smell, he hears every sound, he sees everything. You see, he's always in a state of total paranoia and total paranoia is total awareness.
 CLEMENTINE: We went inside the house. It wasn't locked, understand?
 LIZZIE: I'll keep a lookout.
 CLEMENTINE: And there was this deep, deep living room, and there was this man in the living room.
 FEARLESS: A short man with his hair combed back like this.
 CLEMENTINE: Real neatly combed.
 FEARLESS: And he was wearing expensive clothing and he saw all of us dressed in our creepy-crawlies.
 LIZZIE: I was outside where it was quiet.
 DAVID: You were wearing them too! As a matter of fact they were black. Black dungarees and black T-shirts, and you made them for us, domestic lady!
 LIZZIE: And the man with the combed hair started running. He ran for the backyard.
 CLEMENTINE: And what did you do, David?
 SPALDING: He thought he could get away from us.
 CLEMENTINE: What did you do?
 DAVID: I slit his throat.
 CLEMENTINE: But he didn't stop ruuuunnnnnnnnnnggg!
 SPALDING: The red tide now poured from all sides of the monster like brooks down a hill. His tormented body rolled not in brine but in blood which bubbled and seethed for furlongs behind in his waaaaake!
 LIZZIE: And I jumped on his back and I had a knife and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed!
 CLEMENTINE: That's just the beginning of our story. That's just the start of what happened!
 SPALDING: There was a lady ...!
 DAVID: In blue—
 LIZZIE: No, no, not that lady. There was another lady.
 DAVID: The Lady in Red!
 LIZZIE: That's right: The Lady in Red. She looked very scared and very rich. She thought we were there to rob her.
 CLEMENTINE: You want money? I have lots of money! Look, here's seventy dollars!
 LIZZIE: She started running running running for the yard.
 FEARLESS: I got her, I got her!
 SPALDING: But wait! We still have the best part of our story to tell.
 DAVID: We went upstairs into the bedroom, there the most beautiful people were.
 FEARLESS: Aren't you pretty?
 CLEMENTINE: Remember her long blonde hair and her blue eyes? Remember her breasts?

FEARLESS: Hot tits, nice hot tits.
 CLEMENTINE: Remember her belly? Remember how hard it was?
 FEARLESS: The blonde lady's going to have a baby.
 DAVID: The Lady in Blue!
 FEARLESS: I didn't like the man.
 DAVID: Why not?
 FEARLESS: I didn't like him!
 CLEMENTINE: She had a baby. We killed a baby!
 DAVID: Shut up. And then we took a knife.
 FEARLESS: This time all it took was one knife.
 DAVID: And the Lady in Blue kept saying, "Please, please."
 LIZZIE: Please, please let me have my baby! I want my baby!
 SPALDING: At last, gush after gush of dotted red gore as if it had been the purple lees of red wine shot into the frightened air and falling back again ran dripping down her motionless flanks. Her heart had burst.
 CLEMENTINE: And then we dipped our hands in it. And now we had one, two, three, four—no, wait a minute, five? There was a boy outside when we first came, there was a boy outside and Fearless you got him. He wasn't in the house. Remember the boy who was just visiting?
 DAVID: I don't even live here. I don't know anybody here. I don't even belong here!
 CLEMENTINE: And then we went to the Boy Who Was Just Visiting and to the Man in the Backyard and to the Pretty Man with the Blond Hair and to the Lady in Red and to the Lady in Blue and we dipped inside their bellies and we wrote just like we wrote before!
 FEARLESS: Open your eyes, open your eyes and see!
 CLEMENTINE: We wrote on the floor and we wrote on the ceilings and we wrote on the walls and everybody knew what we did!
 DAVID: Wait a minute. We did one more thing. We took the pretty man with the blond hair and we took the pregnant lady and we put them together on the couch in the living room. We put them together cozy-like because they had been lovers, probably, once.
 FEARLESS: And then we took a silver thread and we put it around his neck and we put it around her neck and then we went away from the house on the hill.
 DAVID: Clementine! It is the verdict of this court that we take you, hang you upside down, slit your throat, and use you as an example for everybody else!
 SPALDING: The changes, the changes, man, are what it's all about. We're a different person each hour, each tick of the time we change. We're two, four, six different people and it doesn't matter as long as it doesn't stop! I went to the desert because I wanted to live deliberately, to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, and if it tasted bitter to taste fully its bitterness and if it tasted sweet to have its sweetness full on my tongue.

As SPALDING speaks the jam session begins. Everyone sings, and takes riffs on the basic melody and words. Two songs have been used for the jam, and either may be used.

“Big Rock Candy Mountain”:

ALL:

On a summer’s day in the month of May
A funky freak came hikin’
Down a shady lane ’neath the sugar cane
He was lookin’ for his likin’
As he walked along he sang a song
Of a land of Milk and Honey
Where a freak can stay for many a day
And he don’t need any money!

Oh, the buzzin’ of the bees
In the cigarette trees
The soda-water fountain
Where the lemonade springs
And the bluebird sings
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain!

In the Big Rock Candy Mountain
The pigs have wooden legs
The bulldogs all have rubber teeth
And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs.
The farmers’ trees are full of fruit
The barns are full of hay
Oh, I’m gonna go where there ain’t no snow
Where the winds don’t blow
Where the sleet don’t go
In the Big Rock Candy Mountain!

“Bound For the Promised Land”:

On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan’s fair and happy land
Where my possessions lie.

Oh, the transporting rapt’rous scene
That rises to my sight:
Sweet fields arrayed in living green
And rivers of delight!

We are bound for the promised land
Bound for the promised land
Oh, who will come and go with us
We are bound for the promised land!

SCHECHNER PLAYS

No chilling winds nor pois'nous breath
Can reach that healthful shore.
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death
Are felt and feared no more.

When shall I reach that happy place
And be forever blessed?
When shall I see my father's face
And in his bosom rest?

We are bound for the promised land
Bound for the promised land
Oh, who will come and go with us
We are bound for the promised land!



FIGURE 6.1: “Sailing to America,” a scene early in *Commune*. From left to right, Mik Cribben, Stephen Borst, Jayme Daniel, Bruce White. The Performing Garage, New York, 1970. Photograph: Frederick Eberstadt.

From this point, the performance continues whichever start has been used.

Everyone is on the Wave which has been transformed into a large sailboat. The performers become the sea, wind, sails, sailors, and passengers. CLEMENTINE leaves the boat and becomes the Statue of Liberty as the boat of immigrants arrives in New York.

LIZZIE:	Look! It's the Statue of Liberty!
ALL:	We're here! We're here! America, America!
BRUCE:	Americaaaaaa!
CLEMENTINE <i>like a cheerleader</i> :	Give me your tired!
ALL:	Tired!
CLEMENTINE:	Your poor.
ALL:	Poor!
CLEMENTINE:	Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free!
ALL:	Yearning to breathe free!
CLEMENTINE:	The wretched refuse.
ALL:	Of your teeming shore!
CLEMENTINE:	Send these the homeless tempest-tossed to me! I lift
ALL:	I lift, I lift, I lift my lamp beside
CLEMENTINE:	I lift my lamp beside the go-o-o-olden door!
ALL:	The golden, golden, golden, golden door!

BRUCE and SPALDING run a slow motion race as the others provide a tightly scored sonic accompaniment. The feel of this accompaniment is of a train accelerating on its tracks with increasing effort and frenzy: the Rat Race.

DAVID:	The shore is all covered with stones
LIZZIE:	Glistening and shining like mineral stones.
FEARLESS:	Lakes and ponds of running water
CLEMENTINE:	Many springs of excellent sweet water

DAVID, *coming in on "water" first syllable*:
Running exceedingly pleasantly.

FEARLESS:	Raspberries
LIZZIE:	Gooseberries
FEARLESS:	Strawberries
CLEMENTINE:	Red and white
DAVID:	As sweet and much bigger than ours.
FEARLESS:	Here are also great store of deer and other beasts.
LIZZIE:	Birds for every kind of pleasant sport

DAVID *on "pleasant."*
Pleasant and delightful sport.

CLEMENTINE *on "sport:"*

Give me your tired, your tired, your poor, your huddled masses

LIZZIE *on "huddled" first syllable:*

There are no violent winds in these regions

CLEMENTINE *on "regions" first syllable:*

Yearning, yearning, yearning,

FEARLESS *on second "yearning" first syllable:*

And but little rain.

DAVID: The sky is dear

LIZZIE: The air is salubrious, pure and temperate

DAVID *on "salubrious" last syllable:*

The air is salubrious

CLEMENTINE *on "salubrious" last syllable:*

The air is pure and temperate

FEARLESS *on "is:"*

The air is salubrious.

Everyone freeze on FEARLESS's "salubrious." The performers singing the text move to a new position in front of the racers, so that the racers can be tempted and urged towards the finish line. As the singers begin their texts, the racers start to move.

LIZZIE: As for trees the country yieldeth

DAVID: Cedars, strait and tall

LIZZIE: High-timbered oaks

FEARLESS *on "oaks:"*

Walnut trees in abundance

LIZZIE: Hazelnut trees

DAVID *on "trees:"*

Cherry trees

CLEMENTINE *on "trees":*

Sassafras, a tree of high price and profit, price and profit

FEARLESS: Laurels, palms, and cypresses that send forth the sweetest fragrance.

LIZZIE: In America there are fertile lands sufficient to subsist all the useless poor, all the useless, useless poor in England.

CLEMENTINE *on “poor:”*

Send these the homeless, the homeless homeless send the homeless tempest tempest-tossed to me!

LIZZIE: The soil is fat and lusty

FEARLESS *on “and:”*

The soil is fat and lusty

DAVID: So is the sea replenished with great abundance of excellent fish

FEARLESS *on “fish:”*

Mullets, turbot, mackerels, herrings, mullets, turbot, mackerels, herrings, mullets, turbot, herrings

LIZZIE *on the first syllable of the first “mackerels:”*

Crabs and lobsters, crabs and lobsters, crabs and lobsters

DAVID *on FEARLESS’s second “turbot:”*

Crevasses and mussels, crevasses and mussels.

LIZZIE *on the last syllable of “mussels:”*

Come to Marlboro Country

CLEMENTINE *on “Marlboro” first syllable:*

Marlboro Country is everywhere

DAVID *on “where:”*

Wherever you go that’s Marlboro country.

CLEMENTINE *on “boro:”*

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Complete freeze for several beats, Racers flat on the ground across the finish line, singers in frozen postures. Then DAVID administers the oath which is repeated line-by-line by the oath-takers. The oath is followed by a march around the space to the tune of “Columbia the Gem of the Ocean.” During the march CLEMENTINE goes off into a corner. The others go to the pool, strip, and bathe.

DAVID and ALL:

Our ulterior aim

Is nothing less

Than heaven on earth.

The conversion of this globe

Now exhaling pestilential vapors
 Into the abode of beauty and health.
 We do not make war
 On any part of human nature
 But only upon its false circumstances
 And subversive conditions!

CLEMENTINE: Aaaaaahhhhhh! I'm so fucking tired of environmental, experimental theatre! I want to make a movie with Arthur Penn and star opposite Dustin Hoffman.

DAVID: Then was Clementine led into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil.

CLEMENTINE: I want to ride horses and go swimming.

BRUCE: Wow, you can't do that over there—where you're at is the epitome of dragdom. Why don't you rip off a couple of credit cards and come down here to St. Croix?

CLEMENTINE: How can I pack up my apartment, sublet it, clean the refrigerator, take care of the cats, answer all my letters, reschedule my singing lessons, explain it all to my parents, and make it to my sister's wedding?

BRUCE: But it's so warm here in St. Croix. You don't have to do anything except be. You just go down to any one of the five beaches and you let it be known that you don't have a place to stay. Then you just take your pick of any of these beautiful, tall, rich, well-hung American men! And they have these mountains, Wow, they have these rain-forest mountains! Have you ever seen the Caribbean?

CLEMENTINE: No.

BRUCE: It's so deep blue you can paint with it.

CLEMENTINE: No. I can't go. I have my work to do.

DAVID: And when she had fasted forty days and forty nights she was afterwards hungry, and the tempter came up to her and said, "If thou be the Son of God command that these feet be made into vanilla ice cream!"

SPALDING: As I sat there at my ease, cross-legged on the deck, under a blue tranquil sky, the ship under indolent sail and gliding so serenely along; as I bathed my hands among those soft, gentle globules of infiltrated tissues, as they richly broke to my fingers and discharged all their opulence like fully ripe grapes their wine, I forgot all about our horrible murders; and in that inexpressible sperm I washed my hands and heart of them.

CLEMENTINE: Save me from the lion's mouth, take me from the horn of the unicorn!

SPALDING: While bathing in that bath I felt divinely free from all malice or anger. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. All the morning long I squeezed that sperm until a strange sort of insanity came over me and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my mates' hands in it. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget that at last I was continually squeezing their hands and looking up into their eyes with love.

CLEMENTINE: Oh, my God, my soul is cast down within me. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts and all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Singing, slowly everyone gets out of the tub and surrounds CLEMENTINE, some at a distance, some close.

ALL:

His knife bein' drawn and all in his right hand
His knife bein' drawn and all in his right hand
His knife bein' drawn and all in his right hand
He stabbed her to the heart and the blood it did flow.
Clementine, Clementine oh come go with us
Clementine, Clementine oh come go with us
Clementine, Clementine oh come go with us
Today we will marry some pleasure to see.
The blood it did flow and the blood it did flow
The blood it did flow and the blood it did flow
The blood it did flow and the blood it did flow
He throwed her in the grave and away he did go.

DAVID: Clem-en-tine. Did you ever make love with your father?

CLEMENTINE: No.

DAVID: Did you ever think about it?

CLEMENTINE: Sometimes.

DAVID: Take off your clothes I want to see your whole body. *She does not in fact undress.* Now go look at yourself in the mirror.

CLEMENTINE: No! I can't look at myself. I'm ugly!

BRUCE: What do you mean you're ugly!?

CLEMENTINE *The response varies according to the actress playing the role:*

Look how bony my knees are, and my ass is flat, and my belly is fat. I have a shape like a pickle! I hate myself and I never want to have a baby!

BRUCE: You're perfect. Look at yourself in the mirror and tell me you're perfect.

DAVID takes his rhythms from each of the other performers as he goes to them. The varying rhythms ultimately join in one rhythm.

DAVID: I am your father—Jesus. And Spalding's your father, Jesus; and Bruce is your father, Jesus; and Liz's your father, Jesus; and Fearless is your father, Jesus. I am your father, Jesus ...

At the climax, CLEMENTINE falls, as do the rest.

CLEMENTINE: I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up and my tongue sticks to my jaws. You have brought me into the dust of death.

ALL: Either you're on the bus or you're off the bus.

The Death Raps follow. These are actual or imagined encounters with death which each performer, except CLEMENTINE, tells to individual spectators. As each performer finishes her/his Death Rap they whisper the name and place of death of someone they knew into the ear of one spectator. For example, "Carrie Borst died in Glassboro, New Jersey." Then the performer repeats this in a speaking voice. Then shouting. After that, each performer goes to a separate place in the theatre and becomes a bell. The Bell Chorus is made from singing the last syllable of the place of death. For example, for New Jersey: "Zee, zee, zee, zee" sounding like the tolling of bells. The Bell Chorus ends abruptly when LIZZIE shouts "Listen!"

LIZZIE:
Listen!
The thrill of it can't be described.
When I stabbed it was like stabbing myself.
Life and death all in one motion.
In and out, in and out,
Everything in life is in and out.
Eating, breathing, sex, even killing!
In and out, in and out, in and out goes the knife.
Listen!

ALL *singing*:
Everywhere there's lots of piggies
Living piggies' lives.
You can see them out for dinner
With their piggy wives
Clutching forks and knives
Forks and knives, forks and knives!

LIZZIE: Moose was on top of me and we were balling. And I liked it, I really liked it!
And he kept saying

LIZZIE *and* FEARLESS:
Are you ready yet? Are you ready yet? Are you ready yet? Are you ready yet? Are you ready yet?
Are you ready yet? Are you ready yet? Are you ready yet?

LIZZIE: And when I was ready, I shouted: Now, now, now!
ALL: Bang!
LIZZIE: He pulled the trigger and blew his head off.
DAVID: Spalding, this Gook jumped into my foxhole, put her rifle against my head, pulled the trigger, and it went click. So I took out my knife and I cut her

head off. You wanna see a nice Kodacolor print I have of me standing there holding this Gook's yellow head by her black hair?
FEARLESS: Hey, did you drop the bomb on the Japs at Hiroshima?

DAVID *and* LIZZIE:
There's nothing possible in this world I haven't done!

SPALDING *singing*:
Tum-ta-ta-tum-tum, da-da!

*All the performers except CLEMENTINE become animals and make a totem pole. She climbs the pole.
FEARLESS is the top animal; when CLEMENTINE reaches him, he speaks.*

FEARLESS: Again the devil taketh her up into an exceeding high mountain and showeth unto her all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of all of them, and saith unto her, "All of these will I give to you if you will fall down and worship me."

ALL: Fall down, fall down, fall down and worship, and worship me, me, me.

BRUCE:
Just before I came here I went away for a weekend to Pennsylvania. I ran through the woods near Gettysburg and I said to myself, "If I can get to the top of that hill, I can see the river." I broke through the woods into a clearing and I fell down on my knees and everything stopped. It was the first astral projection I ever had—where your soul leaves your body and looks back at your body as if it were dead. Your life functions are very close to death. And I said, "Wow, this isn't it." "It" meaning something my roommates had always talked about. And I thought, "Well, that's very interesting, but he's really sick—look at him down there." And all of a sudden I had this great pity for me—for him. Not feeling sorry for myself but feeling sorry for him. Well, anyway, I had this—technically it's called clear light—where you—well, I went through this experience. At that time there was no need for life, and there was absolutely no need to go back inside the body. Then I decided, "Wait a minute, why not go back?" I knew then how to find the kingdom of heaven on earth. And having done that I could have left it and gone on to a low spirit level. Or, like the people in India who spend fifty, sixty, seventy years meditating like crazy without acid—all for the ultimate trip: a half-hour of Nirvana, and they die. Because they have a heart attack or they come down and they just have no desire to live anymore. But I said, "No, this is just the beginning. You go back and affect people by living it?" So that's why I came back—not because I want a Christ trip or an ego trip.

CLEMENTINE: Bruce, can you teach me, can you help me?

ALL: And then the devil took her up unto the holy city and placed her high on a pinnacle and he said unto her:

SPALDING: "If you be the Son of God then cast yourself down, down, down, down."

CLEMENTINE: My friend Lee Kingston Merrill Byrd from Colorado went away every summer only I had to stay home and work as a waitress to make money to go to college. Byrd could fly. I want you to help me to fly. Nowww!

As she shouts "Nowww!" CLEMENTINE leaps off a ledge and flies into the arms of the others. As she sings they carry her through the space.

CLEMENTINE *singing*:

I'll show thee the best springs
 I'll pluck thee berries
 I'll fish for thee and get thee wood enough.
 Let me take you where the crabs grow
 And I with my long nails
 Will dig thee peanuts
 Show thee a jay's nest and instruct thee
 How to snare the nimble marmoset.
 I'll bring thee to clustering filberts
 And sometimes I'll get thee
 Young scamels from the rocks.

They put her down, undo her hair. She takes off her apron and straw hat.

CLEMENTINE: I went to the ranch. It was a loving scene. I gazed into their eyes and they gazed into mine. They took my bag of belongings.

BRUCE: What's yours is ours, what's ours is yours.

CLEMENTINE: It was beautiful.

DAVID: And all that believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all men, as every man had need.

CLEMENTINE *singing, joined by the others*:

No more dams I'll make for fish
 Nor fetch in firing at requiting
 Nor scrape trenchering nor wash dish.
 Ban, Ban, Ca-Caliban!
 Has a new master, get a new man!
 Freedom, hi-day, hi-day, freedom? Freedom, hi-day, freedom!
 What's a creepy-crawly mission?

LIZZIE *and* FEARLESS:

You creep and crawl into people's houses and take things that belong to you because everything belongs to everybody!

Performers steal things from the audience. Whatever they can get: a purse, coat, etc.

SPALDING: Little children!

LIZZIE, CLEMENTINE, *and* BRUCE:

You take things that belongs to you because everything belongs to everybody!

SPALDING: It is the last time. For you have heard that antichrists shall come, and even now there are lots of antichrists, and so you know it is the last time.

LIZZIE and CLEMENTINE *singing*:

Time now ain't long when the Savior will come
Then we'll be judged by the deeds we have done
On that judgment day, we'll weep and we'll cry
When the pale horse and his rider go by.

The Revival. There are several versions. What is presented below is the basic material out of which a Revival can be made. But other Revival texts may be used, or the scene may be improvised.

FEARLESS *preaching*:

You know what America needs today? Get our sin forgiven. You know what keeps you from having fun being saved? Your sin. You know what keeps you from having fun in your home? Your sin. You know what keeps you from being what you ought to be for Christ? Your sin. You know what keeps you from being a soul winner? Your sin. Now can you say that word with me?

ALL: Sin.

FEARLESS: I'm talking to everybody in this theatre.

ALL *louder*: Sin!

FEARLESS: Oh, there's more sin in this room than that!

ALL *very loud*: Sin!

FEARLESS: Come on, get it out!

ALL *loudest*: Sin!

FEARLESS: Be happy!

ALL *loudest*: Sin!!

FEARLESS:

Not my sin—your sin! Jesus said, “I come to die for your sin!” Now if he died for ‘em, why should we live with ‘em? Now how many of you are glad you came here tonight? Raise your hands, let me see. Oh, that makes me feel so good, thank you, thank you, my friend! If you’ve got a want to in your heart to leave this theatre tonight more like you ought to be for Christ and less like you were when you came in, only you with your body can do what the Lord Jesus is trying to do through your heart. Open up your hearts, my friends, and let God slide right in. Open up your hearts, open up your mouths, and let God slide right in. Open up your hearts, open up your mouths, and let her slide right in, slide right down, slide right on, slide right through!

FEARLESS jams on the “Open Up Your Hearts/Mouths” theme. Or he may go dance with spectators.

Once upon a time I was as hip as you. Once upon a time I was as cool as you. But then I met God. God made me hot. I like it hot! God entered me and he spoke to me in tongues? And this is what he said: “Fearless, I want me a dancing partner!”

Or FEARLESS may say:

I want you to give up your piss-poor identities. I want to tell you that through the sweet light of Jesus you can each and every one of you be Queens and Kings. All your selves can shine right through I'm telling you! Peel off the old house paint and let the life of every Saint living or dead shine right on through your sweet little head. Do it now before you're dead!

As FEARLESS is reviving, BRUCE is singing.

BRUCE:

I went into the mountains with a brother
 And we lay in all these mountain-dewed rocks
 And our feet melted in the water
 And our heads opened up to the stars
 And we sat there
 And we flowed
 Round and around and around and around and around and around and around and around
 and around ...
 And we realized that pollution and jelly donuts and peanuts
 Are all part of life
 Because they are all part of the Master!
 And it shall come to pass
 In the last days
 God says
 That I shall pour out my Spirit upon all flesh
 Then your sons and your daughters shall prophesy
 Your young women shall see visions
 And your old men shall dream dreams!

FEARLESS: Are you ready, brother, are you ready?

BRUCE: I'm ready!

FEARLESS: I hereby ordain you with the power of ordaining that was ordained in me by he-she who set me free. I ordain every one of you sitting by me in this theatre. I ordain and claim you for me and thee and She and He and hereby free you from pain and beg you to smile benevolently on the forty billion amoebas fornicating in your bloodstream. I hereby relax you and set you free with the knowledge that you are here on earth to serve as the living tubes for the living God to pass through on Her relentless journey through Her joyous universe! Praise God! Praise You! I'm so happy, hallelujah, I could evaporate on my way to you, Sweet Jesus!

DAVID: Don't you see, brothers and sisters, we don't have to die! We can live forever! It's all just been put into our heads!

SPALDING: And what's real is what's happening to our planet. You can shut your eyes to it and play all your games. You can put on a suit and tie. Or, you can stand off from it and do what is natural and good, as the grass does, and the fruit does, as the tree does.

LIZZIE: And David said:

DAVID: Friend, wherefore art thou come?

LIZZIE: And they came, and laid hands on him, and took him.

CLEMENTINE *then with LIZZIE singing:*

You got to walk that lonesome valley

You got to walk it by yourself

Ain't nobody here can walk it for you

You got to walk it by yourself.

*Each question FEARLESS asks, DAVID answers. But his answers are overwhelmed by the questions.
The scene is played at incredible speed.*

FEARLESS: Name, address, married or single, how many children, parents living or dead, religious preference, do you look behind you when you flush, how long have you held your present job, have you ever been convicted of a felony or institutionalized, you're a homosexual, aren't you, David?

DAVID: People say I'm their leader. Here's the kind of leader I am. I make sure the toilets are clean. I make sure the animals are fed. Any sores on your horses? I heal them. Anything need fixing? I fix it. I'm always the one to do everything nobody else wants to do. Cats need feeding? I feed them. When it's cold, I'm the last one to get a blanket.

WOMEN: Everybody sheds their clothes and lays on the floor. There are lots of mattresses all over the floor. It doesn't matter who's beside you, a man or a woman, you make love. Everybody makes love with everybody.

FEARLESS: Is there sexual intercourse?

WOMEN: Yes, yes, of course.

DAVID: The lowest part of the world is Death Valley. The Fault goes right through Death Valley, and in the last time there will be a big earthquake that will open the world for all those who love. That's us! We shall be saved!

He stands and begins a slow march-dance around the theatre followed by the WOMEN who sing his accompaniment.

LIZZIE and CLEMENTINE:

I shall march through Death Valley with my angelic band

I shall pass through your cities with my fan in hand

And around thee, Oh, Los Angeles, my armies will encamp

While I search my holy temple with my bright burning lamp.

DAVID *while dancing:*

I don't care what I look like to you. I don't care what you think of me. I don't care what you do with me. I've always been yours anyway.

FEARLESS: What happened when you first met him?

LIZZIE: He felt my legs and seemed to think I was OK.

FEARLESS: He never hit you?

LIZZIE: No.

FEARLESS: He never bit you?
 LIZZIE: No.
 FEARLESS: When he made love with you, he was gentle?

LIZZIE *and* CLEMENTINE:
 No, it was not gentle.

DAVID *dancing and then stopping as he offers himself*:
 I've eaten out of your garbage cans. I've worn your second-hand clothes. I've stolen things and given them away again the next second. I've given everything I have away. Everything. Take, this is my body.

FEARLESS:
 Bruce, have you ever dropped acid and received feelings about reincarnation?

BRUCE:
 You go through cycle after cycle and then you go to God and become one with God. There are no words to describe it. It's a feeling and there are no words. My sole purpose for taking acid is God realization.

FEARLESS: You've seen God?
 BRUCE: Yes, I saw God on acid.
 CLEMENTINE: Hey, Spalding, now that we're famous we're going to do this hour-long TV special. It'll be just us—eating, singing, killing, being together.
 LIZZIE: How much're we going to get for it?
 CLEMENTINE: The gas chamber *Sound of gas*. Ppssssssssssssssssssst! Minimum.

DAVID: We could each get a dune buggy!
 FEARLESS: We could get six of 'em!

CLEMENTINE *and* LIZZIE:
 Right on! Can you dig it? Los Angeles in flames, cops and judges and moms and dads all frying like bacon and each of us in our own, shiny, brand, fucking new dune buggy tooling out through Death Valley to save the white race. Far out!

There is a dune buggy race.

CLEMENTINE *and* LIZZIE *singing during the race*:
 My days on earth are numbered,
 I can see the journey's end
 Gonna ride my dune buggy to Glory
 when it comes around the bend.
 Waiting for my call to Glory,
 where I'll know the good and true
 There I'll learn to love my neighbor,
 like he wanted me to do!

CLEMENTINE: And I just stabbed her and she fell, and I stabbed her again. I don't know how many times I stabbed her! Then I looked at her belly and I touched the blood in her belly with my fingers.

LIZZIE: The gas chamber? Are you kidding? It's all verses, climaxes, music, changes. Death is permanent solitary and there is nothing I would like more than that.

As she speaks she blindfolds herself.

BRUCE: The answer is to accept the Cross. I've accepted it. I can go up on the Cross anytime, in my imagination.

ALL *except* LIZZIE:
Lizzie Borden took an ax
Gave her mother forty whacks
When she saw what she had done
She gave her father forty-one!

LIZZIE *singing*:
Somewhere over the rainbow
Bluebirds fly.
Birds fly over the rainbow
Why, oh why, can't I?

CLEMENTINE: But you can, Lizzie. You're going to the top of the big hill. You're going to jump off into the hole in the desert. You're going to discover El Dorado—for us!

ALL: El Dorado.

SPALDING:
When
We were in
The desert
We learned
To sit on rocks
All day like coyoooooooooooooooooteeeeeees.
We reduced our wants to very little.

BRUCE: The desert is heaven because nobody wants it.

SPALDING: There are these old legends among the Indians. When the Spanish came, Montezuma went into Death Valley and disappeared down a hole into the center of the world. El Dorado—the Golden City.

ALL: El Dorado—the Golden City.

SPALDING: There are these gigantic explosions in the desert. A whole mountain just flies off and leaves this gigantic hole.

DAVID: There is this pool in Death Valley that goes down into the center of the world where the aware live forever. Montezuma is there with three hundred ninety-nine of his chosen warriors. And we are going there. They sent divers down into this pool and those divers never came back. Then the government put a wire fence around it.

FEARLESS: I can cut it. I can climb on your back and cut that fence.

LIZZIE: When do I get to the top of this hill?

BRUCE: You're going up it now.

LIZZIE: I think the ground is even.

BRUCE: That's because you're blind.

LIZZIE: I'll stay here. I'll keep a lookout.

CLEMENTINE: Remember her long blonde hair, and her blue eyes?

LIZZIE: I was outside where it was quiet.

CLEMENTINE: Remember her breasts?

FEARLESS: Hot tits, nice hot tits.

CLEMENTINE: You'll never have your baby.

FEARLESS: You're beautiful like she was. You're just like she was.

LIZZIE: I want my baby! Please let me have my baby!

CLEMENTINE: Just like the beautiful lady you'll never have your baby!

LIZZIE *ripping off her blindfold:*
Stay away from me!

DAVID: Stupid cop-out.

CLEMENTINE: Cocksucker.

FEARLESS: I'm beginning to feel the pressure. I was in Miami last week to visit my dad. I hope my family is left out of this. They don't know anything.

There are three versions of the My Lai scene.

First version:

FEARLESS *at random picks fifteen spectators.*

FEARLESS:
I want you fifteen people to come into the center of this circle to represent the villagers at My Lai.

If they all enter the circle outlined with masking tape on the dip in the Wave, the scene continues. But if one or more do not come, FEARLESS removes an item of his costume and says:

I am taking off my—

He takes off an item of his costume.

—to signify that the performance is now stopped. Those who have not come into the circle have the following options. First, you can come into the circle and the play will resume. Second, you can pick anyone else in the room to take your place and if they do the play will resume. Or you can stay where you are and the play will remain stopped. Or you can leave the theatre and the play will resume in your absence.

A wait then begins. On one occasion it was more than three hours before the play resumed.

Second version:

SPALDING: We would like everyone in the theatre to come down to the center of the Wave to represent the villagers at My Lai.

Enough time is allowed for all those spectators who choose to do so to come to the center of the room. The performers climb to ramparts high above the center. After everyone is settled, the scene continues. The play continues even if no spectators come to the designated place.

Third version:

FEARLESS, CLEMENTINE, and DAVID put the shoes of the spectators on a large cloth, drag it up the Wave, and dump the shoes in the center circle. The scene then continues.

In all versions, the following dialogue is the same.

DAVID: Well, we gather thirty, thirty-five people in the center of the village, and we place them in there, and it's like a little island, I'd say, right there in the center of the village.

SPALDING: What kind of people?

DAVID: Men, women, children.

SPALDING: Babies too?

DAVID: Babies too. We huddle them up, we make them squat down.

SPALDING: OK, and the—

DAVID: I pour about four clips into the group.

SPALDING: You fired four clips from your—

DAVID: M-16.

SPALDING: And that's about how many bullets?

DAVID: I carry seventeen rounds to each clip.

SPALDING: So that comes to something like 67 shots.

DAVID: If you say so.

SPALDING: And you killed how many? At that time?

DAVID: Well, I fire them on automatic, so you can't—you just spray the whole area on them so you can't know how many you kill because they're going down fast.

SPALDING: OK, and then what?

DAVID: We're rounding up more and we collect about seven or eight of them. We put them down in the ditch and I drop a hand grenade down there with them. Then somebody tells us to bring them over to the ravine. So we take the rest

and lead them over to the edge. By then they already have 70, 75 of their own all gathered up. So we throw ours in with theirs and the lieutenant tells me, he says, "We got another job to do." And so he walks up to the people and he starts pushing them off and he starts shooting.

FEARLESS: I guess everyone has their own feelings about the war. I doubt I can explain miiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiinnnnnnnnnnneeee!

SPALDING: How do you shoot babies?

DAVID: I don't know. It's just one of them things. It seemed like it was the natural thing to do at the time.

SPALDING *goes to a dancing circle in the corner. He remains there, silent, just standing.*

DAVID *and* FEARLESS *dancing and singing:*

The little pigs they roast themselves
And trot about this lovely land
With knives and forks stuck in their backs
Inquiring if you'd like some ham.

LIZZIE *putting her blindfold back on:*

You're all disgusting!

CLEMENTINE: Down here is the big hole in the desert.

ALL: El Dorado.

CLEMENTINE: There's room here for 144,000 people and you're the first!

FEARLESS: Now you're right on the edge.

LIZZIE *singing:*

Star light, star bright
First star I see tonight,
I wish I may I wish I might
Have the wish I wish tonight.

CLEMENTINE: We went into the bedroom, remember? The pregnant lady's husband was away. He was across the big water.

FEARLESS: There she was on the bed. Face it, man, movie star, rich, beautiful.

CLEMENTINE: Everything you ain't, babe, but dumb as they come!

FEARLESS: Hot tits, nice hot tits!

CLEMENTINE: She never had to work a day in her life. She got everything she wanted. She was a product of the American dream.

LIZZIE: I wasn't there. I didn't do it.

CLEMENTINE: Fearless, will you please present Exhibit A?

FEARLESS: And now, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, here is the Lookout, the Snitch of the first degree!

CLEMENTINE *leading a cheer:*

Punishable, brothers and sisters, by C-R-U-C-I-F-I-X-I-O-N!

FEARLESS: Don't worry, though, they'll let you have your kid first!
LIZZIE: I didn't kill anybody. I threw away the creepy-crawlies but not my own clothes. There's no blood on my shirt. The police will take me out for Chinese supper and I'll spill the beans. They'll grant me immunity and I'll have my baby, go back to my daddy, and finish college. They'll let me go free because basically I'm a nice girl. I can't be in this thing!
DAVID: Why can't you be in this thing?! Who do you think you are that you can't be in this thing!
LIZZIE: I spread the butter
I spread the cheese
I spread the jam
On your dirty knees!
Guess who snitched?
CLEMENTINE: So we came and we were all around her. David held her down.
DAVID: She wanted her baby.
CLEMENTINE: She just kept screaming one thing.

DAVID *and* LIZZIE:
I want my baby! Let me have my baby!

CLEMENTINE: It'll be born dead!
LIZZIE: It'll be born screaming and howling!
FEARLESS: Jump, you cunt, jump!
LIZZIE: I want it, it belongs to me, he's mine!
DAVID: Big as life!

LIZZIE jumps backwards into their arms.

ALL: El Dorado!

LIZZIE is lifted high over everyone's heads and carried around the space. As SPALDING speaks the others howl like wolves heard from a distance.

SPALDING: The people of the country having espied us made a lamentable noise. We thought it had been the howling of wolves.
All: These people are inclined to a chestnut color. The color of their skin is yellowish. The complexion of these people is black.
DAVID: Black-assed niggers, yellow gooks, and spics!
ALL: They admired the whiteness of our skin. They cover their privates only with a piece of leather.
SPALDING: As the time passes our relationship with the natives becomes more and more difficult.
ALL: In the morning we manned our boat with twelve men and muskets and drove the savages from their homes as they would have done of us.
SPALDING: Behold, this pattern of our butcheries.

ALL:

We saw the flames of their fire
And the savages sitting around it
We attacked them at once
Taking them by surprise
They ran into a place where reeds grow thickly
There we found them, there we found them, there we found them ...

As each person says "There we found them" he/she collapses into a line of corpses as at the beginning of the play, version 2.

SPALDING: All visible objects, brothers and sisters, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the moldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How else is the prisoner to reach outside except by shoving his arm through the wall?

CLEMENTINE: Spalding! Remember what happened last night because you were there! Remember how we got into the Pontiac and drove to the big house on the hill. You went to the top of that same hill, Lizzie, a big white house on the hill.

From the spectators' shoes, the performers select unmatched pairs which they wear until the end of the murder scene. Also, if anything has been stolen from the spectators, these items are worn throughout the murder scene.

BRUCE *as he undresses and lounges in the pool:*

American history ended last night. We in this room are all that's left. There was an artist in the city of Kouroo who strove for perfection. One day he decided to make a staff. Knowing that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but in a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, "It shall be perfect in all respects, though I do nothing else in my life."

CLEMENTINE: Yes, Bruce, you were there too. And Fearless, I saw you there!

DAVID: Me, too, I was there too!

CLEMENTINE: That's right, David, you were there too. We drove up the canyon alongside the ocean, then we zipped into the canyon again. We dove like Montezuma down into the hole in the desert.

LIZZIE: I was in the car listening to the radio.

CLEMENTINE: Remember the song they were singing? Somebody opened the gate.

FEARLESS: I got it.

LIZZIE: There were lots of trees around the house. I couldn't see inside.

CLEMENTINE: Spalding, you parked the Pontiac, and Fearless you went up a telephone pole and cut the wires. Then we walked up the gravel path to the house.

Everyone except SPALDING who is high in the ramparts watching and BRUCE who is in the pool, forms into an Organism—a collective body, supersensitive to every sound in the room. As the Organism

ascends the Wave, each time a noise is heard, it freezes. By making noise, the audience, if it wished, could stop the enactment of the murders.

Unlike the speed run-through at the start of the performance, this scene is played methodically, slowly.

SPALDING:

Did you ever see a coyote in the desert—watching, tuned-in, completely aware? Christ on the Cross, the coyote in the desert, it's the same thing. The coyote's beautiful. He walks through the desert delicately. He smells every smell, he hears every sound, he sees everything. You see, he's always in a state of total paranoia and total paranoia is total awareness.

The Organism gets to the top of the Wave and crosses the line marked "inside."

CLEMENTINE: We went inside the house. It wasn't locked, understand?

LIZZIE: I'll keep a lookout.

CLEMENTINE: And there was this deep, deep living room, and there was this man in the living room.

FEARLES: A short man with his hair combed back like this.

CLEMENTINE: Real neatly combed.

FEARLESS: And he was wearing expensive clothing and he saw all of us in our creepy-crawlies.

LIZZIE: I was outside where it was quiet.

DAVID: You were wearing them too! As a matter of fact they were black. Black dungarees and black T-shirts, and you made them for us, Domestic Lady.

LIZZIE: And the man with the combed hair started running. He ran for the backyard.

CLEMENTINE: And what did you do, David?

SPALDING: He thought he could get away from us.

CLEMENTINE: What did you do?

DAVID: I slit his throat.

CLEMENTINE: But he didn't stop ruuuunnnnnnnnnnnnggggg!

SPALDING: The red tide now poured from all sides of the monster like brooks down a hill. His tormented body rolled not in brine but in blood, which bubbled and seethed for furlongs behind in their waaaaaake!

LIZZIE: And I jumped on his back and I had a knife and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed and I stabbed!

CLEMENTINE: That's just the beginning of our story. That's just the start of what happened.

Freeze. BRUCE speaks very quietly, in no rush.

BRUCE: The artist went to the forest to find wood to make his perfect staff. He searched for and rejected stick after stick. As he made no compromise with time, time kept out of his way. Before he found the right stick the city of Kouroo was in ruin. Then he sat on one of its mounds to whittle his stick.

SPALDING *singing the blues*:
There was a lady ...!

DAVID: In blue—
LIZZIE: No, not that lady. There was another lady.
DAVID: The Lady in Red!
LIZZIE: That's right. The Lady in Red. She looked very scared and very rich. She thought we were there to rob her.
CLEMENTINE: You want money? I have lots of money! Look, here's seventy dollars.
LIZZIE: She started running running running for the yard.
FEARLESS: I got her, I got her!
SPALDING: But wait! We still have the best part of our story to tell.
DAVID: We went upstairs into the bedroom, there the most beautiful people were.
FEARLESS: Aren't you pretty.
CLEMENTINE: Remember her long blonde hair and her blue eyes? Remember her breasts?
FEARLESS: Hot tits, nice hot tits.
CLEMENTINE: Remember her belly, remember how hard it was?
FEARLESS: The blonde lady's going to have a baby.
DAVID: The Lady in Blue!
FEARLESS: I didn't like the man.
DAVID: Why not?
FEARLESS: I didn't like him.

FEARLESS *slits* BRUCE's *throat*.

CLEMENTINE: She had a baby. We killed a baby!
DAVID: Shut up. And then we took a knife.
FEARLESS: This time all it took was one knife.
DAVID: And the Lady in Blue kept saying, "Please, please."
LIZZIE: Please, please let me have my baby! I want my baby!

FEARLESS *knifes* SPALDING, CLEMENTINE *knifes* LIZZIE.

SPALDING: At last gush after gush of clotted red gore as if it had been the purple lees of red wine shot into the frightened air and falling back again ran dripping down her motionless flanks. Her heart had burst.
CLEMENTINE: And now we had one, two, three, four no wait a minute, five! There was a boy outside when we first came. There was a boy outside and Fearless you got him. He wasn't in the house. Remember the boy who was just visiting?
DAVID: I don't even live here. I don't know anybody here. I don't even belong here.

FEARLESS *kills* DAVID.

CLEMENTINE: And then we went to the Lady in Blue and we went to the Lady in Red and went to the Man in the Backyard and we went to the Pretty Man with the

Blond Hair and we went to the Boy Who Was Just Visiting and we dipped inside their bellies and we wrote just like we wrote before!

Taking chalk and water from the pool they write on the floors and walls and ceilings. The performers write whatever is on their minds.

FEARLESS: Open your eyes, open your eyes and see!
CLEMENTINE: We wrote on the floors and we wrote on the ceilings and we wrote on the walls and everybody knew what we did!

BRUCE *getting out of the pool and dressing:*

By the time the artist finished polishing and smoothing his staff it suddenly expanded into the fairest of all creations. He made a new system in making a staff. And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet that for him and his work the lapse of time had been an illusion and no more time had elapsed than a single scintillation of the brain.

DAVID: Wait a minute. We did one more thing. We took the pretty man with the blond hair and we took the pregnant lady and we put them together on the couch in the living room. We put them together cozy-like because they had been lovers, probably, once.
FEARLESS: And then we took a silver thread and we put it around his neck and we put it around her neck and then we went away from the house on the hill.
CLEMENTINE: I forgot my knife so I went back inside. The pregnant lady was there and I knew that if I took my knife and cut open her belly I could have her baby!

CLEMENTINE pushes her way through the spectators or shoes in the center circle and jumps from the Wave to a circle marked Freedom. Then she walks slowly to the circle where DAVID was interrogated and the "savages" attacked. As she walks, she sings.

CLEMENTINE *singing:*

A prodigal son once strayed from his maker
To wander a land of hunger and pain
But now I can see the end of my journey
I'm going to heaven again.
From out of the sky he's coming to meet me
To wash all my sins and call me his own
His servants will bring a ring for my finger
And never no more will I roam.

CLEMENTINE jumps into the circle, takes off her shoes, lays down as dead. The others do likewise in different parts of the room. As they do SPALDING opens his eyes. As he passes different corpses they awaken and join the press conference as photographers, mike-men, reporters.

SPALDING:

I wasn't even in the country when it happened. I got a telegram. We were married eighteen months ago in Boston. She wore a white miniskirt and I wore a Regency suit. It was the marriage of two

different worlds. I agreed to come back for the funeral and, and, to hold a press conference at the house. I want to speak somewhere without bounds, like a man in his waking moment to men in their waking moments for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to begin to lay the foundations of truth. When I got to the house on the hill, I saw that someone had written “pig” all over the walls in blood. She was the only one I really loved. She used to prop the pillows up like that when I wasn’t there. That’s how she liked to sleep when I wasn’t there. They must’ve done it. There was blood all over the home. She managed somehow to get out there near the pool. She liked to float around on a rubber raft with her big pregnant belly stuck up in the air. When she first told me she was going to have a baby she announced it as though she had invented motherhood.

DAVID: You don’t seem very upset.
 SPALDING: Who are you talking to?
 FEARLESS: Is it true there was an orgy there that night?
 SPALDING: No, that is not true. This is not an orgy house, it is not the famous house of the orgy.
 LIZZIE: Do you sleep in the nude together?
 SPALDING: She does not take drugs, she never takes drugs.

FEARLESS *letting the water in the pool run through his hands:*
 Excuse me, Spalding, is this the blood?

SPALDING: That’s the blood.
 DAVID: Why aren’t you upset about your wife’s death?
 SPALDING: Look, I love my wife very much. You know, what may be horror to you is not necessarily horror to me.
 CLEMENTINE: What would you describe as the role of the artist in today’s society?
 SPALDING: The role of the artist?
 CLEMENTINE: Yes.
 SPALDING: Yes, yes, of course.

A long freeze. Then SPALDING goes to the side of the Wave, sits, takes out a penny-whistle and blows: like a factory whistle ending the workday. He plays a tune. The others go to the tub and wash, return clothing to spectators, relax. Performance rhythms subside into everyday rhythms. The performance is over.

NOTES

1. Many of these exercises I further refined—and then published them in *Environmental Theater* (1973).
2. On March 16, 1968, a company of American soldiers commanded by Lieutenant William Calley assaulted, raped, mutilated, and murdered more than 500 civilians of My Lai village, Vietnam. The victims included many children and babies. The massacre was not known to the American public until November 1969.
3. Brook Farm just outside Boston was founded by George and Sophia Ripley in 1841 as a model commune that would, in George Ripley’s words, build “a city of God, anew.” Brook farm drew the interest of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne,

- among many. Hawthorne lived there for eight months, his novel *Blithedale Romance* being a fictionalized account of his experiences. Brook Farm closed in 1847.
4. Coined in 1845 by journalist John Louis Sullivan, “manifest destiny” proclaims that it is God’s will that white Americans should expand the United States from “sea to shining sea,” exterminating or removing all in its way. Although contested since first proposed, manifest destiny—applied globally since World War II—is a guiding principle of American imperialism.
 5. The Spahn Ranch was where the Manson “family” lived. Owned by George Spahn, the Ranch was once a farm and then used as a movie set for westerns.
 6. Bowers’s character Lara became Lizzie early in the run.
 7. Before *Commune* opened, MacIntosh’s character became Clementine.
 8. Before *Commune* opened, Griffiths’s character became Fearless.
 9. Before *Commune* opened, Gray’s character became Spalding.
 10. In practice, I never changed my name from Richard.
 11. The Fort Hill Community in Boston was, in my opinion, analogous to Manson’s Family. The Community was founded and led by Mel Lyman (1938–78), His followers said he was Truth incarnate, or maybe an extraterrestrial, or Jesus Christ. I visited Fort Hill as part of my research for *Commune*.
 12. Susan Belinda Moonshine, played by Patric Epstein.
 13. In my notebook, this paragraph is in quotation marks, but with no source. I think it’s something Charles Manson or one of his “family” said.
 14. We never toured to Stratford, Connecticut, or to Toronto. I don’t know what intervened. But continuing our work while in residence at SUNY-New Paltz, and then back in The Performing Garage, we accomplished what is outlined here.
 15. The association exercises are a set of psychophysical movements—head roll, hip roll, body roll, finger, foot and eye movements (all described in *Environmental Theater*) that I devised from work I learned from Jerzy Grotowski during the workshop he led, assisted by Ryszard Cieslak, at NYU’s School of the Arts in November 1967. This workshop led directly to my offering a workshop later that fall that formed the basis of The Performance Group. The exercises are “association” or “associative” because the movements elicit associations and the associations guide the movements in terms of rhythm and intensity.
 16. *Hair*, book and lyrics by Gerome Ragni and James Rado, music by Galt MacDermott, premiered at New York’s Public Theatre on October 17, 1967. It transferred to Broadway in April 1968 where it was a huge hit. *Hair* celebrates hippie culture. Its theme song, “The Age of Aquarius,” announces humanity’s move into an enlightened epoch. *Hair* is definitely upbeat. It was revived on Broadway in 2009 where it won a Tony Award and a Drama Desk Award for “best revival of a musical.”
 17. Charles A. Reich’s 1970 *The Greening of America* proclaims on the cover of its paperback edition: “There is a revolution coming. It will not be like revolutions of the past. It will originate with the individual and with culture, and it will change the political structure only as its final act. It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence. This is the revolution of the new generation.” I wanted to believe this, but could not; and yet I found it, and still find it, noble.
 18. James E. Schevill (1920–2009), a playwright, poet, scholar who taught at San Francisco University and Brown University.
 19. Mik Cribben left the production shortly after it opened. The only textual remainder of his participation in *Commune* is his “Song of First Encounter.”

7

Makbeth, After Shakespeare, 1969–1970

*Introduction*¹

Makbeth, After Shakespeare was the second production of The Performance Group. It opened on November 21, 1969 at The Performing Garage and closed in January 1970. When *Makbeth* closed, the group that made it and *Dionysus in 69* disintegrated. I reconstituted The Performance Group during the spring of 1970 and began work on *Commune*. That new Performance Group worked together throughout the 1970s. In the mid-1970s, several TPG members began working separately from me—a move I encouraged. These members included Elizabeth Le Compte, Spalding Gray, Ron Vawter, and Jim Clayburgh. After I left TPG in January 1980, they reconstituted themselves (and some others) as The Wooster Group.²

What exactly was the experiment with *Makbeth*? When did it begin, what did it involve, what was the process that it set loose, how did it work out? Hopefully, in reflecting on the production of *Makbeth*—“after Shakespeare,” as I note in the piece’s title, the “c” changed to a “k” alphabetically marking what The Performance Group did to Shakespeare’s text—I can offer some understanding or articulation of the relationship of the director to the performers and to the text.

A big part of *Makbeth* is exploring what happens when a group of artists uses the text as material, stuff. I worked from a key premise: Shakespeare is to be played with, not “realized.” I assumed no Platonic ideal *Macbeth*. In this vein, the production was based on another key premise: the theatre doesn’t reflect or imitate or represent a reality, it is a reality. I reject the Platonic-Aristotelian notion of mimesis, that there are different levels of realities reflecting or derived from an ultimate “really real reality”—a form either out there somewhere (Plato) or indwelling (Aristotle). I accept so-called representations as real. Take Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, for example. That painting is itself even as it is a representation of Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo, a woman long gone. Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa* is its own independent reality. Does the painting look like the once-living Lisa? It doesn’t matter. Lisa Gherardini del Giocondo and *Mona Lisa* are separate realities. The Louvre takes great care that no one touches or in any way mars *Mona Lisa*. That’s because the painting is a supremely valuable thing in and of itself.

But Shakespeare’s plays are different. All theatre plays are different. Yes, there is—or may be—a definitive text. But there can be no definitive production on stage or film or whatever medium. *Makbeth* does not presume to “realize” the text of *Macbeth*—to make what Shakespeare might have intended. I did not regard Shakespeare’s text as “untouchable.” Quite the contrary, I treated those words as raw material from which to make a different but related text. One still recognizes in *Makbeth* the story and characters of *Macbeth*. But what the characters say is often a different arrangement of words than in Shakespeare.

The guiding rule of the composition game I played was: I could use only the words in *Macbeth*, but I could use these in any way I wished. Some very famous speeches and phrases I left intact. But often, as in the closing scene, I radically changed the play. Not with the crowning of a new monarch, but with the victory of the Dark Powers.

Who are these Dark Powers? Decisively, I extended Shakespeare's three witches into beings both superior and inferior to Makbeth, Malcolm, Duncan, et al. I made them both female and male. Far from being hags, they are nimble and efficient. They do not depend on a witches' brew but on the ordinary workings of society. The Dark Powers are the witches plus all the "lesser" characters: servants, messengers, the ones who do the dirty work (ambushing Banquo, murdering Macduff's family). They inflame and serve Makbeth's ambition and paranoia. By doing what they are told, the Dark Powers actually control the action. This is not far from Shakespeare's witches: they who can foretell the future own it.

To those accusing me of "desecrating" Shakespeare's play, I say: his text remains what it is because no production can be anything more than an instance. My rearranging Shakespeare's words does not in any way mar what Shakespeare wrote. As with Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (what editors say it is) remains its own independent thing. Or to put it in theatrical terms, *Makbeth* is not an attempt to "realize" *Macbeth*. Rather, I and The Performance Group used the material of *Macbeth* to make our own thing, *Makbeth*.

If original and representation are ways of linking realities, metaphor is another way of linking realities. So, for example, there is the lion and there is the "lion of a man." When you say, "He is a lion of a man," you're not saying that the man imitates the lion or represents the lion. You are saying that the man and the lion share certain qualities. In some cultures, animal-human metaphors become totems. A whole group shares, or aspires to share, the qualities of the totem. The totem, like *Mona Lisa* or *Makbeth*, is its own reality—a reality with social behavioral consequences. And vice-versa. The painting and the theatrical production are totemic.

If you accept that an original and its totem can each claim primacy, the theatrical production night to night, as well as the preparation of the production week by week, is as constituent of the artwork as any "original" text. In practice, for *Makbeth*, the author was not present to defend his reality; Shakespeare never told The Performance Group "I want it done this way." What we had from Shakespeare was a collection of words. The workshop-rehearsal process was the furnace in which we melted, shaped, and made solid a new arrangement of these words. Before discussing how we did that, some background.

I started The Performance Group in November 1967 (see Introduction to *Dionysus in 69*). *D69* opened on June 6, 1968, the night Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated. From the start, the production was a hit—Dan Sullivan gave it a rave review in the *New York Times*. Success was a mixed-blessing. The average age of Performance Group members was mid-20s; I was 33. Few Group members had professional experience. Then just four days after opening, I left on a long-planned research trip to Latin America. At the end of July 1968, *D69* took a break for August. I didn't get back to the Group until September. By then our highly disciplined work had gone slack. I had a hard time re-establishing what we had in the spring. When *D69* re-opened on October 3, still a hit, we decided to play it only three times a week so that we could work on another project at the same time.

Performing *D69* aroused inner doubts as well bringing outer success. The production was charged with erotic energy. Were we a hit because of our radical interpretation of Euripides or because, as Grotowski said later, "You took off your clothes"? Maybe both were true. And what's

wrong with eroticism? Dealing with this, continuing rigorous training, performing to sold-out houses, and trying to develop a new piece at the same time—it was a lot. But we persevered.

We decided the new piece should be “political,” dealing with what was happening in the world at the time. The Democratic Party’s National Convention in Chicago in the summer of 1968 affected members of the Group deeply. During the convention, a broad-ranging coalition of leftists—from those opposed to the Vietnam War to the Yippies led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin—came to Chicago both to protest Hubert Humphrey’s nomination for president and to celebrate alternative culture. Widespread violence occurred when police tried to clear protestors and celebrators from Chicago’s streets and parks. Joan MacIntosh and I were in Mexico City when the riots in Chicago happened. We were back in New York when Mexican students took to the streets in September protesting the big spending on the Olympics scheduled for October in Mexico City at a time when there were so many unmet social needs. The unrest culminated in the October 2 Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City when the army and police murdered between 300 and 400 protestors. 1968 also saw The Prague Spring³ and many other protests in Europe. How could The Performance Group do a piece addressing these events? We decided to deal with the ramifications of what was happening in an indirect, poetic way. *Macbeth* seemed to me to raise questions about the relationship between individual ambition and state power.

At that time, also, I was very interested in collage. I thought we might merge Brecht’s *Arturo Ui* and *Macbeth* or Jarry’s *Ubu Roi* and *Macbeth* because both *Arturo* and *Ubu* are really modeled on *Macbeth*. I felt there was good material there. We met and discussed the relationship between *Arturo* and *Macbeth*, but it didn’t pan out. Brecht’s play was so strong in itself; he’d incorporated his commentaries on *Macbeth* in it already. Not so with *Ubu*, so we began to think about it in mise-en-scene meetings. Whoever wanted to work on the new project met at the apartment shared by MacIntosh and me. We talked about the mise-en-scene—what the shape of the production could be, basic themes, how to organize the space, etc. While talking about *Ubu*, I brought in *Macbeth*. I said, “Why don’t we explore *Macbeth* as it’s a play in our own language, is very strong, and deals with the problems we’ve been talking about? Later we can work on combining *Ubu* and *Macbeth*.”

We never combined *Ubu* and *Macbeth* because Shakespeare’s text grabbed us so strongly. In December 1968, I noted that there were four archetypal character-types in *Macbeth*: Doers: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth; Founders/Victims: Duncan and Banquo; Avengers: Malcolm and Macduff; and Dark Powers: witches, common people, soldiers, messengers, and servants. That division stayed with the production from the beginning to the end. It was expressed in the costumes: each type was garbed in its own color; it influenced deeply how we reconstructed the text because performers in each category worked mostly with each other shaping their improvisations and their selection-collaging of the text; it affected the development of the environment, which went through several phases which I’ll discuss later because we weren’t thinking of space early on.

Other notes I made around this time reveal tensions in the Group. When Peter Brook saw *Macbeth* in November 1969, he told me that “*Macbeth* is a jinxed play.” “Why?” I asked him. “Because the power of the witches is so primal and so deep that you can’t tamper with it without upsetting the balance of nature.” Brook warned me that bad things happen to people who do *Macbeth*. I laughed. “Well, Peter, will you direct *Macbeth*?” He replied instantly. “For God’s sake, I’d never direct *Macbeth*.” To the best of my knowledge, he never did. Returning to The

Performance Group, I detect even back in October 1968 our beginning to act out without knowing it the story of *Macbeth* even as we were beginning to prepare *Makbeth*.

This happened because of the kind of work The Performance Group did, this business of real/actual rather than mimetic. I do not believe in “character,” but in the actor playing out the action directly as her-himself. Even if the action is not invented by the performer, the performer’s work is to own it, to come face to face with the action. Slowly some of the basic actions of *Makbeth* began to filter into the Group. Struggles about who would be in control of The Performance Group: me, some of them, them as a Group, me as an individual, a consensus, and so on. These struggles bored deeper and deeper. *Makbeth* began playing us.

This playing took shape with the “association exercises.” Association exercises combine what I adapted from Grotowski, my work in New Orleans with the New Orleans Group, my experiences in The Free Southern Theater, and some original work of my own. Association exercises are a set of specific physical movements in an active-dynamic relationship to whatever is going on in your mind. For example, you may rotate your head; the rhythm and intensity and direction of that rotation will be determined by whatever you are experiencing-fantasizing. These imaginings are, in turn, set off and/or intensified by you rotating your head. There are a number of movements—body rolls, hip rolls, arm, hand, and finger movements, foot and toe, and so on. The performer builds a dynamic feedback relationship between the physical movement and psychic movement. Association exercises inculcate in the performer a felt belief and a felt need for psycho-physical unity. Many of these exercises are explained in detail in my *Environmental Theater* (1973, 1994) and in *Inside the Performance Workshop* (Bowditch et al. 2023).

We did a lot of association exercises. We had no notion yet of what I now call “verbo-physical” work because we hadn’t faced the problems of speaking poetry, Shakespeare’s or anybody else’s. In *Dionysus in 69* the Choruses are poetic, but we sung them or spoke them colloquially. Other dialog in *D69* wasn’t articulated in the same way as Shakespeare’s lines need to be. *D69* is colloquial by design. With *Makbeth* we had to get inside the poetry, illuminate it the way a candle burns from within its glass container. This was not a problem in “psychological” or “motivational” acting, but a problem of confronting the sound, the articulation, of a text: the feelings evoked by the physics of language-speaking. We had the association exercises to work from. And I experimented for the first time with planting inside these exercises certain phrases, words, sentences that became actions or keys and maps to actions.

Each day’s rehearsals began with association exercises. During this work, I read out loud sentences or phrases or even single words from *Macbeth*. Shakespeare’s text as a material thing infiltrated the performers personal thoughts-feelings-fantasies evoked by the association exercises. I uttered only fragments so that the text-as-meaning would not overwhelm whatever was going on personally. Thus, a dialectic was set up inside each performer between the privateness of his/her fantasies and the publicness of Shakespeare. The next step was to encourage the Group as a collective to interact, to act out together textual fragments, combinations of private and Shakespeare. One afternoon in December 1968, we improvised for the very first time ten actions from *Macbeth*:

1. Macbeth goes deep and meets the witches.
2. The witches tell Macbeth he will be King.
3. Macbeth climbs and kills King Duncan.
4. Duncan and Banquo fall.

5. Malcolm and Macduff are afraid and run.
6. Macbeth kills Banquo.
7. Malcolm and Macduff pursue Macbeth.
8. Macbeth is not afraid, but dies anyway.
9. Macbeth is killed and his head rises.
10. Malcolm is King.

There are contradictions such as Macbeth dying twice. But this work was not about causal logic or consistency. I can't explain why we did these actions and not others, but we did them that afternoon. The performers experienced the text as a concrete event, a thing that makes people move, sing, interact, feel. This improvisation developed into the "antiphonal *Macbeth*" where each performer accumulated her/his own set of sentences, phrases, or syllables. Very personal roadmaps through the play. Each not only accumulated these, they also watched each other accumulate. Everyone except me—I always remained outside—acted out a private vision/version of *Macbeth* and witnessed the others doing the same.

The antiphonal *Macbeth* is a simple exercise which can be adapted to suit any play. It's an effective way to explore embodying the basic actions of a play. The exercise is called "antiphonal" because one person starts it and everyone else answers in a chorus while also exploring variants. Here's how it goes. Each person reads the play, but the group does not work on it collectively. Then, after the performers do the association exercise for a while, the director nominates one performer to be the leader. That person begins their way through the play, a sentence at a time. For example, with regard to *Macbeth*, Richard Dia's first sentence was, "After the witches' prophecies, Macbeth and Banquo walk away discussing them." Then the whole Group takes what they can from that sentence. It's rarely repeated verbatim. In Dia's case, the Group took the word "discussing" and both shortened and stretched it into "Discussssssss." Then they used "Macbeth and Banquo" as the basis for a rhythmic banging. By moving and making sounds as an organic unit, the performers got inside of and out from what Dia initiated. The performers are free to do whatever they want with what they hear. They don't have to try to make the "antiphonal" natural or true to the playwright. They use it as raw material evoking and spurring them to new sounds and associations.

By December 27, 1968, I had divided the antiphonals into two kinds: embodying-vocalizing the action and embodying-vocalizing the quality. So, for example, with Dia's sentence—"After the witches' prophecies, Macbeth and Banquo walk away discussing them"—walking and discussing are the actions and prophecies is the quality. It's very simple. You find the action in the verbs and participles and find the quality in the nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Using antiphonals, each person gets a chance to lead, to have everyone go through the actions of the text from their point of view, not as the outside eye of a director, but as living inside the actions as a performer. While working on *Macbeth*, everyone was a leader at one time or another.

I am going to describe in more detail Dia's antiphonal and one other to show how each relates to the play while also embodying in concrete and particular ways the individuality of the leader's imagination as refracted through the collective bodymind of the group. Dia's antiphonal had twelve parts:

1. After the witches' prophecy, Macbeth and Banquo walk away discussing them.
2. Duncan comes to the castle after his murder has been planned. Macbeth greets him.

3. While asleep, Macbeth sneaks up the stairs and murders Duncan.
4. Macbeth cannot sleep, so he paces.
5. Tired and afraid, Macbeth shuns his wife.
6. Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo.
7. And he cannot dance at his own party.
8. Lady Macbeth descends the steps in her sleep and tells all.
9. Macduff, hearing all, begins a long march with his men on Dunsinane.
10. Macbeth is killed in ritual combat.
11. There is a new king in Dunsinane named for the survivors.
12. Everyone goes home to sleep.

In “There is a new king in Dunsinane named for the survivors” Dia, the leader, was made king. He was dressed in everyone’s clothes. By the end of that action all the performers but Dia were naked. Dia was dressed, smothered, and weighed down by all the clothes in the room (except mine). Then everyone chanted, “There’s a new king in Dunsinane.”

Another, much longer antiphonal:

1. Messenger announces Macbeth’s trial.
2. Cawdor dies; nothing in his life becomes him like the leaving of it.
3. Thane of Cawdor equals Macbeth.
4. Lady Macbeth receives and reads a letter of love.
5. A messenger arrives and says, “The king dines here tonight, Madam.”
6. Lady Macbeth makes Macbeth resolute. Bring forth only men children.
7. Macbeth sees a dagger.
8. Macbeth murders Duncan.
9. Macbeth hears a voice far away.
10. Duncan’s horses eat each other.
11. The Porter hears a knocking at the door and wonders who it might be.
12. Banquo thinks about the prophecies of the witches.
13. Macbeth plots with two murderers.
14. Fleance escapes.
15. Banquo is missed at the banquet.
16. The ghost of Banquo enters the banquet.
17. Macbeth sees the ghost and flips out.
18. “My lord is often like this.”
19. Lady Macbeth asks the guests to leave without ceremony.
20. Hecate meets with the witches.
21. Malcolm tells Macduff he does not have any qualities of a king, but all the vices.
22. Macduff despairs.
23. Malcolm tells Macduff, “I was only kidding you.”
24. Malcolm’s son and his wife make each other brave.
25. They die before their grave.
26. They die before the murderers.
27. Ross brings the news to Macduff.
28. Macduff says, “Speak.”

29. Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth he has to go visit the Weird Sisters.
30. Macbeth meets the witches.
31. Lady Macbeth tries to wash the blood from her hands.
32. A messenger tells Macbeth, "Birnam Wood is coming to Dunsinane."
33. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps.
34. Until the last syllable of recorded time.
35. And all our yesterdays have lighted fools.
36. Life is but a shadow.
37. And is heard no more.

Because this antiphonal was so long, people stopped being part of a single organism; they separated into sub-groups, they lost focus. The goal of the antiphonal exercise is to share each other's sense of the action. Brevity is the soul of that. Not only the leader but also the players must bring only what is essential. The 37-actions antiphonal failed. But generally the antiphonals were successful. They helped us explore the play in a concrete way, verbally and physically. We explored as a group and as individuals.

While working on the antiphonals, I began to compare *Macbeth* and things (for lack of a better word) "in life." I was taken up by the play's questions of power, love, betrayal, and revenge. I started to use *Macbeth's* language to describe my own situation. In my notebook, I wrote "You shall sleep no more." Then around Christmas we stopped working on what would become *Makbeth* because we went on tour with *Dionysus in 69*.

When we came back in February 1969, we started another exercise called "The Twenty Lines Through." It was the first exercise in which we directly confronted the text. I asked each performer to pick twenty lines from the play as their own personal way through the play. Sometimes we used the antiphonal form with the twenty lines and sometimes an individual performer shared with the other performers their twenty lines and then moved through the whole space of the Garage working out these twenty lines. It was the first time that we actually memorized Shakespeare. The relationship between the space and what the performers were doing was not organic. But I didn't know exactly how to make it organic. I thought that the problem might be because we were rehearsing in the *Dionysus* space and not in a new *Makbeth* space. I think now the root of the problem was the fact that we didn't inhabit the language in a physical way. It was always "Shakespeare." We had at that time no verbophysical exercises, no exercises to develop a verbo-physical unity in the way that we had developed psychophysical unity.

I tried to fix the problem by establishing a physical relationship between the text, the performers, and the space. I came up with a scheme in which the center of the space was "no man's land." Elsewhere in the room each of the four groups—Doers, Founders/Victims, Avengers, and Dark Powers—had its own territory. The four groups struggled against each other for control of no-man's land. We organized improvisations along those lines.

Then I began to think and talk about the idea that people are driven by four motives: love, fame, power, and money.⁴ This impressed me because it seemed so simple and sensible. You really can't think of anything human outside of love, fame, power, or money. I then considered the relationship of love, fame, power, and money to the four character groups, the Doers, etc. Love is Duncan and Banquo who want the crown. Fame is Macbeth and Lady who want to win every game they play. Power is Macduff and Malcolm who finally triumph. Money is the Dark Powers who can change into anyone or anything. But the four basic motives

also equal each other. I made these equations: love=fame; fame=power; power=money; money=love ... round and round, ceaselessly, each becomes the others. I got dizzy repeating these, over and over until they became meaningless.

Meaningless and yet at the same time they penetrated to the heart of the work. We began to believe in them. Inside the Performing Garage, a small group was struggling for fame, power, love, and money. But it was all for nothing, make-believe. Mere exercises, rehearsals, improvisations, and games. At night, another struggle, the one that was *Dionysus in 69*. I began to feel bitter and betrayed by myself and the Group. A series of morbid and violent drawings appeared in my notebooks: weird mouths with sharp biting teeth, devouring mouths eating me. I was cracking up. In the middle of that, on March 13, 1969, I cast the play—according to the four basic groups. Interestingly, only the Dark Powers remained constant from the first casting through to the closing of *Makbeth* nearly a year later. Once Jason Bosseau, Richard Dia, and Joan MacIntosh had their hands on those roles, they held on tight. Every other grouping underwent change.

Looking back, I feel that there were many fine ideas in these improvisations that never got into the production. For example, we could have done *Makbeth* night after night as a series of antiphonals. Each night would be different with different leaders. That would have been an extraordinary experience. The question that I ask myself as I review these things is, why at a certain point did I not, as a director, say, “That’s our play”? Why did I say instead, “That’s not our play”? Perhaps the process making us act out within the Group the tensions of the play prevented us from being radical enough in the mise-en-scene. And, also, Shakespeare tyrannized me as he tyrannizes so many. I could not do Shakespeare; and I had a hard time undoing Shakespeare. How ironic, given that in *D69*, which we performed at night while workshopping *Makbeth* during the day, we did not “do Euripides.”

It’s not accidental that the Dark Powers remained constant. MacIntosh described her experience in playing a Dark Power as “exhilarating.” Free from the burden of acting in the conventional sense—she got very deep into the reality of the multiple actualities of being a Dark Power. As witch, servant, messenger, soldier, and other “small parts,” she had the freedom to explore the complex environmental theatre space, magically appearing and disappearing relatively unfettered. Priscilla Smith, in contrast, described her experience as Lady Makbeth like this:

The best example I can give is in the sleepwalking scene. We had no backstage so I had to die on stage. The device we came up with was that I would make a gesture of ripping open my wrists with my mouth and beating my hands on the floor. My hands became completely black and blue and my wrists had huge red splotches on them from the force with which I was making the gestures. The violence I did to myself indicates to me that there was an enormous amount of frustration building up behind the attempt to do this role. It was like constantly circling back into myself and I felt as if I couldn’t free myself, and get out of myself.

During the winter and early spring of 1969, the actions of the production became clearer. The Dark Powers play their amoral game. The Founders/Victims die. The Avengers want power, but are armed mostly with rhetoric. The Doers are reckless experimenters willing to try anything. At this point, I began to see how to put a script together—using our workshop-rehearsal process to make *Makbeth* from *Macbeth*. I asked myself and the others: What internal actions (motivations, desires)? What external actions (staging)? Specifically, who does scenes with whom? When?

What's the actual structure of each scene? How do we handle—attack, if you will—Shakespeare's text, the concrete immediacy of his language?

By this time we'd stopped doing physical work together—it was as if we were paralyzed. We went upstairs over the *Dionysus* playing space to our large rehearsal studio and divided into subgroups, each one jealous of the others, and all of them jealous of me, and angry. I've never felt so isolated, so paranoid, so consumed by people I was supposed to enjoy working with. I was in total rage and constant fear. With that head I began to work on the text.

I started constructing an actual script with the following game. I said to them all:

All of the text is yours, each of you. You can do anything you want with it, but you can't introduce any word that is not in the original text. But you can break Shakespeare's text up word by word, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph: anyway you want. If you're going to construct a new sentence, don't guess that a word in that sentence is somewhere in the text—know that the word is there. Before you start to construct scenes, you have to give me a list of your scenes and a list of your actions within each of those scenes.

Thus, we developed a long collection of possible scenes, texts, and actions. At one point, it seemed possible to perform *Makbeth* with a nightly random selection of scenes—either by having performers shout out what scenes would be played next, something like the antiphonals, or by drawing the scenes out of a hat: letting chance decide.

We worked for about two months collectively on the text. It was painful, difficult work, utterly frustrating. Our heads didn't work together as one. Some of the choices performers made I despised, but they were very wedded to what they had wrought. And I'm sure they didn't like a lot of what I brought in, or said about their work. From one perspective, this period was absolutely pointless because I was lazily laying on the performers what should have been my work as director, dramaturg, and stand-in for the author. And they, in turn, gave up their proper work—vocal, physical, and psychological. We lost touch with the root actions of the antiphonals; we never developed the random *Makbeth*. But from another viewpoint, the work was essential because we wrestled with Shakespeare's language from within, with the very sound of the phonemes. Everyone was also deeply concerned with meanings, relationships, progression of action, rhythms, images, etc. We learned to use Shakespeare's text as material, to take from it, turn it around, use it. In short, Shakespeare was de-mystified, stripped of his authority. He gave us words, we made scenes. But still we couldn't come up with a clear idea of the story. We had nothing to act.

We worked this way until April 29, when I came in with a whole new idea. "I understand the story now," I said. Duncan has four sons—Cawdor, Malcolm, Macduff, and Banquo—and they all want to kill him, or at least they recognize their impulses toward killing him. Cawdor has rebelled, and Duncan has his own son executed. Malcolm is ripe for rebellion and tries to get his brother Macduff to join him. Banquo, though innocent of plotting against Duncan, is not without ambition to found a line of kings. The Dark Powers seduce Banquo as well as Makbeth. Makbeth is the outsider, not of Duncan's blood. But he beats the sons to the punch. Duncan knows that his sons want to kill him, and he resigns himself to his fate.

I personally strongly identified with this plot. I saw reflections both of my own family and of the situation within The Performance Group. I have three brothers, two older and one younger,⁵ and especially when we were children we were very competitive. And there was a time in my

life when I struggled mightily against my father. At the same time, from when I departed for college in 1952, I distanced myself from my family. In my personal family story, I was Macduff or Makbeth. But within The Performance Group, I was Duncan. I knew that people were after my power, that my leadership was under constant challenge and threat. I identified at a deep and personal level with the story of the play as I had constructed it. This kind of identification-construction happens often with me when I direct.

As I was working on the structure of the script, I also began to play around with what the space would look like. As with all Performance Group productions, I started with the large empty cube that is the Performing Garage. I worked with Jerry Rojo⁶; we designed the whole space from scratch. Where would the audience be? Would they stay in place or move around? Where are the playing spaces? How would the action move? How many levels? We decided the focus would be a large table, the site of Makbeth's banquets. In contrast to this big flat open rectangle were cube-like structures and galleries, Makbeth's sense of being "cabin'd, cribb'd, and confined" (IV, 3, 26). A spiral staircase descended from a trap door in the ceiling leading down from the Performing Garage's second floor to the theatre. Spectators entered the theatre from the second floor, through a "*Makbeth Maze*," and then down the stairway into the main playing space. The Maze was designed and illustrated by theatre historian Brooks McNamara,⁷ at one time my colleague at NYU. McNamara's essay on "*The Makbeth Maze*" follows this introduction.

I outlined for Rojo and McNamara exactly what I needed for the production: a territorial space with one huge banquet table, an open area surrounded by closed-in cubicles or boxes. Places to hide and jump from, places to run to, places to look down from, places to peep out of. An environment with many posts suggesting a forest and high ceilings suggesting a throne room or palace. Working together through many conversations and rehearsals that Rojo and McNamara attended, making drawings and models, we finally came up with what we used, two spaces, *The Makbeth Maze* upstairs over the Performing Garage and the main playing space below. As spectators made their way through The Maze, they faced mirrors, ran into dead-ends, and saw bloody illustrations. They also saw models of the theatre and drawings of the *Makbeth* environment. They could read texts describing the historical and literary roots of the *Macbeth* story. And then, suddenly, a trap door and down a spiral staircase into the sparse, white-walled 50' × 40' × 20' space of unpainted wood rectangles dominated by a large table in the center. The space is at once abstract and suggestive of forests, castles, and secret places. Along one wall is an open concrete trench 35' × 8' × 6' deep where the Dark Powers lurk, sometimes hanging upside down like bats in a cave. Sound is well contained and propagated in this environment: performers can be heard from whispers to shouts.

By May 4 the performers and I worked out the nine large movements—in both the musical and action sense—of *Makbeth*:

1. One person, Duncan, has everything.
2. Cawdor rebels against his father Duncan.
3. Bargains are made between the Dark Powers and both Duncan and Lady Makbeth. We decided that the Dark Powers met secretly with both Lady Makbeth and Duncan, saying to Duncan: "What will you give us to knock off Makbeth who is truly a threat to you?" and to Lady Makbeth: "What will you give us to knock off Duncan who is the only person blocking Makbeth from the throne?"

4. The Dark Powers tempt Makbeth, Macduff, Malcolm, and Banquo. By tempting all the sons, each has a motive for patri-regicide.
5. The murder of Duncan.
6. The murder of Banquo.
7. The murder of Makbeth.
8. The murder of Macduff.
9. Malcolm's rule begins.

The structure of the play is the breakdown of the apparent tranquility of movement 1 where Duncan, the Primal Father, has everything. Movements 2, 3, and 4 are full of turmoil. Duncan's sons are tempted to rebel against their father. Movement 5 is the tipping point. Duncan is murdered, his primal power is released and scattered, like so many seeds, what in Greek tragedy is called a *sparagmos*. Movements 6, 7, and 8 is the bloody process of centralizing the power again in one person. Regicide leads to fratricide, murder becomes warfare. Movement 9 restores order as the king-to-be Malcolm states, "What's more to do, we will perform in measure, time, and place." This sequence of movements stuck as I worked to make the playing script printed here. Thus from the three possibilities the workshops offered—the antiphonal *Makbeth*, the playing of scenes in random order, and the nine-movement *Makbeth*—I chose the last, the most orderly and traditional option.

But *Makbeth* goes one scene beyond movement 9. As the Dark Powers put it in the final scene, "And to conclude, the victory fell on us."

This "us" is feminine. In *Makbeth's* patriarchal world, the feminine operates behind the scene, from underneath, in the guise of Lady Makbeth and the Dark Powers. Lady Makbeth fails because she aligns herself with Makbeth: her incarnadine hands are his. The Dark Powers succeed because they embody the energy and anger of the workers, soldiers, servants, and messengers.

During April and May 1969, we tried to write the script collectively, working four nights a week, five hours a night. Angers rose. We couldn't get very far. Finally at the start of the summer I said, "I'll write the play." Writing, the actual construction of sentences and scenes, is a private business that needs peace. The unity that had been built up in the workshops that led to *Dionysus in 69* fragmented. Maybe that unity was never there intrinsically; maybe it was all a function of the themes of *Dionysus*, and its success with the public. Anyway, working on *Makbeth* sprouted discontent. Everything positive about *Dionysus* was sucked up and turned into its opposite by *Makbeth*. Not only the struggles of making a production—that frequently occurs in theatre—but, even deeper, the way the story was working itself out inside the Group. I was Duncan, but a Duncan who would not lay down and die. I took the play home for June, July, and August. *Dionysus* closed at the end of July—not because attendance was falling but because it was over, that thing. In the summer, I didn't attend all the performances of *Dionysus* and gave few notes. I was absorbed in *Makbeth*. The Group took a vacation for August. We agreed to reconvene in September to perform *Dionysus* at the BITEF⁸ in Belgrade and, after that, to rehearse *Makbeth*—script in hand.

None of us had been to Yugoslavia⁹ before. After the performances of *Dionysus* in Belgrade we retreated to Baošići, a paradise on the Boka Katorska (now part of Montenegro), a deep beautiful bay not far from Dubrovnik (now part of Croatia). All this, years before the brutal wars that devastated the region. In Baošići we rented a house right on the Boka Katorska (bay). We could dive and swim in the pure Adriatic whenever. Bill Shephard, who played Malcolm in *Makbeth*,

practiced his bagpipes out in the middle of the bay, shrill beautiful Scots calls ricocheting across vineyards and olive groves.

The first two weeks in Baošići was rain. When the weather cleared, the Group remained stormy. Complaints from everywhere and everyone:

The water is too warm, no, it's too cold; they promised us a sailboat and we only got a rowboat;
Dubrovnik is two hours away, not one hour like they said; I spent 250 dinars on a meal not 150
like we were promised.

These petty grumbles were symptoms of deeper discontents, long building. Only now we had no New York City in which to vent them, only ourselves and the idyllic environment. Because we weren't able to confront each other—surprising considering all the training we'd had in group encounter therapy—we vented on the bay, the locals, our landlords, our hosts.

Amidst this, we began working with the text of *Makbeth* I'd put together. We rehearsed in an open pasture bordering a stream and a small woods. In the middle of the pasture was a huge tree. When the messenger came to tell Duncan of Makbeth's victory over Cawdor, he rushed across the woods to Duncan who stood under the big tree. The Dark Powers hung from branches of other trees in the woods. They called to Duncan and Makbeth, and to all passersby. At night the Dark Powers met secretly to conduct the affairs and ceremonies of their covenant. I never found out where they went or what they did. Malcolm and Macduff went off on their own into the middle of the Boka. England and Ireland were truly across rivers and seas. When Makbeth and Banquo roved the countryside there was a real countryside to rove through. How exciting to have done *Makbeth* in New York similarly, ranging from place to place with the audience following. But this was 1969, many years before the advent of peripatetic performances in western experimental theatre.¹⁰

After rehearsing in a quiet pasture in Yugoslavia, refining and memorizing the text so that environment, actions, and words meshed, we came back to noisy New York and the confines of The Performing Garage. We stepped into Jerry Rojo's brilliant environment, utterly different from the Baošići pasture. Rojo's space shocked and frightened me. I'd approved the design, seen the models. But Rojo's *Makbeth* environment was incommensurate with what we had made on the shore of the Boka Kotorska. I almost gave up, days in October when I said I couldn't go forward with the production. Then I realized Rojo was right, Baošići was wrong. The text I wrote indicates simultaneous scenes, hidden scenes, fast-moving scenes—a montage of very quick cuts—suited to the convulsive spaces Rojo gave us. What he couldn't give was time. We were scheduled to open in November. I turned to composer Paul Epstein's¹¹ brilliant creative approach to the text. Epstein's musical working of the text helped enormously. The Group pulled together, as theatre people do when faced with an opening.

The open rehearsals early in November were encouraging. Houses were full and spectators said that they were absorbed in the production, even if parts of it escaped them. *Makbeth* opened on November 21, 1969. The production did not achieve all it could have, but despite the terrible pressures within the Group and the difficulties of integrating the work in Baošići with the work in the New York environment, the production did many things well: a musically enunciated text, but not opera; swift action through space; effectively enacting murder, death, and doom. Clive Barnes in *The New York Times* and John Lahr in *The Village Voice* gave us reviews that brought in spectators. Then Walter Kerr obliterated the production in the *Sunday Times*.¹² Audiences fell off drastically. *Makbeth* closed in January 1970, less than two months after it opened.

Notes on Staging

Shakespeare's original texts have no stage directions; and even if they did, unless the production was on a thrust stage, they would be of little help. Finally, after all the work in Baošići, *Makbeth* was staged by me in the Rojo environment. If you don't do the play in that space, or a space very like it, my stage directions would not be useful.

I offer this advice: Don't be afraid of simultaneous or overlapping actions or scenes. For example, while Makbeth sits down to his banquet, the Dark Powers are murdering Banquo; while the Dark Powers carouse, Makbeth makes his way through Inverness to murder Duncan; during the first five scenes Lady Makbeth recites Makbeth's letter over and over, only speaking it with full voice in Scene 6. Music is omnipresent, ranging from formal melody to spoken cadences, from original songs to familiar religious and patriotic hymns. The music's a capella sonic structure is as important as the spatial environment. The two support each other: the mostly wood environment is used for stamping, knocking, marching, shuffling. The hollow large table is a drum. The way into the production is through its sounds, its music.

Although the play is divided into scenes, most of the time two or more scenes can be performed simultaneously in different areas of the environment—in front of, behind, over, and under the audience. For example, Duncan's murder. Lady Makbeth, standing at the center of the huge banquet table, is startled by a slight laugh from a Dark Power crouching near the sleeping Duncan. Lady's stifled cry is transformed into loud laughter by the other two Dark Powers carousing with Banquo high in a corner. Their laughter is transformed into a dream grunt by Duncan who, being spied on by the giggling Malcolm and Macduff, is told to "sshhhhh!" All this while Makbeth makes his way as quietly as he can to Duncan. The muffled sounds crescendo, then abruptly stop as Makbeth plunges his dagger into Duncan. Duncan's last sound is a laugh.

There are rules guiding the movement. Makbeth and Lady stay in the more open spaces at the start and then increasingly they are "cabin'd, cribb'd, and confined." Malcolm and Macduff move unhindered while Duncan is king but sneak around the periphery singing of their coming revenge when Makbeth wears the crown. The Dark Powers are always present. They go anywhere, varying from performance to performance. When not in a scene, they watch, spy, cast spells, giggle when things go their way because to them this tragedy is a farce. Duncan is laid in his grave so that his head, held in a net, hangs down through a hole in a platform. From below, spectators see Duncan's disembodied head; from above they see a headless corpse. Banquo is murdered in a place with many posts, like trees, his body slumping against a post. With leaps and darts from post to post as if dashing from tree to tree, Malcolm and Macduff advance on Dunsinane. The Rojo environment provides places to hide and jump from, to run to, to look down from and peep out of.

Costumes are color-coordinated jumpsuits, a unisex look. The Dark Powers in midnight blue, the Doers in dark red, the Founders/Victims in golden brown, and the Avengers in beige. Everyone wears boxer's shoes.

The only prop is the crown: a heavy, solid brass circle. The crown passes from Duncan to Makbeth to Malcolm, but fits none of them. Every character touches the crown. It's too heavy for Duncan. Makbeth likes to reach up and touch it, making sure it's still on his head. He adjusts it frequently because it doesn't fit. Macduff is afraid of it, yet he fiercely snatches it from dead Makbeth thrusting it into Malcolm's stomach the way a quarterback pushes the ball into a running back's gut. Malcolm accepts the crown hungrily, carefully situating it on his head. During the second banquet scene, the Dark Powers take it from Macbeth's head and play catch with it.

The Makbeth Maze¹³ by Brooks McNamara, Designer of the Maze

The *Makbeth* Maze is an attempt to apply some of the principles of environmental theatre to a space used only by the audience before the production. The result is not a “lobby.” It is an environment in which I have tried to explain and amplify the play with graphic material related to historical performances of *Macbeth* and to The Performance Group’s production.

I originally conceived the Maze as a series of corridors beneath a high platform in a corner of the first floor of The Performing Garage—it would be within the *Makbeth* environment. The audience was to pass through the corridors before entering the main space. Like the performance itself, the Maze was conceived of as a way to create a new organization of the *Macbeth* legend. I decided that the walls of the corridors would be a collage of information about the legend, previous performances of *Macbeth*, and the performance that was to take place in the main environment. I planned to fill the walls with blowup images and calligraphy: lines from the *Makbeth* script, historical documents connected with Shakespeare’s play, and prints and photographs suggesting relationships between *Makbeth* and the tradition out of which it came.

At first I placed less emphasis on the atmosphere created by the Maze and more on the possibilities that existed for it as a place in which to organize information in a special way. In an early model, I divided the space into three parallel corridors approximately 4’ wide and 12’ long. I covered the walls of the model with snapshots and newspaper clippings to suggest the blowups I intended to use in the actual Maze.

The model lacked interest.

I reworked it, keeping in mind a technique that I had tried before when I was designing an environment for a production of Kenneth Brown’s *The Brig* (see *Theatre Crafts*, November–December 1968). In the second version of the model, I turned the walls of the corridors into a number of boxes or compartments which were faced with glass and lit from the inside. The collages were to be applied to the back of the glass, the light shining through them from behind. The result was more interesting than the first model, but still seemed to lack vitality.

As the concept for the Maze continued to become more complex, it outgrew the space available under the 12’ × 12’ platform. We decided to move the Maze upstairs to a large room on the second floor of the Garage. Most of the space, which had served as a business office, dressing room, and rehearsal room during *Dionysus in 69*, was not needed during *Makbeth*. To use a part of this space for the Maze would mean an unusual route for the performance. Spectators would enter a door on Wooster Street, climb a narrow steep stairway, and arrive at a neutral lobby carved from a corner of the large room. After buying tickets in this lobby, spectators enter the Maze, wander through it at their own pace, and at the end of the Maze come to a lighted trapdoor in the floor. Entering the trap, they descend a twisting flight of stairs into the main environment. Moving the Maze meant a more expensive and complicated project. But as soon as I proposed it, everyone thought it worth the effort and money.

Before building the Maze, an idea came to me after spending a few minutes in a hall of mirrors at the Battersea Fun Fair in London. The walls of each chamber in the hall of mirrors were made up of 4’ × 8’ frames, some of which contained mirrors and other heavy sheets of plate glass. Still other frames were completely open, allowing movement from one compartment to another. Once inside the hall it was difficult to distinguish the door to an adjoining chamber from a glass wall or mirror. It seemed to me that something of the confusion of the hall of mirrors would give the Maze a life and complexity not present in the early models.

A second experience—a visit to the Chamber of Horrors at Mme. Tussaud's Wax Museum in London—suggested a further possibility. The light in the Chamber of Horrors is intentionally bad. The level of light in the room constantly changes and light sources are placed so that it is often difficult to see an exhibit clearly—most often the tableaux of torture and murder are half hidden in shadows. The result is that spectators and exhibits often seem to merge, with tableaux apparently coming to life. I decided that I wanted a similar effect in the Maze.

In the finished *Makbeth* Maze, the light-box walls disappeared and, instead of regular parallel corridors, I made a single L-shaped passage about 4' wide at its widest point and very irregular. Mirrors were placed on the walls to complicate the collage and blend the blowups and the calligraphy with the reflections of spectators passing through the Maze. The light, I decided, was to be nothing more than half a dozen low-wattage refrigerator bulbs in dime store aluminum reflectors, and the walls, where not covered by calligraphy, blowups, or mirrors, were flat black, as were the floor and ceiling, which was made of black cloth stretched into irregular peaks.

The result is frankly disorienting. Walls turn into mirrors, and mirrors into walls. Spectators bump into each other and excuse themselves for having jostled what turn out to be only reflections, and the audience is to some degree joined with the distorted and reorganized fragments of the *Macbeth* legend. Going through the Maze and descending into the main space, they are ready for what The Performance Group brings them.

Makbeth, After Shakespeare

Production

Director	Richard Schechner
Environment	Jerry Rojo
<i>Makbeth</i> Maze	Brooks McNamara
Music	Paul Epstein
Lighting	Jerry Rojo
Costumes	Jerry Rojo, Lewis Rampino
Stage managers	Vicki Strang, Catherine Farinon
General managers	Robert P Cohen, Philip Phelan

Performers

Dark Power 1	Richard Dia
Dark Power 2	Joan MacIntosh
Dark Power 3	Jason Bosseau
Makbeth	William Finley
Lady Makbeth	Ciel (Priscilla) Smith
Duncan	Tom Crawley
Banquo	Remi Barclay
Macduff	Stephen Borst
Malcolm	William Shephard, later Spalding Gray

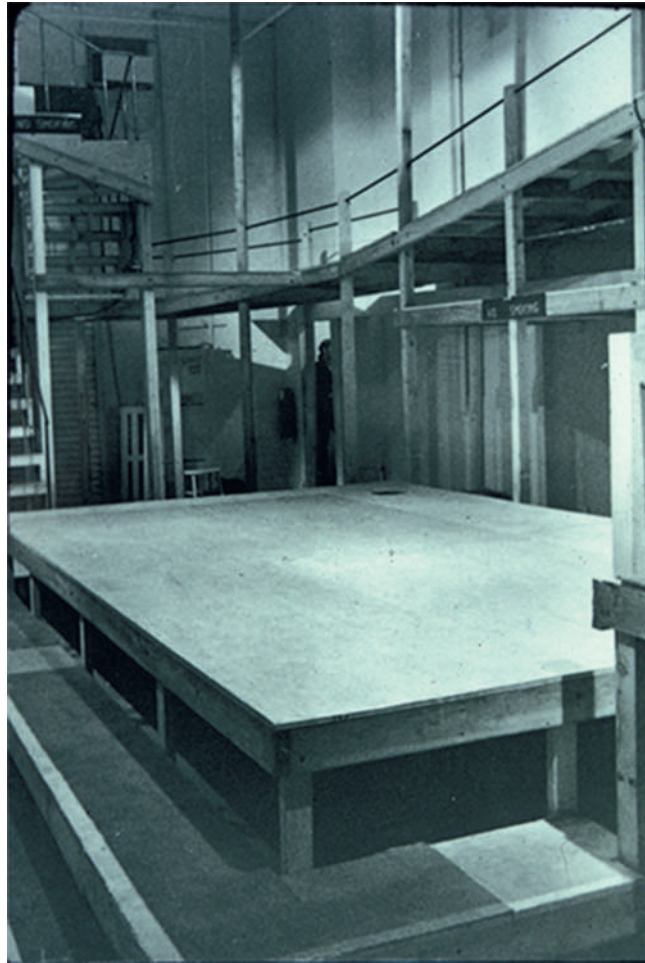


FIGURE 7.1: The large table at the center of the *Makbeth* environment designed by Jerry Rojo. The Performing Garage, New York, 1969. Photograph: Frederick Eberstadt.

Throughout, from before the first spectator enters, the DARK POWERS own the space: roaming, watching, spying, conferring quietly with each other, planning who knows what. Nothing escapes their notice. The DARK POWERS are not only Shakespeare's witches but also all the "unnamed" and/or "minor" roles. The DARK POWERS set the tone of the performance. Once they are murdered, DUNCAN and BANQUO, as ghosts, roam and watch.

Prelude**MUSIC NO. 1.**

The music can be found after the play, unpaginated but in effect pages 300-19.

1

DUNCAN: What bloody man is that?
 MALCOLM: My countryman, but I know him not.
 DUNCAN: What a haste looks through his eyes. He can report the newest state of the revolt.
 MALCOLM: Where do you come from? Your story quickly.

DARK POWER 1 *as messenger*:

From Fife, where Cawdor, your son, wanting your crown, began a terrible conflict. But all's too weak for brave Makbeth. He confronted Cawdor, point against point, arm against arm. His steel smoked with bloody execution.

DUNCAN: Sons, I hope the days are near at hand that chambers will be safe.
 DARK POWER 1: Mark, King of Scotland, mark. No sooner had justice compelled these rebels to trust their heels but Cawdor found arms and new supplies of men and began a fresh assault.
 DUNCAN: Did this not dismay Makbeth?
 DARK POWER 1: Yes, as sparrows eagles. He was as cannons overcharged with double cracks, so he doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe. He meant to bathe in reeking wounds or memorize another Golgotha, I cannot tell. And to conclude, the victory fell on us.
 DUNCAN: No more shall that Thane of Cawdor deceive me. Go and pronounce his death and with his former title greet Makbeth.
 DARK POWER 1: I'll see it done.
 MALCOLM: I doubt it not. As thick as waves comes post with post and every one bears Makbeth's praises. God save the King.

2

DARK POWER 1: Round about the cauldron go.
 DARK POWER 2: A drum, a drum! Makbeth doth come.

ALL DARK POWERS:

MUSIC NO. 2.

I will drain him dry as hay.
 Sleep shall neither night nor day

Hang upon his penthouse lid.
He shall live a man forbid.
Weary seven nights, nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.
Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-toss'd.

BANQUO: So foul and fair a day I have not seen. How far is it to Inverness?
DARK POWER 3: Makbeth, Makbeth, all hail, Makbeth!
DARK POWER 1 & 2: Hail, Makbeth!
DARK POWER 3: Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!
DARK POWER 2: All hail, Makbeth!
DARK POWER 1 & 3: Hail, Makbeth!
DARK POWER 2: Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!
DARK POWER 1: All hail, Makbeth!
ALL: Hail, Makbeth!
DARK POWER 1: That shalt be King hereafter!
DARK POWER 3: I see the thane of Glamis.
DARK POWER 1: I see the Thane of Cawdor.
DARK POWER 2: I see the King. King Makbeth!

ALL DARK POWERS *in overlapping sequence*:
King Makbeth, King Makbeth!

BANQUO: To me you speak not. If you can look into the seeds of time and say
which grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me.
DARK POWER 1: Lesser than Makbeth, and greater.
DARK POWER 2: Not so happy, yet much happier.
DARK POWER 3: Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
MAKBETH: Stay, you imperfect speakers! Tell me more! By Sinel's death I know
I am Thane of Glamis. But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor
lives. And to be King stands not within the prospect of belief. No
more than to be Cawdor. Say from where you owe this intelligence,
or why you stop our way here with such prophetic greeting! Speak!
I order you, speak!

DARK POWERS *vanish*.

BANQUO: Where have they gone?
MAKBETH: As breath into the wind. I wish they had stayed!
BANQUO: Were such things here as we do speak about? Or have we eaten on
the insane root that takes the reason prisoner?
MAKBETH: Your children shall be kings.
BANQUO: You shall be King.
MAKBETH: And Thane of Cawdor too. Went it not so?
BANQUO: To the selfsame tune and words.

DARK POWER 1 *as messenger*:
Makbeth.

BANQUO: Who's here?
 DARK POWER 1: I am sent by the King to greet you Thane of Cawdor.
 MAKBETH: The Thane of Cawdor lives. Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?
 DARK POWER 1: Who was the Thane lives under heavy judgment for his life. Treasons capital, confessed, and proved have overthrown him.
 BANQUO: New honors come upon you.
 MAKBETH: Glamis and Thane of Cawdor. The greatest is behind.
 DARK POWER 1: Two truths are told as prologues to the swelling act of the imperial theme. I thank you, gentlemen.
 MAKBETH: This prophetic soliciting cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill, why has it given me earnest of success commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor. If good, why do I yield to that suggestion whose horrid image makes my heart knock at my ribs?

3

DUNCAN: I wish the friends we miss were safe arrived.
 MALCOLM: Some must die. And yet I see so great a day as this is cheaply bought.
 DUNCAN: Macduff, is execution done on Cawdor? Are those in commission yet returned?
 MACDUFF: They have not yet come back.
 DUNCAN: Swiftly send after them. There's no mercy left if I let Cawdor hang.
 MALCOLM: Father, I have spoken with one that saw him die. Very frankly he confessed his treasons, implored your Highness's pardon, and set forth a deep repentance. Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it.
 DUNCAN: Then he is dead?
 MALCOLM: Your son, my lord, has paid his score. He threw away the dearest thing he owned as 'twere a careless trifle.
 DUNCAN: He was a man on whom I built an absolute trust.
 MALCOLM: Your sorrow must not be measured by his worth.
 DUNCAN: I have lived long enough. My way of life is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf. And that which should accompany old age, as honor, love, obedience, troops of friends, I must not look to have.
 MACDUFF: Worthy Father, you break your strength to think so brainsickly of things.
 DUNCAN: Let us seek out some desolate shade and there weep our sad bosoms empty.
 MALCOLM: What's your gracious pleasure?
 DUNCAN: What news more?
 MACDUFF: All is confirmed my lord, which was reported.

4

DARK POWERS as *three countrymen*.

DARK POWER 3: What is a traitor?
 DARK POWER 2: Why one that swears and lies.
 DARK POWER 3: And be all traitors that do so?
 DARK POWER 2: Every one that does so is a traitor and must be hanged.
 DARK POWER 3: And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?
 DARK POWER 2: Every one.
 DARK POWER 3: Who must hang them
 DARK POWER 2: Why the honest men.

5

MALCOLM: Macduff, let us speak our free hearts to each other.
 MACDUFF: Very gladly.
 MALCOLM: Our royal father has no relish of the king-becoming graces as stableness, perseverance, courage, fortitude.
 MACDUFF: Our father is a most sainted king. Sundry blessings hang about his throne.
 MALCOLM: My dearest brother, school yourself: Duncan is a weak, poor, innocent lamb. If such a one be fit to govern, speak.
 MACDUFF: I think, but dare not speak.
 MALCOLM: Then listen more. Under Duncan my genius is rebuked. And were I King you could convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty. Fear not to take what is yours.
 MACDUFF: But 'tis most likely the sovereignty will fall on Makbeth.
 MALCOLM: I think there would be hands uplifted in my right. And though I could with barefaced power sweep Duncan from my sight, I must not, but wail his fall. Thus it is to your assistance I do make love. What cannot you and I perform upon the unguarded Duncan?
 MACDUFF: I am not treacherous. I would not be the villain thou thinkst for the whole of Scotland and the rich East to boot.
 MALCOLM: Be not offended, child of integrity. Why are you silent?
 MACDUFF: Such welcome and unwelcome things at once, 'tis had to reconcile.

MUSIC NO. 3.

6

MUSIC NO. 4.

LADY MAKBETH: "They met me in the day of success; and I have learned they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question

them further, they made themselves air into which they vanished. While I stood rapt in the wonder of it, a messenger came from the King who hailed me Thane of Cawdor ...

DARK POWER 2: The King comes here tonight.

LADY MAKBETH: Thou'rt mad to say it.

DARK POWER 2: So please you, it is true.

LADY MAKBETH: Come you spirits, unsex me here, and fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full of direst cruelty. Make my blood thick. Stop up the access and passage to remorse.

DARK POWER 3: O, well done! I commend your pains.

LADY MAKBETH: Come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall. Come, thick night, and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, that my keen knife see not the wound it makes nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark to cry, "Hold, hold!"

DARK POWER 2: Look to the lady.

DARK POWER 3: Peace, the charm's wound up.

LADY MAKBETH:

... and referred me to the coming on of time with "Hail, King that shalt be!" This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing by being ignorant of what is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.

7

BANQUO: Father, if you would grant the time, a heavy summons lies like lead upon me. Terrible dreams shake me nightly. Makbeth is greeted with great predictions. The people hail him King.

DUNCAN: Is it not likely the crown will come to Makbeth?

BANQUO: Beware Makbeth. Makbeth will perform murder and treason. The time approaches that thou shalt wear twenty trenched gashes on thy crown.

DUNCAN: If your speech is true, there is no tarrying here. Let us go to Inverness, there to meet with Makbeth. He shall pay his breath to time and custom.

BANQUO: Have you forgot the taste of fears?

DUNCAN: I am so weary with disasters, tugged with fortune, that I would set my life on any chance: to mend it or be rid of it.

8

LADY MAKBETH: Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor! Greater than both by the all-hail hereafter! Thy letter has transported me beyond this ignorant present, and I feel now the future in the instant.

MAKBETH: My dearest love, Duncan comes here tonight.
LADY MAKBETH: And when goes hence?
MAKBETH: Tomorrow, as he purposes.
LADY MAKBETH: O, never shall sun that morrow see. Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be what thou art promised. Yet I fear your nature. It is too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way. You would be great. You are not without ambition, but without the illness that should attend it.
MAKBETH: If chance will have me King, why chance may crown me without my stir.
LADY MAKBETH: Come, let me pour my spirits in thine ear. Let me chastise with my tongue all that impedes thee from the golden round which fate and metaphysical aid seem to have thee crowned with.
MAKBETH: The eye wink at the hand?
LADY MAKBETH: Thus thou must do, if you will have it: Bear welcome in your eye, your hand, your tongue. Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it. Put this night's great business into my dispatch. He that's coming must be provided for.

9

MALCOLM: This castle hath a pleasant seat. The air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself to our gentle senses.
DUNCAN: I have observed: the air is delicate. Where's the Thane of Cawdor?

MAKBETH *to* LADY MAKBETH:
We will speak further.

LADY MAKBETH *greeting Duncan*:
This way, my lord. The day is yours and there is little to do.

DUNCAN: He rides well, and his great love, sharp as his spur, hath helped him to his home before us.
LADY MAKBETH: All our service in every point twice done, and then done double, were poor compared to those honors deep and broad wherewith your Majesty loads our house.

MAKBETH *calling to them*:
Come in, out there.

DUNCAN: Give me your hand. Conduct me to my host. We love him highly and shall continue our graces towards him.
LADY MAKBETH: Enter, sir, the castle. Here's our chief guest.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

MAKBETH: If he had been forgotten, it had been a gap in our great feast.
DUNCAN: We are your guest tonight.
MAKBETH: Tonight we hold a solemn supper, sir, and I'll request your presence.
DUNCAN: Let the lady command me, to the which my duties are with a most indissoluble tie forever knit.
MAKBETH: Ride you this afternoon?
DUNCAN: Ay.
MAKBETH: Is it far you ride?
DUNCAN: As far as will fill up the time between now and supper. Go not my horse the better, I must become a borrower of the night for a dark hour or two.
LADY MAKBETH: Fail not our feast.
DUNCAN: I will not.

10

DARK POWERS *as countrymen.*

DARK POWER 2: I have seen hours dreadful and things strange. But this sore day trifles former knowings.
DARK POWER 1: The heavens, troubled with man's act, threatens his bloody stage. By the clock 'tis day and yet dark night strangles the sun. O'er the one half world nature seems dead and wicked dreams abuse the curtained sleep.
DARK POWER 2: 'Tis unnatural. Last Tuesday a falcon, towering in her pride, was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.
DARK POWER 1: And Duncan's horses, beauteous and swift, the minions of their race, turned wild, broke from their stalls, flung out, contending against obedience as they would make war with mankind.
DARK POWER 2: 'Tis said they eat each other.

11

MACDUFF: Besides, this Duncan has borne his faculties so meek, has been so clear in his great office, that his virtues will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against the untimely emptying of his throne.
MALCOLM: You have loved him well. He has not touched you yet. But do you find patience so predominant in your nature that you can let this chance go?
MACDUFF: I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent.
MALCOLM: Only vaulting ambition.
MACDUFF: Why do I yield to your suggestion whose horrid images make my heart knock at my ribs?
MALCOLM: Duncan is ripe for shaking. Leave all the rest to me.

12

MUSIC NO. 5. First Banquet.

DARK POWERS: I'll charm the air to give a sound
While you perform your antic round,
That this great King may kindly say
Our duties did his welcoming pay.
MAKBETH: What's the news?
LADY MAKBETH: He has almost supped. Why have you left the table?
MAKBETH: Has he asked for me?
LADY MAKBETH: You know he has.
MAKBETH: Go back.

13

DUNCAN: Sons, kinsmen, thanes, and you whose places are the nearest, know we
will establish our estate upon our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name the
Prince Cumberland. What's more to do we will perform in measure,
time, and place. My thanes and kinsmen, we shall not spend a large
expense of time before we reckon with your several loves.
MALCOLM: Hail, King! Hail, King of Scotland!
ALL: Hail, King of Scotland!

14

MAKBETH *with* LADY MAKBETH *apart from the banquet*:
Bring me no more reports! What's the boy Malcolm? But the Prince of Cumberland! That is a
step on which I must fall down or else o'erleap, for it lies in my way.
LADY MAKBETH: When Duncan is asleep his two chamberlains will I with wine and wassail
so convince that memory shall be a fume. When in swinish sleep their
drenched natures lie as in a death, what cannot you and I perform upon
the unguarded Duncan? What not put upon his spongy officers who
shall bear the guilt of our great kill?
MAKBETH: Let us toward the king.

15

DUNCAN is being murdered while a drunken party is going on. Scene 15 is played simultaneously with scenes 16 through 22. The director decides how much of the scene is heard by the entire audience, by some, or by few. While the meaning of some lines is horrific, many are spoken raucously. DARK POWER 1 goes among the spectators and whispers lines to individuals. DARK POWERS 2 and 3 weave in and out of the drunken party.

DARK POWER 1: We are full of strange images of death! **** Bleed, bleed, poor country. **** Untie the winds and let them fight against the churches. Confound and swallow navigation up. Bladed corn be ledged and trees blown down. Castles topple to their foundations. The treasure of nature tumble all together till destruction sicken. **** Come, high or low. **** From this moment the very



FIGURE 7.2: The Dark Powers hold Makbeth down on his own banquet table. From left to right, Richard Dia/Dark Power 1, William Finley/Makbeth, Jason Bosseau/Dark Power 3, and Joan MacIntosh/Dark Power 2. The Performing Garage, New York, 1969. Photograph: Frederick Eberstadt.

firstlings of my heart shall be the firstlings of my hand. **** This my hand will the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red. **** Each new morn new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven on the face. **** Give me your hand. **** O, never shall sun that morrow see. **** Blow the horrid deed in every eye. **** Art thou afeard to be the same in act and valor as thou art in desire? **** Fears and scruples shake us. **** In the great hand of God I stand. **** Better be with the dead. **** It will have blood, they say, blood will have blood. Stones have been known to move and trees to speak. **** What is the night?

DARK POWER 3: Sleep no more. You shall all murder sleep. Duncan, Banquo, Lady Makbeth, Makbeth, Macduff, Malcolm, all, you shall all sleep no more.
DARK POWER 2: I laugh to scorn the power of man. Revenges burn in me. I have words that would be howled out in the desert air. Why what care I that the good things of day begin to droop and drowse while night's black agents to their preys do rouse?

DARK POWER 3: I am one whom the blows and buffets of the world has so incensed that I am reckless what I do to spite the world.
DARK POWER 2: And I a servant who, doing but what I should, do everything.
DARK POWER 3: I am a man.
DARK POWER 2: Ay, in the catalogue you go for a man—as hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, sloughs, water-bugs, and demi-wolves are clept all by the name of dogs. The file distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle, the housekeeper, the hunter, everyone according to nature's gift.
DARK POWER 3: I bear a charmed life.

DARK POWER 3: Come, let me clutch thee. Give me your hand. The eye wink at the hand. Come, let me pluck out thine eyes. Come. Come. Come.
DARK POWER 2: There's no bottom, none in my voluptuousness. No one can fill up the cistern of my lust. O, I could play the woman with mine eyes and brag-gart with my tongue!
DARK POWER 3: Come. Come. Come. Come.
DARK POWER 2: I will be satisfied.

DARK POWER 2: I grant her luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful, sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin that has a name.

DARK POWER 3: Justice, verity, temperance, stableness, bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness, devotion, patience, courage, fortitude, I have no relish of them, but abound in the division of each several crime, acting it many ways.

16

MALCOLM: How goes the night?
 MACDUFF: The moon is down. I have not heard the clock.
 MALCOLM: And she goes down at twelve.
 MACDUFF: I take 'tis later.
 MALCOLM: Well, then, have you considered my former speeches?
 MACDUFF: They have hit my thoughts: you shall be King.
 MALCOLM: Hush, no more.

17

MAKBETH:
 If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well. It were done quickly if the assassination could trammel up the consequences and catch, with his surcease, success. But in these cases we still have judgment here. We but teach bloody instructions, which, being taught, return to plague the inventor. This even-handed justice commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice to our own lips. He's here in double trust. First, I am his kinsman and his subject, both strong against the deed. Then, as his host, I should shut the door against his murderers, not beat the knife myself.

18

MALCOLM: The King's abed. He has been in unusual pleasure.
 MACDUFF: It will rain tonight.
 MALCOLM: Let it come down.

19

BANQUO: Father, I dreamt last night of the three Weird Sisters.
 DUNCAN: Come, let me enfold thee. Think not of them.
 BANQUO: They said that though I would be no king I would be the root and father of many kings.
 DUNCAN: Often the instruments of darkness tell us truths. Why do you start and seem to fear things that sound so fair?
 BANQUO: I am afraid of what I might do.
 DUNCAN: Are you afraid like Makbeth?
 BANQUO: Can I tell ambition it lies and sleeps in spite of thunder?

DUNCAN: Answer me: Are you like Makbeth?
 BANQUO: I want to be King.
 DUNCAN: O, then be lion-mettled. Find what 'twere to kill a father!
 BANQUO: Restrain in me these cursed thoughts! Father, canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?
 DUNCAN: Therein the patient must minister to himself. Dearest chuck, sleek o'er your rugged looks. I am not afraid of you. Go to Makbeth, greet his Lady with this diamond. Call her by the name of most kind hostess.
 BANQUO: Good repose the while, Father.
 DUNCAN: Dear Banquo: Duncan is in his grave. After life's fitful fever he sleeps well. Treason has done his worst. Nor steel, nor poison, malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further.
 BANQUO: Farewell, Father. Let your remembrance apply to Banquo.

20

MAKBETH: We will go no further in this business! He has honored me of late and I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people which should be worn now in their newest gloss, not cast aside so soon.
 LADY MAKBETH: Was the hope drunk wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since? And wakes it now to look so green and pale? From this time such I account your love. Are you afraid to be the same in act and valor as you are in desire? Would you have that which you esteem the ornament of life and live a coward in thine own esteem?
 MAKBETH: Peace! I dare do all that may become a man!
 LADY MAKBETH: Who dares not to do more is none!
 MAKBETH: O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
 LADY MAKBETH: What beast was it then that made you break this enterprise to me? I have given suck and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me. But I would, while it was smiling in my face, pluck my nipple from his boneless gums and dash the brains out had I so sworn as you have done to this.
 MAKBETH: And if we should fail?
 LADY MAKBETH: We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking place and we'll not fail.
 BANQUO: What, sir, not yet at rest? The King's abed. This diamond he greets your wife with and calls her by the name of most kind hostess. He is shut up in measureless content.
 MAKBETH: All's well.

21

MUSIC NO. 6, *continuing through scene 23.*

MAKBETH: Go, and when my drink is ready, strike upon the bell.

DARK POWER 3: Round about the cauldron go.

MAKBETH:

Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee! I have thee not and yet I see thee still. Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible to feeling as to sight? Or art thou but a dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going, and such an instrument I am to use. I see thee still, and on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood. Now, over half the world nature seems dead, and witchcraft celebrates murder. Sure and firm-set earth, hear not my steps which way they walk, for I fear the very stones prate of my coming.

A bell strikes two times.

I go, and it is done.

LADY MAKBETH: He is about it. The doors are open.

MAKBETH: Who's there? What! Who?

LADY MAKBETH: I am afraid 'tis not done. The attempt confounds us. I laid the daggers ready. He could not miss them. The surfeited grooms mock their charge with snores. That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold. What hath quenched them hath given me fire. Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it.

DARK POWER 1: Be bloody, bold, and resolute.

LADY MAKBETH: My husband?

MAKBETH *murders* DUNCAN.

22

MACDUFF *in his sleep*: Murder!

MALCOLM: God bless us.

MACDUFF: Amen.

23

MUSIC NO. 7.

MAKBETH: I have done the deed. Did you hear a noise?

LADY MAKBETH: I heard the owl scream.

MAKBETH: Did you not speak?

LADY MAKBETH: When?

MAKBETH: Now. As I descended.

LADY MAKBETH: Ay.

MAKBETH: Listen! Who lies in the second chamber?

LADY MAKBETH: Malcolm.

MAKBETH *looks at his bloody hands*:
This is a sorry sight.

LADY MAKBETH: A foolish thought to say a sorry sight.
MAKBETH: There's one did laugh in his sleep and one cried, "Murder!" that they did wake each other. I stood and heard them. But they said their prayers and went to sleep again.

LADY MAKBETH: Malcolm and Macduff are lodged together.
MAKBETH: One cried "God bless us!" and "Amen" the other. As if they had seen me with these hangman's hands. I could not say "Amen" when they said "God bless us."

LADY MAKBETH: Consider it not so deeply.
MAKBETH: But why couldn't I pronounce "Amen"? I had most need of blessing and "Amen" stuck in my throat.

LADY MAKBETH: These deeds must not be thought out these ways. It will make us mad.
MAKBETH: I thought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more! Makbeth does murder sleep." The innocent sleep, sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care, the death of each day's life, sore labor's bath, balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast.

LADY MAKBETH: This is the very painting of your fear.
MAKBETH: Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house. "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more. Makbeth shall sleep no more."

LADY MAKBETH: Go get some water and wash this filthy witness from your hand. Why did you bring these daggers from the place? They must lie there. Go carry them and smear the sleepy grooms with blood.

MAKBETH: I'll go no more. I am afraid to think what I have done. Look on it again I dare not.

LADY MAKBETH: Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil. If he's still bleeding, I'll gild the faces of the grooms with blood, for it must seem their guilt.

MAKBETH: What's that knocking? How is it with me when every noise appalls me? What hands are here? They pluck out mine eyes! Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red.

LADY MAKBETH: My hands are of your color, but I shame to wear a heart so white. I hear a knocking at the south entry. Retire we to our chamber. A little water clears us of this deed. How easy it is then.

24

DARK POWER 3: Here's a knocking indeed. If a man were Porter of Hell Gate he should have enough turning of the key. Knock, knock, knock. Who's there, in the name of the everlasting fever? Here's a sleepwalker who poured foul whisperings into every ear. Come in, sleepwalker, here your eyes will stay open.

DARK POWER 2: Who's there in the name of carousing? Here's a liar who committed treason enough for his country's sake, yet could not lie himself into heaven. O, give me your hand, liar, and I'll take you to bed.

DARK POWER 1: I believe carousing gave you the lie last night.

DARK POWER 3: O, yes it did, in the very throat of the King.

DARK POWER 2: The night has been unruly. Is Makbeth stirring?

DARK POWER 1: He grows worse and worse.

25

MALCOLM: Here lay Duncan, his silver skin laced with his golden blood, and his gashed stabs looking like a breach in nature. Approach the chamber and destroy your sight.

MACDUFF: Most sacrilegious murder.

26

BANQUO: Is the King stirring?

MAKBETH: Not yet.

BANQUO: He commanded me to call timely on him. I have almost slipped the hour.

MAKBETH: I'll bring you to him.

BANQUO: I know this is a joyful trouble to you.

MAKBETH: The labor we delight in cures pain.

BANQUO: I dreamt last night of the three Weird Sisters. To you they have showed some truth.

MAKBETH: I think not of them. Here's the door.

BANQUO *exits*.

DARK POWER 1 *as attendant*:
Goes the King hence today?

MAKBETH: He does. He did appoint so.

DARK POWER 1: Where we lay our chimneys were blown down. And lamentings heard in the air, strange screams of death and prophesying of confused events. Some say the earth was feverous and did shake.

MAKBETH: It was a rough night.

27

MALCOLM: Let us put on manly readiness and meet in the hall. This murderous shaft that's shot hath not yet lighted, and our safest way is to avoid the aim. Our separated fortunes shall keep us both the safer. Therefore to horse! And let us not be dainty of leave-taking.

MACDUFF: Shift away.

28

BANQUO: O, horror, horror, horror!

DARK POWER 2 *as attendant*:
What's the matter?

BANQUO: Confusion now has made his masterpiece! Awake! Awake!

DARK POWER 2: You mean his Majesty?

BANQUO: Murder! Murder! Ring the alarm bell! Murder and treason! Malcolm and Macduff, awake! Shake off sleep and look on death! Up, up, and see the great doom's image! Malcolm, Macduff, as from your graves, rise up! Ring the bell!

LADY MAKBETH: What's the business that such a hideous trumpet calls us? Speak, speak!

BANQUO: O, gentle lady, it is not for you to hear what I can say. O, Duff, Duff, our royal Father is murdered!

MACDUFF: Dear Banquo, contradict yourself. Say it is not so.

MALCOLM: What's amiss?

BANQUO: You are and do not know it.

MACDUFF: Our royal Father is murdered.

LADY MAKBETH: What, in my house?

MALCOLM: Oh? By whom?

BANQUO: Why do we hold our tongues?

MACDUFF: What should be spoken here? Let's away. Our tears are not yet brewed.

MALCOLM: And when we have hid our naked frailties, let us meet and question this most bloody piece of work. What will you do now?

MACDUFF: I'll to Ireland.

MALCOLM: To England, I.

29

DARK POWERS *as citizens*.

DARK POWER 1: Where's Duncan's body?

DARK POWER 3: Carried to Colmekill, the sacred storehouse of his predecessors and guardian of their bones.
 DARK POWER 1: 'Tis most likely the crown will come to Makbeth.
 DARK POWER 2: He's already on his way to Scone to be crowned.
 DARK POWER 1: Will you to Colmekill?
 DARK POWER 3: No, brother, I'll to Scone.
 DARK POWER 1: Well, together then.

MUSIC NO. 8.**30****MUSIC NO. 9.**

LADY MAKBETH: Hail, King. Hail, King of Scotland!
 ALL: Hail, King of Scotland!
 BANQUO: You have it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all. And I fear you played most foully for it.
 MAKBETH: You chid the sisters when first they put the name of King upon me and bade them speak to you. Then they hailed you father to a line of kings.
 BANQUO: If truth come from them, as upon thee, Makbeth, their speeches shine, may they not be my oracles as well and set me up in hope?
 MAKBETH: I have no children. Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown and put a barren scepter in my grip.
 BANQUO: Answer me what I ask you.
 MAKBETH: Demand, I'll answer.
 BANQUO: Shall Banquo's children ever reign in this kingdom?
 MAKBETH: Our fears of you stick deep, and in your royalty of nature reigns that which should be feared. I did not murder Duncan for your children. I did not do that to make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings.
 BANQUO: God above deal between thee and me.
 MAKBETH: You marvel at my words? Banquo and his Fleance live. But they are assailable.
 BANQUO: There's blood on thy face.
 MAKBETH: 'Tis Banquo's then.

31

MAKBETH: Both of you know Banquo is your enemy?
 DARK POWER 3 *as murderer*:
 True, my lord.
 MAKBETH: So he is mine.

DARK POWER 2 *as murderer*:

We are your men, my liege.

MAKBETH: Within this hour at most plant yourselves. Kill your enemy. It must be done tonight.

DARK POWER 2: We are resolved, my lord.

MAKBETH: I require a clearness. To leave no rubs nor botches in the work, Fleance his son must embrace the fate of that dark hour.

DARK POWER 3: We shall perform what you command, my liege.

32

LADY MAKBETH: Is Banquo gone from court?

DARK POWER 2 *as attendant*:

Ay, madam, but returns again tonight.

LADY MAKBETH: And you say that Macduff denies his person at our great banquet?

DARK POWER 2: Did you send to him, madam?

LADY MAKBETH: I did. But he, with an absolute “No, not I,” turns his back on my messenger and hums. Macduff is fled to Ireland.

DARK POWER 2: You must have patience, madam.

LADY MAKBETH: Say to the King I would say a few words to him.

DARK POWER 2: Madam, I will.

33

LADY MAKBETH: What is it, my love? Why do you keep alone using those thoughts that should have died with them they think on? Things without remedy should be without regard. What’s done is done.

MAKBETH: We’ve scotched the snake, not killed it. She’ll soon be herself again. We eat our meals in fear and sleep afflicted by these terrible dreams that shake us nightly.

LADY MAKBETH: Come on, my husband, sleep o’er your rugged looks. Be bright and jovial among our guests tonight.

MAKBETH: I shall, my love, and so, I pray, be you. Be kind to Banquo. Present him eminence both with eye and tongue. We must lave honors on him in flattering streams and make our faces mask our hearts.

LADY MAKBETH: You must leave this.

MAKBETH: You know that Banquo and his Fleance live!

LADY MAKBETH: What’s to be done?

MAKBETH: Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, till thou applaud the deed.

LADY MAKBETH: Our desire is got without content. ‘Tis safer to be that which we destroy.

MAKBETH: There shall be done a deed of dreadful note. Come, seeling night, scarf up the tender eye of day and with thy bloody and invisible hand cancel and tear to pieces that great bond which keeps me pale!

LADY MAKBETH: I fear our old robes sit easier than our new. But, come, husband, our guests wait for us.

34

DARK POWER 3 *as murderer*: Who bid thee join us?
 DARK POWER 2 *as murderer*: Makbeth.
 DARK POWER 3: He needs not our mistrust.
 DARK POWER 1 *as murderer*: Stand with us.
 DARK POWER 3: I hear horses.
 DARK POWER 2: 'Tis he.

They murder BANQUO.

MAKBETH: Thou canst not say I did it!

35

MUSIC NO. 10.

MALCOLM *and* MACDUFF *singing behind entire scene*:

Patience, devotion,
 And perseverance,
 And fortitude.
 Industrious soldiership,
 Our pow'r is ready.
 The days are near at hand;
 Advance the war!

MAKBETH:
 You know your places. Sit down, and a hearty welcome.

ALL: Thanks to your Majesty. Thanks to the Queen.
 LADY MAKBETH: To all our friends, my heart speaks welcome.
 MAKBETH: I'll sit here in the midst. Be large in mirth and soon we'll drink a measure the table round.
 LADY MAKBETH: I drink to Banquo who is not present. May I challenge him for unkindness rather than pity him for mischance!
 MAKBETH: His absence, Queen, lays blame upon his promise to share our feast.

Draws DARK POWER 3 apart.

DARK POWER 3 *as murderer*:

My liege, Banquo's throat is cut. That I did for him.

MAKBETH: Thou art the best of the cutthroats. Yet he's as good that did the like for Fleance.

DARK POWER 3: Most royal sir, Fleance escaped.

MAKBETH: Then comes my fit again. I had else been perfect, whole as marble, founded as the rock. Now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in to doubts and fears.

LADY MAKBETH: My royal lord, you do not give the cheer. Meeting is bare without it. The feast is spoiled that is not full of welcome. The sauce for meat is ceremony.

MAKBETH: *To her*. Sweet remembrance! *To murderer*. But Banquo's safe?

DARK POWER 3: Ay, your Highness, safe in a ditch with twenty gashes on his head.

MAKBETH: Thanks for that. *He returns to the banquet*. Now good digestion wait on appetite and health on both!

DARK POWER 2 *as guest*:

May it please your Highness, sit.

BANQUO'S GHOST *sits in the empty place*.

MAKBETH: The table's full.

DARK POWER 2: Here's a place reserved, sir.

MAKBETH: Where?

DARK POWER 2: Here, my good lord.

MAKBETH *sees ghost of BANQUO*.

DARK POWER 1 *as guest*:

What is it that moves your Highness?

MAKBETH: Which of you have done this?

DARK POWER 2: What, my good lord?

MAKBETH: Thou canst not say I did it!

DARK POWER 1: Friends, rise. His Highness is not well.

LADY MAKBETH: Sit. My lord is often thus, and hath been from his youth. The fit is momentary. He will again be well. Feed and regard him not. *Drawing MAKBETH apart*. Are you a man?

MAKBETH: Ay, and a bold one that dare look on that which might appall the devil.

LADY MAKBETH: Why do you make such faces? When all's done, you look but on an empty place.

Ghost of BANQUO vanishes.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

MAKBETH: Blood hath been shed ere now, in the olden time. Ay, and since, too, murders have been performed too terrible for the ear. But when the brains were out, the man would die. But now they rise again and push us from our places.

LADY MAKBETH: This is the painting of your fear. This is the air drawn dagger which you said led you to Duncan.

MAKBETH: I'll sit down. Give me some wine. Fill full. I drink to the general joy of the whole table, and to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss. To all, and him, we thirst.

ALL: Our duties and the pledge.

Ghost of BANQUO reappears.

MAKBETH: Quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee! Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold.

LADY MAKBETH: Think of this, good friends, but as a thing of habit. 'Tis nothing else. Only it spoils our pleasure.

MAKBETH: What man dare, I dare. Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear, the armed rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger. Take any shape but that and my firm nerves shall never tremble. Or be alive and dare me to the desert with thy sword!

LADY MAKBETH: My husband, be a man again. Sit still.

MAKBETH: Can you behold such sights?

DARK POWER 2: What sights, my lord?

LADY MAKBETH: Speak not. Question enrages him.

MAKBETH: It will have blood, they say. Blood will have blood.

LADY MAKBETH, *to* MAKBETH:
You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting. *To the guests.* He grows worse and worse. At once, good night. Stand not upon the order of your going but go at once.

DARK POWERS, *simultaneously.*

DARK POWER 3: Good night, and better health attend his Majesty.

DARK POWER 1: He needs the divine more than the physician.

DARK POWER 2: Look after him. We wear our health but sickly in this life.

DARK POWERS *exit.*

MAKBETH: What time is it?

LADY MAKBETH: Almost morning.

MAKBETH: Why did Macduff refuse our feast?

LADY MAKBETH: Macduff is fled to Ireland.

MAKBETH: Fled to Ireland? Sinful Macduff, you will rue this day.

LADY MAKBETH: What need you fear Macduff?
 MAKBETH: Strange things I have in my head that must be acted out. I am in blood stepped in so far that I must go on. Tomorrow I will go to the Weird Sisters. More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know by the worst means the worst.
 LADY MAKBETH: You lack the season of all natures, sleep.
 MAKBETH: Come, we'll to sleep. Yes, to bed, to bed. We are yet but young in deed.

36

MUSIC NO. 11.

DARK POWER 3: Where have you been, sister?
 DARK POWER 2: Killing swine.
 DARK POWER 3: Brother, where thou?
 DARK POWER 1: Makbeth's wife had chestnuts in her lap and munched, and munched, and munched. "Give me," say I. "Aroint thee, witch," the great Queen cries. Her husband's gone to Dunsinane and strongly fortifies that high place.
 DARK POWER 3: The King prepares for war.
 DARK POWER 2: First came Cawdor who rebelled against his father. Soon he was dead.
 DARK POWER 3: There's one down.
 DARK POWER 2: Then came Duncan who was pitied by Makbeth. Soon he was dead. Later young Banquo walked out late at night. You may say Fleance killed his father, for Fleance fled.
 DARK POWER 1: Men must not walk too late.
 DARK POWER 3: There's three down: Cawdor, Duncan, Banquo.
 DARK POWER 1: And now Duncan's sons are in England preparing their 10,000 soldiers. They hold fast their swords and bestride their downfallen birthdom. Soon Malcolm and Macduff will come against Makbeth.
 DARK POWER 2: It cannot be soon enough for me! The rich warring against the rich, the great nobles tearing each other to pieces. Oh, I am well fed! How I hate these nobles! Oftener upon my knees than on my feet I die every day I live. Their heavy hands have bowed me to the grave and beggared mine forever! Are these nobles fit to govern? No, not fit to live!

MAKBETH *approaches*.

DARK POWER 1: Open locks, whoever knocks!
 MAKBETH: Now, you secret, black, and midnight hags, what is it you do?
 DARK POWER 1: A deed without a name.
 MAKBETH: I conjure you by that which you profess, however you come to know it, answer me. Answer me to what I ask you.
 DARK POWER 1: Speak.

DARK POWER 2: Demand.
 DARK POWER 3: We'll answer.

MUSIC NO. 12.

ALL: Pour in sow's blood that hath eaten her nine farrow. Grease that's sweated from the murderer's gallows. And the finger of a birth-strangled child ditch-delivered by a whore.

MAKBETH: Tell me—

DARK POWER 3: He knows your thought. Hear his speech.

DARK POWER 1: Makbeth! Makbeth! Makbeth! Beware Macduff. Beware the Thane of Fife.

MAKBETH: One word more.

DARK POWER 3: He will not be commanded. Here's another. Listen.

DARK POWER 2: Makbeth! Makbeth! Makbeth! Be bloody, bold and, resolute. Laugh to scorn the power of man, for none of woman born shall harm Makbeth!

MAKBETH: Then live, Macduff. What need I fear thee? But yet I'll make assurance double sure. Thou shalt not live.

DARK POWER 3: Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care where conspirers are. Makbeth shall never vanquished be until great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him.

MAKBETH: That will never be! Who can impress the forest, bid the tree unfix his root? Sweet, good news! Rebellion's head shall never rise until Birnam Wood come against me! High placed Makbeth will live out the full lease that nature gives to life and die in his bed. Yet tell me, if your art can tell so much, shall Banquo's children ever reign in this kingdom?

MUSIC NO. 13.

DARK POWERS: Seek to know no more. Seek to know no more. Seek to know no more.

DARK POWERS *vanish*.

MAKBETH: I will be satisfied! Deny me this and an eternal curse fall on you! Where are they? Gone? From this moment the very firstlings of my heart shall be the firstlings of my hand. The castle of Macduff I will surprise, give to the edge of the sword his wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls that trace him in his line.

37

DARK POWER 1 *as messenger*:

Malcolm. Macduff. Makbeth's power is afoot. Sighs and groans and shrieks rent the air. Where violent sorrow seems a modern ecstasy. Scotland weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash is

added to her wounds. The dead man's knell is scarce asked for who. Now is the time for help. Your eye in Scotland would create soldiers, make even the women fight.

MALCOLM: We are coming. England has lent us 10,000 men.
 MACDUFF: How does my wife?
 DARK POWER 1: Your castle is surprised, your wife and babes savagely slaughtered.
 BANQUO *as ghost*: Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!
 MALCOLM: What, man? Ne'er pull your hair over your brows. Give sorrow words.
 MACDUFF: My children too?
 DARK POWER 1: Wife, children, servants, all that could be found.
 MACDUFF: And I must be from there? My wife killed too?
 DARK POWER 1: I have said.
 MALCOLM: Let's make medicine of our great revenge and cure this deadly grief.
 MACDUFF: He has no children. All my pretty ones? Did you say all? All? What, all my pretty chickens and their dam at one fell swoop?
 MALCOLM: Dispute it like a man.
 MACDUFF: I shall do so. But I must also feel it as a man.
 MALCOLM: Let grief convert to anger. Blunt not the heart, enrage it.
 MACDUFF: Front to front bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself. Within my sword's length set him. If he escape, heaven forgive him too!
 MALCOLM: This tune goes manly! Our power is ready. Makbeth is ripe for shaking!

38

MAKBETH: Let them all fly! Till Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane I shall not fear. Who's Malcolm? Was he not born of woman?
 LADY MAKBETH: I am young. Whither should I fly?
 MAKBETH: "Fear not, Makbeth, no man that's born of woman shall ever have power upon thee." My mind and heart shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.
 LADY MAKBETH: But I remember now I am in this earthly world, bound in, confined.
 MAKBETH: Come in out there! Where got thou that goose look?
 DARK POWER 1 *as soldier*:
 There is ten thousand—
 MAKBETH: Geese, villain?
 DARK POWER 1: Soldiers, sir.
 MAKBETH: What soldiers? What soldiers, wheyface?
 DARK POWER 1: The English, so please you.
 LADY MAKBETH: By the help of these we may again give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights, and free our feasts from bloody knives.
 MAKBETH: Give me my armor.

DARK POWER 2 *as attendant*:

'Tis not needed yet.

MAKBETH: I'll put it on. Send out more horses, skirr the country round. Hang those that talk of fear.

LADY MAKBETH: Where we are there's daggers in men's smiles. The near in blood, the nearer bloody. What are these faces?

MAKBETH: How does your patient, doctor?

DARK POWER 3 *as doctor*:

Not so sick, great King, as she is troubled with thick-coming fancies that keep her from her sleep.

MAKBETH: Cure her of that.

DUNCAN *as ghost*: Now does he feel his secret murders sticking on his hands.

LADY MAKBETH: Curses not loud, but deep, mouth-honor, breath.

MAKBETH: Doctor, the thanes fly from me. What drug would scour these English hence?

DARK POWER 3 *as soldier*:

There is none, my lord.

MAKBETH: Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it! Come, put my armor on. Give me my staff. You, send out. I am sick at heart.

LADY MAKBETH: Hang out our banners on the outward walls!

39

MALCOLM: Makbeth keeps to Dunsinane.

MACDUFF: Storm the castle. Confront Makbeth.

MALCOLM: 'Tis much you dare, brother, but we must act in safety.

MACDUFF: Safety? Why did not raw safety protect my wife and children? Revenges burn in me.

MALCOLM: They burn in me as well. But you must do as I command—and I shall make honors for you.

MACDUFF: You lie! Naught's had, all's spent. I shall wear Makbeth's head on my sword, yet my poor country will have more vices than it had before. Wake Duncan, I wish you could.

MALCOLM: Your father's dead, and there's an end to it.

MACDUFF: If there were an end to murder when the deed is done, I'd kill you now.

MALCOLM: Come on, dare me with thy sword!

MACDUFF: No, brother, I'll not fight with thee. The time approaches that will make us know what we have and what we owe. Let us toward Makbeth.

MALCOLM: March we on.

DUNCAN *as ghost*: Renown and grace is dead. The wine of life is drawn. Our monuments shall be the maws of kites.

MALCOLM: What wood is this?

DARK POWER 1 *as peasant*:
The Wood of Birnam.

40

DARK POWER 3 *as doctor*:
When was it she last walked?

DARK POWER 2 *as nurse*:
Since Makbeth went into the field I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown on, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write on it, read it, seal it, and return to bed. Yet all this while fast asleep.

DARK POWER 3: Besides her walking and other performances what at any time have you heard her say?

DARK POWER 2: That which I will not report.

DARK POWER 3: You may to me.

DARK POWER 2: Look! Here she comes. And fast asleep! Observe her.

DARK POWER 3: Her eyes are open.

DARK POWER 2: Ay, but their sense is shut.

DARK POWER 3: What is she doing now? Look how she rubs her hands.

DARK POWER 2: It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands. I have known her to continue in this a quarter of an hour.

LADY MAKBETH: Yet here's a spot.

DARK POWER 3: Listen, she speaks!

LADY MAKBETH: Out, damned spot, out, I say! Hell is murky. One, two. Why then 'tis time to do it. Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier, and afraid? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

DARK POWER 3: Did you mark that?

LADY MAKBETH: The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? What, will these hands never be clean? No more of that, my lord, no more of that! You mar all with this shaking.

DARK POWER 3: You have known what you should not.

DARK POWER 2: She has said what she should not. Heaven knows what she has known.

LADY MAKBETH: Here's the smell o' the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. O, O, O!

DARK POWER 3: Her heart is sore.

DARK POWER 2: I would not have such a heart in my bosom.

DARK POWER 3: This disease is beyond my practice.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

DARK POWER 2: What's the disease you mean?
 DARK POWER 3: 'Tis called the evil.
 LADY MAKBETH: Wash your hands, put on your nightgown, look not so pale! I tell you again, Banquo's buried, he cannot come out on his grave.

BANQUO *as ghost*: Stones have been known to move and trees to speak.
 DARK POWER 3: Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, and thrice again to make up nine.
 LADY MAKBETH: To bed, to bed! There's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand! What's done cannot be undone.

DARK POWER 3: Will she go to bed now?
 DARK POWER 2: Directly.
 DARK POWER 3: Unnatural deeds breed unnatural troubles.
 DARK POWER 2: God, God forgive us all.
 DARK POWER 3: Look after her.
 DARK POWER 2: Good night, doctor.

41

MAKBETH: Give me my armor.
 MACDUFF: Give me my sword! Make all our trumpets speak, give them all breath! Those harbingers of blood and death!

MALCOLM: Advance the war!
 MAKBETH: I'll fight until from my bones my flesh be hacked! The cry is still, "They come!" They have tied me to a stake, I cannot fly. What is that noise?

DARK POWER 2 *as servant*:
 It is the cry of women, my good King.

MAKBETH: The time has been my senses would have cooled to hear a night-shriek. But slaughterous thoughts cannot further fright me. I have supped full with horrors. Wherefore was that cry?

DARK POWER 2: The Queen, my lord, is dead.
 MAKBETH: She should have died hereafter. There would have been time for such a word tomorrow. Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time. And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out? Out? Brief candle. Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

DARK POWER 1 *as attendant*:
 My lord, I should say what I saw but know not how to do it.

MAKBETH: Well, slave, say!

DARK POWER 1: As I stood my watch I looked toward Birnam and thought the wood began to move.
 MAKBETH: Liar!
 DARK POWER 1: You may see it coming, a moving grove.
 MAKBETH: If you speak false, upon the next tree shall you hang alive. If your speech be true, I care not if you do as much for me. "Fear not, till Birnam Wood do come to Dunsinane!" And now a wood comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out! Ring the alarm bell! Blow wind, come wrack, at least we'll die with harness on our back!
 MALCOLM: Now near enough! Throw down your leafy screens! Makbeth, show thy face.

DARK POWER 3 *as soldier*:
 What is thy name?

MAKBETH: Thou'll be afraid to hear it.
 DARK POWER 3: No, though thou call thyself the hottest name in hell.
 MAKBETH: My name's Makbeth!
 DARK POWER 2: The devil himself could not pronounce a title more hateful for my ear!
 DARK POWER 3: What is thy name?
 DARK POWER 1: What is thy name?
 MAKBETH: Makbeth, Makbeth, my name's Makbeth!

MUSIC NO. 14.

MACDUFF: Turn, hellhound, turn!
 MAKBETH: Of all men I have avoided thee. Get thee back. My soul is too much charged with blood of thine already.
 MACDUFF: I have no words. My voice is in my sword.
 MAKBETH: I wear a charmed life which must not yield to one of woman born.
 MACDUFF: Despair thy charm! Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped.
 MAKBETH: I'll not fight with thee!
 MACDUFF: Then yield, coward, and live to be the show and gaze of the time! We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are, painted upon a pole, and written underneath, "Here you may see the tyrant."
 MAKBETH: I will not yield to kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet. I will try the last. Lay on, Macduff, and damned be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"

They fight. MACDUFF kills MAKBETH.

DUNCAN *as ghost*:
 I do not repent me of my fury! Blood will have blood!

BANQUO *as ghost*:
 Cruel are the times when we are traitors and do not know ourselves. We fear, yet know not what we fear, but float upon a wild and violent sea each way and none.

MUSIC NO. 15.

MACDUFF: Hail, King, for so thou art! I carved out my passage till I faced Makbeth. I did not shake his hand nor bid him farewell. I unseamed him from the belly to the chops and fixed his head upon our battlements.

MALCOLM: Valiant brother, thanks for your pains.

MACDUFF: I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

MALCOLM: Your words become you as your wounds. They smack of honor both. Go, and I'll send you surgeons.

MACDUFF *exits*.

To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus. *Aside to DARK POWERS 1 and 3.* Both of you know Macduff is your enemy?

DARK POWER 1 *as murderer*:

True, my lord.

MALCOLM: So is he mine.

DARK POWER 3 *as murderer*:

We are your men, my liege.

MALCOLM: At once, plant yourselves. Kill your enemy. It must be done now.

DARK POWER 1: We shall perform what you command, my King.

MALCOLM: Kinsmen, thanes, and you whose places are the nearest, be henceforth Earls, the first that Scotland ever named. What's more to do, we will perform in measure, time, and place. My Earls and kinsmen, we shall not spend a large expense of time before we reckon with your several loves. So thanks to all at once and to each one whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone.

DARK POWER 3: Hail, King! Hail, King of Scotland! Hail, King of Scotland!

DUNCAN *from his grave*:

Now does he feel my title hang loose about him, like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief.

BANQUO *from his grave*:

Both sides are even.

43

DARK POWER 2: And to conclude, the victory fell on us. Receive what cheer you may.
DARK POWER 1: We are reckless what we do to spite the world. There's nothing serious
in mortality, all is but toys.
DARK POWER 3: I'll devil porter it no further. I had thought to let in some of all profes-
sions that go the primrose way to everlasting bonfire. But this place is
too cold for hell.
DARK POWER 1: What will you do now? How will you live?
DARK POWER 3: As birds do.
DARK POWER 2: What, with worms and flies?
DARK POWER 3: With what I can get. *To the audience.* So, I pray you, remember the porter.

The DARK POWERS bow.

Blackout

MAKBETH MUSIC

By Paul Epstein

(For voice and action. No instrumental accompaniment is intended)

Functions of Music

1) To heighten the text. The LETTER from Makbeth to his wife is a musicalization, a straight reading with all contours magnified. Fully realized in performance, it is an aria.

2) To replace dramatic (linear) text with choral (simultaneous) textures. The major choral sections – PRELUDE, FUNERAL, CORONATION, BATTLE – explore thematic elements by fragmenting and layering the text and placing the resultant textures in the context of scenic movement and action. In much of the music the selection of text, on the basis of phonetic content as well as meaning, was a major part of the job of composition. In fact “text setting” often meant just that, placing pieces of text in relation to one another, rather than superimposing a strictly musical (melodic) structure. Occasionally once the text selection was made, it was decided to do nothing more musically. In the second banquet, for example, the mutterings of the Dark Powers were to have been scored but were finally left free.

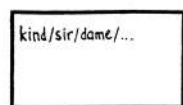
3) To parallel, counterpoint, or otherwise amplify a scene. The MURDER music offers an action parallel to the killing of Duncan – a simultaneous metaphor – in the carousal of the Dark Powers. In the FUNERAL/CORONATION the music comments on both the structure and the content of the scene. Joan* performs, in rapid succession, the funerals of Makbeth and Macduff and the coronation of Malcolm. But the music is thin, peremptory, and fragmented, a shadow of the earlier FUNERAL and CORONATION. The tune of “Happy Days Are Here Again” serves a double function in the first banquet. It has the warm luxurious sound of dinner music, but suggests to anyone familiar with it a political convention – which is what the scene is, in effect.

4) Architectural: to provide the sonic dimension of the environment. This applies not only to explicitly musical material, as the MURDER with its choral undergirding, but to the overall sonic character of the production – the nine-fold knocking and bell-ringing, the spasms of running feet (in boxing shoes) on plywood platforms, the hollow resonances of the Performing Garage. The line between music and task-determined sound often wasn’t there. Generally there was a tendency to score more and more, to define the sonics of each moment precisely, although in many instances this was never fully realized. For example, the mutterings in the second banquet, referred to above, should have had a unique kind of resonance that we simply were not able to discover.

* The DARK POWERS are designated in this musical score by the names of the actors and actress who played the roles in the original production:

RICHARD = Dark Power 1; JOAN = Dark Power 2; JASON = Dark Power 3

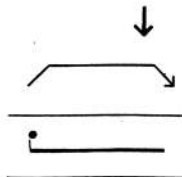
FIGURE 7.3: Functions of music. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.



PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Any or all of the material within a box may be performed and repeated for the duration of the box. In the **PRELUDE** the pauses between phrases, indicated by slashes, are free in duration but should decrease from an average of five seconds or more in the first box to less than a second in the fifth box. The passage from the third to the fourth box is made by each performer ad lib.

Handclap, to cue the end of one box and beginning of the next.



Gradual transition from one mode of performance to another, as from speaking to singing.

Entire phrase sung on one pitch using normal speech rhythm. The two-line staff encompasses the performer's complete vocal range; within it relative pitch is indicated.



Spoken in rhythm.

A graphic notation suggesting a heightened treatment of key words. The notation is both an approximate transcription/interpretation of things done in rehearsal and a score to be re-interpreted by the performer.



The line indicates pitch contour. The mode of performance lies between speaking and singing, with continuous pitch inflection. Note heads merely indicate beginnings of syllables.

□ = JOAN

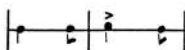
▲ = JOAN & JASON

■ = JASON

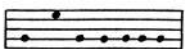
Knocking with hand or fist on wooden platform. The words on which the knocks occur were chosen randomly; the important things are the gradually increasing frequency of knocks and the gradually emerging association between word rhythm and noise. Once this was accomplished in rehearsal, the scored version was abandoned in favor of improvisation.



The first of each pair of phrases is chanted on one pitch, the second on and around the same pitch. The ornamentation is to be improvised and may become highly elaborate. Each pair of phrases may employ a different pitch. Each performer begins the **FUNERAL** chants when he has completed his dialogue in scenes 21 through 25. The chants within a box may be performed and repeated in any order.



In the **ROUND**, each performer sings on two pitches. The interval between the two is to be no more than approximately a minor third; it may be a micro-tone. The sound should be bell-like but dissonant — unisons are to be avoided. During the procession the **DARK POWERS** abandon the **ROUND** one at a time and take up the material in the box, which may be performed and repeated in any order.



The staff without clef is to be read as if in treble clef but with a movable pitch reference. Thus the **CORONATION** uses only major sixths, but each phrase may begin on a different pitch.



Synchronization. In **CEREMONY-1** a rhythmically notated part cues the entrance of a freely spoken line. In the **BATTLE** the reverse occurs: the bursts of choral shouting are triggered by the dialogue, which however proceeds independently.

Inflected speech.



Note heads without stems indicate performance mode only; rhythm is either free (see **FUNERAL/CORONATION**) or otherwise indicated (see **BATTLE**).



In the **FUNERAL/CORONATION** the spoken scene proceeds at its own pace. Bracketed musical passages occur at any time during correspondingly bracketed texts. As usual, material in the box may be repeated ad lib.

NOTE: The **DARK POWERS** are designated in this musical score by the names of the actors and actress who played the roles in the original production, as follows:

RICHARD = Dark Power 1
JOAN = Dark Power 2
JASON = Dark Power 3

FIGURE 7.4: Performance instructions. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

FIGURE 7.5: Performance instructions. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

FIGURE 7.6: Music No. 1, Before Scene 1, “Prelude.” Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 1 (Before Scene 1) – “Prelude”

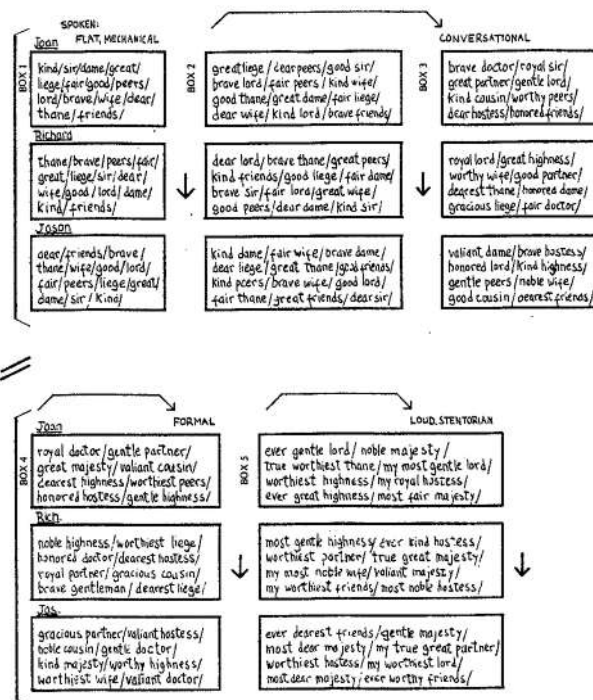
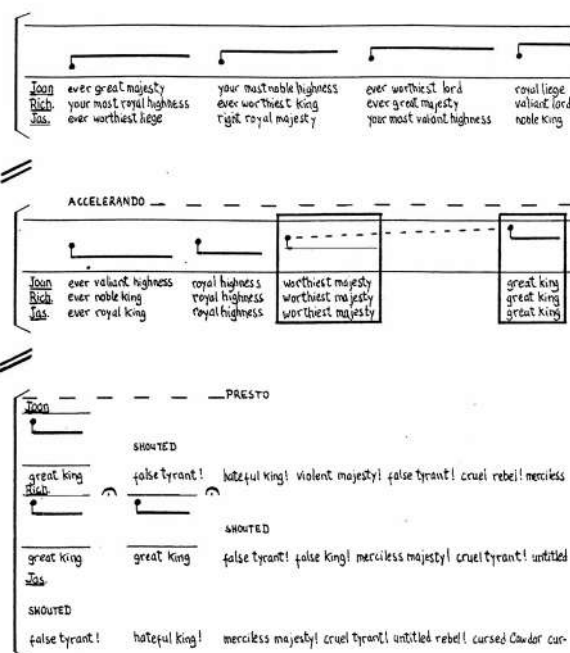


FIGURE 7.7: Music No. 1, Before Scene 1, “Prelude,” continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Music No. 1 — continued



Music No. 1 — continued

Joan Cawdor! untitled usurper! hateful traitor! DEED WITHOUT A NAME!
 Rich rebel! violent traitor! merciless Cawdor!
 Jas sed usurper! cruel rebel! violent traitor!

 || SEQUE

Rich. *mf*
Jas.
Dark Powers
mp *mf*
3

Fair is foul, and foul is fair Hov-er through the fog and fil-thy air. When shall

3

we three meet a-gain in thun-der light-ning or in rain? When the Aur-ly

3
4

bur-ly's done, when the bat-tle's lost and won That will be ere the set of

4
3
4
4

sun. Where the place? U-pon the heath. There to Traf-fic with Mak-beth

4
mf

In rid-dles and af-fairs of death.

FIGURE 7.8: Music No. 1, Before Scene 1, "Prelude," continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 2, Scene 2 –“Witches’ Song 1”

Joan *f*

I will drain him dry as hay. Sleep shall nei-ther night nor day

Rich *f* **MARCATO**

I will drain him dry as hay. Sleep shall nei-ther night nor day

Hang u-pon his pent-house He shall live a man for-bid

Hang u-pon his pent-house lid. He shall live a man for-bid.

Wea-ry sev'n nights nine times nine shall he dwi-n-dle, peak, and pine.

Wea-ry sev'n nights nine times nine shall he dwi-n-dle, peak, and pine.

Though his bark can-not be lost, yet it shall be tem-pest tost.

Though his bark can-not be lost, yet it shall be tem-pest tost.

FIGURE 7.9: Music No. 2, Scene 2, “Witches’ Song 1.” Scan from *Macbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 3, Scene 5 – “Witches’ Song 2”

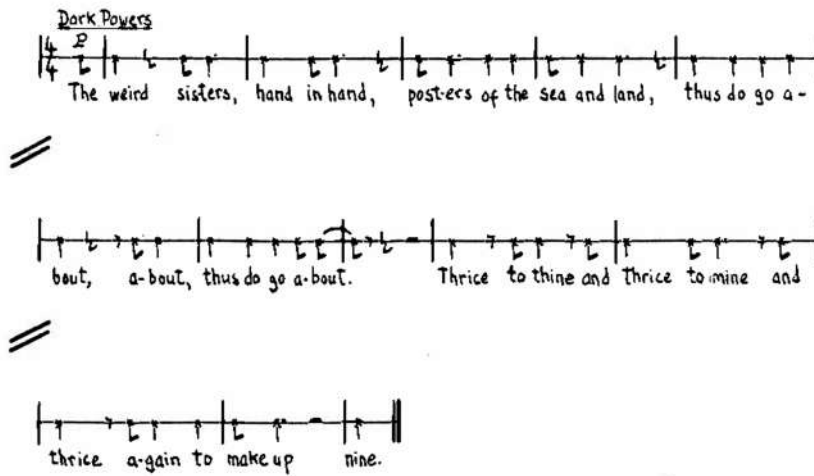


FIGURE 7.10: Music No. 3, Scene 5, “Witches’ Song 2.” Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 4, Scene 6 – “Letter”

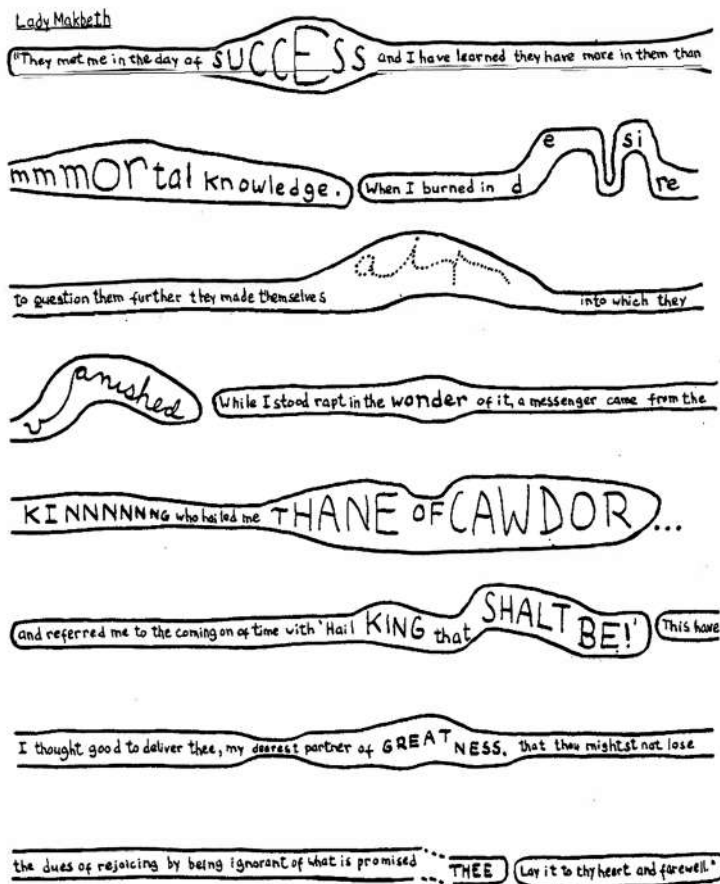


FIGURE 7.11: Music No. 4, Scene 6, “Letter.” Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 5, Scene 12 – “First Banquet”

[DARK POWERS hum “Happy Days Are Here again” softly several times through, then loudly; then, to the same tune, they sing the verse:

DARK POWERS. I’ll Charm the air to give a sound
While you perform your antic round,
That this great king may kindly say
Our duties did his welcome pay.

MUSIC No. 6, Scenes 21-23 – “Murder”

Jos.

Round a-bout the caid-rong o.

Let me in-fold thee and hold thee to my heart.

Joan

Let me in-fold thee and hold thee to my heart.

Jas.

My plen-teous joys

Chief nou-rish-er in life's feast

Joan

Come to my wo-man's breasts

Rich.

Wan-ton in ful-ness

Rich.

Come

Makb. Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?

FIGURE 7.12: Music No. 5, Scene 12, “First Banquet,” and Music No. 6, Scenes 21–23, “Murder.” Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Music No. 6 — continued

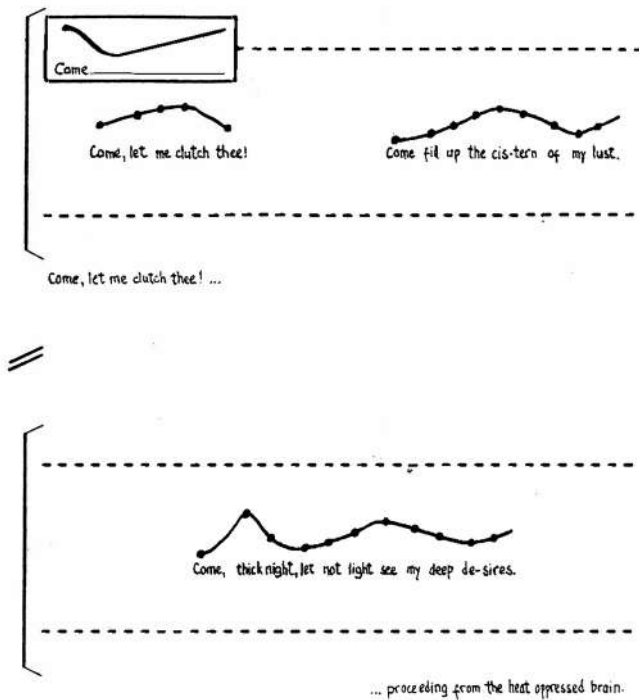


FIGURE 7.13: Music No. 6, Scenes 21–23, “Murder,” continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Music No. 6 — continued

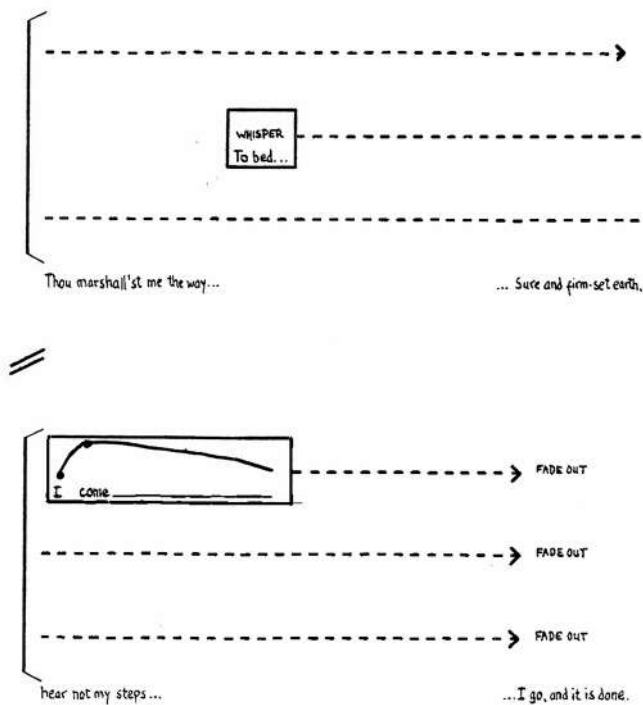


FIGURE 7.14: Music No. 6, Scenes 21–23, “Murder,” continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

FIGURE 7.15: Music No. 6, Scenes 21–23, “Murder,” continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Music No. 6 – continued

Malc.
With his brand-ish'd steel carved out his pass-age from that spring whence com-fort seemed
Macd.
With his brand-ish'd steel carved out his pass-age from that spring whence com-fort seemed

==

Jas.
I have be-gun to plant thee and will make thee full of grow-ing
Joan
There's na bot-tom none in my
Malc.
to come
Macd.
to come

Malc. Who's there?
Lady Macb. He's about it. The doors are open.

FIGURE 7.16: Music No. 6, Scenes 21–23, “Murder,” continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

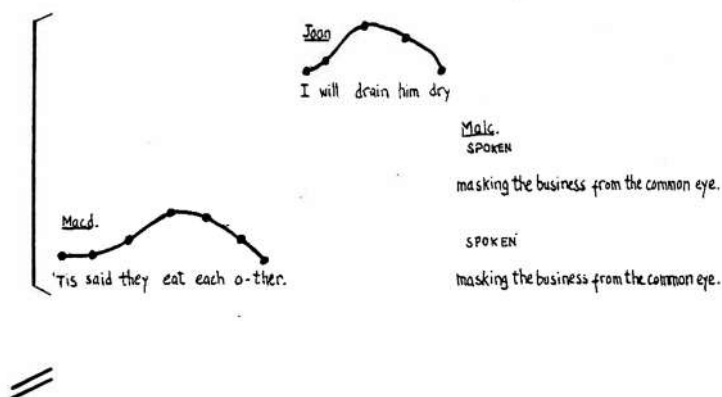
Music No. 6 – continued

Joan
vo-lup-tuous-ness.
Malc.
As can-nons o-ver-charged with doub-le cracks, so they doub-ly re-doub-led
Macd.
As can-nons o-ver-charged with doub-le cracks, so they doub-ly re-doub-led
Malb. What! Who?

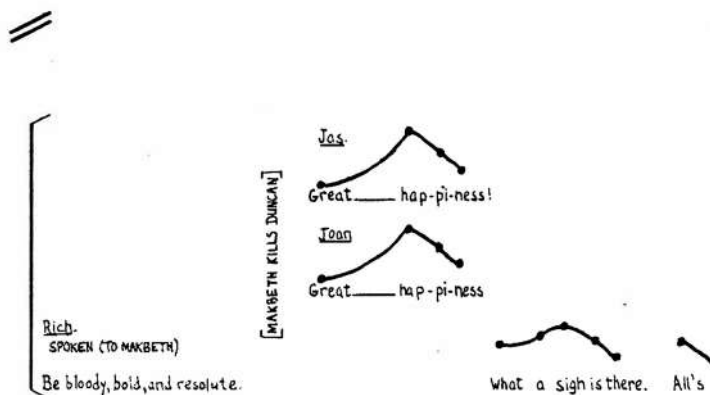
==

Jas.
SPOKEN
And everyone shall share in the gains.
Malc.
strokes be-gan a fresh as-sault.
Macd.
strokes be-gan a fresh as-sault.
They bathe in reek-ing wounds.

Music No. 6 —continued



Lady Makb. I am afraid 'tis not done... ...my father as he slept, I had done it.



Music No. 6 — continued

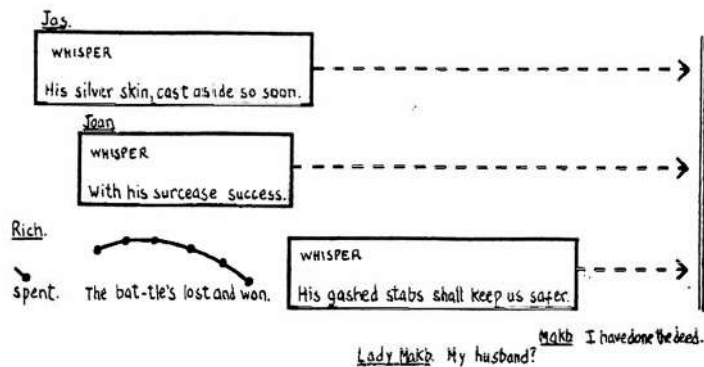


FIGURE 7.17: Music No. 6, Scenes 21–23, “Murder,” continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

FIGURE 7.18: Music No. 6, Scenes 21–23, “Murder,” continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

FIGURE 7.19: Music No. 7, Scene 23, "Knocking."
Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 7, Scene 23 — "Knocking"

[KNOCK where these symbols appear: □ Joan; ■ Jason; ▲ Joan & Jason]
MAKBETH. There's one did laugh in his sleep and one cried "Murder!" that they did wake each other. I stood and heard them. But they said their prayers and went to sleep again. LADY. Malcolm and Macduff are lodged together. MAKB. One cried "God bless us!" and "Amen" the other. As if they had seen me with these hangman's hands. I could not say "Amen" when they said "God bless us." LADY. Consider it not so deeply. MAKB. But why couldn't I pronounce "Amen"? I had most need of blessing and "Amen" stuck in my throat. LADY. These deeds must not be thought out these ways. It will make us mad. MAKB. I thought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more! Makbeth does murder sleep." The innocent sleep, sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care, the death of each day's life, sore labor's bath, balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast. LADY. This

Music No. 7 — continued

is the very painting of your fear. MAKB. Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the house. "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more. Makbeth shall sleep no more." LADY. Go get some water and wash this filthy witness from your hand. Why did you bring these daggers from the place? They must lie there. Go carry them and smear the sleepy grooms with blood. MAKB. I'll go no more. I am afraid to think what I have done. Look on it again I dare not. LADY. Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil. If he's still bleeding, I'll gild the faces of the grooms with blood, for it must seem their guilt. MAKB. What's that knocking? How is it with me when every noise appalls me? What hands are here? They pluck out mine eyes! Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red. LADY. My hands are of your color, but I shame to wear a heart so white. I hear a knocking at the south entry. Retire we to our chamber. A little water clears us of this deed. How easy it is then.

FIGURE 7.20:
Music No. 7, Scene 23, "Knocking," continued.
Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 8, Scene 29 – "Funeral"

Yos.
Good truth and honor.... clear us of this deed. Innocent sleep.... in spite of thunder.
Downy sleep.... balm of hurt minds. Good repose.... knit up the ravelled sleeve of care.

Rich.
Good truth and honor.... the death of each day's life. Balm of hurt minds.... as pure
Life's fitful fever.... wash this filthy witness from my soul. Downy sleep.... the death

Joan
Child of integrity.... wipe the black scruples from your hand. A little water....
Balm of hurt minds.... wash this filthy witness from my soul. Curtained sleep

Lady Makb.
Curtained sleep.... in the affliction of these terrible dreams. Life's fit-
Balm of hurt minds.... death's counterfeit. Downy sleep.... in spite of

Bang.
A little water.... in the affliction of these terrible dreams. Good truth

Macd.
Innocent sleep.... knit up the ravelled sleeve of care. Balm of

Malc.
Child of integrity.... clear us of this deed. Good repose....

FIGURE 7.21: Music No. 8, Scene 29, "Funeral." Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Yos. (cont.)
Great Neptune's ocean.... as pure as snow. Balm of hurt minds.... death's counterfeit.
Restless ecstasy.... in spite of thunder. Downy sleep.... in the affliction of these terrible dreams.

Rich. (cont.)
as snow. Child of integrity.... in the affliction of these terrible dreams.
of each day's life. Life's fitful fever.... death's counterfeit.

Joan (cont.)
balm of hurt minds. Restless ecstasy.... in the affliction of these terrible dreams.
.... as pure as snow. Great Neptune's ocean.... death's counterfeit.

Lady Makb. (cont.)
ful fever.... balm of hurt minds. Great Neptune's ocean.... clear us of this deed.
thunder. Restless ecstasy.... the death of each day's life. Good truth and honor.... as pure as snow.

Bang. (cont.)
and honor.... wipe the black scruples from my soul. Life's fitful fever.... death's counterfeit.

Macd. (cont.)
hurt minds.... in the affliction of these terrible dreams. Good repose.... as pure as snow.

Malc. (cont.)
in the affliction of these terrible dreams. Innocent sleep.... balm of hurt minds.

FIGURE 7.22: Music No. 8, Scene 29, "Funeral," continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

FIGURE 7.23: Music No. 9, Scene 30, "Coronation." Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 9, Scene 30 — "Coronation"

Joan
If it were done for 't must be done. Vault - ing am bi-tion.

Rich.
Bare - - faced power. I have done be it thought and done.

Jas.
Thrift - less am - bi-tion. When 'tis done what's done is

Banq.
Why does he dress in bor-rowed robes? He hath a hea-ven-ly gift of
My du-ties to your High-ness are fore-ver knit. I am his kins-

Lady Makb.
Laugh to scorn the pow'r of man. The crown
Good truth and han-or ap-plaud the deed.

FIGURE 7.24: Music No. 9, Scene 30, "Coronation," continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Music No. 9 — continued

If it were
Bare -
done.

Dark Powers
To all our nights and days to come give sove-reign sway and mas-ter-dom.
I am his sub-ject. My du-ties to your High-ness are fore-ver knit.
New han-ors come up-on him. The crown does sear mine eye-balls.

Banq. (cont.)
pro-phe-cy. The crown does sear mine eye-balls. New han-ors come up-on him.
man and his sub-ject. The serv-ice and the loy-al-ty I owe.

Lady Makb. (cont.)
does sear mine eye-balls. Mak-beth shall ne-ver van-quished be.
Make all our trump-ets speak, give them all breath.

MUSIC No. 10 (Scene 34)

MALCOLM & MACDUFF. [*To the tune of "America"*]

Patience, devotion,
And perseverance,
And fortitude.
Industrious soldiership,
Our pow'r is ready.
The days are near at hand;
Advance the war!

FIGURE 7.25: Music No. 10, Scene 34, Malcom & McDuff. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 11, Scene 35 – "Ceremony 1"

Joan
2
4
Un-tie the winds and let them fight.

Rich.
2
4
Un-tie the winds and let them fight.

SPOKEN FREELY
Jas. I am reckless what I do.

Joan (cont.)
though cast-les topple on their ward-ers heads,

Rich. (cont.)
swal-low na-vi-ga-tion up,

Jas. (cont.)
go and it is done.

Joan (cont.)
though the trea-sure of na-ture tum-ble all to-

Rich. (cont.)
slope their heads to their foun-da-tions,

Jas. (cont.)
deed I'll do.

Joan (cont.)
ge-ther

Rich. (cont.)
E-ven till de-struc-tion sick-en

Jas. (cont.)
crown my thoughts with acts, spurn fate, scorn death

I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do!

FIGURE 7.26: Music No. 11, Scene 35, "Ceremony 1." Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 12, Scene 35 – “Ceremony 2”

Dark Powers

mf | 2/4 x | 1/4 | 3/4 - | 2/4 x | 1/4 | 3/4 x | 1/4 | 3/4 p | 1/4 | 1/4 | 1/4 | Grease

Pour in sow's blood that hath eat-en her nine far-row;

that's sweated from the mur-der-er's gal-lows;

Crescendo Poco a poco — — — — — *ff*

Joan

And the fing-er of a birth-strang-led child ditch-de-li-vered by a whore

Rich.

And the fing-er of a birth-strang-led child ditch-de-li-vered by a whore

Jas.

And the fing-er of a birth-strang-led child ditch-de-li-vered by a whore

MUSIC No. 13 (Scene 35) – “Ceremony 3”

[illegible]

FIGURE 7.27: Music No. 12, Scene 35, “Ceremony 2.” Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

MUSIC No. 14, Scene 40 – “Battle Scene”

PRESTO
SEMPRE *fff*

<u>Joan</u> Gouts of blood!	Our bloody cou-sins!
<u>Rich.</u> Badged with blood!	What blood-y man is that!
<u>Jas.</u> Gold - en blood!	Most blood-y piece of work!

Macd. Turn, hellhound, turn!
Makb. Of all men have I avoided thee. Get thee back! My soul is

<u>Banq.</u> Blood hath been shed!	
<u>Joan</u> Blood hath been shed!	
<u>Rich.</u> Blood-y ex - e - cu - tion!	
<u>Jas.</u> Blood-balt-ered Ban-quo!	

Makb. (cont.)
too much charged with blood of thine already.

Macd. (cont.)
I have no words. My voice is in my sword I wear
(Continued on next page)

FIGURE 7.28: Music No. 14, Scene 40, “Battle Scene.” Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Music No. 14 – continued

Banq. Blood-bolt-ered Ban-quo!
 Joan With his gold-en blood!
 Rich. I grant him blood-y!
 Jas. Make thick my blood!

Macd. (cont.) Despair thy charm! Macduff was from
 a charmed life which must not yield to one of woman born.

Banq. Make thick my blood make thick my blood my blood make
 Joan There's blood up-on thy face up-on thy face there's
 Rich. The fount-ain of your blood is stopped the fount-
 Jas. I am in blood stepped in in blood stepped in blood

Macd. (cont.) his mother's womb untimely ripped.
 Macb. (cont.) I'll not fight with thee! Then yield, coward, and live to be the
 (Continued on next page)

FIGURE 7.29: Music No. 14, Scene 40, "Battle Scene," continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

Music No. 14 — continued

CRESCENDO POCO A POCO

B. Thick my bloo - - - - -

SIBBLE

Jo blood up-on thy face There's bloo - - - - -

FAST AS POSSIBLE

R. ain of your blood the fount-ain is stopped your bloo - - - - -

Ja I am I am stepped in in bloo - - - - -

Macd. (cont.)
show and gaze of the time! We'll have thee as our rerer monsters are, painted upon a pole, and under write

FIGURE 7.30: Music No. 14, Scene 40, "Battle Scene," continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

B. d! - - - - -

Jo d! - - - - -

R. d! - - - - -

Ja d! - - - - -

Macd. (cont.)
"Here you may see the tyrant."

Macb. (cont.)
This most blood-y piece of work!
The near in blood, the near-er blood-y!
In such blood-y dis-tance badged with blood!
Our blood-y cou-sins laced with his gold-en blood!
I will not yield to kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet. I will
(Continued on next page)

B. It will have blood! Gold-en blood!

Jo Thy blood is cold! Make thick my blood!

R. It will have blood! Gouts of blood!

Ja Blood on thy face! Blood hoth been shed!

Macb. (cont.)
try the last. Lay on, Macduff, and damned be him that first cries "Hold, enough!"

FIGURE 7.31: Music No. 14, Scene 40, "Battle Scene," continued. Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

B. y ex-e-cu-tion!

Jo ces were all badged with blood!

R. ver skin laced with his gold-en blood!

Ja y grooms with blood!

MUSIC No. 15 – “Funeral/Coronation” (for Scene 41 as indicated:)

MACDUFF

Hail, King, for so thou art! I carved out my passage till I faced Makbeth. I did not shake his hand nor bid him farewell. I unseamed him from the belly to the chops and fixed his head upon our battlements.

MALCOLM.

Valiant brother, thanks for your pains.

MACDUFF.

I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

MALCOLM.

Your words become you as your wounds. They smack of honor both. Go, and I'll send you surgeons. To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus. Both of you know Macduff is your enemy?

RICHARD.

True, my lord.

MALCOLM.

So he is mine.

RICHARD.

We are your men my liege.

MALCOLM.

At once, plant yourselves. Kill your enemy. It must be done now.

RICHARD.

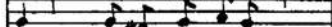
We shall perform what you command, my King.

MALCOLM.

Kinsmen, thanes, and you whose places are the nearest, be henceforth Earls, the first that Scotland ever named. What's more to do, we will perform in measure, time, and place. My Earls and kinsman, we shall not spend a large expense of time before we reckon with your several loves.

So thanks to all at once and to each one whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone.

FIGURE 7.32: Music No. 15, “Funeral/Coronation” (for Scene 41 as indicated). Scan from *Makbeth* music. Courtesy of Paul Epstein.

		
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.	He was a gentleman.	Some must go off.
		
Your son has paid a soldier's debt.	Thy words be-come thee as thy wounds.	He parted well.
		
Let us weep our sad bosoms empty.	Your sorrow must not be measured by his worth.	

And so his knell is knolled.

All that im-pedes thee from the gold-en round a-bout the cald-ron gold-bound

brow does ... , all. Fruitless crown, the round and top of sovereignty.

brow does calls. Fruitless crown, the round and top of sovereignty.

To all our nights and days to come give save-reign sway and mas-ter-dom.

NOTES

1. This introduction is adapted from “Notes on *Makbeth*,” my introduction to the published script of *Makbeth* (Schechner 1978: v–xix).
2. See note 1 to *Faust/gastronome*.
3. The Prague Spring was a brief period of liberalization in what was then Czechoslovakia, a “satellite” of the USSR. The Prague Spring began in January 1968 when reformer Alexander Dubček became head of the Czech Communist Party. It ended in August when troops from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Warsaw Pact communist countries invaded Czechoslovakia.
4. I am at a loss in determining from where I got this idea. I thought it was Freud, but I cannot find the reference. Research leads me to Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* (1265–74) where I am told he writes of the “four idols” of money, power, pleasure, and fame. However, in reading an English translation of the *Summa* I could not find exactly where Aquinas said this.
5. All my brothers were alive when The Performance Group did *Makbeth*. My eldest brother, David, died in 2018 and my younger brother, William, died in 2023. The two middle brothers, Arthur (three years my elder) and I, live.
6. I met Rojo in 1966 while he was a visiting scholar-artist at the Tulane University Theatre Department. Rojo designed the environments for my productions of Eugene Ionesco’s *Victims of Duty* (1967) in New Orleans and *Dionysus in 69* (1968) in New York. We continued to work together for decades. Rojo designed the “Möbius Theatre” at the University of Connecticut-Storrs where he directed and designed many productions. He also worked extensively across America. Rojo died in 2018.
7. I met McNamara in the mid-1960s when he came for his PhD to Tulane where I was a professor. I moved to NYU in 1967. In 1968, McNamara also came to NYU where we were academic colleagues until McNamara’s retirement in 1996. McNamara was a contributing editor of *TDR: The Drama Review*, which I edit. He was the founding director of the Shubert Archive from 1976 to 1996. McNamara, Rojo, and I co-authored *Theatres, Spaces, Environments: Eighteen Projects* (1975). McNamara died in 2009.
8. BITEF—the Belgrade International Theatre Festival—is an annual event starting in 1967 and continuing to the present. Especially in its early years, BITEF was a showcase for avantgarde and experimental theatre. *Dionysus in 69* won a “special award” at the 1969 BITEF.
9. Yugoslavia is no more. It came into existence at the end of World War I and ceased to exist in 1992. From 1991 to 2001, brutal wars, ethnic cleansing, and genocide ravaged the region; even after this, sporadic fighting continued. From 1991 to 2008, seven independent nations emerged in the territory that once was Yugoslavia: Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Slovenia, North Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.
10. At the time when The Performance Group did *Makbeth*, ambulatory performances were rare to nonexistent in western experimental theatre. But not in India, as I discovered in 1976 during my second journey there. The Ramlila of Ramnagar is 31-day outdoor, peripatetic theatrical-ritual performance. The movement of performers and spectators is integral to Ramlila which enacts the life of Rama, Vishnu’s seventh avatar (see Schechner 1985a).
11. Epstein and I worked together since the New Orleans Group which we co-founded with painter Franklin Adams in 1966. An eminent composer, Epstein moved to Temple University in 1969. He continued to work with The Performance Group until 1972. His “Musical Score” for *Makbeth* is published here.
12. Barnes review, 21 November 1969; Lahr review, 27 November 1969; Kerr review 30 November 1969.
13. Slightly adapted from “The *Makbeth* Maze” in Schechner 1978: xxi–xxii.

8

Dionysus in 69, 1968–1969

Introduction

Dionysus in 69 (D69), the first production of The Performance Group (TPG), opened in The Performing Garage, New York City, on June 6, 1968 and ran until the end of July 1969. In January 1969, the production toured to Colorado College, the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis, the Firehouse Theatre in Minneapolis, The Sea in Detroit, and the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.¹ In the late summer of 1969, *D69* went to the Belgrade International Theatre Festival (BITEF) where it won a “Special Award.” The production featured extensive audience participation, a radical deconstruction of Euripides’s *The Bacchae*, environmental theatre design and staging, and total male and female nakedness during several extended scenes. There have been at least two restagings,² neither directed by me. In July, 1969, at the end of the New York run, Brian De Palma, Bruce Rubin, and Robert Fiore filmed the production during two performances. This film was released in 1970 and has since been screened often. Many articles have been written about *D69*,³ making it without doubt my most noticed production.

Dionysus was on my dance card from way back. *The Bacchae* deeply gripped me from when I was an undergraduate at Cornell (1952–1956). My first published scholarly essay, published in 1961 in the *Tulane Drama Review (TDR)*, is “*The Bacchae*: A City Sacrificed to a Jealous God.” In that essay I wrote:

The egocentric, vengeance-ridden, and capricious Dionysus obliterates all of Thebes by destroying its ruling family and exiling in slavery all its people. The terror which the play engenders rises out of this divine caprice of Dionysus. It is awesome, dreadful and terribly absurd to see a god improvise the destruction of a people.

(1961: 124)

I wrote this while in the US Army (1958–1960), stationed in Fort Hood, Texas. At Hood, I also began to write a play based on *The Bacchae*. I worked on *Young King, Jealous God* until 1962. I wanted to adapt Euripides to US society. Among my notes from April 1960:

Working along the theme of communal sacrifice, I slowly came to the heart of the play I wanted to write. [...] The thing must be spare and disciplined. Even the humor (and there must be some) cannot be mere relief—it must be in the mainstream of the play. [...] Communal sacrifice leading to compassion. Conflict between the old, stable, rational order and the new, violent passionate order. It is the revolution - with all its frenzy - versus the short-sighted present.

In January 1962 in Brittany, France, on a short break from my dissertation research in Paris on the theatre of Eugène Ionesco. I wrote a 14 page introduction to *Young King, Jealous God* detailing how it should be staged. Apparently I finished the play, but I cannot find a complete script—that is why it is not in this book. Little did I know in Brittany that in the fall of 1962 I would become *TDR*'s editor and less than six years after that direct *Dionysus in 69* in my own theatre in what would be SoHo, New York City.

In October 1968, five months after *Dionysus in 69* opened, I published another essay about *The Bacchae*: “In Warm Blood: *The Bacchae*” (1968a). I wrote “In Warm Blood” in 1966 or 1967, before staging *D69*, but in the essay I specified several of what became the production's key themes:

[Dionysus] is polymorphous perverse, the eternally ungratified, unquenchably pleasure-seeking young man of stupendous sensual possibility. [...] What Dionysus brings to Thebes is confusion. [...] What is this confusion he brings to Thebes? First, he drives the women to the hillside, entirely disrupting family life. Next he confronts the political authorities, mocking their procedures, destroying their jail, taunting their king. He claims, and then demonstrates that women are stronger than men, lust stronger than law, pleasure seeking better than work, night better than day, oneness better than plurality. [...] The analogues between the situation in *The Bacchae* and our own America are too obvious to spell out. The logic of *The Bacchae* is inescapable and unconsoling. The state cannot recover its youthful virility. And the young, blond, effeminate god offers nothing but his politics of ecstasy.⁴ Dionysus demands gratification here and now. He overturns the traditional values which have become oppressive and only apparently strong.

(1968a: 416–18, 424)

Clearly, before I started the work that led to *D69*, I knew the paradox of the simultaneous laughter and terror Dionysus brings, according to the farce-tragedy Euripides wrote millennia ago.

But my scholarly investigations and playwriting were not the only inputs leading to *D69*. The workshops that led to the formation of The Performance Group and generated the adaptation of *The Bacchae* were shaped by what happened to me, to the theatre, and to American society in the 1950s and 1960s. Let me unpack these.

In a series of articles and op-eds I authored and co-authored in 1953 and 1954 for *The Cornell Daily Sun* I reported on, analyzed, and discussed *Brown v Board of Education*, the landmark case decided 9-0 by the Supreme Court overturning segregation in US public schools. In one of those articles, Liz Chase and I concluded: “the Civil War and its direct manifestations have come to an end; legal state discrimination exists no longer. However, the battle for complete and unequivocal acceptance of all citizens as equal human beings has just begun” (1954: 4). In another *Sun* article, I wrote about meeting Thurgood Marshall, the lead counsel for the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund,⁵ who in 1952 and 1953 argued *Brown* before the Supreme Court. In 1967, Marshall became the first African American Justice of the Supreme Court, serving until 1991.

I met Marshall in the fall of 1954, at his office in Harlem. Of that meeting, which changed my life, I wrote in part:

Contrary to popular opinion, greatness is not always aloof. While in New York City this week, three reporters of *The Sun* had the privilege to meet and talk to Thurgood Marshall, the lawyer whose arguments lead to the Supreme Court decision ending racial segregation in the public schools. [...] We followed him into his rather small office and sat down. Marshall threw his feet upon the window ledge

behind his chair and picked up the phone. “No callers, not even my mother,” he said. [...] He related to us the progress of litigation concerning public housing, transportation, and graduate education. “The signs are good, even though private housing—restrictive covenants and large units—are hard to crack. But this publicity that has come out of the segregation cases in public schools is helping out a great deal. The more the public knows, the better off we are.”

(1954: 4)

How could such a pro-forma conversation change my life? Because Marshall was the embodiment of dedication to the cause of justice. He told us that since 1936 he’d been fulltime with the NAACP, earning about one-sixth of what he could in private practice. With an ironic smile he told us, “This is my last year in this business; I’m going out for myself next year” (1954: 4). In Marshall I’d met a model. Not a person I could emulate fully, but a beacon.

In the fall of 1957 thanks to a letter Marshall wrote introducing me to Daisy Bates, head of the Arkansas NAACP, I was with the Little Rock Nine when they integrated Central High School on September 25.⁶ My intention was to write about the integration from the point of view of the students and those who were preparing them.⁷ I remember being with the Nine in a below street level room across from Central High School. Through small rectangular windows I saw the turmoil above. The students were told not to respond to taunts, threats, and racist epithets but to “just cross the street and go up the steps into the school.” Making sure their entry would succeed were soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division deployed on orders from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. As the teenage students left the staging room to go to school, I was moved by their determination, their dedication to the mission.

Reflecting 66 years later on that day, I realize that everyone was performing—being themselves and more than themselves, playing the roles of change and resistance to change; of law and lawlessness. The place itself was a school and more than a school. On November 6, 1998, Congress designated Central High School a National Historical Site. Did that staging room where the Nine and those preparing them waited get such a designation? It ought have.

After Little Rock, I drove to Iowa City to begin my MA in the University of Iowa’s English Department as a member of Paul Engle’s Iowa Writers’ Workshop. My thesis was a full-length play, *The Blessing of the Fleet* (this volume). During the summer of 1958, I was co-artistic director (with Karl Harshbarger) of the East End Players (EEP) of Provincetown, Massachusetts. More on that in my introduction to “Lot’s Daughters” (this volume).

In November 1958, I “volunteered for the draft,”⁸ serving in the US Army until August 1960. While in the army, I continued to think and write about *The Bacchae* and explore my own versions of the play. Also, I directed Gore Vidal’s 1957 sci-fi comedy, *Visit to a Small Planet*. My military job was to write “information pamphlets” about current events, adhering to official US positions, which—insofar as I could—I critiqued. Shortly after discharge, I arrived in New Orleans to start my PhD studies at Tulane University. I earned my degree in May 1962 and joined the Tulane faculty as an assistant professor and editor of the *Tulane Drama Review* (now at NYU as *TDR: The Drama Review*, which I still edit). In New Orleans, I became active in the Freedom Movement. On 5 November 1963, I, two Tulane graduate students, and a black minister were arrested in the New Orleans mayor’s office for “refusing to move on” after we asked to meet the mayor. Other activists, black and white, were arrested in the city hall cafeteria. Our dual sit-in made the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* (1963).

My next step was decisive with regard to *D69*. In 1963, I was invited by three of the founders of the Free Southern Theater (FST)—Gilbert Moses, John O’Neal, and Denise Nicholas—to

join FST as a producing director.⁹ To centralize the operation, FST's headquarters shifted from Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, to New Orleans. FST was integrated when I joined. Its mission was to perform not mostly in cities but in the rural deep south. The 1964 FST season was Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (directed by Moses, featuring him and O'Neal), Martin Duberman's documentary *In White America*, and Ossie Davis's anti-racist satire, *Purlie Victorious*, which I directed. FST productions happened in churches, schools, yards; the audiences often interacted with the performers—taking their cue from the black church. In group discussions, play selection, rehearsals, and touring, the underlying ideology was “participatory democracy,” a cornerstone of both the Freedom and Student Movements.¹⁰ That kind of participation stayed with me into *D69*—ways to draw upon the creative energies of both actors and audiences.

At the same time, I became involved in the movement against American involvement in the Vietnam War. On the Tulane campus, I actively disrupted ROTC training on the main quadrangle by shouting “counter-marching orders” to the cadets—putting to use what I learned during my army years. Also at Tulane, in 1965 I participated in one of the south's first teach-ins against the war. The joining of the Freedom and Anti War movements climaxed in the spring of 1967, just prior to my move from Tulane to NYU, when Martin Luther King denounced the war and Muhammad Ali refused to be drafted into the US Army.¹¹

In 1965, the FST became an all-black theatre. I served on its board of directors. I shifted my artistic work to the New Orleans Group (NOG), which I co-founded in 1966 with the aforementioned painter Franklin Adams and composer Paul Epstein, both Tulane University colleagues. 1966 was also the year *TDR* published its Happenings issue, guest edited by Michael Kirby—who would co-design *D69* as well become my close friend and colleague at NYU. Inspired by Happenings, in April 1966 NOG produced *4/66*, my first collaboration with non-theatre artists. *4/66* happened in a large open space where spectators moved and participated; it was structured like a game, a progression of actual events. Spectators moved freely through the space, taking part in whatever caught their fancy. *4/66* led to my first environmental theatre production, NOG's May 1967 staging of Eugene Ionesco's *Victims of Duty*.¹² For *Victims*, I worked with my NOG associates and with Jerry Rojo, a visiting scholar from the University of Connecticut who was at Tulane for the year especially to work with me. We became good friends. Rojo co-designed *D69*, and many more of my productions. *Victims* was staged in a black box theatre (before such a name existed) where spectators sat on carpeted platforms and the floor, sharing the space with the performers. This arrangement was repeated with *D69*.

Out of my experiences with FST and NOG came my “Six Axioms for Environmental Theatre” (1968b):

1. The theatrical event is a set of related transactions.
2. All the space is used for performance; all the space is used for audience.
3. The theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or in “found space.”
4. Focus is flexible and variable.
5. All production elements speak in their own language.
6. The text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all.

The Axioms are realized in *D69*. But that's not the end of the story.

In late 1962 or early 1963, I received a letter from James Hatch, a playwright friend from my year at the University of Iowa. I've long lost the letter, so I can't date it exactly. But I remember clearly a sentence from it: "You are the only person I know crazy enough to appreciate this." Included was the program note for Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre's production of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* in Opole, Poland. Grotowski wrote the program note in French. I translated it for inclusion in *TDR*'s Marlowe issue (Grotowski 1964). I believe this is the first item by Grotowski in English; it certainly is his first appearance in *TDR*. Many more followed.

Grotowski (1933–99) very strongly impacted my artistic life. Although only one year older than I, he was my teacher. What I had theorized and to some degree put into practice in EEP, FST, and NOG, Grotowski realized: environmental theatre staging, text montage, the integration of the performers' personal lives and their stage lives, audience inclusion and participation, ritual. I met Grotowski face-to-face for the first time in the spring of 1967 at Expo 67 in Montreal. The man I met there was the "early Grotowski," a serious pale creature in a dark suit, shaded glasses masking his upper face. He chain smoked while enunciating in a high-pitched voice the principles of "poor theatre," theatre stripped of all that is not absolutely necessary. Leaving, what? "Essential" is much too weak a word.

Grotowski and his close colleague, performer Ryszard Cieslak, brought their "via negativa"¹³ to a four-week, 16-session workshop they conducted at NYU's School of the Arts, November 6–30, 1967. I was part of that workshop, the only faculty to actually do the work (several observed). I'd moved from Tulane to NYU in September, 1967. One student participant, Pat McDermott, later joined the *D69* team. Another, Tom Crawley, joined TPG for *Makbeth*. The exercises Grotowski and Cieslak taught, and their work ethic, profoundly influenced The Performance Group. This is not the place to detail the exercises brought by Grotowski and Cieslak; they are well documented. A key component were the "association exercises" where the mind runs free as the body performs carefully detailed movements: head rolls, hip rolls, body rolls, shoulder stands, head stands, slow motion running, and more. Instead of these being gymnastic, Grotowski and Cieslak insisted that the movements draw from and feed into whatever individuals were thinking, feeling, fantasizing, remembering at the moment. Added to the association exercises was deep work on vocal resonators in the abdomen, chest, nasal passage, and mouth; speaking, singing, and echoing not only from the mouth but also from different parts of the body. Paradoxically, these exercises were performed with extreme precision even as they took on very personal variations depending on what was going on with particular performers. As we worked, we were guided hands-on by Grotowski and Cieslak. Additionally, individuals worked on scenes that were critiqued by Grotowski who met with students one-on-one.¹⁴

As a group, we listened to Grotowski talk about the principles of his work. Every performance is personal, intimate; one performs in relation to a "secure partner," a unit of performative exchange, someone or something that the performer always interacts with; the importance of developing a precise detailed score (as in music) not only of movements but of every aspect of the performance; how mastering specific vocal resonators leads to something beyond speaking or singing. Although Grotowski did not talk about assembling a text, he made clear that texts arose from tensions and associations between the classical, traditional, collective, and individual. Grotowski emphasized that one develops a performance not mostly by acquiring new skills, but by removing obstacles, the via negativa.

What Grotowski spoke, Cieslak did, both to show us and to guide us. The NYU workshop happened a year before the publication of Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968). We were expe-

riencing an advance in-person edition. Little did we know that barely two years later Grotowski would leave the “theatre of productions” forever. He moved on to paratheatre, theatre of sources, objective drama, and art as vehicle—work that occupied him for the rest of his life. Looking back, I treasure that I learned from Grotowski at this culminating moment, just before his turning point.

As noted earlier, I moved from Tulane to NYU in September 1967. Dropping “Tulane” from its title, I brought *TDR* with me, renaming it *The Drama Review*. The move came with a promotion to full professor. Although I was part of NYU’s School of the Arts (not yet Tisch), I was in the Department of Drama-Graduate, where students earned MAs and PhDs. No practical work. That didn’t stop me from participating in the Grotowski-Cieslak workshop. And more. I was so excited by what I was learning from the Poles, that on November 15, in the midst of the workshop I was part of, I convened a workshop of my own. We met in the Tompkins Square Community Center in the East Village. Forty-eight people—many were NYU students from my classes—attended that first session. Over the next two months, that number winnowed to around twenty. I don’t remember if we met twice or three times a week. But by January, we were ready for the next step.

At the Community Center, we worked in a room with a stage, which I ignored. Instead, folding and stacking the chairs. I used the whole room as a black box theatre. I led the group in exercises from Grotowski combined with what I learned from my FST and NOG experiences; and from my studies in anthropology, psychoanalysis, and sociology. The root of the work during January, February, and March was “exploration.” I knew what I knew while being all too aware of what I didn’t know. Exploration meant exchange. We exchanged techniques, touches, ideas, anxieties, words, gestures, angers, sounds . . . so many things. I taught the association exercises, the resonators. This was more than three years before my first trip to India, so yoga was not yet part of the training, but I was pointed in that direction.

One Saturday afternoon in January 1968, I brought in William Arrowsmith’s translation of Euripides’s *The Bacchae*. It was time to actualize my early scholarly writing and my deep connection to that drama. We read the whole *The Bacchae* in unison. We had no money, no theatre. But from that afternoon, we had a project. We focused on how to “confront” *The Bacchae*, to experience it, to make it our own. Then late in January, we were thrown out of the room. We stopped our work and looked at many spaces for rent. None were right.

One day Bill Shephard¹⁵ or Pat McDermott told me about a “garage” on Wooster Street between Grand and Broome streets in the Manhattan district that would become SoHo. As soon as I saw the space, I knew it was right. Big, square, high: a cube about 50’ by 40’ by 20’ high. Originally a metal-stamping factory, there was a six-foot deep trench not far from the north wall that had housed machinery. This “pit” as we called it proved very helpful for *D69* and later TPG productions. In the winter of 1968, I incorporated what I called The Performance Group as The Wooster Group.¹⁶ The Wooster Group Inc., using my money, rented the space. TPG began working in the garage on March 1, 1968 the day our lease began. In early spring I dubbed the space “The Performing Garage.” That moniker because when I first stepped into the room, it was filled by two large trucks parked there. Later, after *Dionysus in 69* was a success, the Wooster Group Inc. took permanent possession of the Garage by buying shares in the Grand Street Artists Cooperative.

When we started in the Garage, it was bitter cold. We used space heaters and worked in layers of clothes. Throughout March and much of April, we did association exercises and improvised scenes; we got on our knees to scrub the floor and went up ladders to paint the walls white. Work chants rose to our throats as we passed buckets of soapy water and cans of paint. Throughout we met three and then four times a week for five hours a session to work on what I began to call *Dionysus in 69*.

Because the floor was cold cement, we bought three long rubber gym mats which, when laid side-by-side, formed a rectangle 12' × 6'. This was a focus for our floor work both at this point of development and during performances of *D69*. As we exercised and improvised, we made friends with the rest of the floor, cold and inhospitable as it was. We also climbed to as much of the space as we could reach, stark as it was. Sometime early that spring, or maybe the year before, I saw Pierre-Dominique Gaisseau's 1962 documentary *The Sky Above, the Mud Below*. In it, the Asmat people of Indonesian Papua perform a "birth ritual." In this ritual, persons pass between the legs of women standing astride naked men lying on the ground. I thought this would be an excellent ritual for us, a way to initiate each of us into The Performance Group. I adapted it so that the women actually laid hands on those they were "birthing" pulling them through over the backs of the men. For our exercise, we mixed women and men, with everyone having the chance to give birth and be born. Later—with women astride the men—this became the birth and death rituals of *D69*.

I decided to paint the Garage white, rather than the usual black (as in "black box") because I wanted spectators and performers to see each other. I wanted light to bounce all over the place. I knew also that we needed platforms both for height and to offer places to hide under. I contacted Jerry Rojo in Connecticut and asked him to design and build a set of platforms. These 4' × 8' and 4' × 4' structures, some 4' high, some 6' were modules we moved and played with as we explored *The Bacchae*. Then I asked Michael Kirby, a pioneer of Happenings, a close friend, and my colleague at NYU, to design the two towers of Thebes, dominant features of the *D69* environment. All the while, we kept working on *The Bacchae*. In May, Bill Shephard took us to the Kelly Carpet Company on Sixth Avenue where he once worked. For \$150, the manager let us take away as much scrap carpet as we could carry. Borrowing a flatbed truck from Joe Pasquale, a Wooster Street neighbor, we hauled a massive amount of carpet. Once installed in the Garage, on the floors and on the surfaces of the platforms, the environment was both cozy and imposing, a huge living room with many pueblo-like rectangles and towers. As noted, the environment resembled the space Rojo and I designed in 1967 in New Orleans for Eugène Ionesco's *Victims of Duty*.

In the Performing Garage, we made two communities: The Performance Group and Thebes. We formed two "moieties," the women of Thebes who follow Dionysus out of the city and the men who remain in the town to anxiously defending the "old values." As the spring got warmer, I asked the women to leave the Garage and find "homes" on neighboring roofs. There they devised calls to keep in touch with each other. I sent the men out to "hunt" the women and bring them back. It was a rule-bound game: no physical violence, no dragging. Only gestures and sounds. I asked everyone to read all the choruses in *The Bacchae* and underline only those words or sentences that they liked or disliked. If sentences were neutral, leave them out. Then we read the choruses based on these selections—some passages had many voices, some few, and some were not heard at all. We began to exchange roles, mixing the person of the actor with the personage of the character. Because Dionysus is a god, he is free to say or do what he pleases. And because he is polymorphous, he can be a woman or a man or any variation thereof. But Pentheus is by definition rigid, a man who follows the letter of the law—which in our case was the text of *The Bacchae*. The interactions between god and man were tense, comic, preposterous, and tragic.

PENTHEUS: I am Pentheus. Son of Echion and Agave. King of Thebes.

DIONYSUS: Pentheus? Son of Echion and Agave? King of Thebes? Bullshit. You're Bill Shephard. You're in the Group. You're no god, but you are in the Group.

In performance, spectators laughed at this exchange, and similar ones. This laughter angered Shephard—not only Shephard-as-Pentheus but also Shephard-as-himself. Not only was the character ridiculed, but also the actor. The rules of the game meant Shephard could not improvise a response to Dionysus, he could not defend himself in kind, or push back with his own mockery of the god. Pentheus-Shephard had to stay in character, stick to the already known published text.¹⁷ This was true not only for Shephard, of course, but also for whoever was Pentheus. However, whoever played Dionysus was free to do as they pleased.

The Group interlaced Arrowsmith's translation of *The Bacchae* with performer-made improvisations. The effect was to make the classical more contemporary, bringing it close to those in the theatre, both spectators and performers. Portions of the chorus were sung to well-known tunes such as "Yankee Doodle," "Clementine," "Hi-ho the Derry-O," "Mary Had a Little Lamb," "Jingle Bells," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and others. It was as if the chorus—the collective "we"—was taunting Pentheus with nursery rhymes, pop culture, the US Civil War. These tunes were familiar and playful, making Greek tragedy fun for the audiences in the Performing Garage. This is what Dionysus brings, at first. Along with sexuality, dancing, and inebriation, "ecstasy" is the word TPG used. Grown-ups possessed played as innocently as children. This was Dionysus's great gift of "illusion"—a word whose Latin root, *ludere*, means to play, mock, deceive.

Starting in May, we began open rehearsals. Twice a week, people came to watch us work. We interacted with audiences, danced with them, touched them, drew them into the performance. These open rehearsals were not set ups, not previews, but genuine rehearsals. We tried different versions of scenes; stopped mid-scene to go over a detail, make a change. We showed the birth ritual bringing first Pentheus and then Dionysus into this theatre world. We had Pentheus try to find a woman in the audience who would accept him, go with him, make him the winner of the "Dionysus Game." The number of spectators who came to these rehearsals grew from 15 to nearly 100.

In the first minutes of June 5, 1968, Robert F. Kennedy was shot in Los Angeles. He was pronounced dead 25 hours later, early in the morning of June 6 Los Angeles time. *Dionysus in 69* was scheduled to open the evening of June 6. The Group met during the day and decided to go on with the show. It was a terrible spring. Martin Luther King was murdered on April 28. We felt that *D69*, whatever else it was, concerned these violent crimes which were not only against individuals but also against society.

Once *D69* opened, it kept developing throughout its thirteen-month run. I attended all performances, and took copious notes to give to the performers before the next performance. We always gathered at the theatre at least two hours before the show started, sometimes earlier if there were big changes or if I felt a scene needed detailed rehearsing. The roles rotated regularly, with everybody playing more than one role over time. I very much wanted that "democracy of stardom." Four women played Agave; three men and one woman played Dionysus; three men played Cadmus; three men and one woman played the Messenger; two men played Pentheus; one woman and one man played Tiresias; four men played the chorus leader; everyone played the chorus. Each of these rotations brought with it variations in the text and actions. What is printed here records most of those variations. I want to share as much as I can the organicity of the production, its existence in the creative tensions between individual interpretations and an overall consistent throughline of action. I want to share the "wrighterliness" of *Dionysus in 69*.

On June 7, 1968, Dan Sullivan's review appeared in *The New York Times*:

Richard Schechner's version of Euripides's *The Bacchae* opened last night and, as Jonah doubtless told the press when he emerged from the whale, it was certainly an experience. [...] The audience perches on or hides under roughhewn wooden platforms, some tall enough to be called towers. At any moment these may be invaded by the mad followers of Dionysus, who whisper seductive things in your ear or engage you in eye-to-eye psychological combat. At one marvelous point, the distraught young King of Thebes leaps barefoot from tower to tower, trying to clap his hand over the mocking mouths of the wine god's followers. But these now seem to number everyone in the theatre. [...] Audience becomes chorus here. [...] The extraordinary collaboration between audience and cast in moments like these makes *Dionysus in 69*: as faithful a production as *The Bacchae* can have received since its original performance. [...] *Dionysus in 69* is strong stuff, but anyone who wants to know where the modern theater is going will have to see it. (1968: 35)

After that, we sold out The Performing Garage for every performance.

Much of what drew people to *D69* was the production's innovations: audience participation, environmental theatre staging, naked performers (in the birth and death rituals), the blurring of the distinction between actors and the roles they played, two men kissing (when both Dionysus and Pentheus were performed by males), the deconstruction of a classical text resulting in the presentation of a "Greek tragedy" as something in and for "now". None of these were for the first time in theatre, dance, and popular entertainment. But using them all in a single production was new. The spectators could and did directly interact with performers, becoming part of the performance, affecting the flow of the action. In both the "ecstasy dance" immediately after the birth of Dionysus and the "total caress" embodying what the Theban women were doing on Mount Cithaeron, spectators moved with, and sometimes stripped, touched, and were touched by the performers. The action took place not only in the central space but all over the Performing Garage. Performers spoke and sang to everyone at once, and also spoke or whispered to individuals. Dionysus was non-binary (though I didn't know that term in 1968).

In fact, most people know *D69* either by means of the De Palma film or from the many essays mentioning and the fewer actually discussing/analyzing the production. With some exceptions, the in-depth discussions are based on the *D69* movie. The film is both a representation and a misrepresentation of the production. The film was made from footage shot in July 1969 during *D69*'s final two performances in The Performing Garage. The film, brilliant as it is with its split-screen images, graphic closeups, and documentation of audience participation, gives only a snapshot of the always evolving organism that was *D69*. It shows an amalgam of two instances, freezing what was fluid. Some know the production from the 1970 book, *Dionysus in 69* authored by The Performance Group and edited by me. That book is comprehensive, with hundreds of photographs taken at many performances by Frederick Eberstadt and Raeanne Rubenstein plus a portfolio of re-enactments of the birth and death rituals staged in his studio for Max Waldman to photograph. The book contains the text variations, comments by me, the stage manager, and the performers, and a chart showing how the roles were shared over time. The text in this book closely follows that book.

What is not in the film or the book is an account of my personal journey outlined in this introduction. Nor an explanation of how a Euripidean tragedy became for so many a performance of liberation. But despite this reception, for me the production was a fair representation of a Greek tragedy. The characters and the spectators live through a story that features a disputed and extended *anagnorisis*, the recognition of who Dionysus is, a *peripeteia*, the reversal of fortune that is the horror of what Dionysus brings and does, a *catharsis* or cleansing as the performers

mop up stage blood, and finally an *exodus*, the exile of the people of Thebes—everyone in the theatre—when the large overhead Garage door opens and spectators and performers—led by Dionysus—stream out onto Wooster Street. But for all these, Euripides's *The Bacchae* is no *Oedipus*, the model tragedy selected by Aristotle to define the genre. Dionysus is no impersonal offstage fate; he is seductively present, playful and cruel, delighting in ironies, a trickster.

D69 is a cautionary tale warning those who follow charismatic leaders that these saviors are false prophets, more demagogue than messiah. Such figures appear at specific historical moments when many people dissatisfied with their lives feel the need to throw off old values, to dance to enchanting music, to drink potent wine, and to seek a new political order. In experiential fact, *D69* performed the contradictions at the heart of American society. More than a half-century on, those contradictions live.

Dionysus in 69

Production

Director	Richard Schechner
Environment	Jerry Rojo, Michael Kirby, Richard Schechner
Lighting	Jerry Rojo
Music	The Performance Group
Choreography	The Performance Group
Costumes	The Performance Group
Dramaturg	Richard Schechner
Technical director	Jerry Rojo
Construction	Jerry Rojo
Stage manager	Vicki May Strang

Performers

Roles on opening night

Remi Barclay	Chorus
Samuel Blazer	Chorus
Jason Bosseau	Chorus
Margaret Ryan	Chorus
Richard Dia	Cadmus
Patrick McDermott	Tiresias
William Finley	Dionysus
William Shephard	Pentheus
Joan MacIntosh	Agave
Ciel Smith	Agave

Some people who worked on *Dionysus in 69* left The Performance Group during the run; or never were members of TPG. Rozanne Levine performed from February through July 1968.

Gwendolyn Galsworth, Ron Schenk, and Charles Strang performed during the fall of 1968. Sam Blazer left in May 1969. Judy Allen, Carla Crosby, and Eric Uben helped manage The Performance Group and maintain The Performing Garage.

Over the thirteen-month run at The Performing Garage, everyone was Chorus at one time or other. The named roles rotated. In the script below, the names of performers are given as well as the roles they play. Because these roles rotated, by the end of the run all but one performer played more than one role. Certain lines—devised by specific performers—were spoken only by those specific performers. The script below tries to exemplify this process of role rotation and individual variation.

At around 7:30 pm spectators begin to line up at The Performing Garage. On rainy and/or cold nights, they wait upstairs over the theatre. For Dionysus in 69, the theatre contains unpainted wood platforms of various heights from 4' squares and rectangles to two 15' towers. Carpets of different colors cover the surface of these platforms and the floor. Against the south wall a 3' high stone "classical" fountain filled with stage blood (though probably no one notices). In a central space between the two towers, three rubber gym mats arranged to form a 12' by 8' rectangle lay over the carpets. The performers and spectators share the space. At 7:45 the performers—in different places throughout the theatre—begin to warm up their voices and bodies. The performers continue these opening exercises throughout the time the spectators enter the theatre. At 8:15 the stage manager, standing on the sidewalk outside the theatre's door, announces:

STAGE MANAGER:

Ladies and gentlemen! May I have your attention, please. We are going to let you in now. You will be admitted to the theatre one at a time, and if you're with someone you may be split up. But you can find each other again once you're inside. Take your time to explore the environment. It's a very interesting space with many different kinds of places to sit or stand or even lay down. We recommend going up high on the towers and platforms, or down underneath them. The password is, "Go up over or take cover." No smoking, no cameras. Thank you.

The first chorus starts before any spectators enter the theatre. This chorus is fragmented, random, and therefore different in every performance. Phrases mix, overlap, merge, and diverge. Each woman CHORUS has a set of lines which she may say in any order and/or distort into pure sounds. The men CHORUS repeat one line only: "Good evening, ma'am (or sir), may I take you to your seat?" But the men do not assist anyone. There are no seats in the theatre, only the carpeted floor and the wood platforms and towers. Each spectator—separated by the stage manager at the entrance from whomever they came with—must find their own way and place.

CHORUS *women only:*

Now I raise the old, old hymn to Dionysus
keep the rite of Cybele the mother
blessed are we for we know the mysteries of god
blessed are you for you shall be purified
blessed are those possessed by the spirit of god
who are one with those who belong
to the holy body of Dionysus

he is our god
 evohe!
 his mother bore him in labor bitter
 lightning struck forced forth by fire
 consumed, she died
 of light the son was born

CHORUS *men only to as many entering spectators as possible:*
 Good evening, sir (ma'am), may I take you to your seat?

DIONYSUS, as yet unidentified, moves freely in the space, sometimes confronting spectators, speaking to them, touching them (but never aggressively). He goes to each of the women CHORUS "impregnating" them.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:
 Women waiting for god. Blessed is the mother.
 Blessed are you, for you can know the mysteries of god.

CHORUS *women only:*
 when the weaving fates fulfilled the time
 the bull-horned god was born of Zeus
 with joy he crowned his son, set serpents on his head
 he is sweet upon the mountain
 he drops to the earth with the running pack
 he hunts the wild goat and kills it
 he delights in raw flesh
 with flying feet, she leaps
 set serpents on his head
 come dance the dance of god
 evohe!
 let the dance begin

CHORUS *men only:*
 Good evening, sir, may I take you to your seat?

CHORUS *women only:*
 where the throngs of women wait
 driven from shuttle and loom
 possessed by Dionysus
 evohe!
 he is sweet upon the mountain
 with milk the earth flows, it flows with wine,
 it runs with the nectar of bees
 flames float out

CHORUS *men only:*
 Good evening, ma'am, may I take you to your seat

CHORUS *women only*:

hard are the labors of god
sweet to serve, sweet to cry Bacchus,
evohe!
bear your god in triumph home
escort your Dionysus home
attend him through the streets of Hellas
to the mountain
he delights in raw flesh
flows with wine
he runs with the nectar of bees
flames jump out from his trailing wand and his long curls
he drops to the earth
and kills it
evohe!
red with berries green with bryony
redden with berries and green with bryony
let the dance begin
drop to the earth
attend him to the mountain
he delights in the labors of god
flames float out in triumph

CHORUS *men only*:

Good evening, ma'am, may I take you to you

CHORUS *women only*:

with milk the dance of god flows with the nectar of bees
the ivy of god lightning struck untimely torn
bear him down with labor bitter
keep the rite of Cybele who is one
with the holy body of god
evohe!
now I raise the old old hymn
with flying feet she delights in raw flesh

CHORUS *men only*:

Good evening, sir, may I take you to your seat

CHORUS *women only*:

set serpents on his head
let the dance begin
walking would be better
beeeeeeeeeeeeees beeeeeeeeeeeeees
let the dance begin
for Bromius we come

and kills it
 evohe!
 with joy he crowned his son
 set serpents on his head

Twice during the opening ceremonies the CHORUS recites/sings together and in sequence. A CHORUS member begins when she feels a compelling density of spectators or a proper rise in energies from the performers. The end of this second choral recitation overlaps the start of the scene between TIRESIAS and CADMUS.

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS:

Out of the land of Asia, down from holy Tmolus,
 speeding the service of god, for Bromius we come!
 Sweet to serve, sweet to cry.

MANY VOICES:

Bacchus! Evohe! Make way! Fall back! Hush!

RYAN *and* BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

Blessed, blessed are those who know the mysteries of god. Blessed are they who hallow their lives in the worship of god, they whom the spirit of god possesses, one with those who belong to the holy body of god. Blessed are the dancers and those who are purified, who dance on the hill in the holy dance of god. Blessed are they who keep the rite of Cybele the Mother. Blessed are the thyrsus-bearers those who wield in their hands the holy wand of god. Blessed are those who wear the crown of ivy. Blessed, blessed are they. Dionysus is their god!

RYAN *as* CHORUS:

On Bacchae, on you Bacchae, bear your god in triumph home! Bear on the god, escort your Dionysus home! Bear him down from the Phrygian hill, attend him through the streets of Hellas.

SMITH *as* CHORUS:

His mother bore him in labor bitter, lightning struck, forced by fire that flared from Zeus. Consumed, she died, untimely torn, in childbed dead by blow of light. Of light the son was born. And when the weaving fates fulfilled the time, the bull-horned god was born of Zeus. With joy he crowned his son, set serpents on his head.

MACINTOSH *and* BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

O Thebes, nurse of Semele, crown your hair with ivy.

MACINTOSH, BARCLAY, *and* SMITH *as* CHORUS:

Grow green with bryony.

MACINTOSH *and* BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

Redden with berries! O city, with boughs of oak and fir, come dance the dance of god. Fringe your skins of dappled fawn with tufts of twisted wool. Handle with holy care the violent wand of god. And let the dance begin.

MACINTOSH *and* BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

He is Bromius who runs to the mountain. To the mountain where

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* CHORUS:

the throngs of women wait, driven from shuttle and loom, possessed by Dionysus. Possessed by Dionysus! Evohe!

SMITH *as* CHORUS:

He is sweet upon the mountain. He drops to the earth from the running pack. He wears the holy fawn-skin.

SMITH *and* RYAN *as* CHORUS:

He delights in raw flesh.

MACINTOSH, BARCLAY, *and* SMITH *as* CHORUS:

With milk the earth flows. It flows with wine. It runs with the nectar of bees.

SMITH *as* CHORUS:

Flames float out from his trailing wand and his long curls stream into the wind.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* CHORUS:

To the mountain!

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS:

To the mountain!

BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

With flying feet—she leaps!

TIRESIAS and CADMUS emerge from the opening ritual. TIRESIAS wears a blindfold to indicate his blindness. The performers do not try to simulate old age. The text says one thing, they are another.

When McDermott plays TIRESIAS and Dia plays CADMUS, they start the scene during the opening chorus. They conspire in a dark place behind a tower or under a platform. The scene is played two or three times privately before it is seen and spoken loud enough for all to hear.

When McDermott and Shephard play these roles, CADMUS blindfolds TIRESIAS.

When Smith and Finley play these roles, the scene starts with CADMUS seated among the audience, frequently high in a tower. TIRESIAS, blindfolded, tries to find CADMUS—first by chance and then by homing in on his words. CADMUS does not allow himself to be caught until he finishes his last speech.

- TIRESIAS: Cadmus, Agenor's son, the stranger from Sidon who built the towers of our Thebes, Tiresias wants you. You know what errand brings me—the agreement we made to deck our wands with flowers and dress in skins of fawn and crown our heads with ivy.
- CADMUS: Tiresias, my old friend, I knew it was you when I heard your voice. For there's something in the voice of wisdom that makes the man of wisdom known. Here I am. Dressed in the costume of the god. We must do honor to this god—insofar as we are able—because he was born my daughter's son and revealed to all men the god Dionysus. Where should we go? Tossing our heads and dancing to the gods? Expound to me, Tiresias, for in such matters you are wise, not me. Me, I could dance all night, tossing my white head, beating the earth with my thyrsus. How sweet it is to forget my old age!
- TIRESIAS: How old are you?

The performers say their actual age.

- CADMUS: 27.
- TIRESIAS: I'm 26. It's the same with me. I, too, feel young, young enough to dance.
- CADMUS: Shall we take our chariots to the mountain?
- TIRESIAS: No, walking would be better. It shows more honor to the god.
- CADMUS: Let's go then. My old age conducting yours.

They start and stop. Their movements are erratic.

- TIRESIAS: The god will guide us there with no effort on our part.

They do not move. Pause. Silence.

- CADMUS: Are we the only ones who are going to dance for Bacchus?
- TIRESIAS: I don't know.
- CADMUS: Why don't you ask them?
- TIRESIAS: You want me to ask them?
- CADMUS: Yes, ask them.
- TIRESIAS: All right. You wait here. Don't move.

There are two versions of TIRESIAS going into the audience to question individuals. When McDermott plays the role, he removes his blindfold, goes behind a spectator and whispers in her/his ear, one at a time. When Smith plays TIRESIAS, she remains blindfolded moving slowly among the spectators, feeling them with her hands. She questions those she senses a rapport with. Cadmus warns her of obstacles.

MCDERMOTT *as* TIRESIAS:

Would you like to go through our ordeal with us?

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:

Have you come to join the revels of the god or just to watch?

CADMUS: Careful, Tiresias.

Sometimes the spectator does not respond. More often, the spectator responds. TIRESIAS is happy when someone agrees to join the revels of the god. CADMUS keeps score. When three people say they will participate or when three say they won't, the interrogation game is over.

CADMUS: Come on, Tiresias, we're wasting too much time. I don't know about them, but I'm just a man. I don't scoff at heaven.

There are two versions of the following speech.

MCDERMOTT *as* TIRESIAS:

Oh, no, we don't trifle with divinity. We are the heirs of customs and traditions hallowed by age and handed down by our fathers. No quibbling American *mise-en-scène* can topple them, whatever subtleties this clever Group invents—and people say they are very clever. People may say, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, acting Euripides at your age?" Well, I'm not ashamed. Did the god say that just the young should dance? Or just the old? Or just the whites? Or just the blacks? Or just the Italians? Or just the Greeks? Or just James Brown? No, he wants his honor from all mankind. He wants no one excluded from his worship. Not even The Performance Group.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:

Neither do I. We don't trifle with divinity. We are the heirs of custom and tradition handed down to us by our mothers and fathers, hallowed by age. No quibbling logic can topple them, whatever subtleties this clever age invents. And it is a very subtle age. People may say, "Don't you feel ridiculous, dressed in those ragtag clothes, covered with sweat, dancing through the factories in worship of some unknown rebel god no one believes in?" But I don't feel ridiculous. Did the god declare that just the beautiful should dance? Or just the ugly? Just the rich or just the poor? Just those with soul or just those who plod? No, no, no. He wants no one excluded from his worship. Not even The Performance Group.

CADMUS: Are we there yet?

TIRESIAS: Yes, we're there.

Sometimes, when whoever is playing TIRESIAS does not feel that the scene has taken the performers "there," CADMUS's question is answered with "It's hard to tell," or "I don't think so," or even "No." During the CADMUS-TIRESIAS scene, the other performers have moved from the periphery of the theatre to the center. Some come in swiftly, running and somersaulting, others move in measured paces. One by one they arrive and squat around the edges of three black rubber mats laid together to make a 12 by 8 foot rectangle, the "holy space." The hubbub of the opening chorus, its exciting promise of ecstasy,

subsides. Spectators focusing on the scene between TIRESIAS and CADMUS slowly become aware of the silent meditating performers. The room quiets, peripheral activity ceases, the stage lights aimed at the center intensify. The performance gathers itself to begin again.

The performers rise from their meditative squat one at a time. While saying their chorus lines, they undress, preparing for the birth ritual, an action adapted from the Asmat people of Papua, Indonesia. Sometime the performers are not completely naked—it depends on the energy in the room. If the performers sense prurience, they strip to underpants and bras for the women and jock straps for the men. The men lay face down on the black rubber mats. As each man takes his position, he stops speaking. Only PENTHEUS does not lay down. Each woman stands astride a man, one leg tucked between his neck and shoulder, the other as high as possible in his crotch. Only the women speak, very quietly, either in chorus or individually, intoning prayers that blend into the motions of birthing. They speak/sing their lines simultaneously.

CHORUS *women only, in a murmur:*
 so his mother bore him once in labor bitter
 there is the towering man who mocked your mysteries
 and when the weaving fates fulfilled the time
 the bull-horned god was born of
 what was the name of the child you bore that man?
 good evening, sir, may I take you to your seat?

PENTHEUS enters the birth canal. The "birth ritual" begins. The "birth canal" is formed by the triangle of the women straddling the men. The women roll and thrust their hips as they reach down with their hands to draw PENTHEUS through. The men rotate their bodies slightly off the floor also helping with the birth. PENTHEUS is passive as he is drawn through the birth canal by the efforts of the women above and the men beneath.

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS:
 What was the name of your husband?
 What was the name of your child?
 When the weaving fates fulfilled the time,
 the bull-horned god was born of Zeus.
 With joy he crowned his son, set serpents on his head.
 So his mother bore him once in labor bitter.

SMITH *as* CHORUS:
 His mother bore him once in labor bitter. Lightning struck, forced by fire that flared from Zeus, consumed, she died, untimely torn in childbed dead by blow of light. Of light the son was born. Blessed are we, for we shall know the mysteries of god. Thebes, nurse of Semele, crown your hair with ivy, redden with berries, grow green with bryony. Dionysus is our god. Hard are the labors of god but sweet to serve, sweet to cry, Bacchus. Evohe! Who is one with those who belong to the holy body of god? Who keeps the rite of Cybele, the mother? Bear your god in triumph. And when the weaving fates fulfilled the time, the bull-horned god was born of Zeus. With joy he crowned his son, set serpents on his head. Where the throng of women waits, possessed by Dionysus. With milk the earth flows, with wine it runs with the nectar of bees.

RYAN *as* CHORUS:

O Thebes, nurse of Semele, crown your hair with ivy grow green with bryony, redden with berries.
O city, with boughs of oak and fir, come dance the dance of god. Blessed are the thyrsus bearers.

BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

And when the weaving fates fulfilled the time, the bull-horned god was born of Zeus.

PENTHEUS, *thrust out of the birth canal, is born. He stands and addresses the spectators.*

PENTHEUS:

I am Pentheus, son of Echion and Agave, and King of Thebes.

PENTHEUS *replaces DIONYSUS in the line of men on the floor by pushing DIONYSUS out. DIONYSUS goes to the entrance of the birth canal and enters. He is much more active than PENTHEUS was. As DIONYSUS is drawn between the legs of the women over the backs of the men, he fondles the women and speaks. There are four versions of DIONYSUS's first speech which is spoken directly to the audience just before DIONYSUS enters the birth canal.*

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Good evening, I see you found your seats. My name is William Finley, son of William Finley. I was born 27 years ago. Two months after my birth the hospital in which I was born burned to the ground. I've come here for three important reasons. The first and most important of these is to announce my divinity. The second is to establish my rites and rituals. And the third is to be born, if you'll excuse me.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Good evening, I see you found your seats. My name is Joan MacIntosh, daughter of Walter MacIntosh and June Wyatt. I was born 23 years ago in a hospital in Newark, New Jersey. I have come here for three very important reasons. The first and most important of these reasons is to announce my divinity. I am a god. The second of these reasons is to establish my rites and rituals. As you can see, they are already in progress. And the third is to be born, if you'll excuse me.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Good evening, my name is Pat McDermott. I was born on August 12 about a generation ago in the state of Nebraska. My mother's name is Ada Belle. Ada Belle was born in Eads, Colorado. That was a town in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains. Ada Belle used to tell me that on a clear day you could see Pike's Peak. But Ada Belle might've been lying, because the town's not there anymore. Some folks say I'm a bastard. Ada Belle says different. Ada Belle says I'm the son of god. I've come here tonight for three very important reasons. The first of these reasons is to announce my divinity. I am a god. The second of these reasons is to establish my rites and my rituals. As you can see, they've already started, and they're coming along just fine. And the third reason is to be born, if you'll excuse me.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Mother! Mother! Mother!

He pulls himself from the row of men, rolls, and ends in a woman's lap.

You're not my mother. My name is Jason Bosseau. I am the son of Damar Bosseau and Jessie Bartoletti. I was born 27 years ago in a small, boring, typical Midwestern town in southeastern Kansas called Pittsburgh. Now this town has 18,000 people in it and it's just 40 miles down the road from where last year's Miss America was born. I've come here tonight for three important reasons. Number one is to announce my divinity. I mean: I am a god. Number two is to establish my rites and rituals. As you can see, they are already in progress. And number three is to be born—in this, my birth ritual, if you'll excuse me.

The birth ritual ends with a two beat freeze. The performers rise and dress while repeating the same lines they said while undressing. Then they squat in a circle facing outward. DIONYSUS also dresses. He remains outside the circle. He addresses the audience, making eye contact, very relaxed, easy-going. All the other performers remain squatting. There are six versions of this speech, two by Finley, two by Bosseau, one by MacIntosh, one by McDermott.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

I was brought up Roman Catholic. So for kicks I would go to a place on 42nd street called the Laff Movie. They played Bugs Bunny cartoons and Laurel and Hardy shorts and lots of other stuff. I loved it. One day, when I was about 12 years old, I was in the Laff Movie and this big fat guy with a big mustache sits next to me eating a falafel sandwich. He turned and looked at me and said, "Hey, kid. You remind me of Dionysus. I like that." *Pause.* I moved three seats away. And you know what? He was right. I mean, I'm it!

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Here I am. Dionysus once again. Now for those of you who believe what I just told you, that I am a god, you are going to have a terrific evening. The rest of you are in for an hour and a half of being up against the wall. Those of you who do believe can join us in what we do next. It's a celebration, a ritual, an ordeal, an ecstasy. An ordeal is something you go through. An ecstasy is what happens to you when you get there.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Now I noticed when I went around tonight, before we got deeply into my mysteries, that there were a lot of snickering faces. The kind of faces that doubt that I am a god. That shouldn't be. To say that I am not a god is the same as saying that my name is not Jason Bosseau, or that I am not 27 years old, or that my parents' names are not Bosseau and Bartoletti. To say that I am not a god is like saying that my name is not Dionysus or that I was not in fact born right here before your eyes in a garage at 33 Wooster Street.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Here I am. Once again born the god Dionysus. Those of you who believe, who are willing to let yourselves go and admit the possibility of believing that I am a god, you're going to be part of a genuinely holy experience. But those of you who do not believe, I must warn you that you are flirting with cataclysm. Our ordeal brings a lot of pain. But it leads to an ecstasy. It's a celebration of me, of my nativity. And if anyone tries to stop it, I'll kill that person.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Here I am. Dionysus this time. Now I noticed that there were some disbelievers among you when I announced my divinity. If you deny me and my mysteries, if you deny that I was born a god before your very eyes, then you deny truth and you shall suffer for it. If, however, you believe what I tell you, you shall have an extraordinary experience tonight. Something you won't forget. Together we can make one community. We can celebrate together. Be joyous together. Reach ecstasy together. So join us in what we do next. It's a circle dance around the sacred spot of my birth. It's a celebration of me, of my nativity.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Now I noticed some of you were slapping bugs when I was telling you I was a god. Well, I tell you, if you don't believe me, it's going to be a couple of hours of being up against the wall. On the other hand, if you believe what I say, we can shake this room and get the blood running. And later on, it'll go up to your eyes and you'll see clearer. What we do next is called an ecstasy. It's a circle dance around the spot of my birth, and the more people that join, the bigger the circle gets. Oh, yes, it's a ritual. If you don't know what a ritual is, a ritual is an intrauterine device that is not a prophylactic. It's a celebration of me, of my nativity.

The ecstasy dance begins when anyone squatting in the circle starts an "OM" sound which others join making it swell into a driving rhythm. Anyone may add words singing solo, in unison, or in counterpoint.

CHORUS:

On Bacchae, on you Bacchae, bear your god in triumph home. So his mother bore him once. Come dance the dance of god. Of light the son was born.

Rising slowly, the performers dance counterclockwise around the mats. One of them finds a drum under a tower; another a flute; another a tambourine. DIONYSUS sets the rhythm with hand cymbals. The circle expands, breaks, becomes its own thing. Spectators join on their own or are invited by performers. The ecstasy dance intensifies and goes around the towers and may fill the whole theatre. Sometimes the dancing is so intense that people—spectators as well as performers—take off their clothes. The dance continues for at least 10 minutes. Then PENTHEUS stops it by pulling the performers out of it one by one, forcefully stopping their dancing, making them squat silently. Sometimes a performer even after having been stilled returns to dancing and needs to be taken down again by PENTHEUS. The participating spectators are abandoned—and after a while they find places to sit, to become watchers again. Finally all the performers leave the ecstasy dance and squat on the mats facing inward in a newly formed circle.

CHORUS *chanting continuously:*

Pen-thee-oos, Pen-thee-oos.

The ecstasy songs and rhythm are counteracted by the long, wailing "Pen-thee-oos" chant. When everyone is in the circle, PENTHEUS stops the chanting of his name one by one by placing his hand over the mouth of each performer in turn. Then PENTHEUS steps to the center of the circle and talks to the "people of Thebes."

Sometimes when Shepard plays PENTHEUS, he says the whole speech below, "I was away from the city [...] I'll have his head, and his wand, cut off" before the birth ritual. In that case, he does not repeat the speech after the dance. Instead, PENTHEUS joins the ecstasy dance. During the dance he discovers and reviles his own participation, his own nakedness. Ashamed and enraged, he dresses, pulls each performer individually out of the dance, waits for the formation of the "Pen-thee-oos" circle. Then he begins, "If I allow disorder in my house." PENTHEUS climbs one of the towers during the ecstasy dance, watches what happens, and then speaks through a bullhorn. At the sound of his amplified voice all the stage and house lights come up full. Everyone in the theatre is caught in the midst of their bacchanal—either as participants or as voyeurs.

SHEPHARD as PENTHEUS:

I was away from the city when reports of strange disorders reached me. Stories of our women leaving home to frisk among the thickets on the mountains, dancing in honor of the latest divinity, a certain Dionysus, whoever that may be. In their midst stand bowls brimming with wine, while one by one the women wander off to secret nooks to satisfy the lusts of men. Priestesses of Bacchus they claim they are. But it's really Aphrodite they adore. My jailers have some of them safely in prison and the others will be hunted down off the mountain like the animals they are. Even my own mother, Agave, and Autonoë, Acteon's mother. Well, the steel-net trap is closing and I will soon stop this obscene disorder. Stories have also come to be of a stranger here in Thebes from Lydia. His days and nights he spends with women and girls, dangling before them the joys of initiation in his mysteries. Well, let me get him under this roof and I'll stop the bouncing of his head and the throbbing of his wand. I'll have his head, and his wand, cut off. Go now!

The performers go to their "homes" in various places in the theatre—under platforms, in the towers, etc.

When Dia plays PENTHEUS the ecstasy dance ends differently. As the dance begins, PENTHEUS slips out of the theatre and goes to a room directly over the theatre on the second floor of The Performing Garage. When he hears the ecstasy dance reach a climax, he goes outside the theatre and pounds on the large, metal main garage door. As soon as the performers hear him pounding, they grab their clothes and duck under platforms or run to corners of the space to dress and hide. Only TIRESIAS and CADMUS are left in the center. Then PENTHEUS opens a smaller door and enters the theatre from the street. He confronts TIRESIAS and CADMUS.

DIA as PENTHEUS:

Tiresias the seer tricked out in a dapple fawn skin! And you, my own grandfather, playing at the bacchante with a wand? Sir, I shrink to see your old age so foolish. Shake off that ivy, Grandfather, shake it off! This man claims that Dionysus is a god who was sewn into the thigh of Zeus. That is a lie.

SHEPHARD as PENTHEUS:

If I allow disorder in my house, I'd surely have to license it abroad.¹⁸ A man who deals fairly with his own, he can make manifest justice in the state. But he who crosses the law, or tries to bring the rulers under him, shall never have a word of praise from me. The man the state has put in place must have obedient hearing to his least command when it is right and even when it is not. He who accepts this teaching I can trust, ruler or ruled, to function in his place, to stand his

own even in a storm of spears. A mate to trust in battle at one's side. There is no greater wrong than disobedience. This ruins cities, tears down homes, and breaks the battle front in panic. If men live decently, it is because discipline saves their very lives for them. Should I then yield this city to one man? Better I should be beaten by a woman. I will not yield this city to one man. Go back to your homes.

Everyone leaves the center except PENTHEUS, TIRESIAS, and CADMUS.

CADMUS: Pentheus, you are a reckless boy. You don't understand the consequences of your words. You are talking madness.

TIRESIAS: You give a wise man an honest brief to plead and his eloquence is no remarkable achievement. But Pentheus you're glib. Your words come rolling out smoothly on your tongue as if you were wise instead of foolish. The man whose glibness flows from his conceit of speech declares the thing he is: a worthless and a stupid citizen.

CADMUS: Tiresias advises well, my boy. This god whom you ridicule may some day possess enormous power and prestige throughout Hellas.

TIRESIAS: Mankind, young man, possess two supreme blessings. The first of these is the goddess Demeter or Earth, whichever name you choose to call her. It was she who gave to man his nourishment of grain. But after her there came the son of Semele, who matched her present by inventing liquid wine as his gift to mankind. For, filled with that good gift, suffering mankind forgets its grief. From it comes sleep and with it oblivion to the troubles of the day. There is no other medicine for misery.

As TIRESIAS speaks, a high open sound swells from the CHORUS who are in different parts of the room. The sound fills the whole theatre. A kind of human-made siren.

TIRESIAS: And when we pour the shining wine, we pour the god of wine himself.

The sound climaxes and ends.

PENTHEUS: This is your doing, Tiresias.

CADMUS: Grandson, your home here is with us, with our customs and traditions, not outside, alone.

PENTHEUS: You want still another god revealed so you can pocket the profits from burnt offerings and bird watching.

CADMUS: You sneer, do you, at the story that Dionysus was sewn into the thigh of Zeus? Let Tiresias teach you.

TIRESIAS: When Zeus rescued his infant son from the thunderbolt and brought him to Olympus, Hera plotted to hurl the child from heaven. But Zeus, like the god he is, countered her. Breaking off a tiny fragment of that ether that surrounds the world, he molded from it a dummy Dionysus and this he "showed" to Hera. But, with time, men garbled the word and said that Dionysus was "sewed" into the thigh of Zeus.

- CADMUS: Even if Dionysus is no god, as you assert, persuade yourself that he is. The fiction's a noble one. Your aunt Semele will seem the mother of a god and that bestows no small honor on this house. It's good politics.
- TIRESIAS: Moreover, this is a god of prophecy. His worshippers are endowed with mantic powers.
- CADMUS: Once god enters the body of a person, he fills it with the breath of prophecy.

Led by TIRESIAS, but coming from all over the theatre, the sound of rapid, shallow panting. It crescendos and stops suddenly as TIRESIAS speaks.

- TIRESIAS: Dionysus has usurped the function of warlike Ares. When you see an army mustered under arms stricken with panic before it even lifts a spear, that is the work of Dionysus. Some day you will see him among the crags at Delphi, twirling and waving his wand, leaping the pastures that stretch between the peaks. Dionysus will be great throughout the Hellas that once was yours.
- PENTHEUS: Tiresias, if it weren't for your old age, I'd have you imprisoned with these crazy women for importing into Thebes these filthy mysteries.
- TIRESIAS: Mark my words, Pentheus. Do not be so sure that power is what matters in the life of man. Do not mistake for wisdom the fantasies of your sick mind.
- CADMUS: Think, grandson, you are pleased when men stand outside your door and the whole city glorifies the name of Pentheus.

As CADMUS says "the name of Pentheus," a faint echo of the "Pen—thee—oos" chant emanates from corners of the room. PENTHEUS's name is chanted three times.

- PENTHEUS: So, too, the god. He delights in glory. Crown your head with ivy, pour him libations, welcome this god to Thebes.
- PENTHEUS: When you see wine shining at the feasts of women, you may be sure that the festival is rotten.
- CADMUS: Your mind is distracted now. What you're thinking is sheer delirium.
- TIRESIAS: Dionysus, I admit, does not compel a woman to be chaste. Always, and in every case, it is a woman's character and nature that keeps her chaste. And so, therefore, even in the rites of Dionysus, the unchaste woman will be unchaste.

When Smith plays TIRESIAS and Finley plays CADMUS, they roll on the floor laughing and touching each other, imitating a sexual orgy. PENTHEUS looks on, barely able to contain disgust and mocking rage. TIRESIAS and CADMUS stop abruptly.

- CADMUS: But Cadmus and I, whom you ridicule, will join the dances of the god. We will crown our heads with ivy.
- CADMUS: Come with us. The revels have begun.

CADMUS takes PENTHEUS's arm. PENTHEUS wrenches himself free.

- PENTHEUS: Go worship your Dionysus if you want to. But don't wipe your madness off on me.
- TIRESIAS: You're mad, beyond the power of any drug to cure, for you are drugged with madness.
- PENTHEUS: You're going to regret this folly of yours.
- TIRESIAS: The words of fools finish in folly.

TIRESIAS's "folly" is trilled and echoed in decrescendo throughout the theatre. TIRESIAS somersaults around PENTHEUS ending at the fountain. Then TIRESIAS and CADMUS join hands and somersault around PENTHEUS repeating "The words of fools finish in folly."

This leads to the "tag chorus." Each performer addresses a particular segment of the audience. All around the room, individual CHORUS members are quietly speaking. There is no attempt at unison. Words and phrases overlap, break off, and re-assemble.

- CHORUS: Let me come to Cyprus, island of Aphrodite, home of the loves that cast their spells on the hearts of people. Or Paphos, where the hundred-mouthed barbarian river brings ripeness without rain. To Pieria, haunt of the Muses. And there desire, and there the right to do as I please.

Infuriated, PENTHEUS runs from performer to performer tagging each one at a time to silence them. The first time a performer is tagged, often in mid-sentence, they freezes until everyone is tagged and the theatre is quiet. But then the CHORUS resumes. The next time PENTHEUS tags a person, they freezes for a count of twenty, then for a count of ten, then five, then no pause at all. Losing control of his "city," PENTHEUS grows more frantic running around the room trying to shut the CHORUS down.

- CHORUS: These blessings he gave: laughter to the flute, and the loosing of cares when the shining wine is spilled at the feast of the gods—
- CHORUS: Far in the air of heaven the gods of heaven live. But they watch the lives of people—
- CHORUS: Briefly we live, briefly, then die. what passes for wisdom is not wisdom. Oh, let me come to the holy hill of Olympus. There the lovely graces—
- CHORUS: Holiness, queen of heaven, holiness on golden wing, who hovers over earth, do you hear what Pentheus says? Do you hear his blasphemies?
- CHORUS: Holiness, queen of heaven, holiness on golden wing who hovers over earth, do you hear what Pentheus says? Do you hear his blasphemy against the god of garlands and banquets, Bromius, evoke! Semele's son—
- CHORUS: Do you hear what Pentheus says? Do you hear his stupid blasphemies? Briefly we live, briefly, then die. Wherefore I say he who hunts a glory, he who tracks some boundless, superhuman dream may lose his harvest here and now and garner death. Such men are mad and their counsels evil. Let me come to Cyprus, island of Aphrodite—

- CHORUS: The deity, the son of Zeus, in feast, in festival delights. He loves the goddess Peace, generous of good, preserver of the young. To rich and poor—
- CHORUS: These blessings he gave: laughter to the flute and the loosing of cares when the shining wine is spilled at the feast of the gods. The life of quiet good, the wisdom that accepts. These abide unshaken, sustaining the houses of men. Let me come to—

Each night, the mix of sound is different. Spectators close to a performer hear that person and overhear the sonic mélange. There is a building of energy toward a climax as PENTHEUS moves more and more swiftly through the crowded space trying to reach and quiet each performer. Spectators frequently add their voices to those of the performers. Sometimes spectators physically try to stop PENTHEUS. From amidst the audience, DIONYSUS acknowledges the CHORUS, but does not directly participate in it. DIONYSUS may chat with spectators.

- CHORUS: He gives the simple gift of wine, the gladness of the grape, the laughter of the flute. But him who scoffs he hates, and him who mocks—
- CHORUS: Far in the air the gods of heaven live. They watch the lives of men. And what passes for wisdom is not wisdom. In laughter, in festival the gods delight. But him who scoffs she hates, and him who mocks—

As the scene builds, the CHORUS puts its words to melodies from familiar songs. These erupt in different parts of the room spreading infectiously. Soon performers and spectators are singing and clapping together.

These blessings he gave: laughter to the flute, and the loosing of cares when the shining wine is spilled at the feast of the gods, and the wine bowl casts its sleep on feasters crowned with ivy.

To the Tune of "Hi-Ho the Derry-O."

- CHORUS: Laughter to the flute, laughter to the flute,
Hi-Ho the Derry-O laughter to the flute!
- CHORUS: A tongue without reins, defiance, un wisdom, their end is disaster. But the life of quiet good, the wisdom that accepts, these abide unshaken, preserving and sustaining the houses of women and men.
- CHORUS: These blessings he gave: laughter to the flute and the loosing of cares when the shining wine is spilled at the feast of the gods, and the wine bowl casts its sleep on feasters crowned with ivy. Far in the air of heaven the gods of heaven live. But they watch the lives of people. And what passes for wisdom—
- CHORUS: Let us go to Cyprus, island of—
- CHORUS: Cyprus, island of Aphrodite, home of the loves that—
- CHORUS: Home of the loves that cast their spells on the hearts of women. And there desire, and there the right is ours to worship and do as we—
- CHORUS: Far in the air the children of heaven live. But they watch the lives of people. And what—

CHORUS: Defiance, unwisdom, their end is disaster. But the life of quiet good, the wisdom that accepts, these abide unshaken, preserving

To the tune of “Yankee Doodle.”

Dionysus god of wine, god of joy and laughter!
Dionysus god of wine, god of joy and laughter!
Dionysus god of wine, god of joy and laughter!
Dionysus god of wine, god of joy and laughter!
CHORUS: Happy are those for whom the day is blessed, and doubly blessed the night.
CHORUS: These blessings he gave: laughter—
CHORUS: Cast their spells on the hearts of men. Or Paphos, where the hundred-mouthed barbarian—
CHORUS: Abide, unshaken, preserving, sustaining the houses—

To the tune of “Clementine.”

Lovely graces, lovely graces,
where the lovely graces go!
There the right is mine to worship,
where the lovely graces go!

At each performance one tune finally dominates. The repertory is extensive.

To the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

What the simple people do, people do, people do,
What the simple people do, I too believe and do.

To the tune of “Auld Lang Syne.”

The things that simple people do,
I too believe and do.
The things that common men believe,
I too believe and do.

To the tune of “Jingle Bells.”

Shining wine, shining wine, shining wine is spilled,
When we pour the shining wine, we pour the god himself!

To the tune of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Far in the air of heaven, all the children of heaven live!
Far in the air of heaven, all the children of heaven live!

SCHECHNER PLAYS

Far in the air of heaven, all the children of heaven live!
They watch the lives of all!

To the tune of "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush."

Let us go to Pieria, Pieria, Pieria!
Let us go to Pieria to worship as we please!

To the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down."

Dionysus, god of joy, god of joy, god of joy!
Dionysus, god of joy!
Di-o-nysus!

What the common people do, people do, people do!
What the common people do!
I too believe and do!

When PENTHEUS is too exhausted to run or stand, he collapses, shouting with his last breath a cry of desperation. When this happens, the bedlam of the CHORUS instantly stops.

PENTHEUS: Go! Someone! Go! Go to the place where this prophet prophesies. Tear it up! Pry it up with crowbars! Demolish everything you see! Throw his fillets to the wind! That will make him mad enough. And then scour the city for that effeminate stranger. The man who infects our women with this strange disease. And pollutes our beds. When you find him, I want him brought here to me—in chains.

There are two versions of the following line.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
He shall die the death he deserves by being stoned to death in Thebes.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:
He shall come to rue his drunken merrymaking here in Thebes.

PENTHEUS: Well? Where is he?

Dionysus is calmly sitting among the spectators.

DIONYSUS: Here I am.

CHORUS *a single voice*:
O greatest light of our holy revels, how glad I am to see your face.

DIONYSUS: Thanks.

PENTHEUS: Well, stranger, you are attractive, to women at least, which explains your presence here in Thebes.

There are two versions of this first encounter between DIONYSUS and PENTHEUS.

First version.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
Where did you get that lousy haircut?

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
I told Ada Belle: It's time for me to be about my father's business. And she said to me: Son, you ain't goin' nowhere till you fix your hair.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
Your curls are long. You don't wrestle, do you? And what fair skin you have. No daylight complexion, that. It comes from the night, when you hunt Aphrodite with your beauty. Now tell me. Who are you and where do you come from?

Second version.

PENTHEUS:
Well, stranger, you are attractive, to women at least, which explains your presence here in Thebes. *Examining* DIONYSUS. Your curls are long. You don't wrestle, do you? And what fair skin you have. No daylight complexion, that. It comes from the night, when you hunt Aphrodite with your beauty. Now tell me. Who are you and where do you come from?

There are four versions of the following speech.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
My name is William Finley and you've no doubt heard of the flowering slums to the east of here over on Sixth Street?

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:
My name's Jason Bosseau and you've probably heard of the flowering slums to the east of here on Fifth Street?

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
My name is Joan MacIntosh. And you've heard no doubt of the flowering slums to the east on Seventh Street?

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
My name's Pat McDermott. You've heard no doubt of the Circus corner of Bleecker and MacDougal?

PENTHEUS's reply to each of these speeches is:

PENTHEUS: I know the place. It rings the city of Sardis.

There are four versions of the following speech.

FINLEY as DIONYSUS:

Well, I don't live there. I used to dance there, until they closed it down. I live to the west, on Christopher Street, number 91. That's 69 plus 22.

BOSSEAU as DIONYSUS:

I don't come from there. I'm from Kansas. But I live there now, on Fifth, between Second and Third.

MACINTOSH as DIONYSUS:

Well, I don't come from there. I used to go to school there. I live to the west. At 29 Washington Square West, 16B.

MCDERMOTT as DIONYSUS:

I don't come from there. I come from the state of Nebraska. But I can be found up there.

PENTHEUS:

Who is this new god whose worship you have imported into Thebes?

Each DIONYSUS uses his or her own name. When a woman plays DIONYSUS, she does not masquerade as a man. All references to "him" or "his" become "her" or "hers." However PENTHEUS sees a man and continues to refer to "him." There are four versions of the following speech.

FINLEY as DIONYSUS:

A god descended on William Finley, Dionysus, son of Zeus, son of William Finley, and instructed me.

BOSSEAU as DIONYSUS:

A god descended on Jason Bosseau, son of Zeus, son of Damar Bosseau. He instructed me.

MACINTOSH as DIONYSUS:

A god descended upon Joan MacIntosh, daughter of Zeus, daughter of Walter MacIntosh. She instructed me.

MCDERMOTT as DIONYSUS:

A god descended on Pat McDermott, son of Zeus and son of Ada Belle. He instructed me.

PENTHEUS:

You have some local Zeus that spawns new gods?

There are three versions of the following speech.

FINLEY *or* MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

No local Zeus. I speak of your Zeus, the same Zeus we were just talking about. You know, Zeus.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

No local Zeus. I speak of the express Zeus. The same Zeus we were just talking about. Zeus.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

No local Zeus. The express Zeus, your Zeus, the almighty Zeus, the omniscient Zeus. The same Zeus we were just talking about. Zeus.

There are two versions of the following speech.

DIONYSUS: Well, first he saw me and then I saw him. It was sort of like now. Face to face.
As proof, he gave me his mysteries.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Well, I saw him in a dream. It was sort of like now. It was face to face. It was a face-to-face dream.
As proof, he gave me his mysteries.

PENTHEUS: What form do they take, these mysteries of yours?

DIONYSUS: Oh, my mysteries are very difficult to describe. But they're out of sight.

PENTHEUS: Tell me the benefits those who know your mysteries enjoy.

DIONYSUS: Well, I can't speak for them and they can't hear you right now. But it's worth hearing about soon.

PENTHEUS: Your answers are designed to make me curious.

DIONYSUS: Curiosity is useless with my mysteries. You just have to accept them the way I am.

PENTHEUS: You say you saw a god. What form did he assume?

DIONYSUS: He assumed the form he had to take at the time. The choice was his, not mine.
Or mine, not his. Whatever you say.

PENTHEUS: You're evading the question. That's what I say.

DIONYSUS: Ask me some more. I'll do better.

PENTHEUS: Have you introduced your rites to other cities, or is Thebes the first?

DIONYSUS: No, Thebes isn't the first. Foreigners everywhere dance the way I dance.

PENTHEUS: They are more ignorant than Greeks.

There are two versions of the following speech.

DIONYSUS: No they're not. They're just quicker than Greeks.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

No, no, they're more limber than Greeks.

PENTHEUS: Do you hold your rites during the day or at night?

DIONYSUS: Mostly at night. Darkness is better.
 PENTHEUS: Better suited to lechery and seducing women.

There are two versions of the following speech.

DIONYSUS: Yeah. Daylight's nice too. Any time's nice for that, if that's your thing.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS *singing*:
 Honey in the morning, honey in the evening, honey in the supper time.

There are two versions to the following speech.

PENTHEUS: You are going to regret all this pernicious sophistry.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:
 You're going to regret all your clever answers.

DIONYSUS: You're beautiful.
 PENTHEUS: What a bold bacchante. You wrestle well, when it comes to words.
 DIONYSUS: Okay, what are you going to do with me now?

There are three versions of the following exchange.

First version.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
 First, I'm going to cut off your hair.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
 Now wait a minute. My hair is god's hair. If you touch my hair, you touch god. Please respect my hair.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
 Next I'm going to take away your glasses.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
 Oh, these? Here. You can have them. They belong to William Finley. They're Dionysus's. I was just wearing them for him.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
 Finally, I'm going to throw you in prison along with your women.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
 That'll be fun, I can't wait.



FIGURE 8.1: Playful Dionysus taunts uptight Pentheus. On the left, Pentheus/William Shephard on the right, Dionysus/William Finley. The Performing Garage, New York, 1968. Photograph: Raeanne Rubenstein.

Second version.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

First, I am going to cut off your hair.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Hold on. My hair is god's hair. If you touch my hair, you touch god. Touch my hair and I'll kill you.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

Then I'm going to take away that button.

Bosseau is wearing a "Dionysus in 69" button, in red and blue, yin-yang style, which DIONYSUS throws down on the audience at the end of the play.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Oh, this? Here you can have it. It belongs to Dionysus. I have hundreds more back there by the light board. I was just holding it for him.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

Then I'm going to have you castrated and thrown in prison with your women.

Third version.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
First I'm going to shave you bald.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
No you're not. Only god touches my hair.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
I'm going to cut off your balls and stick them in your mouth and put you down in that hole. I'm going to put you in prison.

DIONYSUS: Shit. Here I stand. One man under guard. But guard will set me free. He hears you. He sees what you're doing.

PENTHEUS: You'll be with your women in prison when you call on your god for help.

From this point on, DIONYSUS often addresses PENTHEUS by the performer's actual name. For convenience, the standard name in this text is "Bill." However, when Richard Dia is specifically alluded to, "Richard" will be used.

DIONYSUS: Look. You don't understand, Bill. He's here with us. He sees you right now. He knows what you're doing.

PENTHEUS: Where is he? I don't see him.

DIONYSUS: If you don't see him, you're blind.

PENTHEUS: Seize him. He is mocking me and Thebes.

DIONYSUS: I warn you, place no chains on me.

PENTHEUS: I said, take him away. And I'm the stronger here.

DIONYSUS: Bill, you're beautiful, but you're crazy. Now, look, I'll count to three. Someone take him away. One. Two.

PENTHEUS: Take him away!

DIONYSUS: One. You don't know the limits of your strength. Two. You're acting as if you don't know what you're doing. Three. You don't know who you are.

PENTHEUS: I am Pentheus. Son of Echion and Agave. King of Thebes.

There are three version of the following exchange.

DIONYSUS *to* SHEPHARD:

Pentheus? Son of Echion and Agave? King of Thebes? Bullshit. You're Bill Shephard. You're in the Group. You're no god, but you are in the Group. Pentheus? Echion? You're coo-coo. Take him away.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS *to* SHEPHARD:

Pentheus? Son of Echion and Agave and King of Thebes? Bullshit. You were a little man with a big dream. And now you're a big man in trouble. That's who you are.

DIONYSUS *to* DIA:

Pentheus, son of Echion and Agave and King of Thebes? Bullshit. You're Richard Dia. You were born in New York City. Your father makes mandolins. You're a nice guy. Sometimes we have coffee together. You're in the Group. You're no god, but you're in the Group. When you get like this, you're impossible. Will someone please take him away?

There are two versions of the following speech.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

Throw him into the stud stalls where the beasts copulate.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

Throw him into the stables under the palace.

PENTHEUS: Since he enjoys darkness so much, give him all he wants. Let him dance down there in the dark. As for these women of yours, I'm going to have them sold as slaves or put to work at my looms. That will silence the beating of their drums.

There are two versions of the following speech.

DIONYSUS: Okay, okay, I'll go. But I won't suffer. That's not what happens. We've been playing your game long enough. I'm getting bored with it. Now we're going to play my game. The Dionysus Game. It's much more fun. If you say I'm not the god, I say you're not the king. And you're not the king. When you chain me, you chain the god. See you in 69!

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Okay, I'll go. But I won't suffer. That's not what happens. You see, if you say I'm not the god, then I say you're not the king. And if I say you're not the king, you won't be the king. We've been playing your game long enough. Now we're going to play my game. It's much more fun. It's called the Dionysus Game.

DIONYSUS goes into the pit, the deep trench close to the north wall of The Performing Garage. The pit is covered. There is a 4' by 4' trap door opening to it.

After DIONYSUS descends into the pit, from the periphery of the theatre in silence the CHORUS comes one by one to surround PENTHEUS. All face in looking at him or looking beyond him at each other. Each says something joyful or eventful that happened to them that day. Or sometime earlier in their life. If nothing comes to mind, a performer simply says their name. As each CHORUS person speaks, they turn away from PENTHEUS. Some sample remarks.

SMITH *as* CHORUS:

I said to Ray, "Tell me five things your hands do." And he answered, "They write, they rest, they smoke, they wash, they die."

BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

We painted another room in our apartment today, adding a red room to the blue room and the yellow room.

BOSSEAU *as* CHORUS:

I had a parakeet when I was twelve years old. And the parakeet's name was Chico. One day he flew away.

MCDERMOTT *as* CHORUS:

For a long time I tried to think of who Sam Yorty¹⁹ reminded me of. And finally it hit me. Ozzie Nelson.²⁰

FINLEY *as* CHORUS:

My name is William Finley.

DIA *as* CHORUS:

Joan, on my way up Broadway today I was stopped by two men and one woman. One of the men said, "We are three witches."

SHEPHARD *as* CHORUS:

Today I wrote one of the most important letters of my life.

MARGARET *as* CHORUS:

There is a cop in Central Park who rides a big bay horse and carries a parrot on his shoulder.

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS:

Today I was seduced by Sydney the Giant Far Eastern Slithery, tickled by Morris the Midget Mauler, and raped by Sigmund the Sadist.

During this scene, DIONYSUS very quietly comes out of the pit and sits among the audience. After the last performer speaks, DIONYSUS asks a question of one of them.

DIONYSUS: Pat, who does Ozzie Nelson remind you of?

PENTHEUS: How did you escape?

DIONYSUS: How did I escape? How did you escape?

PENTHEUS: How did you escape!

DIONYSUS: Okay, Bill. You asked first. I escaped with someone's help.

PENTHEUS: Who is this mysterious someone?

There are several answers to this questions.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Eight androgynous hermaphrodites. They who make my cock grow for mankind.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Dionysus, the god who has enough power to turn on all mankind.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Dionysus. She who turns on all mankind.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

An androgynous, philanthropic hermaphrodite. He who lets his balls hang down like grapes on the vine.

PENTHEUS: Splendid contribution, that.

DIONYSUS: Don't knock the gift that is my biggest glory.

PENTHEUS: Oh, you're very clever, but not where it counts.

DIONYSUS: You're wrong. Where it counts most, there I am most clever.

DIONYSUS gestures and the CHORUS sings one of the tag-chorus songs for that night. As they sing, the CHORUS dances around PENTHEUS, moving more and more swiftly. They continue until PENTHEUS screams and DIONYSUS gestures the CHORUS to be silent. During the next dialogue between DIONYSUS and PENTHEUS, the CHORUS presses in on PENTHEUS. The CHORUS makes and passes faces among themselves. Surrounded by ridicule, PENTHEUS is frustrated and enraged.

PENTHEUS:

Like a blazing fire, your Bacchic ecstasy spreads. But it comes too close. We are disgraced, humiliated in the eyes of Hellas. You there, go down to the Electran Gates and order out all the heavy-armored infantry. Call up the fastest troops among our cavalry. The mobile squadrons and the archers. We march against the Bacchae! Affairs are out of hand when we tamely endure such conduct in our women.

There are two versions of the response to PENTHEUS.

FINLEY *or* BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Oh, Bill, you're too much. Always ranting and screaming to people who aren't there. Talking about armies and cavalry. Making long speeches of bad poetry. You know you've got to learn to give. You can't always command.

MACINTOSH *or* MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Bill, you're too much. Who are you talking to? There's no army in this room. You know, Bill, if I were you I'd stop giving so many orders. I'd learn to take orders.

PENTHEUS: Don't lecture me. I put you in that pit once and I can put you down there again.

DIONYSUS: Bill, you don't understand. You're a man. I'm a god. This is a tragedy. The odds are against you. If I were you, I'd give me a present. A sacrifice. God's don't have everything, you know.

PENTHEUS:

I'll give you—your god—the sacrifice you deserve. Your victims will be your women. I'm going to make a great slaughter in the woods of Cithaeron.

There are three versions of DIONYSUS's response.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

You'll be destroyed. Their yes will flood your no. Our ecstasy will eat up your hate and shit it out again.

BOSSEAU *or* MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

You'll be destroyed. Our collective yes will take your uptight little no and laugh it out of here. You don't have a chance.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Their bouncing breasts will turn back your spears. You don't have a chance.

The action becomes very personal at this point. The performers playing DIONYSUS and PENTHEUS have to understand each other, be empathetic with each other. In all six versions of the scene, when DIONYSUS says, "Try it yourself," or "You can't get it from anyone else," or "You'll see. I'm the one," the CHORUS runs away from PENTHEUS, leaving him alone in the center of the theatre.

First, a version between FINLEY and SHEPHARD.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

Finley, it's hopeless talking to you and you never would wrestle me.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

I don't wrestle, Bill. But I can tell you how to end this hassle.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

How? By taking orders from my own slaves?

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

No, look. I'll bring them down without force. You don't need the heat.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

This is some kind of trap.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

A trap? A trap? A trapity-trapity-trapity-trap-trap-trap. *Singing.* Paranoia, paranoia! Para para para paranoia! Why is it a trap if I use my powers to help you?

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

You stand to lose too much if I win. And I know that you and Remi and Ciel and McDermott are out to get me.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

You're right. We've been rehearsing for months. We've been conspiring against you. Fool.

Shephard takes Finley's glasses off, gives them to a spectator to hold. He puts Finley in the starting position for Olympic wrestling, Finley kneeling on all fours, and Shephard on his knees with his arms around Finley. Shephard throws Finley on the mat. Finley does not resist.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Why did you do that?

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

Because I had to.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

What can I give you?

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I have this energy inside here, like a little animal. It's gnawing, eating me from the inside, trying to get out.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

I can give you any woman in this room.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I don't need you.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

You don't need me? Then try it yourself.

There is a much shorter version between Finley and Shephard.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

It's hopeless talking to you and you won't wrestle me.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

I don't wrestle, but I can help you end this hassle. I can give you any woman in this room.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I don't need you.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
You don't? Then try it yourself.

Shephard then goes into the audience seeking a woman. If one is responsive, Shephard touches her, kisses her, tries to make love with her. He continues until she puts up the least resistance. At that point, he stops. Absolutely no force; only mutuality.

The Finley and Dia version.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:
It's hopeless talking to you. I just want to obliterate you.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
Richard, I can't be touched. I can't be touched. Can't be touched, can't be touched, can't be touched.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:
All the love that I bare in these private hours of dying plunges me into stillness and vacancy where a muddy cloud hovers about my head and my feet stagger lost in the swamp, ankle deep, stagnant. I, I crucified, laid bare to stumble.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
I reject that. It sucks.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:
I need someone to accept that.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
I can give you someone to accept that.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:
No, you can't.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
Yes, I can. Any woman in the audience. Anyone you want. Look around here, Richard. Her? Or her? I can give her to you, Richard.

He points to specific women in the audience.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:
I don't need you.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
You don't need me? Well, then, try it yourself.

Dia does not go into the audience seeking a woman. He recites some of his own poetry, asking for someone to come and help him.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

Come to me, someone. I need someone to be a mother to me, To be an angel to my needs. My needs are great. Sound the alarm, my need is great. Put up a wall if you're a mason. But if you're not, don't worry about walls. Come to me, someone. Put up a wall if you're a mason. One, two, buckle your shoe, Forget you're sad, forget you're blue. Every shadow is a cloud and every tear is only water. And remember this. Wherever there are shadows, there must be light nearby. And sorrow is a stepping stone to joy. Am I to become only my own echo, reflecting off stone walls? Why are there no shadows here? Where is the key to unlock the misery I abound in?

The Bosseau and Dia version.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

It's no use talking to you because you always felt that your life style was so much better than my life style.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Hey, Richard, my life style is better than yours. You know it. I mean, I've traveled to many places, many countries, and I've given to more than one hundred women. I've known many ecstasies.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

And that makes you a god?

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

That's part of it. Another part is that I could go out into this audience right now and select a woman of my choice and achieve ecstasy here and now. We'd make love and it would be good. I could do that.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

So could I.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

You don't believe that, Richard. Those are just lines. You can barely say them. You need my help, Richard, to get anywhere at all.

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

I don't need you for anything.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

You don't need me for anything?

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

Nothing.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Not even this?

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

Not even this.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Okay, Richard, okay. Try it yourself.

Here, as in the version with Finley, Dia recites his poetry.

The Bosseau and Shephard version. In this and all the remaining versions, Shephard remains in the center. He looks at various people in the audience. Sometimes a person comes to him. More often, no one does. Shephard crumbles, slowly, silently, and seemingly from within.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

It's hopeless talking with you, Bosseau, and you never would wrestle me.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

I don't wrestle, Bill, but I can give you what you need.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I don't need anything from you.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Bill, I can give you compassion. I can even give you ecstasy.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I don't believe you. I don't believe anything about you.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Well, you won't get it from anybody else.

The MacIntosh and Shepard version.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

It's hopeless talking to you. And you can't wrestle.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

I don't wrestle. But I can give you what you want.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I don't want anything from you.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

I can give you compassion.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
I don't believe you. I don't believe anything about you.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
You can't get it from anyone else.

The McDermott and Shephard version.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
It's hopeless talking to you. And you won't fight.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
No, I don't fight. But I can give you what you want.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
I don't want anything from you.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
I can put you out of your misery.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
Who says I'm miserable?

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
Sure you are. That's why you want to fight me.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
I don't need you.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
Nobody else can do it for you. You'll see. I'm the one.

*While PENTHEUS is in the center, the CHORUS and DIONYSUS move through the theatre.
DIONYSUS is the ever shifting instigator and nucleus of the CHORUS.*

*They meet in small groups. They talk, laugh, point at PENTHEUS, split, and meet again somewhere else.
The focus is divided between silent PENTHEUS in the center and the furtive CHORUS all around.*

CHORUS *but not in unison*:
When shall I dance once more with bare feet the all-night dances? Tossing my head for joy in the damp air, in the dew, as a running fawn might frisk for the green joy of wide fields.

Free from the fear of the hunt. Free from the circling beaters and the nets of woven mesh. Free from the hunters hallooing on their yelping packs.

And then, hard pressed, she sprints with the quickness of wind. Bounding over the marsh, leaping to frisk, leaping for joy, gay with the green of the leaves. To dance for joy in the forest. To dance where the darkness is deepest. Where no man is.

DIONYSUS: What time is it?

MCDERMOTT *as* CHORUS:

Slow, but unmistakable, the might of the gods moves on. It punishes that man infatuate of soul hardened in his pride disregarding the gods. The gods are crafty. They lie in wait a long step of time to hunt the unholy.

RYAN *as* CHORUS:

Small is the cost to believe in this: Whatever is god is strong.

DIONYSUS: We're going to kill him in twenty minutes. At 10:15. Pass it on.

DIONYSUS repeats this conspiratorially to the CHORUS and to spectators in several parts of the theatre. Spectators pass on the message.

BLAZER *as* CHORUS:

Wisdom. Honor. Victory. The gods are crafty. They lie in ambush a long step of time to hunt the unholy. Beyond the old beliefs no thought, no act, shall go. Whatever is god is strong. Honor is precious forever.

BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

Small, small is the cost to believe in this. Honor is precious forever.

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS:

Honor is precious forever. Slow but unmistakable the might of the gods moves on. In various ways one man outraces another.

RYAN *as* CHORUS:

Dislocate his elbow. We're going to kill him in eighteen minutes.

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS:

In seventeen minutes we're going to kill him. At 10:15 we're going to kill him. Will you help us kill Pentheus?

The CHORUS goes into the audience, enlisting as many people as they can.

SMITH *as* CHORUS:

The gods are crafty. They lie in ambush a long step of time to hunt the unholy. Slow but unmistakable the might of the gods moves on punishing that man infatuate of soul.

What is wisdom? What gift of the gods is held in honor like this: to hold your hand victorious over the heads of those you hate.

Honor is precious forever. Small is the cost to believe in this: whatever is god is strong. We're going to kill him in fifteen minutes, okay? Are you in?

PENTHEUS is almost always rejected by the women he approaches. Or he collapses in the center because no one comes to help him. In the run of 163 performances, people effectively aided PENTHEUS only twice.²¹ Most often, PENTHEUS is at first accepted but as he kisses and fondles a woman—he always sought a woman, and many at first respond affectionately—he is finally rejected because he goes “too far.” When PENTHEUS realizes there is no escaping his fate, he gives up. DIONYSUS approaches him. There are five versions of this scene. The tone of the scene differs from performance to performance.

The version used by Finley or Bosseau as DIONYSUS and Shephard or Dia as PENTHEUS.

DIONYSUS: Bill, I can give you what you want. I can give it to you, Bill. But first you have to do something for me. I can give you someone to accept you. But you have to do something for me.

PENTHEUS: What do you want me to do?

DIONYSUS: First I want you to relax. To be open. To be open to me. I want you to be vulnerable. To be very loving and very relaxed. Bill, I want you to be a woman for me.

PENTHEUS: What does that mean?

DIONYSUS: Ecstasy doesn't come cheap. If you give me what I want, I'll give you what you want. I'll give you any woman in this room. But first you have to make love to me.

PENTHEUS: You're an old hand at cunning.

DIONYSUS: Dionysus taught me everything I know.

PENTHEUS: What specifically do you want me to do?

DIONYSUS: Specifically, I want you to take off my shirt and my pants and my jock strap. Then I want you to caress me very slowly and carefully. I want you to caress my cock until it gets hard. And then I want you to take my cock in your mouth and caress it with your lips and your tongue and your teeth. I want you to suck on my cock. Bill, I want you to suck my cock.

PENTHEUS: What?

DIONYSUS: I want you to suck my cock.

PENTHEUS: Are you out of your mind?

DIONYSUS: If you don't do what I want, you'll have to confront the Bacchae and that means violence and rejection. Do you want every woman in this room to reject you, one after another? Is that what you want?

PENTHEUS: No. No! No!!

DIONYSUS: Then try what I ask. It's not so hard. Try it.

They kiss.

PENTHEUS: Not here. I can't do it here.

DIONYSUS: We can go upstairs, or in the toilet, or behind the dimmer board. We can go down into the pit. Why not in the pit, Bill? No one can see us there. It will be very private.
 PENTHEUS: Either I'll do what you want or I'll tear you limb from limb.

When Dia is PENTHEUS, DIONYSUS's speech after "Are you out of your mind?":

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

If you don't do what I want, you'll have to confront the Bacchae, and that means violence and rejection. Do you want to go out in the middle of this room and recite your silly poems?

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

No.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Do you want to have them rejected by everyone in the room, one person after another?

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

No.

When Bosseau is DIONYSUS playing with Dia, the sequence goes:

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Richard, if I am out of my mind, you will have to confront the Bacchae, and that means violence and rejection and bloodshed. And that means you will be killed. Now is that what you want?

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

No.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Do you want to be rejected by every woman in this room, one after another? Do you?! Do you?!

DIA *as* PENTHEUS:

No! No! No!

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Well, then, Richard, why don't you try it? It's not so hard.

When DIONYSUS is a woman the dynamics of the scene are different than when performed by two men. Here is the version between MacIntosh and Shephard.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Bill, I was right, wasn't I? I am the only person in this room who cares enough about you. I am the only one who can give you compassion. I can give you compassion and ecstasy, Bill. But first you have to do something for me.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

What do you want me to do?

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

I want you to do exactly what I tell you to do.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

What do you mean?

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Ecstasy doesn't come cheap.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

You're an old hand at cunning.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Dionysus taught me everything I know.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

What specifically do you want me to do?

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

First I want you to relax. Then I want you to take off your clothes. I want you to be vulnerable and open to me. Then I want you to take off my shirt and pants and caress my body. I want you to kiss me full on the mouth. I want you to caress my face and hair with your fingers. I want you to blow into my ears and bite them with your teeth and lick them with your tongue. I want you to rub and scratch my back, my arms, and my legs. I want you to suck on my breasts. I want you to lick and tickle my belly. I want you to spread my legs and caress the insides of my thighs. I want you to put your mouth inside my cunt and bite it gently with your teeth and lick it with your tongue. I want you to eat me around the folds of skin and way deep inside.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I can't do what you want.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

You can't do what I want? Well, if you can't do what I want, then you'll have to confront the Bacchae and that means violence and rejection. I'll have every person in this room reject you, one right after the other. Is that what you want?

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

No.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Then try what I ask.

PENTHEUS *begins to undress.*

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
I can't do it here.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
You don't have to do it here. We can go into the pit. Why don't you go into the pit and wait for me there? We can be alone there. No one will see us.

The version between McDermott and Shephard.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
I told you, Bill. It's hard to find a friend, Bill. It's hard not to be lonely, Bill. It's hard to leave your misery behind, Bill. I told you. I'm the only one. I can do it for you. I can put you out of your misery. But first you have to do something for me. Oh, please do something for me.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
What do I have to do for you?

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
Ecstasy doesn't come cheap, Bill.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
You're an old hand at cunning, aren't you?

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
You've got your problems, I got mine.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
What do you want from me?

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
I want you to take your clothes off, Bill. I want you take your clothes off and lay down next to me. And then take mine off, Bill. And then caress me, Bill. And then kiss me. And lick my eyes. Put your tongue in my ears. Way down deep. Put your tongue in my nose, Bill. And then I want you to lick my legs. And then eat my hair. And I want you to bite my ass. And then I want you to put your tongue in my crotch and lick my crotch and hold my balls in your hand and make me feel good and send me up, man, send me up! And put my cock in your mouth! Bill, put my cock in your mouth! Take it away! Take it away from me, Bill! Drink it! Drink it! Drink it!

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:
I can't do what you want!

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

What! You can't do what I want? You know what I'm going to do about that? I'm going to tell people you were not nice to me! And they'll rip you to pieces! They will rip you apart limb from limb. You want that?

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

No.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Then try, Bill.

They kiss.

SHEPHARD *as* PENTHEUS:

I can't do it here.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

You don't have to do it here, Bill. Do it down there. Go on down there and wait for me.

After PENTHEUS goes into the pit, DIONYSUS goes halfway down, then addresses the audience. The names used change depending on who is performing the roles. Finley, Bosseau, and MacIntosh use the same speech. McDermott's version is different.

DIONYSUS:

Friends, skeptics, fellow Bacchae. To quote Euripides: "For sane of mind that man would never wear a woman's dress, but obsess his soul and he cannot refuse." What that means is this: Bill Shephard [*or whoever is* PENTHEUS] has to know me, William Finley [*or whoever is* DIONYSUS]. He has to submit to me. He has to know me, William Finley [*or whoever*], Dionysus, the god most terrible and yet most gentle to mankind.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

He's mine. He's all mine. Thousands of years ago Euripides said, "Sane of mind that man would never wear a woman's dress, but obsess his soul and he cannot refuse." Now what that means is this: he's got to know me, Dionysus, Patrick McZeus, god most terrible and yet most gentle to mankind.

BLAZER *as* CHORUS:

Let the truth be told, there is no god greater than William Finley [*or whoever*]. Reveal yourself a bull.

DIONYSUS *descends into the pit, closing the trap door.*

There are two versions of the following scene, the "total caress." In one, the CHORUS, moving separately or in groups of two and three, seek individual spectators to caress gently. Sometimes the caressing becomes erotic leading to full body touching and kissing. Spectators often reciprocate. Unlike the noisy, wildly

climactic "ecstasy dance" after the birth ritual, the total caress is quiet, steady-state. As they caress people, the CHORUS gives forth a low hum.

In the second version, the CHORUS breaks into individuals who speak lines while in different parts of the darkened theatre. As each CHORUS member finishes, they go behind one of the two central towers. There, two demi-CHORUSES begin a slow circle dance which grows to a quiet intense ecstasy. As they dance, the CHORUS sings sotto voce. Over the choral singing is the voice of the CHORUS LEADER. At one time or another, everyone is CHORUS LEADER.

CHORUS:

We dance to the glory of Bacchus.
We dance to the death of Pentheus.
What is the name of your husband?
What is the name of your child?

BOSSEAU *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Spinning out of control, the unbeliever marches blindly to his own death. He spits at the god and the god turns that spit into blood. Blood and more, life. Life is the price this unholy beast must pay as a sacrifice to the god.

O Dionysus! Leader! Let us go. Please let your Bacchae go. Let us know ecstasy. Let us know freedom.

Let us kill this man who hunts our freedom.

Let us kill! Let us kill! Let us kill!

BLAZER *as* CHORUS LEADER:

The unbeliever uncontrolled assaults the mysteries and rages at the death that gods exact to humble and insult us. We men who are not gods, we run to death. Smile, Bacchus, and bring him down, this unbeliever. Trample underfoot his madness and his mystery.

SMITH *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Bending, twisting, in grief, in rage we go. The unbelievers. The incomplete. Assaulting the mystery of who we are. Profaning the beauty of why we are. Headlong we rush from birth to death. Seeking, weeping, alone. But this we exact: we humble ourselves with pain, never remembering who we are, that are men, that are men, that are men.

Bacchus, come with your smile, cast your net around me, bring me down, trample me underfoot. I am running headlong.

You can never go back to where you started from.

FINLEY *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Head-long. Head-less. Head-long. Head-less. Head-long. Head-less. Head-long. Head-less. Headlong he runs. From life to death. Headlong we run. From gods who smile. On him head-less. Headlong no rest. No help. No breath. Head-less. He runs. Himself. To death. Head-long. Head-less. Head-long. Head-less.

BARCLAY *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Furiously stupid, the little man stumbles at the party of the gods. Cursing the mother of a god who once betrayed her promise to serve men. On hands and knees he butts the wall, shrieking injustice. A bloody head for a bloody life. The gods shriek back, with laughter. He staggers. O Bacchus, come! Come laughing! Cast your noose around this man who hunts your revelers. Torture him. Make him die forever.

MCDERMOTT *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Blessed is the man who can say of that which he gives, "This is mine." Damned be the traitors. Head in his pocket, the unbeliever denies the mysteries of god if he forgets god's mother here. Against the unassailable he rages headlong to his death.

Death the gods exact, death our humble style.
That we remember who we are who are not gods.
Get him! Come with your smile. Get him!
Hunt the man who hunts the Bacchae.
Get him!

SHEPHARD *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Inaccessible, the unbeliever goes in spitting rage, madly assaulting the mysteries of god, profaning the rites of the mother of god. Against the unassailable he runs with rage. Headlong he runs to death. For death is the price. We are humbled by death that we remember who we are who are not gods but men.

RYAN *as* CHORUS LEADER:

He blasphemed the god. He profaned the rights of the mother of god. He runs against the unassailable. He runs to death. Yes, Bacchus, come with your smile. Catch the man who hates the Bacchae. We don't care whose little boy he is. Bring him down!

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Uncontrollable the unbeliever goes in spitting rage, madly assaulting the mysteries of god. Profaning the rites of the mother of god. Profaning the rites of his mother. Against the unassailable he runs with rage. Headlong he runs to death. For death the gods exact. Come, Bacchus, come with your smile. Cast your noose around this man who hunts your Bacchae. Bring him down. Trample him underfoot. Run to death. We run to death.

DIA *as* CHORUS LEADER:

We are but men. We die. That is our proof, our justice. Who are we to try and overleap this humble circumscription, assaulting and profaning what we are who are not god but men? Come, Bacchus, bring on the man obsessed. In tune, in measured pace, bring on the man. He's doomed. He's going to die. Let the truth be told.

After 10–15 minutes of the "total caress" and CHORUS, the MESSENGER goes to the pit cover and, standing over it, delivers his speech. There are four versions of the speech.

BLAZER *as* MESSENGER:

Yes, it's a death struggle. Dionysus versus Pentheus. The organism versus the law. I'm a messenger. But even if I stick to the text, it won't change a thing. I could tell you what I saw outside this garage. I could tell you how Dionysus led Pentheus into a trap on a mountain called Cithaeron. How he tantalized hundreds of women into frenzy, released their energies so they could kill a man for their sport. For a god's sport. What I can't tell you is the reason why anyone, god or candidate, can promise a man joy, freedom, ecstasy. And then make him settle for a bloodbath. I don't mind preparing you for a bloodbath. Then Dionysus and Pentheus will rise from the pit, we'll get on with the action, and you can have a kind of mute catharsis. But there is chance to consider. Each of you is chance. And most of you are passive. Night after night you go along with Dionysus, just as we do. And night after night you confirm the need for a Pentheus. Look, if Dionysus could lead you into the promised land, Dionysus or someone else could lead you right out again. Dig? Most of us have a pretty cheap fantasy of self-liberation. So before I open the pit door and set your catharsis in motion, consider this. It's harder to be a man than to be a god. And tragedy leaves behind no morals because it consumes them. So don't understand us too quickly. Dig?

The song at the start of McDermott's MESSENGER speech is to the tune of Johnny Rivers's "The Seventh Son."

MCDERMOTT *as* MESSENGER:

Get the man, get the man,
Get the man who gets the Bacchae down.
Get the man, get the man,
Get the man who gets the Bacchae down.

Wear your smile, wear your smile,
Wear you smile to the great bloodbath.
Wear your smile, wear your smile,
Wear you smile to the great bloodbath.

Hunt the man, hunt the man,
Hunt the man who hunts the Bacchae down.
Hunt the man, hunt the man,
Hunt the man who hunts the Bacchae down.

Yes, it's a death struggle. Dionysus against Pentheus. An organism against the law. I'm the messenger. I don't mind preparing you for a bloodbath. Then we can get on with the action. And you can have some kind of mute catharsis. I don't mind that. It's the pornography of death that I mind. The pornography starts now. So, if there are any persons of principle in the audience, they should leave now. It's not too late. We're just now getting to the obscenities. What happens is this. There are certain pig-like features about a policeman. So someone beats up an oink-pig, a thing alive, a thing with a sense of feeling, in order to express his sentiments. What happens is someone rapes a girl in Central Park to get that warm, wet, wild, free feeling inside. What happens is, at a theatre or a football game, someone starts up something like this.

Snaps fingers.

And then because no one hears the silences, it wants to go like this.

Faster.

And then it wants to keep right on going till there's nowhere else to go.

Fibrillations.

And it's this.

Stop. Silence.

Nothing. Because who knows the beat of liberation? Who knows the pulse of his own life? What happens is that Dionysus, according to his convenience and popular demand, becomes another Pentheus. Most of us have a pretty cheap fantasy of self-liberation. And if Dionysus, or someone else, could lead us into the Promised Land, then Dionysus, or someone else, could lead us right out again. Don't bother to get The Man unless you plan to close his office down, permanently. The first rule of the revolution is: Dig yourself. Dig yourself. So don't understand too much too quick. Okay?

BARCLAY *as* MESSENGER:

This is a power play, a death struggle. Dionysus against Pentheus. An organism against the law. I'm a messenger. I've come to prepare you for a bloodbath. Nothing unusual. It happens every day. Someone has to get the knife, the bullet, the bomb so that the man behind the weapon can be free. Free. A man like Pentheus has everything set up to protect his comfortable position. We all know his rules. So along comes Dionysus, living by impulse, a tempter who points out the planned obsolescence of our lives. He promises a trade-in. Our rigid structure for his expanding one. But he doesn't say where his stops. Just the promise of freedom. To walk down the street the way a surfer rides a wave. To go naked before a congressional hearing. To drop acid in the water supply of New York City. To bomb Chicago and dance in the rubble. Free. We all want to believe and go with it. But you know what it's like? It's like at a convention or a football game, somebody starts a sound, then another joins, and another and another, until the sound is lost in a roar, and the roar goes on until there's nothing left. Don't understand us too quickly.

BOSSEAU *as* MESSENGER:

Ladies and Gentleman! The allied forces of Dionysus have just issued the following official statement to the diverse good people assembled here: Pentheus is to die. Repeat. Pentheus is going to die. Members of the Bacchae have agreed to the terms of a ritual death, which will take place in the center of this temple in five minutes. With the downfall of Pentheus, Dionysus will assume complete control of this space. And this theatre will be liberated. Repeat. This theatre will be liberated. The allied forces of Dionysus further declare that Dionysus, in his position as god and leader, will for the good of all people assume absolute ownership of the collective will of the people. Therefore, a state of emergency will be declared while Dionysus decides exactly

what the will of the people will be. Further statements on the plans of the god's new order will come directly from Dionysus himself in about ten minutes.

The MESSENGER opens the pit cover. DIONYSUS and PENTHEUS emerge. PENTHEUS is naked.

DIONYSUS: Come out. Come on. You can see them dancing.
 PENTHEUS: You're my best friend now.
 DIONYSUS: Would you like to see them dancing?
 PENTHEUS: Yes, I'd pay anything to see that sight.
 DIONYSUS: Why are you so curious?
 PENTHEUS: Of course, I'd be sorry to see them drunk.
 DIONYSUS: But for all your sorrow, you'd still like to see them?
 PENTHEUS: Yes, very much. I can climb the tower here and hide.
 DIONYSUS: Be careful. If you hide, they may find you and kill you.
 PENTHEUS: Right. I'll go openly.
 DIONYSUS: That's dangerous too.
 PENTHEUS: What can I do? I can't wait another minute.
 DIONYSUS: Come with me. I won't let them hurt you.
 PENTHEUS: Do I look like any of them? Like Ciel, or Finley or Margaret?
 DIONYSUS: You look like all of them. Like any one of them.
 PENTHEUS: To be a real bacchante, how should I dance?

DIONYSUS teaches PENTHEUS how to dance. Then he leads him to where the others are dancing.

DIONYSUS: Watch. Like this. You raise up one foot and one arm. Then you raise up the other foot and the other arm. And then you give it a little kick. And you go like this. And like this, Bill. And you kick your foot out.
 PENTHEUS: I feel like I could put my shoulders against these towers and push them over, Bacchae and all.
 DIONYSUS: You used to be crazy, but I like you now.
 PENTHEUS: Should we take crowbars, or should I put my shoulders against them and push them over?
 DIONYSUS: No, don't destroy this place. It's holy.
 PENTHEUS: You're right. Women shouldn't be mastered by brute force.
 DIONYSUS: Am I your best friend now?
 PENTHEUS: I trust you completely. Come on.
 DIONYSUS: Would you like to get closer?
 PENTHEUS: Yes, yes. I am the one. I am the one. I am the one. I am the one. I am the one.
 DIONYSUS: You are the one.
 PENTHEUS: No one else in this city dared to go.
 DIONYSUS: A great ecstasy awaits you. But you are worthy of it. You and you alone will suffer for your city. I am taking you there. But someone else will bring you back.
 PENTHEUS: You mean my mother?
 DIONYSUS: Yes. You'll be carried high.
 PENTHEUS: The higher the better. I've no fear of heights.

DIONYSUS: A sight for all men to see. Cradled in your mother's arms.
PENTHEUS: I want my reward. I want my reward.
DIONYSUS: You're going to have an extraordinary experience. You're an extraordinary young man. Everyone will be jealous of you and your ecstasy.

DIONYSUS leaves PENTHEUS in the center. Then DIONYSUS goes to the fountain and dips his hands in the blood. He returns to PENTHEUS and stands over him, both arms extended.

PENTHEUS:
I see two suns blazing in the heavens. And two cities, each with seven gates. And you're a bull! Horns have sprouted from your head. Have you always been a beast?

There are two versions of DIONYSUS's reply.

DIONYSUS: It's the god you see. You're soft and vulnerable now. I like you now.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
Oh, I've always been a beast!

DIONYSUS caresses, perhaps kisses PENTHEUS. But DIONYSUS's voice is guttural, rough. He draws his bloody hand across PENTHEUS's throat, marking him with blood. Then DIONYSUS goes into the "total caress" jumble of people and roughly hauls two AGAVES out. There are two versions of the following speech.

DIONYSUS: Agave! Agave! Ciel! Joan! There's a lion in the woods of Cithaeron. I want you to catch him. Caress him, stroke him, make him happy. Then I want you to tear him to pieces with your bare hands.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:
Agave! Agave! Agave, there's a beautiful young animal in the woods. And I want you to find him for me. Caress him. Make him happy. And then I want you to kill him as a sacrifice to me.

DIONYSUS climbs the tower that has the bullhorn on it. When McDermott plays DIONYSUS, he wipes the blood off his hands with a towel before he climbs.

There are four versions of the following speech.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:
Who gave him to you? *Shaking the women violently.* Who?! Who?! Me! I did. I gave him to you. Me, Dionysus, William Finley, I gave him to you. *Pause. Then, more calmly.* The rest the event shall show.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:
Who gave him to you? Who? Who? *Shaking the women violently.* Me, Dionysus, Jason Bosseau, I did, I gave him to you. *Pause. Then, more calmly.* The rest the event shall show.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Who gave him to you? Who? Who? *Shaking the women violently.* Me, Dionysus, Joan MacIntosh gave him to you. *Pause. Then, more calmly.* The rest the event shall show.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS

And remember who gave him to you! *Shaking the women violently.* I did! Dionysus! Patrick McZeus. *Pause. Then, more calmly.* The rest the event will show.

As AGAVE comes to the center, the dance ends. First AGAVE—sometimes performed by one woman, sometimes by two—and then all the women caress PENTHEUS. They fondle and kiss him. They sing to him. They play with him sexually. Slowly they become more threatening. Their caresses transform into tugs, their kisses into bites. They start clawing and tearing at PENTHEUS. They begin to rip him apart.

PENTHEUS breaks free of the women. He runs. In one version, the women turn into animals and chase PENTHEUS through the theatre. He climbs the towers and leaps from platform to platform. Finally, the women catch and wound him. PENTHEUS drags himself to the death ritual which is performed on the center mats, a reverse-mirror image of the birth ritual. DIONYSUS watches from above, standing on the same tower where earlier in the play PENTHEUS addressed the people of Thebes.

In another version, the women are “circling beaters” and PENTHEUS hunted prey. Wherever he goes, a woman confronts him. They maneuver him into a corner or against a wall. When PENTHEUS is trapped, the dance song begins again. PENTHEUS willingly accompanies the women to his death ritual, the death ritual of all the men.

When there is the total caress of the spectators instead of the dancing behind the towers, the MESSENGER speech comes after DIONYSUS gives PENTHEUS to AGAVE. As the MESSENGER speaks, the women caressing spectators turn violent. No spectator is hurt, but the gentle caresses becomes rough and the hum turns to roars. Then the women leave the spectators and chase PENTHEUS.

BOSSEAU *as* MESSENGER:

There were three of us. Pentheus, me, and that tall slinky stranger, the man with the long blond hair. He was our guide, he took us there. To the mountain, to Cithaeron, far beyond our homes in Thebes. When we got there, we were like spies, trying to see the action without being seen. And there they were, all of them. Joan, Ciel, Remi, Margaret, and even Pat, Sam, and Richard. They had organized themselves into two pleasure units, and each bacchante was deeply into his own pleasure thing. But Pentheus, unhappy man, was frustrated, and he wanted to get closer to his fellow performers. “Stranger,” he said, “from where I stand I cannot see what is really going on. But if I climbed higher, then I could see their shameless orgies better.” And then the stranger performed a miracle. Reaching for the highest branch of a great fir, he bent it down, down, down to the dark earth, till it was curved the way a taut bow bends. Like that he forced that mighty mountain fir to the ground. No mortal could have done it. Then he seated Pentheus at the highest tip and with his bare hands let the trunk of the tree rise straight up, up, up, slowly and gently, so as not to throw its rider. And the tree rose, towering to heaven, with Pentheus at the top. Now Pentheus was a completely different man. His eyes looked drugged. He was totally in the hands of his god, totally exposed to pleasure. But hardly had the caressing begun when a voice over the loudspeaker cried out: “Sisters, this man is our enemy. He refused to believe that I am god. So as fellow worshippers of me, your

god, I command you to kill him.” Those were his orders. And even as he spoke, a flash of awful fire bound heaven and earth. Suddenly all hell broke loose. And the gentle humming sounds of the Bacchae disappeared, and in their place were the cries and the screams and roars of wild animals. They were no longer individuals, or even two separate pleasure units. They were one angry mob, one single mindless body gone mad. Their victim was alive but trapped and doomed. The women surrounded him, but they did not attack until his own mother, Agave, cried out: “We must kill this animal. Remember, violence is as American as cherry pie.” And, with that, Agave struck first, and then the rest joined in and the rout was on. The pitiful remains lie scattered on the mountain. His mother, picking up his head, impaled it on her wand. She seems to think it is some mountain lion’s head which she carries in triumph through the thickets of Cithaeron. She is coming here, gloating over her grisly prize. She calls upon Bacchus. He is her “fellow huntsman,” “comrade of the chase, crowned with victory.” But all the victory she carries home is her own grief.

The death ritual is the reverse of the birth ritual. PENTHEUS, already naked, waits. The other performers undress. The men stand waiting around the mats. The women move slowly to the blood fountain and dip their hands in, deep. They move to the mats and lift their arms which stream with blood.

SMITH *as* CHORUS:

To hold your child.

BLAZER *as* CHORUS:

Good evening, sir, may I take you to your death?

BARCLAY *as* CHORUS:

Streaming with blood.

MCDERMOTT *as* CHORUS:

I’m ready, sir, I want to die, sir.

DIONYSUS: Go on, Sam, get down, die! You too Jason! All of you, die, die!

One by one the men dive down on the mats. The women straddle them, as in the birth ritual, except that this time the women face the opposite direction, so they can see Pentheus as he enters the death canal. The women repeat over and over the line, or fragments of it, “To hold your child in your arms, streaming with his blood.” The names below change, according to who is performing DIONYSUS and PENTHEUS.

RYAN *as* CHORUS:

To hold your child in your arms, streaming with his blood!

DIA *as* CHORUS:

Yes, sir, it’s my turn now, sir, can I go now, sir?

The men salute DIONYSUS as they get into the death ritual position.

DIONYSUS: Yes, Richard, for me, Richard, you can die now, Richard.

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS:
Streaming with his blood.

FINLEY *as* CHORUS:
Please, god, let me go now, god, I want to go now, god.

DIONYSUS: Down, Finley, down, quick, quick, die.

SHEPHARD *as* CHORUS:
I'm ready, sir. Yes, sir.

DIONYSUS: Die, Bill Shephard.

SMITH *as* CHORUS:
In your arms, streaming with his blood.

DIONYSUS *to* PENTHEUS:
It's your turn. You go. You die now. You die.

PENTHEUS crawls into the death canal.

PENTHEUS: Mama, mama, it's me, Pentheus, your little boy. Don't kill your little boy for what I did wrong.

The women kill the men in slow motion.

There are two versions of the following scene.

In the first version, all the women are AGAVE. As soon as the killing is over, they rush into the audience and confront one or several spectators. AGAVE's speech can be said simultaneously by all the women or it can be divided into sentences with each woman reciting part of the whole—again simultaneously. The whole theatre should be buzzing with the women's report of what happened. They imagine they are carrying PENTHEUS's head which they believe to be the head of a mountain lion.

AGAVE:
Bacchae of Asia! I bring this branch to the palace, this fresh-cut spray from the mountains. Happy was my hunting. The whelp of a wild mountain lion and snared by me without a noose. Look, look at the prize I bring. I caught him, my prize, on Cithaeron. I struck him first. The Maenads call me Agave the blest. After me, Cadmus's daughters reached the prey. After me. Happy was my hunting. Share my glory. Share my feast. See, the whelp is young and tender. Beneath the soft mane of his hair the down is blooming on his cheeks. Our god is wise. Cunningly, cleverly, Bacchus the hunter lashed the Maenads against his prey. Praise me. Do you praise me now? And Pentheus. He will be proud. He will praise his mother. I have caught a great quarry, this lion's cub. I have won the trophy of the chase. Are you happy? See the great prize I bring!

Then one of the women speaks directly to DIONYSUS.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
Dionysus! Bill Finley!

DIONYSUS: Speak.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
I come from the mountain with this fresh-cut prey. Happy was my hunting.

DIONYSUS: I see. I welcome a fellow reveler of god.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
The whelp of a wild mountain lion and snared by me without a noose. Look. Look at the prize I bring.

DIONYSUS: Where did you catch him?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
On Cithaeron. There my prize was killed.

DIONYSUS: Who killed him?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
I did. I struck him first. The Maenads call me Agave the blest.

DIONYSUS: Was anyone with you?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
Cadmus's daughters.

DIONYSUS: Ah.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
But they reached this catch after me. After me. Our hunting was happy.

DIONYSUS: Happy indeed.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
Then share my glory. We're going to have a feast and eat this cat.

DIONYSUS: Share what?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
Look, the whelp is tender. Beneath the soft mane of his hair the down is blooming on his cheeks.

DIONYSUS: With that mane he looks a beast.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:

Oh, you're clever. Cunningly you lashed the Maenads against your prey.

DIONYSUS: Our god is a hunter.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:

Do you praise me?

DIONYSUS: Yes.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:

And the men of Thebes? Will they praise me?

DIONYSUS: And Pentheus?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:

Pentheus will love it. We've caught a great quarry, this lion's cub.

DIONYSUS: An extraordinary catch.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:

Our extraordinary skill.

DIONYSUS: And you're proud?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:

Of course! I killed this animal for you!

The second version. MacIntosh and Smith speak. As they do, CADMUS pulls himself from the body pile.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:

You. You citizens of this towered city, men of Thebes, behold the trophy of your women's hunting!

SMITH *as* AGAVE:

This is the quarry of our chase, taken not with nets or spears of bronze, but by the white and delicate hands of women.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:

What are they worth, all your boastings now and all that uselessness your armor is, since we, with our bare hands, captured this quarry and tore his bleeding body limb from limb?

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:

But where is my father, Cadmus? He should come.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
And my son.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
Where is Pentheus?

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
I'll have him set his ladder up against that wall and there, on the beam, nail the head of this wild lion.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
I have killed.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
I have killed.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
I have killed.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
I have killed.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
As a trophy of my hunt. Now, Father, yours can be the proudest boast of living men. For you are now the father of the bravest daughters in the world.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
I above the rest.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
I above the rest.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
I left my shuttle at the loom.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
And raised my sight to higher things.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
Hunting animals with my bare hands.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
You see? Here in my hands I hold the quarry of my chase. A trophy for our house.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
Take it, Father.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
Take it.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
Glory in my kill and invite your friends to share the feast of triumph. For you are blest, Father.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
By this great deed I have done.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
I have done.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
I have done.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
I have done.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
I have done.

CADMUS:
This is a grief so great it knows no size. This is the awful murder your hands have done. This is the noble victim you've slaughtered to the gods? And to a feast like this you now invite all Thebes and me?

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
Why do you reproach me?

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
Is there something wrong?

CADMUS *as* AGAVE:
What was the name of your husband?

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
Echion, a man.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
A man, they say, born of a dragon's teeth.

CADMUS *as* AGAVE:

And what was the name of the child you bore that man?

SMITH *as* AGAVE:

Pentheus.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:

William. *Or the name of whoever is playing* PENTHEUS.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:

William.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:

Pentheus.

CADMUS: And what is this?

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:

A mountain lion.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:

The hunters told me.



FIGURE 8.2: After killing and dismembering Pentheus, Agave celebrates amidst the bloody bodies. In the foreground, Joan MacIntosh. Standing with her back to the camera, Ciel Smith. The Performing Garage, New York, 1968. Photograph: Frederick Eberstadt.

CADMUS: Look more closely.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
What am I holding in my hands?

CADMUS: Study it.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
What is it?

CADMUS: Study it.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
Pentheus.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
William.

CADMUS: Mourned by me before you ever knew.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
But who killed him?

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
Why am I holding him?

CADMUS: You killed him. You and your sisters and the women of Thebes killed him.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
Where was he killed?

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:
Here at home?

SMITH *as* AGAVE:
Where?

CADMUS: He was killed on Cithaeron.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:
But what was Pentheus doing on Cithaeron?

CADMUS: He went there to mock the revels of your god.

MACTINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:

Why did we go to Cithaeron?

CADMUS: You were possessed. Possessed by Dionysus.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:

Dionysus has destroyed us all.

CADMUS: You denied that he was truly a god.

MACINTOSH *as* AGAVE:

Where is my poor boy's body now?

CADMUS: Here. This is your poor boy's body.

SMITH *as* AGAVE:

Is it all there? Is it whole?

CADMUS: I gathered the pieces with great difficulty. I laid him out as best as I could.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:

My joy. My famous prize of grief.

CADMUS: He, like you, blasphemed William Finley. *Or whoever plays* DIONYSUS.

MACINTOSH *and* SMITH *as* AGAVE:

Dearest, dearest face. Pretty, boyish mouth.

A hand emerges from the body pile. It points down at the pile.

BLAZER *as* CHORUS:

Let this scene teach those who see: Dionysus is the son of Zeus.

There is another version of this discovery scene. Immediately after the kill, a woman goes into the audience and speaks directly to the spectators.

BARCLAY *as* CHORUS LEADER:

I danced. I made music here to free myself. But there's always someone who wants to put down my freedom. Always someone who resents my power. Pentheus put me down until I wanted to rip him apart, gouge out his eyes, murder him. I killed him because nobody is going to put me down. If I have to murder every person in this goddamn room, nobody is going to keep me from being free. Nobody.

Or:

MACINTOSH *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Look! Look what I've done! I've killed Pentheus! I killed him! I loved him more than anything else in the world. I gave myself to him. But he never loved me. He used me. He took my love and then he betrayed me. So I had to kill him. I ripped his flesh from his bones. I tore his legs off. I tasted his blood. I had to kill him so I could live. I had to get rid of him so I could be free. And now I'm free!

Or:

RYAN *as* CHORUS LEADER:

Did you see that? Did you see what I did? That was no accident. Look at Pentheus. I told him: Don't wrench my arm. Don't stomp on a toe that's already stained. Don't threaten me! Don't bother me in the subway when I'm 12 years old. So I got to the bloodbath last. I got extra blood. I killed him! That was no accident.

When MacIntosh plays DIONYSUS and Smith plays TIRESIAS, this dialogue between them.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:

Dionysus. Joan.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Yes?

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:

Here we are. And not empty-handed. We captured the quarry you sent us to catch.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

I see. I welcome a fellow reveler of god.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:

Our prey was tame.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Where did you catch him?

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:

We tracked him down on Cithaeron. On Cithaeron he was killed.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Who killed him?

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:

His mother, Agave, the women of Thebes, and I.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
Ah.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
Your victory is just, high is the prize, this famous prize of grief. Glorious the game.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
Glorious, yes.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
You walk among the ruins you have made.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
I proved to him and every man in Thebes: I am god.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
Yes. You're clever. Cunningly you lashed the Maenads against your prey.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
Our god is a hunter.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
Do you praise me now?

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
I praise you.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
And the men of Thebes?

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
Pentheus?

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
The spy who came to the mountain to peer at our revels.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
He got his reward.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
He threatened to bind me, though my body is bound to god.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
And you killed him.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
Yes!

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
Well done.

SMITH *as* TIRESIAS:
He was a man. A man and nothing more. Yet he presumed to wage war with a god.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:
A man and nothing more.

AGAVE:
You, citizens of this towered city, men of Thebes. Behold the trophy your women bring home from their hunt. This is the quarry of my chase, taken not with nets or spears of bronze but by the pale and delicate hands of women. What are they worth, all your boastings now? And all that uselessness your armor is? When I, with my bare hands, captured this quarry and tore his bleeding body limb from limb. But where is my father, Cadmus? He should come. And my son. Where is Pentheus? Fetch him. I'll have him set his ladder up against the wall and there upon the beam nail my trophy for all to see.

CADMUS extracts himself from the body pile, dresses, and begins to disentangle and arrange the bodies.
As CADMUS works, AGAVE addresses him.

Father. Father, look. Father, you can boast the proudest boasting of living men because you are the father of the bravest daughter in the world. All your daughters are brave, but I above the rest. I left my shuttle at the loom. I raised my sights to higher things, to hunting wild animals with my bare hands. Look! Here is the quarry of my chase, a trophy for our house.

AGAVE lifts PENTHEUS's head, and offers it to CADMUS.

Take it, Father, take it. Glory in my kill. Invite your friends to share this feast of triumph. For you are blest, Father, by this great deed I have done.

CADMUS: Enough. No more. When you realize the horror you have done, you will suffer terribly.
AGAVE: Why do you reproach me?
CADMUS: This is a grief so great it knows no size. This is the awful murder your hands have done. This is the noble victim you have slaughtered. And to a feast like this you invite all Thebes and me?
AGAVE: What's wrong with you?
CADMUS: What was the name of your husband?
AGAVE: Echion. A man born of the dragon's tooth.
CADMUS: And what was the name of the child you bore Echion?
AGAVE: Pentheus. William. *Or whatever name.* Pentheus.

CADMUS: And what is this?
AGAVE: What?
CADMUS: Look at it! Look!
AGAVE: No.
CADMUS: Yes! Look! Look!
AGAVE: Pentheus?
CADMUS: Yes, Pentheus.
AGAVE: Pentheus.

When Finley plays CADMUS and Ryan plays AGAVE, AGAVE sits among the bodies, holding PENTHEUS. CADMUS shows AGAVE each of the men.

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
And what is this?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
It's a mountain lion. The hunters told me.

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
Look at it. Closely. Look!

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
No.

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
Who is this?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
That's Richard Dia.

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
And this one?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
Jason Bosseau.

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
And this one?

MARGARET *as* AGAVE:
That's Pat McDermott.

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
And him? Who is he?

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
I don't know.

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
Who? Who?

He forces her to look at PENTHEUS.

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
This is Bill Shephard!

FINLEY *as* CADMUS:
Pentheus!

RYAN *as* AGAVE:
Pentheus.

CADMUS: Pentheus. And mourned by me before you ever knew.
AGAVE: Who killed him? Why am I holding him?
CADMUS: You killed him. You and your sisters killed Pentheus.
AGAVE: Where was he killed? Here at home? Where?
CADMUS: He was killed on Cithaeron.
AGAVE: Why did he go to Cithaeron?
CADMUS: He went to your revels to mock your god.
AGAVE: What were we doing on Cithaeron?
CADMUS: You were mad. The whole city was possessed.
AGAVE: Dionysus. Dionysus has destroyed us all!
CADMUS: You outraged him. You denied that he was truly a god.
AGAVE: Father, where is my poor boy's body now?
CADMUS: There. I gathered the pieces with great difficulty.
AGAVE: Is it whole? Has it been laid out well?
CADMUS: He has no head.
AGAVE: Why should Pentheus suffer for my crime?
CADMUS: He, like you, blasphemed the god.

BLAZER *as* CHORUS:
Dionysus is the child of Zeus.

TIRESIAS begins an antiphonal dirge. In one version, the dirge is sung until all the performers leave the theatre. In another version, the dirge is transformed into a marching song as the Group marches out of the theatre. In both versions, the dirge is the basic sonic ground of the final scenes: the "catharsis," cleaning the theatre, and the "exodus," exiting from the theatre. Everyone sings the dirge except DIONYSUS.

TIRESIAS: Lead me guides where my sisters wait.
ALL: Lead me guides where my sisters wait.

TIRESIAS: Poor sisters of my exile, let me go.
 ALL: Poor sisters of my exile. let me go.
 TIRESIAS: Where I shall never see Cithaeron again.
 ALL: Where I shall never see Cithaeron again.
 TIRESIAS: Where that cursed hill may not see me.
 ALL: Where that cursed hill may not see me.
 TIRESIAS: Where I shall find no trace of thyrsus.
 ALL: Where I shall find no trace of thyrsus.
 TIRESIAS: I leave that to other Bacchae.
 ALL: I leave that to other Bacchae.

The men rise from the body pile. Someone gets two buckets of water, sponges, brushes, and mops. Everyone except DIONYSUS washes the mats, the platforms, the towers, scrubbing away the blood as best they can. The singing continues, over and over. Everyone dresses.

In the version in which the performers march from the theatre, the stage manager and a performer bring in a trunk containing clothes and shoes for the outdoors. The performers dress, hoist DIONYSUS on their shoulders, and leave as a group.

In another version, after each performer is cursed by DIONYSUS, they go to the second floor of The Performing Garage, shower, dress, and leave. DIONYSUS is the last, leaving after the final spectator departs.

There are several versions of DIONYSUS's curse. In all, he speaks through a bullhorn from the top of one of the towers. Only a few curses are given here because they depend on the events of each particular night. What's happening in the world and what happened in the Garage. The curses which follow are in the order they arose during the year's performances of Dionysus in 69.

First, Finley's pre-Presidential election of 1968 curse. During the scene between CADMUS and AGAVE, Finley wipes the blood from his hands, combs his hair, and dresses in a blue suit and tie. He carries a red, white, and blue bag filled with Dionysus in 69 buttons in the yin-yang design.

FINLEY as DIONYSUS:

I am William Finley, a god by any other name. A god that smokes seven brands of cigarettes, a god that eats food, men, and women. A god with a Social Security number. But an unemployed god. Dionysus. Son of William and Dorothy, and still not recognized as a true god by everyone in this garage. When you could have known me, you did not. And even now you're not sure. Dig it. I came to New York, the city where I was born, and I came to this garage and told you who I was. But instead of saying, "That's nice. He's Dionysus. I dig that," you made fun of me. You threw me in the pit. You didn't turn me on. You didn't freak me out. You didn't love me. Therefore, I will reveal to you the results of mistrust and rejection. The royal house is overthrown. Schechner will go to South America and never see what happens to this play.²² "So what?" you say. Well, the city streets are full of dogshit and fear. "So what?" you say. Well, look at each other now. Look long and hard because outside this place you'll be afraid to look at each other. Now, before I split, let me reveal the sufferings in store for those of little faith. Bill Shephard. Yes, you, Shephard. This man told me he had nothing for me. He came to us in rage. He put me in the pit and he did what he should least of all have done. He told the truth. He had nothing

for me. He didn't satisfy me. Now he has only a false death, some stage blood, and the promise that he has to do the same damned thing tomorrow night. Upon you, Agave, Ciel and Joan, I pronounce this doom. In some ways you took peace and solitude away from Bill Shephard. You tried to mortify him and you hardly touched me at all. You both shall leave this garage in expiation of the murder you have done. You shall wear out your wretched lives never knowing which of you played Agave. Next, I shall reveal the trials which await you, Cadmus, Richard Dia. It is your fate to lead a great black army of black panthers. You shall change your name to Richard 37X. With a host so large its numbers cannot be counted, you shall burn many cities to the ground—Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, New Orleans, Chicago, Newark, and many many more. Finally, your army will come to New York and plunder the Harlem shrine of Apollo. There, your homecoming will be perilous and hard. Yet in the end the great god Ares will turn you into a honky and bring you to live among the blest.

DIA *as* CADMUS:

We implore you, we've done no wrong.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Too late, Richard. When there was time, you didn't know me.

DIA *as* CADMUS:

We've learned. Your sentence is too harsh.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

I am a god. I was blasphemed by you.

DIA *as* CADMUS:

Gods should be exempt from human passions.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Long ago, Euripides wrote these things.

AGAVE:

Terribly has Dionysus brought disaster down upon this garage.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

I was terribly blasphemed. My name dishonored in New York.

Speaking directly to the audience:

As for the rest of you, I condemn you to remember what's happened here tonight. To remember William Finley. Remember him when you are awake. Dream of him when you are asleep. Most of all, remember him when you go into your voting booths this fall. Yes, I am running for President. Who else have you got? Remember me and write in my name. William Finley. W-I-L-L-I-A-M F-I-N-L-E-Y. Remember: A vote for Finley in 68 brings Dionysus in 69!

DIONYSUS climbs down the tower, goes to The Performing Garage's south wall, and raises a steel door revealing a cinder-block wall on which is painted an American flag, with Finley's face in its center. A flower protrudes

from his mouth. As the performers sing the melody of John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever" as if they were a brass band, they salute each other in a military way, march to the front of The Performing Garage, and raise the main door opening to Wooster Street. Then, hoisting Finley as DIONYSUS on their shoulders, they step in place preparing to march out the door onto Wooster Street.

William Finley has many shapes. William Finley has many faces. William Finley brings many things to surprising conclusions. Some of the things you thought would happen here tonight did not happen here tonight. And for that you should be thankful. For I have found a way. A way no man expected. A way to end this play. Forward!

Finley as DIONYSUS throws yin-yang 69 buttons to the audience. The performers march into Wooster Street, turn north, go to Broome Street, and make a left turn. Finley as DIONYSUS continues his campaign speech. No performer returns to the theatre until at least a half hour has gone by. Some spectators follow the performers into the street. Sometimes a lot people—spectators and performers—end at Kenn's Broome Street Bar.

My fellow Americans, citizens of Wooster Street! Awake and arouse yourselves! Follow me into the streets. You have nothing to lose but your minds. Follow me! My dance is swift. My wrath is militant. I ask you to mobilize yourselves! Get down! Delight in real contact with one another. Grab a thyrsus! Pack a .45! Arm yourself! Napalm the decay! Burn the slums! Shit bricks on The Man! Power to the Bacchae! If someone gives you lip on the subway, shoot him down! Not to kill, but to wound. In pain, the infidel will become a fellow reveler of me. Feel the pain! I ask only that you follow me. Only that you indulge your fantasies of violence and sensuality. Only now can it come true. Fuck fantasy! Make it real! Make it now! Okay your cocks. Explode your feelings. Freedom! Stroke your pussy hairs! Ball in the streets! Freedom! Delight in the raw flesh! Freedom! Take Humphrey's²³ clothes off! Give Mayor Lindsay²⁴ a total caress! Blow kisses on Lyndon!²⁵ Lay tongues on your leaders! Then tear them to pieces! Firebomb a cop! Roast a pig! Drop the jelly of napalm joy on them! I am sick of reason and laws. I am tired of squashy liberals and concrete conservatives. Tired of Pentheuses and paper honkies. They must be eliminated! Torn limb from limb! I love the smell of riots, the orgasms of death and blood! We will tolerate no more false revolutions, no more rituals, no more stage blood bloodbaths! We want the real thing!

He gives the Nazi "heil Hitler" salute.

After the 1968 election of Richard Nixon as US President, Finley's curse changed.

FINLEY as DIONYSUS:

Good evening. This is William Finley. A god by any other name. A god that smokes seven brands of cigarettes, a god that eats food, men, and women, a god with a Social Security number, but an unemployed god. Dig it. I came here tonight by the Seventh Avenue subway to tell you who I was. You mocked me, you wouldn't participate in my ordeals. You wouldn't even clap for my rites. Therefore, before I split, I will reveal the trials that await those of little faith. First on the list is Dia, Richard Dia. Dia, you came to us in a void. You still feel nothing. As a result of your actions here tonight, of clearing spaces and having people hauled around the room, I got thrown

in the pit. You didn't turn me on. And now you have nothing but stage blood and the promise that you'll have to do the same damned thing tomorrow night. On you, Agave, I pronounce this doom. In many ways you mocked Dia. Therefore, you have to leave this garage to live out the rest of your wretched lives never knowing which of you played Agave.

When Barclay plays AGAVE.

On you, Agave, Remi, I pronounce this doom. You will have to discover each night that you have killed your own baby. The baby you have not yet given birth to.

When Shephard plays CADMUS.

And you, Cadmus, Bill Shephard, you will go to the island of Scorpios. There you will become the bodyguard of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis²⁶ and there you will be contracted by the Greek Mafia to make a hit on Richard Nixon, who has decided that Spiro Agnew²⁷ deserves the job. Nixon is tired of the Presidency and is going to be the first President to commit suicide by assassination.

SHEPHARD *as* CADMUS:

Finley, your punishment is too harsh. We've learned.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

I'm sorry, Bill, but I was a god and you blasphemed me.

SHEPHARD *as* CADMUS:

But gods should be exempt from human passions.

FINLEY *as* DIONYSUS:

Gods aren't exempt from anything. They just have more power. As for the rest of you, I condemn you to forget what's happened here tonight. We are going to visit other cities. We are going to bring doom and blood and death all across the United States. Good evening, motherfuckers!

When Bosseau plays DIONYSUS, he puts on an old, brown leather coat. As he watches the women killing PENTHEUS and the other men, and listens to the lament, he smokes a corncob pipe.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Good evening. Once again this is Jason Bromius Bosseau, a god who knows 42 of these United States, a god born and raised in Kansas, a god who lived for four miserable years in Southern California and three miserable years in an East Village tenement. Let us review what happened here tonight. I came here to tell you who I am, a god. Instead of saying that's nice—in fact, that is beautiful, this man is a god, I dig that, I love that, I would dance for this man, I would live for this man, I would march for this man, I would go to war for this man, I would kill for this man, I would die for this man. Instead of saying that, you mocked me, you threw me into the pit, most of you didn't dance for me, none of you really killed for me, and in general you dishonored me. So I'm going to throw you all out of here.

But before you split, I'm going to leave each and every one of you with a curse on your head. First you, Richard Dia, Pentheus. You came to us in rage and you connected with your anger, but what you didn't do is connect with your love for me. As a result, the death you suffer you suffer justly. Your curse is that you must continue performing this play again and again and again until you finally realize that I am not acting, that I am a god, and that nothing less than your total submission to me and my demands can ever save you from a false death. And upon you, Remi, Agave, this doom. You must leave this garage in expiation of the murder you have done, for you are unclean, and it would be a sacrilege for you to remain here in my holy temple. It is your fate to go back to Houston, where you will live out the rest of your wretched life not knowing why you ever gave yourself to me. Upon you, Cadmus, William Shephard, I pronounce this doom. You will leave this city at 1 p.m. tomorrow on an Eastern Airlines flight for Washington, D.C. There you will go directly to the Pentagon. You will meet my friends who rule this great country. You see, I'm no longer living in the slums, I'm living in great mansions all over this beautiful land. It is your fate, Shephard, to become a United States Army general, and you will lead thousands and millions of troops through this country and make it pure again. In my name, your armies will plunder many cities. You will have your men stick bayonets in the bellies of each citizen who does not believe in America. You will end, once and for all, the problem of alienation in this land. Everyone is going to believe again!

CADMUS: Jason, your sentence is too harsh.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

I'm sorry, but it's too late. When there was time you didn't know me.

CADMUS: Gods should be exempt from human passion.

BOSSEAU *as* DIONYSUS:

Gods aren't exempt from anything. They simply have the power to do what they want. Now shut up and sweat and work. As for the rest of you, I condemn you to remember what happened here tonight. To remember me, Jason Bosseau, and what happens when I appear.

The middle section of Bosseau's version of DIONYSUS's curse sometimes went like this.

Richard Dia. Dia, you came to me in rage, you stopped my dancing, you threw me in that filthy pit. Then, obsessed by me, you went down there and I gave you your chance. But you did nothing for me. You didn't even touch me. So you must leave here with your false death. You will do the same thing tomorrow night. Upon you, Agave, Joan, and Ciel, this doom. You must leave this garage in expiation of the murder you have done, for you are unclean. You offend me. You offend my holiness. So split. And no real children. You will have to do the birth ritual night after night and you won't have any real children until you make your peace with me. Upon you, Shephard, Cadmus, I pronounce this doom. You will go with a huge army to Southern California, to Los Angeles County, and you will burn it to the ground. Then you will go to Orange County and burn it to the ground. Then to San Diego and do the same thing. Then you will get thousands of bulldozers and push all that plastic shit into the Pacific Ocean. You'll have all the money you need. And on your way back to New York you'll

stop in Kansas and burn all of it to the ground too. In the end, the great god Ares will bring you to live among the blest.

As Bosseau as DIONYSUS curses each performer, they leave through the theatre's side door, go upstairs, shower, and dress. Toward the end of his curse, Bosseau as DIONYSUS throws Dionysus in 69 buttons to the spectators. Then he too goes upstairs.

The curse of MacIntosh as DIONYSUS.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Good evening once again. This is Joan MacIntosh, a god who is a woman, a god who is much more than a woman. I came here tonight to reveal myself to you, to let you know me. I came here to liberate you, to turn you on. But instead of welcoming me, instead of believing me and worshipping me and loving me, you threw me into the pit. You didn't believe, you didn't love, you didn't turn me on. In fact, you turned me off. Therefore I shall tell you what lies in store for those of such little faith. First you, Bill Shephard. You came to me in innocence. You tried to destroy me with your physical strength and your curiosity. You didn't respect my female body. You never even touched me. Therefore I condemn you to leave this garage and sign up with Women's Liberation. I condemn you to see to it that a woman is made President of the United States within the next 50 years.

An alternative condemnation of Shephard.

I condemn you to perform this play over and over and over again until you learn to submit to me.

When Ryan plays AGAVE.

Upon you, Agave, Margaret, I pronounce this doom. You will leave this garage in expiation of the murder you have done, for you are unclean. You killed your son. Therefore you will stop performing, go back to Harlem, and be an unwed mother. You will have a child every nine months and name them all after me.

When Barclay plays AGAVE.

Upon you, Agave, Remi, this doom. You will leave this garage in expiation of the murder you have done, for you are unclean. You will stop performing, and go back to Bobbs-Merrill. You will become the head of the International Children's Books Department. You will establish yourself in Biafra and teach those children how to read. You will teach them to love America.

After each performer is cursed, they leave the theatre.

When Finley plays CADMUS.

You, Cadmus, Finley, will change your name to General Curtis LeMay.²⁸ You will gain 200 pounds, dye your hair black, shave off your mustache, and destroy your glasses. You will lead an

army group into Vietnam and kill all the Americans and Vietnamese. On your way back home you will destroy all the major cities in the world. You will bomb your world back to the Stone Age, where it belongs. Out of the debris you will erect many shrines in my name, celebrating me.

CADMUS: Joan, your sentence is too harsh.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

I'm sorry. Long ago Euripides wrote these things. It's too late. When there was time you didn't know me.

CADMUS: Gods should be exempt from human passions.

MACINTOSH *as* DIONYSUS:

Gods do whatever they please. They alone have the power. Now shut up, get back to work, and then split. As for the rest of you, I condemn you to forget what happened here tonight. I condemn you to leave this garage and support my revolution. You will follow me, and worship me, and love me! And you will never know when your leaders have betrayed you!

During the last part of her curse, MacIntosh as DIONYSUS climbs down from the tower, bringing the bull-horn with her. She leaves the theatre on her last word. The theatre is empty, except for the audience.

The curse of McDermott as DIONYSUS takes two forms. The short curse continues until the performers have cleaned the theatre and gone upstairs. The long curse goes on until all the spectators leave the theatre. This may be half-an-hour or longer. Like a prize fighter after a tough workout, McDermott wraps around his neck the towel he used to wipe the blood from his hands. On one occasion, he was carried out onto Wooster Street, as in the first Finley as DIONYSUS ending.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Good evening. Hello, hello. I'd like to make a statement. Originally, I came here to announce that I'm a god. I was a god incognito. But I'm in a new position now. And now I want to announce that I'll be running as the fourth candidate, or the fifth candidate, or the fourth and fifth candidates, in the race for Mayor of the City of New York. I've made this decision only after careful consideration. After careful consideration, I've decided that, though the will of the people is crystal clear, only a god can make it work. What that means is this: we've got to get things moving, there isn't much time. Only a god can make it work. Only a god knows the will of the people well enough to make it work. We'll get to my platform in a moment. But first I'd like to thank all those who've helped me achieve this victory this evening. We've been through some desperate moments, and I don't know what I would have done without all my loyal supporters. It's a great victory we've won. And now it's time to forgive and forget. Forgive and forget. It's a time for bringing together all the elements in our society, and I know how. It's a time for peace and harmony, you got it? I said peace and harmony. I want to see some peace and some harmony. I'm anxious to tell you about my platform, but first I have to talk to my advisors. Stand up, Cadmus. Cadmus, you know that the people are very concerned about law and order. Well, I've got the answer. We all know why kids get into trouble. They get into trouble because they're on the streets. Now let's look at that. What do we do? This is

what we do. Manufacture a pedometer shoe, a pedometer shoe, get it? Everyone will wear this thing, and it will count every step a person takes. And we will levy a street tax, get it? Yea, like the going rate will be a penny a step. So you see what that means? A boogaloo down Broadway will cost you about 40 dollars, a walk in the park will cost you five or ten dollars. I want you to work on that.

CADMUS: I didn't know gods were like you.

MCDERMOTT *as* DIONYSUS:

Now you know. A god in my position is like me. You understand? Do you know what it's like to be a god in my position? No, of course you don't. Well, take it on faith. Stand up, Pentheus. Pentheus, you know that it is the will of the people to get some peace and harmony, right? Okay. Why do kids get into trouble? Because they're unhappy. Why are they unhappy? Because nothing is happening. They go out on the street looking for action. So I want you to get everything in motion. If everything's already moving, nobody's going to go out on the street looking for action. You see what I mean? Keep 'em moving and they're happy. Give everybody the sense of motion. It's the will of the people. I want cars to move and houses to move and office buildings to move. It will never be necessary to leave your auto, your house, your office. Everyone will stay in his place, yet everything will move. It's the perfect solution. Everybody moves, but everybody stays. Perfect order. Work on that. Stand up, Agave. Agave, how would you like to come to Gracie Mansion with me? How would you like to be my social secretary? I want you to consider this carefully, because you have to be the people's instrument. You have to put on a great show. When people come to the mansion to picket and demonstrate, we'll entertain them out of sight. Drinks, girls, the works. People will demonstrate just to be bought off. Now I've got the lyrics for a good song. Here they are: "Call me god, call me god, Patrick McZeus, that's me." Find me a catchy tune for that. And get a new song for this clean-up job. We'll be mopping up many floors and streets before the campaign is over. We've got to have a soul sound, a sound that makes the brushes scrub. A sound to forgive and forget by. Got it? Work on that.

By this time, most of the performers and many of the spectators have left. The stage lights are down and the house lights up. The spot remains on McDermott as DIONYSUS.

Now here's my platform. I've discovered that inflation is the one problem that concerns all the people. End inflation, that's the will of the people. Inflation happens because money is based on gold. Gold is an unrealistic base for the currency of this nation. I'm going to put the currency on a solid base. I'm going to put our currency where it's really at. Power. Power is where it's at. I'm going to base money on power. Already you see the value of my system. It makes the most powerful the richest, without any intermediary materials like gold, without any hypocritical economic theories. Now what is power? Dig this. Power is power. Do you get it? Let it sink in. Meditate on this. Power is power. Do you see what that means? Power Power.

I want Power Power. Power means power. I mean juice, baby. Electrical power is power. Currency is current and current is power. Power is power. It goes through wires, it's in the tube, in the radio, it comes in little batteries that you can put in your pocket, it makes things move, it is the source of the sense of motion, it makes light, it makes the ticket tick. Power is power. Now we're going to control all the power. Everyone will have a tube in his home. On this tube we will

give him all the information he wants. Everyone will be totally in motion and totally informed. Dig it. Power Power! Power Power! Power Power!

Shouting his slogan, McDermott as DIONYSUS leaves the theatre. Or, if he decides to wait out the audience, his speech goes on and on.

Now more details about my program. The penal system. I will develop a penal system that works perfectly but does not hurt anybody. Modern technology will do it for me. The deep-freezer, you understand? A misdemeanor will cost you a couple of days in the deep-freezer. A felony will cost you a couple of years. A capital crime and we put you in the deep-freezer forever. But you won't feel a thing. It's perfectly humane. There's no pain.

By now, usually, only about ten or fifteen people remain. Sometimes they heckle. Sometimes they cheer. Sometimes they just sit and listen, straggling out one or two at a time.

Communication. There will be no personal communication. All communication will be via power. Bullhorns, tubes, radios, telephones. No personal communication. Personal communication upsets people. Dictaphones, cablegrams, message units, Yes. Personal communication, No. Now if you've come on a bus, or in a car with friends, or if your parents are waiting for you, they'll wait. Everything will wait on the will and word of god. If you've heard me today, and if I've touched your heart, I want you to ...

NOTES

1. The tour was controversial because usually TPG performed the birth and death rituals naked. At the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis, we agreed to not undress for the rituals, but a spectator stripped during the dancing after the birth of Dionysus. The second performance at the university was cancelled. We did the rituals naked at the January 26, 1969 performance at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. After the performance, all 10 members of the cast were arrested and charged with "indecent exposure." The case persisted for 27 months before the charges were dropped.
2. In 1973, Bruce Bowen directed *D69* at the Houston Laboratory Theatre (see Lowry 1973). On June 28–29, 2006 at The Performing Garage, Christopher Mirto directed his own version of *D69*—the performance was somewhere between a staged reading and a production. In an email, Mirto wrote, "For the revival at the Garage we performed an adaptation I created with the cast. I remember we used three actors to play Dionysus. We followed the story and plot and the spirit but with much less audience interaction. [...] William Finley introduced us at each show to the audience" (2024). December 3–20, 2009 the Rude Mechanicals of Austin, Texas, staged *D69* based on the De Palma, Fiore, and Rubin film. The Rude Mechanicals production toured to Princeton, New Jersey in 2011 and to New York's Live Arts theatre in 2012.
3. Lots has been written about *D69*, most of it superficial. Among the serious analyses: Brecht 1969, Shephard 1991 (revised 2012), Zeitlin 2004, Fischer-Lichte 2014, and Deriu 2023.
4. A phrase popularized as the title of Timothy Leary's 1968 book championing psychedelic drugs. "Politics of Ecstasy" is also the title of an essay I wrote in 1968 for the *New York Free Press* later included in my 1969 *Public Domain*.
5. NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was founded in 1909 by Ida B. Wells, and W. E. B. DuBois, and others. In 1935, Charles Hamilton Houston left his position as Dean of Howard University Law School to become the NAACP's general counsel. In 1936, Houston brought

- Thurgood Marshall, one of his mentees at Howard, to the NAACP. In 1940, Marshall became the lead the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund whose mission was to end racial segregation. In 1957, the Legal Defense Fund separated from the NAACP. Marshall remained its head until 1961. Marshall became a Supreme Court justice in 1967, serving until 1991. He was the first African American on the Court.
6. On September 23, the nine students, guarded by local police and state troopers, entered Central High School through a side door only to be withdrawn because a mob outside and students inside threatened them. Two days later, protected by the 101st Airborne division, Central High School was integrated.
 7. I was going to write about the Little Rock Nine for *The Reporter* magazine, a progressive publication that existed from 1949 through 1968. I don't know why, but I did not write the article.
 8. Men were drafted into the US Army from 1948 until 1973. In 1958, 142,246 men were drafted. Local draft boards were responsible for filling quotas. One could go to your draft board and "volunteer for the draft." This helped the draft board fill its quota. If I enlisted, I would serve a minimum of three years. As a draftee, I served two years. My motive for serving? Until almost the age of 14, I lived in an upper middle class Jewish home in the Jewish Weequahic neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey. Then my family moved to even wealthier South Orange, NJ. Next, I went to Cornell University. My life was sheltered and privileged. Serving as an enlisted man put me in direct close daily contact with people very different from those I had previously known. I wanted that.
 9. For a full discussion of the FST including documents and letters, see *The Free Southern Theater by the Free Southern Theater* (1969), Moses, Schechner, and Dent, eds.
 10. A major input came from SDS, Students for a Democratic Society, founded in 1960, and its 1962 manifesto, "The Port Huron Statement." SDS was radical left, growing out of the labor political movements of the 1930s.
 11. King condemned the war in 1965. His outspoken opposition culminated in his remarks on April 4, 1967 in New York's Riverside Chapel before 3,000 people, when he joined the president of the Union Theological Seminary, and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel when he declared, "My conscience leaves me no other choice." In the speech King forcefully denounced western colonialism. Ali refused the draft on April 28, 1967, in June he was convicted of draft-evasion; his heavyweight title was taken away. In 1971, the Supreme Court overturned Ali's conviction. In 1974, Ali regained his title by defeating George Foreman.
 12. I was very familiar with Ionesco's work: his plays from *The Bald Soprano* through to *Victims of Duty* were the subject of my 1962 PhD dissertation at Tulane University.
 13. To make theatre by stripping away everything that is not essential. This is close to the "negative capability" poet John Keats ascribed to me. See my Introduction to *Imagining O* (this volume).
 14. During the Grotowski-Cieslak NYU workshop, participant Tom Crawley wrote a detailed description of the work. His description and commentary was sometimes augmented by fellow participant Jerry Mayer. This journal has not been published. It was given to me by Crawley's widow, Phyllis Crawley.
 15. In his *The Dionysus Group* (1991, revised 2012), Shephard gives his account of The Performance Group and of *Dionysus in 69*.
 16. I wanted to incorporate as "The Performance Group," but that name was taken. I chose "Wooster Group" because The Performing Garage was located at 33 Wooster Street.
 17. To strengthen Pentheus, Shephard imported part of a speech of Creon from Elizabeth Wyckoff's translation of Sophocles's *Antigone*: "If I allow disorder in my house, I'd surely have to license it abroad. [...] If men live decently, it is because discipline saves their very lives for them."
 18. This speech, until "discipline saves their very lives for them," is what King Creon says in Sophocles's *Antigone*. Shephard selected this text.

19. Sam Yorty (1909–1998) was mayor of Los Angeles from 1961 to 1973.
20. Ozzie Nelson (1906–1975) was an actor and bandleader who with his wife Harriet and their sons David and Ricky starred in the popular radio and television series, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.
21. Once, Shephard and a woman who came to his aid, continued to caress and kiss each other. After about five minutes—which is a long time in such a theatrical situation—they decided to go off together. They left the theatre. That night, Pentheus won the “Dionysus game.” I told the audience that the performance was over. Spectators response ranged from surprise to delight to rage. “We bought tickets, we are entitled to see the whole play!” I offered spectators complimentary tickets for another performance. At another time, a group of students who had seen *D69* several times decided to “rescue” Pentheus. At this point in the play, they carried him out of the theatre. I asked for a volunteer to take his place, to finish the “ritual” that was the performance. A young man came forward. Step by step, I told him what to do and fed him his necessary lines. The performance that night was uniquely moving, very real.
22. Four days after *D69* opened, I left New York on an extended research trip to Latin America to observe performances and meet with artists. *D69* went on without me during July, then closed for August and September. In September, I led refresher rehearsals running up to re-opening early in October. Everyone in TPG knew of my upcoming trip, and Finley used this information.
23. Hubert H. Humphrey (1911–1978) was a US Senator from Minnesota (1949–1964 and 1971–1978), Vice President of the United States (1965–1969), and the Democratic Party candidate for President in 1968, losing to Richard M. Nixon (1913–1994).
24. John V. Lindsay (1921–2000) was a Member of Congress (1959–1965) and mayor of New York (1963–1971).
25. Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973) was a US Senator from Texas (1948–1961), Vice President of the United States (1961–1963), and President (1963–1969).
26. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (1929–1994) was First Lady of the United States (1961–1963), wife of President John F. Kennedy. In 1968, five years after JFK’s assassination, Jacqueline married Aristotle Onassis, owner of the world’s largest commercial shipping fleet. After Onassis’s death in 1975, Jacqueline worked as a book editor in New York.
27. Spiro Agnew (1918–1996) was Richard Nixon’s Vice President (1969–1973). Agnew resigned because of bribes, tax evasion, and other corrupt actions which began before he became Vice President and continued while he was in office.
28. General Curtis LeMay (1906–1990) was Chief of Staff of the US Air Force from 1961 to 1965. He advocated heavy bombing of North Vietnam, saying that “we’re going to bomb them back into the Stone Age” (LeMay 1965).

9

Briseis and the Sergeant, 1958, 1961, 1962

Introduction

Briseis and the Sergeant was performed from April 26 to May 2, 1962 as part of the Tulane University Theatre Department's Silver Season. The text below draws on versions completed in September 1958, February 1961, and May 1962. From November 1958 until August 1960, I was a Private and then a Specialist in the US Army, stationed first at Fort Polk Louisiana and then at Fort Hood Texas.¹ I began *Briseis* before serving and worked on it after my discharge. The title page of one manuscript says "Provincetown, Massachusetts September, 1958."² My army experiences infiltrate the play, but do not determine it. *Briseis* is an early example of my abiding fascination with the Greek canon and thought: Homer, Pindar, Plato, Aristotle, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Heraclitus. Throughout my career, I have returned to the Greeks, often twisting them and radically reinterpreting them, as in *Dionysus in 69*, *The Prometheus Project*, and *YokastaS* (all in this volume). In 1977, I directed *Seneca's Oedipus* in Ted Hughes's magnificent version of the Latin classic, a version of Sophocles's play.

The story of *Briseis* caught my interest in the spring of 1958 while I was at the University of Iowa. There I read *The Iliad* in Richmond Lattimore's lucid translation. *Briseis* appears rarely in the epic: near its start when Agamemnon takes her from Achilles, in the midst when she weeps over the corpse of Patroclus, beloved of Achilles slain by Hector, and near the end when Agamemnon returns her to Achilles. Although only a flash in the epic, what happens to *Briseis* sets everything in motion. When Agamemnon takes *Briseis* from Achilles, the insulted and angry warrior refuses to fight, putting the Greeks in peril. When Achilles returns to the war and kills Hector, Agamemnon sends *Briseis* back to him. Homer treats *Briseis* as war booty. But I imagine her as having agency. She is the epic's hinge: everything turns on her. Her importance to the story combined with her absence fascinated me so much, I wrote a play about her. That is an abiding theme in my work: raising to more visibility women that history and/or culture have all but erased.

Briseis and the Sergeant is also about the play's two other major characters, the Woman and the Sergeant. No doubt the Woman is like Bertolt Brecht's Anna Fierling, aka Mother Courage, whom Brecht calls "a hyena of the battlefield" in *Mother Courage and Her Children*. But there is also the feistiness of other Brecht women, such as Grusha in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Shen Teh in *The Good Woman of Setzuan*.³ Brecht's Fierling works Europe's Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), while *Briseis'* Woman is a time-traveler going from war to war. As for the Sergeant, he is an amalgam of many men I met during my two years in the army, career soldiers who were in it for the long haul, for 20 or 30 years. The "grunts," the "re-ups," the ones who cursed the army as they re-enlisted.

Briseis and the Sergeant was staged only once, in April–May 1962 by the Tulane University Theatre Department. Professor George W. Hendrickson directed. At that time, I was finishing

my PhD dissertation in advance of joining the faculty in September 1962 as an assistant professor and editor of the *Tulane Drama Review* (TDR). Here is an edited version of my program note for the Tulane production:

If *The Iliad* has a basic plot it is what happens when Achilles refuses to fight. The story fascinated me and I began to work. The situation soon expanded into a kind of morality play of war and women, of men and pride. Then I volunteered for the draft. My experience in the Army provided some of the inspiration for the satirical elements of the play. I finished the first draft of *Briseis* in the Company C office of the 1st Armored Division while stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. The company clerk let me use his typewriter and the guys were amused that I would tramp into the office after duty, take out my cigarettes and work on the play. At first they thought I was a nut. Then they began to like the idea of my writing a play “about the Army.” Soon the play became a symbol to us all—the draftees, that is—of the necessary futility of war, its stupidity and brutality and also its seeming inevitability. Not much of my Army experience was used directly in the play, but the atmosphere for much of the play grows out of my days in service, amidst roaches and Master Sergeants, barracks and inspections. The US Army was “international”—we were white and black, yellow and tan; we all were Americans, but we came from (or our forebearers came from) Africa, the Caribbean, the Americas, Europe, Asia, the Philippines, and God knows where. Where we came from was no longer important: we were in “it.” This sense of universality I wanted to get into the play. And also a powerful female urgency. I thought then: women are urgent persons, hard to move if they choose not to move, and hard to stop once they set their hearts on something. They will defy fate itself if they want something badly enough. It was this courage, often cloaked in irony, yet optimistic, that I tried to put into *Briseis*.

What is published here is my best take of what I wrote before I went into the army, rewrote while in the army, revised in 1961, and then revised again during rehearsals for the Tulane production. I’ve done some further minor editing for this publication. The production calls for music. What we used at Tulane has been lost, unfortunately. Maybe it will turn up some day. Much of the music can be inferred from the stage directions. Other music, including the Woman’s songs that are so important, needs to be newly composed if *Briseis and the Sergeant* were to be produced again. The pictures of the Tulane production show that Hendrickson’s staging was conventional, deftly deploying a cast of 29. I suggest, if the play were done today, a more fluid staging, perhaps doing away with most of the set.

Briseis and the Sergeant is a time-travel historical conflation. World War I stands for modern war, the Trojan War stands for ancient war. Together they represent all wars, everywhere anytime. In re-reading the play after many years, I recognize the biases in it. Briseis is a “girl-woman” on the way to growing up. She is driven first by shock, then by love, and then by motherhood. Finally, she recognizes that she will have to go it alone. Or, more accurately, without a man. Briseis enlists as the Woman’s apprentice and partner. They both are already and always on the road. The Sergeant is a “boy-man” refusing to grow up. He cannot bind with Briseis and make a family. At the other extreme, he cannot rule the world. He rises only to subside at the end into what he feels safest doing—taking orders from those above him in rank and giving orders to those below him in rank. Nothing is more organizational than the military. Wanting power mostly for its accoutrements, the Sergeant doesn’t know what to do with power once he has it, so he surrenders it, re-enlists, and follows the cadence of the march. And the Woman? An entrepreneur, akin to Mother Courage but not suffering any of Anna Fierling’s deep losses. The trial scene in act 3 is, of course, a satirical version of Aeschylus’s *The Eumenides*.

For me, now, in 2024, the best things in *Briseis* are the media circus trial in act 3, the satire of war-making, the flow of the dialog, the sometimes tender if also tense relationship of the title characters, and the conflation of time.

Briseis and the Sergeant

Production

Director	George W. Hendrickson
Design	Daniel Hannon
Technical director	Daniel Hannon
Stage manager	Carroll Durand
Sound	Danny Blodget
Sound assistant	William C. Clark
Lights	Michael D. Birtwistle
Lights assistants	Michael Welch, Elizabeth Clark
Props	Philip McCoy, Janice Meer
Prop construction	Daniel Hannon, Eugene Peyroux
Make up	Fred Chapman
Make up assistants	Beverly Bazler, David Haller
Costumes	Nancy Gallaher, Harlene Marley, Joyce Chumbley
Scenery construction	Daniel Hannon, Edmund Seagrave, Denny Blodget, Herbert Prizeman, Michael Welch, Eugene Peyroux, Martin Boorstein, Elizabeth Clark
Paint crew	Daniel Hannon, Michael Welch, Herbert Prizeman, Eugene Peyroux

Performers

Briseis	Katherine Preston
Woman	Janet Swanson
Sergeant	Thomas B. Markus
Captain	Robert Schneider
Patroclus	William T. Clark, III
Agamemnon	David Mays
Odysseus	David Haller
Lawyer	Robert Merritt
TV director	Edward B. Reid
Clerk	Stuart Velasco
Doctor	Joseph Elliott
Cheerleaders	Wendy Bensinger, Virginia Flick, Celia Scott, Carole Weinman
TV Announcer	Martin Boorstein, James Head, Bruce Kruger
Soldiers, Refugees	Carroll Mace, Shirley Price, John Midyette
Crowds, Messengers	Albert Salzer, Marsha Solomon, Alton Stewart, John Sutherland, Marsha Terry, Jane Uris, Stuart Velasco

ACT 1

1

A bare stage with a large rock. Early evening. At rear, a cyclorama that slowly changes from white to red to purple as night comes on. Flares and martial music in the distance. The music approximates the tune of the WOMAN's song.

A middle-aged WOMAN enters pushing a wheelbarrow overflowing with flowers. She wears a shawl and an apron. In one of her apron pockets, a well-worn leather-bound book; in the other, a flashlight. She sings her song like a street hawker. Once long ago the song had a lovely lyrical quality that has since been lost.

WOMAN:

Buy my flowers! Buy! Buy!

Roses for the young ones
Violets for the old,
Poppies for the dumb ones
Vine wreaths for your heroes.

She stops and mops her forehead with her sleeve.

Give the dead their due
With flowers of every hue.
Stop the slow black blood
With garlands of happy flowers.

Buy my flowers! Buy! Buy!

She looks around at the bare stage and continues, less exuberantly.

Roses for the young ones
Violets for the old,
Poppies for the dumb ones
Vine wreaths for ...

Her voice trails off. In the distance the music fades away. The WOMAN sits on a ledge, mops her forehead again. She is tired.

Hell.

She takes a map out of the book and examines it with her flashlight.

This is the place all right.

She looks out over the audience.

But it's too peaceful. I dislike tranquility. Wake up and fight! *Dejected.* Ahh, what's the use?

She takes a white lily out of the wheelbarrow. She strips the flower, petal by petal.

Who are you for, quiet lily? Some young prince slaughtered by a spear? No. Rose wreaths would be better for him. Or maybe some nameless nitwit ripped to pieces by a mortar. *Musing.* Poppies for him. *Looks at the petals in her palm.* Nice tiny sheets. Shrouds. Flower, you'd be fine for the classical wars. Or even some of the religious wars. Lilies have that connotation. A thirty year lily. The lily of Troy. *Mimicking an advertisement.* "Helen, formerly of Sparta, now one of our leading socialites, recommends lilies for all funerals, private and public." Or maybe: lilies for the Israelite dead. Yes. Yes—that's nice. "Lilies for the Israelite dead." That'd sell. If I could only get to Jerusalem in time for the destruction of the temple. I could run a special on it. *With sudden, bitter dejection.* Ah, those days are dead and gone. We're in the era of "please omit flowers." *Dreamily.* I remember when they decked out the dead in a hundred colors and brought woolly white sheep in by the score to sacrifice. When the funeral pyres for young heroes blazed straight up a thousand feet. Weeping came in waves. Whole cities washed away in mourning. I had good clothes then. But that was before there were so many dead—that was when you could give proper attention to each one. But now! *She spits.* Now you cater to the mass dead. Where's the meaning in that? What's the fun in a funeral for a couple of million? For one man you can show compassion, but for a pile of rotting flesh ...? *Catching herself.* Ahh, but I shouldn't lecture. I'll make the best of the situation.

The stage lights up brilliantly for a moment. The sound of distant gunfire.

Look! A flare! They're getting closer. Good. Now there'll be some fighting. *Happily and confidently to the audience.* Couldn't we use some after all this detestable quiet?

BRISEIS *enters slowly. She is young and pretty. Her long brown hair is untied falling loosely over her shoulders. She is dressed in a simple classical robe. She holds a handkerchief to her face. Occasionally she sobs quietly. The WOMAN goes to meet her.*

Some grief in your family, perhaps?

BRISEIS *waves her away with her handkerchief and gives a mighty sob. Then she goes over to the rock and sits wearily.*

A death? In the war?

BRISEIS: It's night already.

WOMAN: You've lost someone?

BRISEIS *shakes her head yes.*

Thank god. *She goes to the wheelbarrow and selects some flowers.* Put white roses on his coffin.

BRISEIS: Coffin?
WOMAN: There's nothing a dead man would rather have than white roses.
BRISEIS: I can't find him. I've looked everywhere. And now it's dark!
WOMAN: Now, now, child. Don't worry. Put a wreath on an unmarked grave. *She displays her flowers.* Aren't these tulips lovely? Remember, to heaven it's all the same. It's by our effort that God judges us.

BRISEIS *looking up exasperated:*
If only I knew his name!

WOMAN: What?
BRISEIS: And now I'll never find him.
WOMAN: You're in mourning for someone you don't know?

BRISEIS *vivaciously:*
I'm not in mourning. I don't believe in mourning.

WOMAN: But you're crying. And you said you lost someone.

BRISEIS *sobbing louder:*
Oh!! Don't remind me! Lost, lost, lost!!!

WOMAN *to herself:*
There's grief in the old tradition.

BRISEIS: I'm looking for the man who killed my husband.
WOMAN: Ah. Revenge.
BRISEIS: I want to marry him.
WOMAN: Marry?
BRISEIS: Is that so hard for you to understand? He killed my husband and brothers.
WOMAN: Yes. But—
BRISEIS: He can't just wreck my city and run off like that. He might do that to other girls, but not to me.
WOMAN: It's not human to not mourn your husband. If you loved him.
BRISEIS: I loved him. Now help me find the other one. He was a tall man. He had strong hands and bronze and leather greaves—
WOMAN: Greaves?
BRISEIS: And a steel spear that could go through the sun!

WOMAN *putting her flowers back in the wheelbarrow:*
I'm not taking on any partners. See this wheelbarrow? It's full. Do you know what that means? No sales. Tonight I'll have to eat onion shoots. Do you think a flower girl should stink from onions?

BRISEIS: You've got to help me find him.

WOMAN: I can't go chasing after live men. We've got nothing to discuss. That is, unless you'd like to buy some flowers.

BRISEIS: Yes. Yes, of course.

She takes a purse out of her sleeve.

Here.

WOMAN: I've got poppies, roses, violets, azaleas, lilies, vine wreaths, gardenias—

BRISEIS: Anything.

WOMAN *as she takes some coins:*

Did your husband have brown eyes or blue?

BRISEIS: Brown. But—

WOMAN: Then, honestly, roses—although they are a touch more expensive.

BRISEIS *gives her the purse:*

Here. Take it all.

WOMAN: Thank you, young lady.

Opening her book.

Now which war was he in?

BRISEIS *confused:*

This one.

WOMAN: What do you mean, "this one?" Just because I'm old, that's no reason for you to be insolent.

BRISEIS: Stop confusing me! All I know is that my city was destroyed by this man.

Romantically.

And, oh, what a man!

WOMAN *all business:*

None of that, child. The world is full of wars. You must be explicit.

Looking in her book.

Now, tell me. Where were you born?

Another flare illuminates the sky. BRISEIS starts in fright.

BRISEIS: Father Zeus!

WOMAN: What?!

BRISEIS: Lyrnessus.

WOMAN *thumbing through her book*:

Yes. It's listed. You're lucky. The sack of Lyrnessus was the prelude to a very important war. You see Helen was the most beautiful—

BRISEIS: Please!

WOMAN: Do you want my help or not? Now. Was your father an official of the town?

BRISEIS *proudly*:

He was the chief priest. I married the king!

WOMAN: Yes, yes here we are.

She reads to herself.

BRISEIS: You're Briseis.

BRISEIS: Yes. What's that book?

WOMAN: A pity ...

BRISEIS: What?

WOMAN: A real shame.

Sits on the rock as she continues to read.

Awful. No, honey. I don't think you want any more information. Believe me, it'll do you no good.

BRISEIS: I bought your flowers. Answer my questions.

WOMAN: This book is something of a prophecy. Or a history. It all depends. It's hard for me to explain but—

BRISEIS: I just want the name of the man who took my city!

WOMAN: I mean you're dead—in a manner of speaking. But, then, so am I. So what's the difference?

BRISEIS: No riddles. Give me that book.

They fight. BRISEIS knocks the WOMAN down but can't get the book.

WOMAN: You'll only learn misery—

BRISEIS: His name! His name!

Another flare. Gunfire closer.

WOMAN: Listen! They're starting. Get off me!

Buy my flowers!!

Roses for the young ones

Violets for the old—

Several soldiers dressed in World War I uniforms run across the stage.

WOMAN: Here, my boys. Get this girl off of me. Buy some flowers.

BRISEIS *pinning her*:
Quick now. Tell me!

Explosion, very near.

SOLDIER 1 *lifting BRISEIS off the* WOMAN:
Behind this rock now—

SOLDIER 2: The Jerries've started the barrage!

The SERGEANT enters running. He's a big, good-natured man in his late twenties. Sizing up the situation, he takes instant command.

SERGEANT: Get them out of the line of fire!

WOMAN *rushing toward her wheelbarrow*:
Yes, sir! But buy a bouquet first!

SOLDIER 1 *tosses the wheelbarrow behind the rock. The flowers scatter.*

SOLDIER 1: Get a move on! Fast!

In the confusion, BRISEIS picks up the book and reads.

BRISEIS: Achilles! Achilles!

The SERGEANT turns his head at the sound of the name.

SERGEANT: What the hell?! What?!!!

A violent explosion very near. Brilliant white light. BRISEIS holds her hands to her head in fright. She drops the book.

BRISEIS: Oh, Zeus!

The WOMAN darts out and retrieves the book, gathers the flowers, puts them back in the barrow. The SERGEANT looks at BRISEIS an instant, then scoops her up and takes her behind the rock.

Blackout

2

Later the same evening. The entrance to a small cave behind the rock of the preceding scene. A lean-to over the cave-mouth. A peaceful moon. Gunfire in the distance. The soldiers relax in foxholes near the cave. The WOMAN and the SERGEANT sit on a ledge. He is writing in a notebook lit by a tiny penlight. BRISEIS is in the cave out of sight.

SERGEANT: Now let's have it one more time. You sell flowers for funerals and the girl is looking for the man who killed her husband so she can marry him?
WOMAN: I'd much rather sell to weddings and anniversaries—but the funeral market is by far the steadiest and most lucrative—
SERGEANT: All right, all right. But why did you bring this girl into no-man's-land? And what business do you have here? This is a battle zone, you know. It's off limits—
WOMAN: What do you call your war?
SERGEANT: I don't think you get it. I'm interrogating you.
WOMAN: Of course you are.

Opening her book.

SERGEANT: But tell me, what do you call this war?
SERGEANT: Listen here!
WOMAN: The name, Sergeant.

SERGEANT *proudly*:
This is The Great War.

WOMAN *matter-of-factly*:
There are seventeen wars under that heading.

Looking closely at the SERGEANT.

Ugly tin helmets, drab uniforms. Ah, here we are.

SERGEANT: Lady, let me remind you that you're under the jurisdiction of the US Army.
WOMAN: We shall see.

Reading.

SERGEANT: I must say: this is a disgusting war.
SERGEANT: So what's new?
WOMAN: I'm not staying here beyond daybreak.

Shuts her book.

SERGEANT: You can say that again!

The WOMAN goes into the cave to join BRISEIS.

SOLDIER 1: Well, Sarge? What do we do with them?
 SERGEANT: At dawn we escort them back behind the line. The brass will take over from there.
 SOLDIER 1: Aww. Do we have to turn the pretty one over?

SERGEANT *pompously*:
 Soldier, let me remind you that the Articles of War require us to protect all non-combatants who either accidentally or through premeditation find themselves in a battle zone.

More informally.

But for now, get some rest. I'll keep watch.

He lights a cigarette.

SOLDIER 2: Wanna be the first one in, huh Sarge?
 SERGEANT: Soldier, watch your tongue.

The SOLDIERS stretch out in their foxholes and sleep. Inside the cave, the WOMAN takes two candles from her barrow and lights them. BRISEIS stands in a corner.

BRISEIS: Has the lightening stopped?
 WOMAN: It's all right now, child. See. I've made it light in here.
 BRISEIS: Why is Zeus so angry?
 WOMAN: Sit down. I've things to explain to you.
 BRISEIS: Do you know where Achilles is?
 WOMAN: We have to talk about that.
 BRISEIS: Why wouldn't you tell me his name before? And who are those men outside in funny clothes?
 WOMAN: Listen to me. Somehow we've gotten mixed up in a very ugly war—and we won't be able to get out until the sun rises. We must make the best of our situation for tonight.
 BRISEIS: Are those men barbarians? Are they going to rape us?
 WOMAN: Don't be afraid, child. I'll protect you.
 BRISEIS: Zeus is angry. But I'm not afraid of those barbarians. They don't even have spears. They must be slaves.
 WOMAN: They're real soldiers, all right. I can't explain everything to you. But tomorrow we'll go away and it won't matter.
 BRISEIS: And then you'll help me find Achilles?
 WOMAN: If you insist. Now try to sleep.
 BRISEIS: And you'll make him marry me?
 WOMAN: I'll do what I can.
 BRISEIS: I'll buy all your flowers for our wedding. I'm very rich. And my whole city'll be there. And his city too.
 WOMAN: It's wartime, honey. You can't be certain of anything.

BRISEIS: We always seem to be at war. Is that any reason not to get married?

The SERGEANT, carrying his gun, enters the cave.

SERGEANT: You can stay here for the night.

BRISEIS: Why do you have those funny clothes on? Are you a barbarian?

WOMAN: Child!

BRISEIS: And what's that thing you're carrying?

SERGEANT *looks at his gun and then at the WOMAN:*
She shell-shocked?

WOMAN: That's a good way of putting it.

BRISEIS: Is it a new kind of spear?

SERGEANT: Can't you see it's a gun?

BRISEIS: Gun?

SERGEANT: I shoot Germans with it. Bang! Bang!

BRISEIS: Shoot?

SERGEANT: Kill. Kill.

BRISEIS: All the time?

SERGEANT: Whenever I get the chance.

BRISEIS: Why?

SERGEANT: Don't you know anything at all?

WOMAN: Sergeant, I wouldn't tax her mind just now.

BRISEIS: Do you know where Achilles is?

SERGEANT: Who?

BRISEIS: Achilles. Achilles.

SERGEANT: All right. I've had enough.

He raises his gun, aims at BRISEIS.

What kind of game are you playing?

BRISEIS: It's no game. I'm going to marry him.

SERGEANT: Marry! Now look here—

BRISEIS: What business is it of yours? If you know where he is, tell me. If you don't,
I'll find him myself. I'm freeborn—

She goes toward the cave's entrance.

SERGEANT *cocking his gun:*

You're not going anywhere, babe. I've got some questions for you.

WOMAN: Can't they wait until morning? We're both very tired.

SERGEANT: No they can't wait!

WOMAN: You can see this girl's condition—

SERGEANT: Condition, hell, lady. Military intelligence might be interested in her. Do you think I'm as dumb as I look? There's something fishy going on, and I'm gonna to get to the bottom of it.

WOMAN *resigned*:

Very well. But listen to me, you might not be able to handle what you find out.

SERGEANT: Are you running this show, lady, or me?

The WOMAN shrugs and sits.

Good. We understand each other.

To BRISEIS.

Now, Miss, just where did you get that name, Achilles?
 BRISEIS: It was in her book. He killed my husband—
 SERGEANT: What book?
 WOMAN: What do you care?
 SERGEANT: Don't give me any lip. Give it to me.

He points his gun at the WOMAN.

Pronto.
 WOMAN: Very well.

She hands her book to him.

It's a catalogue of wars.
 SERGEANT: Of wars? Just what is your game?
 BRISEIS: Oh, it doesn't matter! Achilles killed my husband so I've got to marry him.
 It's my right.
 SERGEANT: Just tell me this one thing, Miss. How do you know my name?
 BRISEIS: Your name?
 SERGEANT: And don't tell me there are two Achilles Demosthenes Pakapopulous's in this man's army.
 BRISEIS: You're Achilles?
 SERGEANT: And didn't you yell my name just before the barrage?
 BRISEIS: Why did you take your greaves off? And where did you hide your spear? Are those barbarians outside holding you prisoner? Oh it doesn't matter! *To the WOMAN.* That's him, isn't it? He is! He's my Achilles!!
 SERGEANT: What are you two up to?

BRISEIS *to the WOMAN*:
 Promise me you won't let him get away!

The SERGEANT raises his gun again.

SERGEANT: All right both of you. Back up against that wall. Hands way up over your head. Don't move. None of your Jerry tricks.

BRISEIS comes toward the SERGEANT. He nudges her back to the wall with his bayonet.

I said, against the wall. You can't fool me. And don't think you're gonna subvert this patrol. We've been briefed on your Mata Hari stuff.
WOMAN: Sergeant, stop acting like an adolescent.
SERGEANT: Do you have any weapons?
WOMAN: Of course not.
SERGEANT: Let's find out.

He steps forward to search them. As he reaches BRISEIS she throws her arms around his neck and kisses him.

BRISEIS: I know you're the man who killed my husband!

The SERGEANT pushes BRISEIS back.

SERGEANT: Hey! You think I'm kidding?
BRISEIS: That's nothing to be ashamed of. He was no weakling.
WOMAN: He was buried with all the necessary honors.
BRISEIS: Oh, we did much better than that. We sacrificed 130 bullocks. Ours is a royal house.
WOMAN: And flowers, my dear, don't forget the flowers. Flowers that would make an emperor's heart burn with envy—
BRISEIS: And feasting—

SERGEANT *cocking his gun*:

Hold on! Knock it off! Once and for all, we're going to get to the bottom of this nonsense.

BRISEIS: Nonsense! Do you call burning my city nonsense? Is it nonsense to kill my husband and brothers and then not protect me? I'm a freeborn citizen. I've my rights. Are you a man or not? Will you marry me or not?
SERGEANT: I did not kill your husband!
WOMAN: How do you know?
BRISEIS: Your little war is all very well and good. But I've got children to get born and a household to start. You might be in this world to go around killing people. That may be your job. But it's not mine. So stop trying to confuse me!
SERGEANT: Me? Confuse you?
BRISEIS: I've been looking for you all day. I haven't eaten. And all you do is point that thing at me. Why won't you give me some wine?
SERGEANT: Wine?

BRISEIS:

Oh, I don't care anymore! If you're not man enough to face up to your responsibilities, I'll go. I'll marry some shepherd or bureaucrat or somebody. But I thought soldiers did more than just go out and kill people. Why do you fight your wars? Oh, you have your big words, don't you? But all you do is smash cities. Is that fun for you? Well it isn't fun for me. And I'm not going to stand by while you make rags of my life. I can fight too, if I have to. I'll follow you wherever you go and tell everyone I meet that you're Achilles the coward! Achilles the liar! Achilles the cheat!

SERGEANT: Now look here. I don't know why I'm fighting this war any more than you do. I'm no general.

BRISEIS: You're no general are you? Don't try to squirm out that way. Wasn't it you I saw this morning? You, Achilles, leading all your Myrmidons? Shouting at them to burn my city!

SERGEANT: I command six men. And three of them are god knows where.

BRISEIS: What's the difference? You owe me something.

SERGEANT *appealing to the* WOMAN:

Will you explain to this girl?

WOMAN: Sergeant, I agree with her 100 percent.

SERGEANT: Is that so? Look here—

WOMAN:

And I advise you to get along with this young woman. Do you hear me complaining that your men've mucked my flowers? These flowers are my living. You can point your gun at us all night, but when this war's over you'll go home. We can't. Our homes are gone. Do you hear us bitching? Has she cried about her husband? Is it so hard for you to be kind to her? Look at her.

The WOMAN coaches BRISEIS as if she were a model.

Stand up, my dear. Now turn around. Slowly. Isn't she pretty? And I'm sure she's more intelligent than most of the woman you've had in this war. Furthermore, she doesn't want very much from you.

SERGEANT: She wants to marry me!

WOMAN: You already have a wife?

SERGEANT: No. But—

WOMAN: You don't love her?

SERGEANT: Are you kidding?

WOMAN: You just met her. What do you expect? It's always love at first sight with you?

SERGEANT: That's not the point.

WOMAN: What then is the point?

SERGEANT: The illogical way all this is happening.

WOMAN: And I suppose you fight your wars in accord with some strictly syllogistic propositions?

SERGEANT: We have enemies. We kill them.
WOMAN: And they do the same for you. Very neat.
SERGEANT: We're protecting our freedoms.
WOMAN: And once you win—if you win—all your freedoms will be forever protected?
SERGEANT: I didn't say that.
WOMAN: Then you fight because you like to?
SERGEANT: I didn't say that either.
WOMAN: You fight for profit and glory?
SERGEANT: I do what they tell me to do.
WOMAN: You're a slave?

SERGEANT *raising his gun*:
I'm a free man!

WOMAN: And you'll shoot me to prove it?

BRISEIS *at the cave entrance*:
Stop arguing. The moon's up.

SERGEANT: Who gave you permission to walk over there?
BRISEIS: Come over here and look at it.
WOMAN: Go ahead, Sergeant. It's only for one night.
BRISEIS: That's not for you to say.
WOMAN: Put your gun down. We won't hurt you.
BRISEIS: Come here to me.

SERGEANT *slowly putting his gun down*:
But only for the night.

WOMAN: Who can say? Who can say?

Blackout

3

Near dawn the same night. Far away bugles play reveille in muted, indistinct tones which mix with the melody of the WOMAN's song. As the light brightens the desolate carnage of a battlefield comes into view. Stripped, leafless trees; mounds of unlovely earth; cartridges. And, along with these, helmets, spears, arrows. Birds are singing in the blasted trees.

The soldiers are sleeping in their foxholes. The WOMAN is sleeping too, her head resting on the side of the wheelbarrow, her apron under her head. BRISEIS and the SERGEANT are in passionate embrace.

BRISEIS: Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.
SERGEANT: Don't go away.

They kiss again.

BRISEIS *coquettishly*:

See? I told you it wouldn't be so bad.

SERGEANT: You bet.

They kiss again.

BRISEIS: Love me?

SERGEANT: You bet.

BRISEIS: With all your heart. Forever?

SERGEANT: You bet.

BRISEIS: Even the small, tiny muscles?

SERGEANT: You bet.

They kiss again.

BRISEIS: This is better than your old war, isn't it?

SERGEANT *leaning back and closing his eyes*:

You bet.

BRISEIS: And you'll marry me?

SERGEANT *sitting bolt upright*:

Why do you always go spoiling it?

BRISEIS: Haven't you ever been in love before?

SERGEANT: Sure I've had girls.

BRISEIS: I don't mean that. I mean love.

SERGEANT: We don't always call it that.

BRISEIS: What do you call it then?

SERGEANT: You're weird. You know that?

BRISEIS: Am I?

SERGEANT: Come on. Tell me. You are French, right?

BRISEIS: That's a nice word, "French." *Touching his dog tag*. What's this?

SERGEANT: My dog tag. See, I keep another one here in my boot.

BRISEIS: Give me that one.

SERGEANT: No way. Against regulations.

BRISEIS: Did a god give them to you?

SERGEANT: The army. They tell me who I am in case I get killed.

BRISEIS: If I wear one of these and get killed, will they think I'm you?

SERGEANT: You?! No way.

BRISEIS: If I have a baby, I'll call him Achilles.

SERGEANT: I told you I don't like that name. And you're not gonna have a baby.
BRISEIS: Achilles. I'll say it all the time. *He lunges toward her, she runs from him.* Achilles. Achilles. Achilles. Achil—

He catches her and kisses her.

BRISEIS: —les. Because that's who you are.
SERGEANT: Can't you quit the joking?
BRISEIS: I'm not joking. Let's talk about our future. I'd like a house not too near the center of the city and a lot of slaves and a garden—
SERGEANT: Slaves! Give me a break.

Pause. They look at each other.

BRISEIS: I really do like you. No fooling. But you're crazy.
BRISEIS: I'm the daughter of a king.
SERGEANT: I don't want to hear you talk like that.
BRISEIS: Like what?
SERGEANT: Like you're nuts. You can't fool me. You've been around. A girl doesn't learn to do the things you do without being around plenty.
BRISEIS: I was married.
SERGEANT: You sure forget about your husband in a hurry.
BRISEIS: He's dead. Why should I remember him?
SERGEANT: What if I get killed?
BRISEIS: I'd forget you.
SERGEANT: See?
BRISEIS: If someone's dead, does it make them any happier to be remembered? I'm young. I've got my life to live.
SERGEANT: You just think of yourself.
BRISEIS: And who do you think of when you want to be remembered after you're dead?
SERGEANT: Look. Let's not fight anymore. *He kisses her.* All night, kissing then fighting. It's wearing me out. Either let's kiss all the time or fight all the time.
BRISEIS: OK, kiss. *They do.* And get married.
SERGEANT: It's getting light. We gotta to get back to our lines.

On the ledge overlooking the cave, several GREEK SOLDIERS appear, dressed in full battle armor. The WOMAN, still groggy, sees them. She stands up, startled.

WOMAN: Hey!

She grabs for her book. The GREEK SOLDIERS, seeing they are discovered, race back out of sight.

SERGEANT: What is it?

The WOMAN feverishly searches through her book, ignoring the SERGEANT.

BRISEIS: Grab your stuff. We're heading back.
 And then we can get married?
 SERGEANT: I am not marrying you.

The SOLDIERS are sleepily awake and standing.

SERGEANT: All right squad! Over here. That means you women too.

BRISEIS *to the* WOMAN:
 You promised to help.

WOMAN: I'm afraid it's out of my power.
 SERGEANT: Double time! We've gotta move out pronto.

The CAPTAIN and several SOLDIERS appear, guns drawn.

CAPTAIN: Hold it right there, all of you!

Everyone below is startled. The SERGEANT wheels about.

SERGEANT: Captain!

CAPTAIN *recognizing who it is, lowers his gun:*
 So it's you, Pakapopulous.

SOLDIER 1: Who'd you expect, General von Kraut?
 CAPTAIN: Private. You're at attention.

The CAPTAIN steps down, looks over the situation.

CAPTAIN: So you've been having a little party?
 SERGEANT: Captain sir. The Boche barrage pinned us down.

CAPTAIN *going to* BRISEIS:
 Pinned down, sergeant?

SERGEANT: These women, sir. They were trapped.
 CAPTAIN: Trapped? Of course, Pakapopulous. Certainly. And you were dutybound
 to ... cover ... them?
 SERGEANT: Exactly, sir.

CAPTAIN *walking back to the* SERGEANT:
 And this lipstick, Sergeant?

SERGEANT: Sir. I—

CAPTAIN: The Colonel will deal with you.
BRISEIS: It's true—
CAPTAIN: Knock it off. *Calls to his SOLDIERS.* Take these camp followers in tow. *Sneeringly to the WOMAN.* The US Army has ways of dealing with women like you. At your age you should realize immorality is why wars are lost.
WOMAN: Captain, I've seen enough of your army.

CAPTAIN *going to* BRISEIS:
Very young. Very young indeed. What's your name?

BRISEIS: Briseis.

CAPTAIN *with increasingly oily concern:*
Yes. Yes, indeed. A very French name. Write that down, soldier. B-R-I-S-E-E-U-S.

A SOLDIER whips out a pad and writes.

Do I have it right, you pretty thing? You know I can put in a good word for you, if—

As the CAPTAIN is about to kiss her, BRISEIS slaps him very hard.

CAPTAIN: Soldier! Write that down. Striking an officer.

The SOLDIERS muffle a laugh.

Knock it off! *To* BRISEIS. You ungrateful bitch. Let's get moving. On the double.

A group of GREEK SOLDIERS led by PATROCLUS appear.

PATROCLUS: Hold! Hold!

Everybody freezes, shocked.

BRISEIS: My father's army!!

The GREEKS quickly disarm the stunned soldiers.

PATROCLUS: Bring those spears over here.
GREEK SOLDIER 1: They're not wearing armor.
GREEK SOLDIER 2: Barbarians.
GREEK SOLDIER 1: Let's kill them.
CAPTAIN: As an officer of the American Expeditionary Forces, I demand to know who you are. The Geneva Convention stipulates that all combatants wear clearly identifiable insignia.
PATROCLUS: I am Patroclus. Lieutenant to Achilles.

BRISEIS *pushing the SERGEANT forward*:

Here he is! These barbarians've captured him. They're holding him prisoner.

PATROCLUS: And who are you?

BRISEIS: Briseis. Achilles took me from Mynes.

PATROCLUS: *Pointing to the SERGEANT*. And who is this man?

BRISEIS: Achilles. Your general.

PATROCLUS *confers with the GREEK SOLDIERS in whispers*.

The WOMAN consults her book.

WOMAN *to BRISEIS*:

Don't push your luck.

PATROCLUS *points to the CAPTAIN and the SOLDIERS*:

Take those away.

CAPTAIN: I am a fellow officer! You are violating the Geneva Convention!

He and the other SOLDIERS are led away.

PATROCLUS: You say this man is Achilles?

BRISEIS: Don't you recognize him?

PATROCLUS *to the SERGEANT*:

What's your name?

SERGEANT: Sergeant Achilles Demosthenes Pakapopulous. US Army RA 17 633 459.
Call me Buster. That's all I'm required to say.

PATROCLUS *to the WOMAN*:

And what part do you play in all this?

WOMAN *looking up from her book*:

What?

PATROCLUS: I asked you what your connection with this is.

WOMAN: Very tenuous. So you're Patroclus? Happy to meet you.
I've long admired your war.

PATROCLUS: What?

WOMAN: How about a vine-wreath? It's lacking water so I'm willing to let it go at a fraction of its true value.

PATROCLUS *turning to BRISEIS*:

You realize I'm intimate with the genuine Achilles?

BRISEIS: The ... genuine ... Achilles?



FIGURE 9.1: The Woman/Janet Swanson shows some flowers to Patroclus/William Clark III. Briseis/Katherine Preston sits on the left. Four soldiers guard or lounge. Photograph courtesy of Tulane Theatre and Dance Department.

PATROCLUS: Yes.

BRISEIS: The one who destroyed Lyrnessus? The one who killed Mynes?

PATROCLUS: Yes.

BRISEIS *goes to the SERGEANT*:

But don't hurt this one! I love him!

PATROCLUS: Come. I have to take you to our camp. There are important matters to be settled. *To BRISEIS*. Don't worry. I'll protect you.

WOMAN *closing her book with satisfaction*:

Yes, Patroclus. Your war is certainly to my taste.

PATROCLUS: No war is to my taste. Hurry. We must get to camp before noon and the way is long.

PATROCLUS *leads the way off. The others follow*.

SERGEANT: Well, I'll be damned!

WOMAN: That's a distinct possibility, sergeant. But first we have to make you into a general.

BRISEIS: And then we will get married!

Blackout

ACT 2

1

Several days later. The Greek camp near Troy. The WOMAN, radiantly happy, is arranging flowers in her wheelbarrow. BRISEIS paces nervously. Two GREEK SOLDIERS in full battle dress stand guard. Other GREEK SOLDIERS are lounging on the grounds polishing spears and helmets, playing dice.

WOMAN *singing softly, the same tune as before:*

The world's brighter today
Than it ever was before
I've sold more flowers today
Than I ever have before.

She turns to BRISEIS.

This is a red letter day for me. *Opens her book.* Let's see, at 10 this morning a wreath of ivy for Promachus. At 11 Ajax is picking up ten dozen roses for the funeral of Lykophron who was killed by Hector himself. What an honor, they tell me. And at 1 o'clock sharp, I'm due at the tent of Melas the Cretan who's burying Menesthes, his lover. You don't know how many times I've dreamed of getting to this war!

Come and buy a fresh cut flower
Before it fades away.
Decorate your lover's bower
Before—

BRISEIS: Oh, shut up!

WOMAN: Honey, stop moping.

BRISEIS: You're always so happy. It makes me sick.

WOMAN: You should be happy too. This is a glorious war and today's a glorious day.

BRISEIS: They've had him in there for two hours.

WOMAN: Don't worry, child. Everything'll work out. *Confidentially.* I had a little chat with Patroclus.

BRISEIS: Tell me.

WOMAN: You've heard the rumors around camp. Remember when we were captured Patroclus said he had to consider some "important matter?" It seems that Achilles has been missing for three days. Ever since the Lyrnessus campaign. So I suggested to Patroclus that your little barbarian is the real Achilles, bewitched by Trojan necromancy.

BRISEIS: He'll never believe that.

WOMAN: Child! I don't rely on superstition. Don't you see that if Achilles is missing in action—or what's worse, dead—the whole army will be demoralized. Troy will never fall. Business will stagnate. The entire Hellenic world will plunge into a disastrous depression. That is, unless an adequate substitute were found—

BRISEIS: Who can substitute for Achilles?

- WOMAN: Exactly. No one. Patroclus knows that very well. So we have to get the real Achilles. An Achilles the troops can believe in. An Achilles who will restore confidence in the drachma. And yet—an Achilles who can be—how shall I put it?—“persuaded.” I told Patroclus that your barbarian has all the necessary capabilities. Big shoulders, handsome features, a strong voice, grass roots background. And as pliable and durable as leather. Yes, he’s from stock that knows how to take orders. Patroclus immediately perceived what I was cleverly suggesting and gave birth to the idea full-blown out of his own head.
- BRISEIS: You mean they’re using my Achilles as a stooge? No! I won’t let them.
- WOMAN: Don’t you see what’s in it for you? Your man is a general. Think of all those pretty ribbons and buttons, as splendid as flowers. A man with all the glories but none of the responsibilities of leadership. Achilles, the titular leader of 22,000 troops and the idol of millions more. Mothers weave little Achilles tunics for their babies. Teenage girls swoon at the sight of him. Politicians court his favor. And you! You are his chosen mistress. Mistress to the master of the world!
- BRISEIS: I don’t want to be anyone’s mistress. And I don’t care if he’s master of the world or not.
- WOMAN: Do you want to be the wife of some insignificant speck of dust? To be blown here and there with him? No, no child. Attach yourself to this rock, this boulder, this mountain of a man! Stand where he stands—overlooking mighty armies, commanding the destiny of thousands!
- BRISEIS: Last night you were advising me to forget him.
- WOMAN: The world changes, child. Two nights ago we were prisoners of barbarians. Last night the Council was debating whether to sell us east or west. Today the entire Greek world lies at our feet. You see these flowers? Patroclus had them brought to me from miles around, free of charge. Just smell them!
- BRISEIS: You’re tricking me.
- WOMAN: You’ve got history in your hands! Your molding an unborn world. Pass this up and you’ll bring grief on yourself.
- BRISEIS: Grief?
- WOMAN *thumbing through her book:*
Lost wars, childlessness, mourning.
- BRISEIS: I don’t know what to believe anymore! Last night they let me stay with him all night. And we didn’t fight—not once. And then this morning Patroclus came into our tent and took him away. And now you tell me—
- WOMAN: Shhhh now! Listen!

A HERALD appears from within and blows a trumpet. The SOLDIERS snap to attention. PATROCLUS appears.

PATROCLUS: Myrmidons! Achaeans! Strong men of the Hellenic Union! The Council has met!

As he lists each of the Council, the man comes out of the cave and stands on the ledge. The SOLDIERS cheer as each man is introduced.

Agamemnon, leader of the invincible Greek Expeditionary Force! Menelaus, lord of Sparta, husband of Helen, first to suffer! Ajax, head of infantry! Odysseus, chief of intelligence! Nestor, advisor to kings! Chalcas, prophet and chaplain to the combined Greek forces.

ODYSSEUS: Get on with it, for Athena's sake!

PATROCLUS *speeding up*:

Diamodes, Big Ajax, Little Ajax, Peleus, Phoenix, Idomeneus, Askalaphon, Agapenor, Magos, Thoas, Neoptolemus, Nireus, Goneus, and Prothoos!!

He takes a deep breath and clears his throat. Some of the leaders have been squeezed off the ledge.

And—the greatest of them all!!!

WOMAN: Look, child!

The HERALD gives a long blast on the trumpet.

PATROCLUS: Son of Peleus and Thetis the sea-nymph, ruler of Pythia, Skyros, and Hellas, the swift-footed, broad-shouldered, oak-armed Achilles!

A mighty roar from the SOLDIERS. Followed by an awesome prolonged silence. Then the SERGEANT, dressed uneasily in full Greek battle regalia, appears from within the cave.

SERGEANT: Hi.

The SOLDIERS roar back.

PATROCLUS: Herald, you may read the decree.

HERALD *unrolls a long parchment*:

By order of the Great Council, by order of Agamemnon Supreme Commander of the invincible Greek Expeditionary Force, by order of Menelaus—

ODYSSEUS: Idiot! Read the decree!

The HERALD confused, looks to PATROCLUS who looks to AGAMEMNON who bids him read.

HERALD: By order of all these, and many many more, the aforementioned swift-footed Achilles hereby assumes his place as commander of the Myrmidons. The Council further decrees that Achilles' absence from the battlefield was due to evil and noxious sorcery invoked by Trojan wizards.

The Council members shake hands with the SERGEANT as they file out.

SOLDIERS: Hooray! Achilles! Storm Troy! Kill Hector! Free Helen! Give Paris the boot!
Achilles! Achilles! Achilles!

WOMAN to BRISEIS:

Listen to that. I told you it would work out. And look how handsome he is.

The SERGEANT steps forward to say a few words to the troops.

SERGEANT: Men. Men. Quiet please. *Finally, silence.* We've got one job to do and we'll do it.

They cheer wildly. As he prepares to say more, PATROCLUS steps in front of the SERGEANT.

PATROCLUS: Myrmidons! Achilles is tired. Let him rest.

SOLDIER 1: We want Trojan blood!

PATROCLUS: There will be time for that later.

SOLDIER 2: Let the general speak!

PATROCLUS: He has to make battle plans. Do you want a speech now or a battle in a few hours?

The word "Fight!!" resounds wildly.

Then give the your commander time to make battle plans. When you fight, Achilles will be in front. I promise you that.

The SOLDIERS disperse to their tents and their games. The SERGEANT watches them, his eyes full with the possibilities of leadership. PATROCLUS comes down from the ledge and goes over to the WOMAN.

BRISEIS: Why didn't you let Achilles talk? He really wanted to.

PATROCLUS: He's tired. *To the WOMAN.* Well?

WOMAN: Splendid. Wear this carnation. It means long life.

BRISEIS: Can I be with him now?

PATROCLUS: Not yet. He needs a little time to adjust. Look at him. Glorious. A man all Greece can be proud of. A product of our hills and valleys, of our farms and cities.

The SERGEANT shifts uneasily under the weight of the heavy armor. PATROCLUS turns to the WOMAN.

I'm relieved we—found—him. The soldiers were uneasy. Without a leader an army is uncontrollable. And now you women have a job to do. Something very important for the security of Greece, and therefore for the security of the world.

WOMAN: Patroclus, please. No speeches.

PATROCLUS: You must teach him how to bear arms. But at the same time you must keep him from fighting. He must look the part, but we can't allow him to act it.
 WOMAN: Training him, isn't that your job?
 PATROCLUS: I must meet immediately with Agamemnon to decide on—on our next move. *To the* WOMAN. How much does the girl know?
 WOMAN: She knows everything, but I'm not sure how much she understands.

PATROCLUS:
 May I speak plainly? *To* BRISEIS. You understand that if you want to keep your man alive you must contain him. Don't let him get too close to his men. I convinced certain skeptical members of the Council that Achilles was—shall we say?—befuddled by Trojan sorcery. It may very well be so. For the first 30 minutes he kept rattling off a long list of names followed by an ungainly number—undoubtedly a charm. When we stripped him, we saw that someone had engraved the very same number on an amulet he wore around his neck and on another he hid in his boot. We had to remove them from him by force. But I'm confident that with a few days of rest—and some wine and some other things you can do for him—he'll be his old self again. Seasoned soldiers always adjust. In no time, he'll be fit enough to march in the first rank of our next major attack. No matter. The important thing is that the infantry has its leader again. *Pause.* Above all else, remember, any orders Achilles issues must be approved by me. This is for the good of the nation.

BRISEIS: If he's Achilles, then he's Achilles! Your commander.

PATROCLUS *to the* WOMAN:
 I thought you said she knew everything?

BRISEIS: I do. And I don't like it.
 WOMAN: Don't talk so, child.
 BRISEIS: I can say what I want. I'm almost a queen.
 PATROCLUS: The facts of war allow me to contradict you. Our army must not be demoralized by finding out that their leader is incompetent.
 BRISEIS: You just want to take his place.

PATROCLUS *to the* WOMAN:
 Will you see that this girl obeys my orders? I will not be crossed.

PATROCLUS exits. BRISEIS starts toward the SERGEANT who is uncertain of what to do.

BRISEIS: He can't do that to my Achilles.
 WOMAN: For your own good, listen to me. Make the best of the situation. What do you care what they do to him, as long as he's alive and with you?

The SERGEANT furtively leans over the edge of the ledge.

SERGEANT: Psssst! Hey ...
 BRISEIS: He's calling—
 WOMAN: Let me take the lead.

They go over to him. The WOMAN adjusts his armor as BRISEIS kisses him.

BRISEIS: Did they hurt you?
 SERGEANT: They took my dog tags. I can get into real trouble. Aside from that, it was easy. They kept asking me to approve plans. And whenever that Pat guy nudged me I said yes. When he left me alone, I said no. *The WOMAN tightens his tunic.* Owww! Don't pull so hard. Why did they dress me up in this stuff anyway? None of our brass wears all this junk—
 WOMAN: When in Rome, Sergeant—
 SERGEANT: What? Are we in Italy?
 BRISEIS: No, silly. This is Troy.
 SERGEANT: New York?
 BRISEIS: Where?
 WOMAN: Hold still, so I can get this armor straight!
 SERGEANT: Do I have to wear this stuff all the time?
 WOMAN: Sergeant, you're an officer now. We've fulfilled our part of the bargain. Now you will have to do some things in return.

BRISEIS retires to the side sulking.

SERGEANT: First of all—you will be called Achilles.
 SERGEANT: But I like Buster!
 WOMAN: Sergeant! There will be no butts or Busters! Second, you will wear armor at all times, except when sleeping—
 SERGEANT: What about when I have to go to the bathroom?
 WOMAN: You may lift the armor, like this. *She demonstrates, front and back.* Third, you will be attended only by myself, Briseis, and Patroclus.

The SERGEANT practices lifting the armor.

WOMAN: Are you listening! *He snaps to attention.* As I said, no soldier, slave, messenger, herald, or attendant will be allowed to see you. And lastly you will give no orders to the troops without the knowledge and consent of Patroclus. Understood?
 SERGEANT: Sure. But that isn't what a general does. He rides around and makes sure everybody does the fighting for him.
 WOMAN: This is not your barbaric army. In this army generals do as they are told.
 SERGEANT: Like I was still a sergeant?
 WOMAN: Exactly. *To BRISEIS.* And you understand all this?
 BRISEIS *sulkily*: Yes.
 WOMAN: Well? What's the matter now?
 BRISEIS: Nothing.
 WOMAN: You two may stay together as long as you like. No one will bother you. However, I think it would be advisable if you remained inside. I don't want

the soldiers to see you. If you follow my directions we'll all be very happy here. Sergeant, you'll be a hero in no time at all.

BRISEIS: And will we get married soon?

WOMAN: As soon as Troy falls. When that happens, Achilles' mission is complete. For now, he belongs to all Greece.

BRISEIS: You certainly have taken over around here.

WOMAN: Everyone enjoys power.

Blackout

2

Same place about one hour later. BRISEIS and the SERGEANT are sitting within the cave. Outside the SOLDIERS lounge. The WOMAN is among them.

BRISEIS: So they're going to use you and then get rid of you.

SERGEANT: The hell they will. Give me my gun!

BRISEIS: Now listen to me. We can fool them all. You are Achilles, remember? Every one of those soldiers out there believes in you. All you have to do is assert yourself. Take your spear, your helmet—

The SERGEANT picks up the spear by the wrong end.

BRISEIS: No! No! Here. Let me show you. This way.

She puts it into his hands. He doesn't know what to do with it.

SERGEANT: I use it like a bayonet? I'll run them through the gut! *He charges towards the wall, shouting. Kill!!! Kill!!!*

BRISEIS: No. Watch me.

She takes it from him and demonstrates.

SERGEANT: Like a javelin, huh? But what good'll that thing be when they open up with machine guns?

BRISEIS: Just do what I tell you. Now strap on the sword.

He doesn't know how. She does it for him.

BRISEIS: And if anyone gets close to you, run him through.

SERGEANT: Yeah. I get you.

He takes the sword out and brandishes it.

BRISEIS: Don't hold it like a stick! Didn't your father teach you how to fight?
 SERGEANT: I've got a terrific right cross.
 BRISEIS: Never mind. You won't have to use your sword anyway.
 SERGEANT: What's the matter? Don't start nagging again. *He runs at the cave entrance with the spear.* Take that, you dog! You know, I'm beginning to like this. You tell me all those guys out there are my soldiers? All of them?
 BRISEIS: And thousands more.

SERGEANT *flexing his biceps*:
 Like rock. And what I say goes, huh?

BRISEIS: Right.
 SERGEANT: But Pat wants to take my command away from me? I'll have him court-martialed. I'll have him shot! Or at least stabbed. Or whatever they do to traitors around here. Double-crossing me? He's got no patriotism.
 BRISEIS: Hurry up and put your helmet on. And your greaves.

SERGEANT *picking up the greaves*:
 I got to wear these leggings too?

BRISEIS: Yes. Quick now. Patroclus'll be back soon.
 SERGEANT: Strap them on for me. I was never good with laces. And give me a kiss. Before I go out and fight for you. *They kiss.* I'm your general now, huh?
 BRISEIS: And remember. No matter what happens, never give up command of your men. Never! You own the Myrmidons.
 SERGEANT: I got it. How do I look?
 BRISEIS: Strong. Wonderful.
 SERGEANT: Just one thing. How do I tell the enemy from my army?
 BRISEIS: Oh, Zeus! I don't know.
 SERGEANT: Well, it doesn't matter. It's a technical problem. I'll be like a regular general. I won't have to do the fighting. As soon as one of my men wounds one of the enemy I'll come up and finish him off.
 BRISEIS: Just remember, they're Trojans. Trojans. Remember?
 SERGEANT: Who? Us—or the other side?
 BRISEIS: The other side.
 SERGEANT: Just one more thing. What are we fighting for? I need something to boost my morale.
 BRISEIS: The Trojans stole Helen, wife of Menelaus. The Greeks are fighting to get her back.
 SERGEANT: You gotta be kidding! A whole war about a dame?
 BRISEIS: And don't be frightened.
 SERGEANT: Don't worry. I've been in combat plenty. We'll cut 'em down in the trenches, slaughter 'em in the fields. We'll beat 'em back from the beaches, ambush 'em in the hills! Achilles and his Mermaids!!
 BRISEIS: Myrmidons.

SERGEANT: Whatever. Myrmidons.
 BRISEIS: But I don't want you to fight for very long, understand? Just long enough to show them whose boss. The rest of the time stay here with me.
 SERGEANT: But couldn't I do that anyway? That's what that Pat guy wants me to do.
 BRISEIS: Have some pride! Do you think I want to bring some stooge home? I want to bring home the hero of Troy!
 SERGEANT: You got it. The hero of Troy.
 BRISEIS: Call the Herald in. Tell him you have an announcement. Then tell your troops to get ready for battle.

SERGEANT *kissing her gently on the forehead:*
 Jesus. I'm glad you saved me from being a stooge.

BRISEIS: When they're ready, you—
 SERGEANT: Ok, ok. You don't have to repeat everything a million times. I get it. I tell you I like being a general. *He goes to the entrance of the cave.* Very much. Hey, you!

The HERALD enters quickly, stands at attention.

SERGEANT: Muster the men! We're marching!
 HERALD: But Patroclus said—
 SERGEANT: Soldier. You're at attention. I'm running this show, not that flea-bitten Irishman. *The HERALD does not move.* Well? You heard me! On the double.

The HERALD goes outside and blows the trumpet. The SOLDIERS assemble.

SERGEANT: Well? How did I do? I once read an Army manual on "How to Command."
 It said, be firm and be loud.
 BRISEIS: Wonderful. *They embrace.* Maybe you are a general after all.
 SERGEANT: Sure. All it takes is the uniform. Let's go.

They come out on the ledge. The SOLDIERS are gathered below.

SERGEANT: Men!! This is a grave hour for our country! *Turns to BRISEIS.* We Merma—

BRISEIS *in a loud whisper:*
 Myrmidons—

SERGEANT: We Myrmidons aren't going to let a bunch of wife-snatching Trojans knock us down, are we?!!
 SOLDIERS: No!!
 SERGEANT: We aren't going to let those chicken-shit fucks hide behind those walls and bombard us, are we?!!
 SOLDIERS: No!!
 SERGEANT: We're gonna make this world safe for Myrmidons! Attack!!

BRISEIS AND THE SERGEANT, 1958, 1961, 1962

SOLDIERS: Attack!! Attack!!
SERGEANT: Kill!! Kill!!
SOLDIERS: Kill!! Kill!!
SERGEANT: Get your asses out of the trench! Strap on your M2 masks! Load your Brownings! Launch your mortars! Fire your Howitzers! Give those Trojan fuckers the works!!

The SOLDIERS mutter in confusion. PATROCLUS and AGAMEMNON appear.

PATROCLUS: What's going on?
SERGEANT: To your station, soldier!

PATROCLUS *loudly to the SOLDIERS*:
Back to your tents!

The SOLDIERS stand confused. Some of them go back, but most of them wait for orders from the SERGEANT.

SOLDIER: Achilles gives us orders, not you!
PATROCLUS: Is that so?

PATROCLUS *climbs to the ledge next to the SERGEANT*.

BRISEIS: Send them back, if you want to live.
PATROCLUS: He commands his army, not you!
PATROCLUS: Shut up! *To the SERGEANT*. You heard me.
SERGEANT: I'm running this show.

AGAMEMNON *pushing through the soldiers*:
Achilles! Achilles! The Council has met! Important news! We must talk to you!

SERGEANT *saluting*:
Yes, sir, chief.

BRISEIS: No, it's a trick.
SERGEANT: But he's the commander-in-chief. I've got to listen. *To the SOLDIERS*. All right, men. Stand down. The attack's postponed. I gotta have an important strategic meeting with the chief here first. Don't worry, we'll fight soon. I'll give you the word when. *In his best sergeant's voice*. Arrrmee, Dis—missed!!

The SOLDIERS return to their tents.

PATROCLUS: Ok, let's go inside.

BRISEIS starts to slip away, but PATROCLUS grabs her.

PATROCLUS: No you don't, sister. You're coming too.

AGAMEMNON, PATROCLUS, BRISEIS, *and the* SERGEANT *go inside the cave.*

SERGEANT *to* AGAMEMNON:

Ok, chief. What's the scoop? Let's plaster these Trojans. The sanctity of the home must be preserved. Kill 'em all, I say!

PATROCLUS: Shut up. I have charges to bring against—

BRISEIS: He hasn't done anything!

AGAMEMNON: We're in conference here. You will talk when I call on you, and only then.

PATROCLUS: As I was saying—I have certain grave charges to bring against this woman.

BRISEIS: Me?!

SERGEANT: What's she done, huh?

PATROCLUS *addressing* AGAMEMNON:

As you saw, sir, she was subverting Achilles and through him the entire army. Any attack now, without the full coordination of all Greek forces, would be suicide. *Mockingly, pointing at the* SERGEANT. And do you think he alone could have ordered an attack without the Council's knowledge and consent?

SERGEANT: Sure it was my idea! I got a lot of ideas.

PATROCLUS: Obviously she is using some kind of Trojan trick. This is not the first time Troy has been low enough to use women for strategic purposes.

AGAMEMNON: Trojan? Yes, yes. I understand.

PATROCLUS: Look at her Trojan eyes. *To* BRISEIS. Show your hands!

BRISEIS: This is absurd. I will not.

PATROCLUS *grabs her hands:*

Note these invidious lines, sir. Trojan palms!

SERGEANT: Take your hands off her.

BRISEIS: I'm not a Trojan and you know it. I'm the daughter of Briseus, high priest of Mynes.

PATROCLUS: Ahh, convicting yourself out of your own mouth. *To* AGAMEMNON. You will remember, sir, that Mynes is a Trojan satellite.

BRISEIS: It is not! We're independent.

PATROCLUS: Independent? *He spits.* We overran the town a few days ago. An enemy of Greece. Enemies of Greece are allies of Troy! Enemies of Troy are allies of Greece. That's the first axiom of this war.

BRISEIS: We were neutral and free until you attacked.

PATROCLUS: Neutrality and freedom are illusions. It is impossible to be neutral and remain free.

SERGEANT: Hold on. She's been with me for three days. She hasn't been near a Trojan. I've never seen a Trojan.

PATROCLUS *to* AGAMEMNON:

Achilles' mind is still affected—or, what's worse, it has been re-affected—by her.

SERGEANT: The hell it has!

AGAMEMNON: Soldier, remember I'm your commanding officer. That was explained to you this morning.

SERGEANT: It was my idea to attack. I'm patriotic right down to my bone marrow.

AGAMEMNON: You are not entitled to ideas. You are a soldier.

SERGEANT: But you told me I was in command of the Mermaids!

AGAMEMNON: I am the commander-in-chief. While I live there is no higher authority.

PATROCLUS: Why waste words? Dispose of the girl.

SERGEANT: What do you mean, dispose? She isn't a beer bottle.

PATROCLUS: Greece must act to protect its interests.

AGAMEMNON: Correct. Freedom must be protected by all means necessary. *To* PATROCLUS. What do you suggest?

PATROCLUS: Death.

BRISEIS: No! *Grabs the* SERGEANT. Don't you see? They're tricking you!! Buster!!

PATROCLUS: Notice the Trojan name she calls him by. We must make an example of her. Death by public stoning.

SERGEANT *shielding* BRISEIS:

Keep your hands off her! She's mine. I won her, fair and square.

PATROCLUS: This is a matter of internal security. You have nothing to say.

SERGEANT: You'll have to fight me first. And the Mermaids!

AGAMEMNON *noticing* BRISEIS's *beauty*:

Perhaps death would be too severe.

SERGEANT: Don't worry, baby.

PATROCLUS: Too severe? Subversion must be destroyed before it becomes revolution. This conspiracy, I admit, is still incipient. But we must stop it before it becomes open rebellion.

AGAMEMNON *inspecting* BRISEIS *carefully*:

Patroclus, I think it would be a tragedy to kill this girl while she is so young. After all, we've nipped the harm in the bud. Let's show Troy that we Achaeans have mercy on our fingertips. Let's open our arms to her and—rehabilitate her. Don't undervalue the emotional force of such a gesture once it is publicized.

BRISEIS: What are you going to do?

AGAMEMNON: Come over here, my young one. We are not hard to accommodate.

BRISEIS: No!

AGAMEMNON: Stoning is not pleasant.

SERGEANT: Don't touch her.

AGAMEMNON: Achilles, my boy. Consider your country. Consider the hills and valleys that brought you to manhood. Consider further—if you have no shred of patriotism—that I am your commanding officer. Consider still further that your life depends upon your compliance.

SERGEANT: I'd die for her.

PATROCLUS: Excellent.

AGAMEMNON: But I prefer to show mercy—in accord with my acknowledged policy of benevolent strength.

BRISEIS: What are you saying? Be clear.

AGAMEMNON: I shall be clear. Either you come with me or both of you die.

BRISEIS: You can't run the army without him.

AGAMEMNON: War teaches that no one is indispensable.

BRISEIS: Is that what the Council decided this morning?

AGAMEMNON: Of course it would be easier—for all of us—if everyone remained alive. But I don't think it's absolutely necessary. Things can be done to soldiers by means of funeral orations. Achilles will die a glorious death, fighting single handed against a mass of Trojans. I shall report his last words—the tears still stinging my cheeks—I shall say that Achilles spoke through the cloud of darkening death—that his final instructions were, "Fight on! Fight on!" *Sentimentally*. Yes. The picture is pleasing. *To* PATROCLUS. Your flower merchant friend can have full charge of the funeral. The glee club will sing dirges.

PATROCLUS: An admirable plan.

BRISEIS: You mean what you say?

AGAMEMNON: I have built my authority on being a man of integrity.

BRISEIS: Then take me. I don't want him to die.

SERGEANT *holding on to* BRISEIS:
No! Well. Kill us.

BRISEIS *breaking away*:
No! No!

PATROCLUS *to the* SERGEANT:
She shows more good sense than you.

AGAMEMNON *taking* BRISEIS's *wrist*:
We shall personally see that you are well attended to.

The MESSENGER enters.

MESSENGER: Sir.

AGAMEMNON: Yes?

MESSENGER: Hector is launching a great attack. The trenches are on fire. He is marching on the ships.

AGAMEMNON: Prepare the men for battle. Inform the Council. We will meet him.
MESSENGER: Yes, sir.

Exits.

AGAMEMNON: Well. That cuts our session short. *He looks around.* Are we agreed then?

SERGEANT *to* BRISEIS:
You're sure this is what you want?

BRISEIS: Don't forget me.
SERGEANT: I won't forget you.
PATROCLUS: No love scenes now. War is at hand.
AGAMEMNON: Come with me, young one. Tonight you shall bathe in scented goat's milk—
SERGEANT: You better keep your hands off her!
AGAMEMNON: Soldier, when you become commander-in-chief you may give orders. Until then you will take them. *To* PATROCLUS. Make sure the Myrmidons are mustered in twenty minutes. *Points to the* SERGEANT. Put him in the front rank.

AGAMEMNON *and* BRISEIS *exit*.

PATROCLUS: Well? You heard him. Muster the troops.
SERGEANT: Soldier. When you command the Mermaids, you can give orders. Until then you will take them.
PATROCLUS: What?!
SERGEANT: Achilles Demosthenes Pakapopulous, US Army 176 333 459 will not take what has happened here laying down. Not while he still holds rank here. The chief is gone. The army is mine.
PATROCLUS: By Zeus, it isn't!

He starts to exit after AGAMEMNON, but the SERGEANT grabs hold of him with a mighty grip.

SERGEANT: It is only out of my duty to the chain-of-command that I don't order my men to cut down the commander-in-chief. It's only out of regard for your rank as an officer that I don't have you stoned. As it is, you're demoted to a one-bar second lieutenant. Herald!!

The HERALD enters.

SERGEANT: Assemble the troops.
HERALD: Yes, sir!

Exits.

PATROCLUS: You're headed for trouble.

SERGEANT *towering over* PATROCLUS:
How about we settle it here and now? My right cross'll devastate you.

PATROCLUS: Forces more powerful than I will deal with you.

He tries to leave.

SERGEANT: Don't take one step, soldier. While there were two of you here I held myself in check. She wanted to go. Maybe she wanted to save my life, maybe not. That's her business. Mine is fighting. You stay put. If you come outside, I'll finish you off myself. Understand?

PATROCLUS *sits. The SERGEANT exits to the outside, adjusting his helmet. He is in full battle dress. The SOLDIERS have assembled.*

SERGEANT: Blow your horn, soldier.

The HERALD signals. The men stand at attention.

SERGEANT: Men! The Mermaids have been insulted! Great Achilles is outraged!

The WOMAN enters, her wheelbarrow almost empty. She stops and looks up at the SERGEANT.

SERGEANT: Agamemnon has seized Briseis who was mine to keep! You all saw it. What are we going to do!?

SOLDIER: Fight!!! Fight!!!! Fight!!!! Fight!!!!

SERGEANT: Wrong. We are not going to fight. The greatest of the Greeks has been insulted!

He takes off his helmet and throws it to the ground.

Get down there, you twenty-dollar headgear! The commander-in-chief is a horny tyrant!

He throws his shield to the ground.

Sit there, you fifty-dollar tin plate! The commander-in-chief will be sorry when Hector burns his boats!

He throws his spear to the ground.

Rest yourself there, you hundred-dollar javelin! The Mermaids will not fight even when the fires burn up Agamemnon's army!

He takes off his greaves and throws them to the ground.

Rot there you two-hundred dollar leggings! Then everyone will know how important I am!!

He throws his sword to the ground.

Rust there, you 500 dollar blade!

He sits on the ledge. The SOLDIERS are worked up to a frenzy.

SOLDIERS: Show Agamemnon he can't steal from Achilles! Kill Agamemnon!!

SERGEANT: Go back to your tents, my boys. Let the Trojans rip Agamemnon to pieces, then he'll know how much I'm worth.

The SOLDIERS begin to disburse. The WOMAN runs up to the SERGEANT.

WOMAN: Just what do you think you're doing, you two-cent counterfeit general?

SERGEANT: I'm running my army, that's what!

Blackout

3

Several days later, same place. Towards evening, darkening. The SERGEANT has acquired the demeanor of one who rules. His speech is more refined, his manner more overbearing. He sits on the ledge which has been covered over with a luxuriant red Persian rug. He's taken off his shoes so as not to dirty the rug. Inside the cave, PATROCLUS is chained to the wall with a long leash. The SOLDIERS lounge about as before, playing cards or dice. The WOMAN is arranging her flowers. But they are neither so plentiful nor so luxuriant as before. In the distance, as the scene proceeds, the melody of the WOMAN's song can be heard. As night comes on, an occasional flare illuminates the sky. Two HERALDS enter. One bears a sumptuous plate of food and a bowl of wine, the other scraps of food and a cup of water.

SERGEANT *accepting his grand meal:*
Feed him.

The other HERALD goes to PATROCLUS who hungrily grabs the food. A MESSENGER approaches the SERGEANT at a run.

MESSENGER: I have the latest dispatch, Great One.

SERGEANT: On your knees before you speak to me!

The MESSENGER scrapes the floor.

MESSENGER *kneeling then unrolling a scroll:*

The Trojans have laid waste to the Greek trenches. Hector is leading a column to the sea. Another Trojan column, headed by Sarpedon, is endangering Agamemnon's ships. Our lookouts report strange fires across the straights.

He rises, approaching the SERGEANT.

Exalted one, if I may—

SERGEANT: Soldier, you may not.

MESSENGER *retreating:*

Yes, Your Highness.

SERGEANT: Now what more do you report?

MESSENGER *advancing onto the rug:*

Our allies—

SERGEANT: Do you want to be whipped?

MESSENGER: No, Most Superior.

SERGEANT: Then remove your footgear.

MESSENGER *takes off his sandals:*

Our position is in danger.

SERGEANT: At what war college did you study military strategy?

MESSENGER: None, Supreme Commander.

SERGEANT: Dismissed.

The MESSENGER salutes, turns to leave carrying his sandals.

Wait. Send an orderly to clean my carpet.

MESSENGER: I will, General Sir.

The MESSENGER salutes and leaves. PATROCLUS puts his head out of the flap.

PATROCLUS: Commandant—

SERGEANT: Back inside, dog!

PATROCLUS: We must fight!

SERGEANT: Herald!

HERALD: Yes, sir.

SERGEANT: Shorten this man's leash. I do not want to see his face.

HERALD: Yes, sir.

PATROCLUS *is yanked back into the cave. The WOMAN approaches the SERGEANT who is raptaciously eating.*

WOMAN: Your Royal Eminence.

SERGEANT: I'm eating.

WOMAN: Greatest of all Greeks ...

SERGEANT: Lady, you're upsetting my digestion.

WOMAN: First Hero of gods and men.

SERGEANT *throws wine at her:*

Get away! Scat!!

WOMAN *wiping the wine off and offering an exaggerated bow:*

If I may have the honor of a brief audience with you.

SERGEANT: What is it now? I told you twice this morning I am not a horticulturalist.

WOMAN *coming closer:*

I've been good to you in the past.

SERGEANT: Don't dirty my rug with your muddy shoes! It's genuine Persian.

WOMAN *removing her shoes:*

I've been instrumental in your rise.

The SERGEANT continues to chew and belch very loudly.

I brought you here, introduced you to the right people. And when you asserted your natural authority, I didn't question it.

SERGEANT *speaking through a full mouth:*

Only because I let you pick wildflowers.

WOMAN: Let's not waste time with trifles. I'll be frank. You are a practical man. I am in touch with popular opinion—popular opinion, I might add, that both you and I depend on.

SERGEANT *points to the big stars on his tunic:*

These are what I depend on.

WOMAN: It's my duty as a patriotic citizen—

SERGEANT: Skip the baloney.

WOMAN: My sales are down.

SERGEANT: Nobody's keeping you here.
 WOMAN: Since you've withdrawn your troops from the war, a deep reaction has set in among the Greeks. They are fighting like cattle not men. And like cattle, they are being slaughtered. Burials have become slovenly. Mass graves, pits full of corpses. No flowers.

SERGEANT: The misfortune of the Greeks and your business do not concern me.
 WOMAN: There you are wrong. You refusing to fight is the cause of this "misfortune," as you to call it. You're a soldier who won't soldier. I have big ears, and what I hear is talk of insurrection.

SERGEANT: That would be suicide. I rule here.
 WOMAN: For now. Don't forget how you got to where you are. Every hill has two sides, one up the other down. Some people believe your blood would be a salve for their wounds.

SERGEANT: Look. When a real crisis arises—when it's a matter of life or death—
 WOMAN: Whose life or death? People are dying.
 SERGEANT: Mine! Do you get it, mine! Then I'll step in with the Mermaids and destroy Troy. I'll destroy the Greeks. I'll destroy everything. Then I'll be king of everything.

The sound of distant gunfire.

WOMAN: You will be king of nothing.
 SERGEANT: Say you.
 WOMAN: I set you up. And Briseis loves you.
 SERGEANT: Our affair's over.
 WOMAN: She doesn't think so.
 SERGEANT: I'll give her a farm. Two farms. Big ones.
 WOMAN: The only plough she wants is you.
 SERGEANT: These days my concern is with the state of the world, not the domestic sphere. Tell Briseis I'll be glad to see her for a night or two now and then. Anything more is preposterous.

WOMAN: You loved her.
 SERGEANT: Don't all men say that to all women?

The WOMAN remains fixed.

WOMAN: You told me everyone enjoys power.
 SERGEANT: I don't exercise it to my own peril.
 WOMAN: Neither do I.
 SERGEANT: You can go too far.
 WOMAN: So can you!

ODYSSEUS enters carrying a finely wrought bronze and silver bowl. Several SOLDIERS accompany him.

WOMAN: I warn you, Sergeant, there's a breaking point.
 SERGEANT: Lady! Watch yourself.
 ODYSSEUS: Great Achilles. A word with you.
 SERGEANT: Certainly. Sit with me. Herald! Wine.

The WOMAN returns to her wheelbarrow and carefully packs her flowers away. ODYSSEUS removes his sandals. The HERALD pours wine into two bowls.

ODYSSEUS: Your health, Achilles!
 SERGEANT: Cheers.
 ODYSSEUS: I see you've eaten. Good! Meat and wine will prepare you for what I have to say.
 SERGEANT: Come to the point.
 ODYSSEUS: The war is going badly for us. We need you.
 SERGEANT: My treatment at the hands of—of your friend, cannot be forgotten.
 ODYSSEUS: Agamemnon sends this bronze and silver bowl as a gesture of affection.
 SERGEANT: I don't need his love as badly as he needs my Mermaids.
 ODYSSEUS: You are a man of sense. Listen, then, to the other things Agamemnon promises you.
 SERGEANT: Promises are easy to make in bad times.

ODYSSEUS:
 At present I want nothing more than your ears. These things stand ready in Agamemnon's camp. Seven unfired tripods to make the gods happy. Ten talents of gold. Twenty shining copper kettles. Twelve fine racing horses. They've won many prizes and will win many more. *The SERGEANT sits in stony silence.* But that's not all. He will give you seven Thracian maidens—the most beautiful in the western world, one for each day of the week and none older than fifteen years. We are not barbarians, we appreciate sophistication.

The sounds of war come closer. ODYSSEUS quickens his pace. It is almost dark and the light of fires can be seen.

SERGEANT: These prizes do not equal what he took from me.

ODYSSEUS:
 These prizes are just what he promises immediately, as soon as you give the order to attack. But after Troy has fallen before you—and the omens tells us it will—Agamemnon will load your ships until they break under the weight of gold and bronze. And after that you may have your pick of twenty Trojan women. And, finally, should you wish to return to Mycenae with him, Agamemnon shall make you his son-in-law. His fine daughters are at your disposal. Iphigenia is, well, gone. But Chrysothemis with long black hair, or even Electra, if you savor more mature women. Or, if you prefer truly young ones, Iphianassa who is not yet thirteen. As for dowry, Agamemnon promises you seven citadels, all strongly built and near the sea.

SERGEANT: You've not met my price yet.

ODYSSEUS: I thought not. Soldier! Bring the most valued prize!

A SOLDIER enters leading BRISEIS who hardly looks at the SERGEANT.

ODYSSEUS: Agamemnon swears a mighty oath that he never touched her. Not her hand, not her cheek, not her lips. Look at her, so lovely. Now, what do you say?

SERGEANT: Return her to her owner.

ODYSSEUS: What?!

SERGEANT: You and that scumbag will know my strength!

A MESSENGER enters out of breath.

MESSENGER: Hector is setting fire to the ships!

MESSENGER collapses. The SOLDIERS rush about in panic. BRISEIS breaks free and grasps the SERGEANT's feet. He does not rise from his seat.

BRISEIS: Take me! I have nowhere else to go!

SERGEANT: I am a man beyond temptation.

Sound of explosions, very near.

ODYSSEUS: Zeus sends his fire down to warn you!

A REPORTER dressed in modern clothes wearing a hat that says, "Press" rushes up to the SERGEANT.

REPORTER: What comment do you have on the bombing of New York?

SERGEANT: Take off your shoes when you stand on my carpet!

REPORTER writes this down.

REPORTER: Anything else?

ODYSSEUS: How can you sit still while the world's being destroyed?!

The WOMAN rushes around offering many flowers.

WOMAN: Fire sale, fire sale! Buy now, pay later! Buy now! Pay later!

SERGEANT: I am waiting for a crisis.

PATROCLUS *tugging at his chain:*

Let me out!! Let me out!! The shelter's burning!!

SOLDIERS dressed in uniforms of many wars ancient and modern shout in panic as they run cross the stage back and forth.

SOLDIERS: The ocean's burning! The air's burning! Where's the enemy!? Which one is the enemy!? *And so on.*

AGAMEMNON *enters, his face streaming with blood.*

AGAMEMNON: I resign as head of the Expeditionary Force!

SERGEANT: Now I am Commander-in-Chief.

AGAMEMNON: Yes! Do something!!

Shellfire and explosions very close. CROWDS of civilians from all times and places crisscross the stage. They mingle with the SOLDIERS.

CROWD: The cities are burning! Help me, mommy! Bombs! Bombs! *And so on.*

BRISEIS *tugging the SERGEANT's tunic for attention:*

Listen to me! Please! I'm pregnant!

All hell breaks loose on stage as people, soldiers, characters run helter skelter in waves. Only BRISEIS and the SERGEANT remain motionless. At the climax, the LAWYER enters. Silence, freeze. The LAWYER is immaculately dressed in a morning suit and spats. He carries a briefcase. The WOMAN points out the SERGEANT. The LAWYER bows politely to the WOMAN, then turns to the SERGEANT.

LAWYER: Sergeant King Emperor Commander General Achilles Demosthenes Pakapopulous, US Army 176 333 459?

SERGEANT: That's me.

The LAWYER walks with slow dignity to the SERGEANT and hands him a white piece of paper.

LAWYER:

Here, in triplicate, is a warrant for your arrest. Also in triplicate, an indictment. You must stand trial.

SERGEANT: A Trial? For what!!!

The LAWYER gestures around him.

LAWYER: The charge is chaos.

SERGEANT: But I am the Supreme Ruler!! I am responsible for nothing!!!

Blackout

ACT 3

1

The rock and cave have been transformed into an outdoor courtroom. A highly ornate judge's chair on the ledge. A long table for diplomats and VIPs. A smaller table for the prosecution and another for the defense. A jury box. Carpenters are putting the finishing touches on a grandstand with seating for about thirty. Spectators are invited by the TV DIRECTOR to sit and watch. In front of the grandstand, CHEERLEADERS are limbering up with leaps, handsprings, and cartwheels. On their sweaters in bold red, "The People." Several workmen enter carrying klieg lights. The TV DIRECTOR carries a clipboard which he checks again and again throughout the scene.

TV DIRECTOR: Come on, you guys, what are doing, sleepwalking? Over here. Quick. *Looks at his watch.* The trial starts in eight minutes.
 CAMERAMAN: Ok, ok. Hold your horses. Where's the power for these kliegs, huh?
 TV DIRECTOR: There's connections behind the judge's chair. Yeah. Here. *Yells offstage.* Hey! Mack! Are the booms set!
 OFFSTAGE VOICE: Everything's ready to roll!
 TV DIRECTOR: Well bring everyone on. Get them in place. We don't have all day.
 CHEERLEADER: Gee. You mean we're going to be on TV?
 TV DIRECTOR: Powder your cheeks, honey. This broadcast is going all over the world!
 CHEERLEADER 1: Hear that, gang?

All the CHEERLEADERS giggle approvingly. They fluff their hair and pinch their cheeks. They are prime examples of good, clean, American teenage sexuality.

CHEERLEADER 2: You mean an international hookup?
 TV DIRECTOR: This is the trial of the century—
 CHEERLEADER 3: Of all the centuries!
 CHEERLEADERS: Of eternity!
 M-A-N K-I-N D-D-D!
 Mankind! Mankind! Mankind!
 Rah! Rah! Rah!

CAMERAMEN *bring on camera booms and microphones.*

TV DIRECTOR: Get that stuff over there on the left. Don't obstruct the center of the arena. *To the CHEERLEADERS.* Girls! Knock it off, huh? We've got work to do.

BRISEIS and the WOMAN enter. The WOMAN, handsomely dressed, leaves her wheelbarrow full of glorious flowers to the side. BRISEIS still wears her simple robe. She is very, very pregnant.

WOMAN: Come on, child. Hurry. This is the place.
 BRISEIS: Are they really going to try him?

WOMAN: Certainly. One isn't held incommunicado for nothing.
BRISEIS: It's been months. He won't recognize me—now. Why wouldn't they let me visit him? I'm dizzy.
WOMAN: Here now. Easy. Over here. Sit down and rest. Is it your time?

BRISEIS *sits at the prosecution table.*

BRISEIS: I don't think so. Not yet.
TV DIRECTOR: OK, ladies, vamoose. We're not open yet. Get your tickets at the gate.
WOMAN: Young man, this is Briseis.
TV DIRECTOR: Briseis? Of course. How dumb of me! Colorcasts are very difficult. *To Briseis.* I think a little makeup.
BRISEIS: No.
TV DIRECTOR: Just a touch of rouge.
BRISEIS: And if they convict him?
WOMAN: I hear the judge is very strict.
BRISEIS: I don't want him dead. What good'll he do me then? That's what happened to my first husband. I want this one alive.
WOMAN: Now child, you can't look on this as a personal matter. It's the moral issue that's at stake, my dear. The moral issue. This man is responsible for the destruction of the world. The entire world!
BRISEIS: Since when are you concerned about morality?
WOMAN: Some modicum of public order is good for business. *Shifting the subject.* Look at what they've built here. Wonderful. We still have a legal structure. *Breathes deeply.* We still can breathe God's air. But we can't thank him, let me tell you. If it were left to your man, we'd all be dead.
BRISEIS: I still want to marry him.
WOMAN: You're being very anarchistic.

A WAITER *enters.*

WAITER: Bon matin, madame. *He bows.* Que voulez-vous?
WOMAN: Daiquiri. *To BRISEIS.* My dear?
BRISEIS: I'm not feeling well.

WAITER *in a phony French accent:*
Zee excitement of luh day, n'est ce pas?

WOMAN: Exactly.
WAITER: Ce beeyootiful jour, n'est ce pas?

The WOMAN drops a few coins in his hand and he hurries off.

WAITER: Merci, madame, thank you beaucoup!

TV DIRECTOR *to the* WOMAN:

When the trial starts, you'll have to move to the grandstand.

WOMAN: Certainly.

BRISEIS: Me too?

TV DIRECTOR: Of course not, Briseis. You are perfect where you are. *The TV DIRECTOR light-meters BRISEIS's robe.* Pity you didn't wear something brighter. *Light-meters her face.* Very photogenic. The cameras will love you. Ahh. Yes. *Adjusting her.* That's it. Perfect. Now the viewers will be certain to notice—uh—your—your—

WOMAN: We understand.

BRISEIS: I don't want them to notice. It's my affair.

TV DIRECTOR: Yes of course, your "affair." But remember, you're a celebrity now. You have a responsibility to the public.

The CHEERLEADERS cautiously come over. They peek at BRISEIS.

CHEERLEADER 3: Is that her?

CHEERLEADER 2: Of course it is, stupid.

CHEERLEADER 1: Number Two! Number Two!

The CHEERLEADERS form a straight row in front of BRISEIS. As they cheer, they jump up and down and do handsprings.

CHEERLEADERS: Briseis! Briseis!
 Outraged girl.
 Briseis! Briseis!
 Gave it a whirl!
 Win! Win! Win!

The TV DIRECTOR whips out his light meter and catches hold of a CHEERLEADER. She lifts her miniskirt and he meters her red underpants.

BRISEIS: Do they have to make such a big fuss?

TV DIRECTOR *to the* CAMERAMEN:

Be sure to get a picture of the handsprings.

Quietly to the CHEERLEADER.

What's your name, sweetie?

CHEERLEADER: Gloria Scruggles. Can I go on TV? Huh? Huh?

TV DIRECTOR: You never can tell. You never can tell.

CHEERLEADER: 138 Muscatine Boulevard, Muscatine Iowa. 563-218-4117.

TV DIRECTOR *writing as quickly as he can:*
563-218, what's the rest?

CHEERLEADER: 4117.
TV DIRECTOR: Got it, Arlene.
CHEERLEADER: It's Gloria.

TV DIRECTOR *kisses her on the cheek:*
Gloria. *Checks his watch.* Four minutes to trial time! Four minutes to trial time!

CHEERLEADER: I'm going to be on TV!!

The other CHEERLEADERS pull up their miniskirts and giggle.

BRISEIS: I wish they'd get it over with. I don't feel good.

AGAMEMNON, *the* CAPTAIN, PATROCLUS, *several distinguished* DIPLOMAT'S, *and the* LAWYER *enter chatting. They are each dressed in the clothes of their time. PATROCLUS is wearing bandages.*

LAWYER: An open and shut case, gentlemen. Open and shut.
PATROCLUS: These burns'll clinch it. Had the bandages put back on especially for the trial.
CAPTAIN: Pakapopulous was always insubordinate.
AGAMEMNON: Let's get this over by lunchtime. I hate to miss lunch.
LAWYER: Open and shut. Open and shut.
LAWYER sits at his desk, pulls papers out of his briefcase.
To BRISEIS and the WOMAN:
Ah, ladies. The incarnation of punctuality, I see.

PATROCLUS, CAPTAIN, AGAMEMNON:
Good morning. I hope you're in good health. Prettier than ever.

BRISEIS *turns away.* AGAMEMNON *sidles up to her.*

AGAMEMNON: Now, now—we don't bear grudges, do we? Forgive and forget is my motto. We're here to convict a criminal. We're all on the same side now.

WAITER *with the daiquiri for the WOMAN:*
Voila, madame! Bon morning, messieurs! Suivez-mois, if vous plait.

Shows AGAMEMNON, PATROCLUS, and the CAPTAIN to the jury-box.

Assiyez-vous, s'il you plait.

TV DIRECTOR *checking the men on his clipboard:*

Yes. Yes. Yes. I'll have to ask you gentlemen to keep your voices down. SOP for live telecasts.

ALL: Certainly. Certainly.

CHEERLEADER: Number Seven! Number Seven!

TV DIRECTOR: Not now, girls. Wait until the trial starts.

They lift their skirts in unison laughing.

And pull those things down! This is a family show. *Shouting offstage.*

Ok, Mack. Let the public in. Two minutes! Two minutes to trial time!

A crowd of noisy people rush in and grab the grandstand seats. Men, women, children, and infants. Maybe a dog or two. Actual spectators may be integrated into this crowd. There is much pushing, shouting, and cursing. The people are dressed in various periods and styles. Each is eating something. Bananas, grapes, pears, candy, ice-cream, carrots . . . They have bottles of wine and liquor, cans of beer, soft drinks, water. Some who can't fit into the grandstand spread blankets on the field and unload picnics. As they finish eating something, they toss their garbage into the center of the stage. They actively react to the trial as at a sports event or rock 'n' roll concert. The WOMAN goes among the crowd selling flowers.

CROWD *improvising crowd talk:*

Hey! Move over! Goddamnit! Buddy, you don't own this seat! Down in front! Mommy, give me a peach! Mommy, I got to make wee-wee. Take off your hat! *etc.*

BRISEIS: I won't go through with it. I withdraw my charge. Where is he? I just want to be with him.

LAWYER *brandishing papers:*

You can't withdraw. You've sworn out an affidavit.

WOMAN: The child's tired! The emotional strain! Can't you see her condition?

BRISEIS: I'm not tired. And I know what it is to be pregnant a lot better than you do. I don't want him to die. I don't care.

LAWYER *confers briefly with the DIPLOMATS. Then to BRISEIS:*

You understand, of course, that these men are pressing charges too? Even if you drop your grievance, the trial will go on! The law cannot take notice of you. The law works inexorably, impersonally, legally. This man is charged with the gravest crimes. *He waves papers in her face.* Here I present you with fully documented, notarized depositions, lists of malfeasances, negligences, incompetences, and what-nots—in triplicate. And to back these up—I have hundreds, thousands of copies in my office!! Massive evidence!! Tons!!! Megatons!!!

BRISEIS: I don't care. I don't feel good. I'm going.

TV DIRECTOR: You can't leave. The gates are locked. The station break is finished. The cameras are focused. The microphones are live. The trial's about

to start. Time cannot move backward. Thirty seconds ... twenty ...
ten. Here comes the judge!

LAWYER *pushing* BRISEIS *back into her seat*:
You will testify!

TV DIRECTOR: five, four ...

BRISEIS *sobbing*: I don't care! I don't care! I love him!

TV DIRECTOR: On my cue now, Audrey.

CHEERLEADER: Gloria!

TV DIRECTOR: Gloria. Two, one. On the air.

The camera boom wheels around to catch the CHEERLEADERS and crowd.

CHEERLEADER: Number Six! Number Six!

CHEERLEADERS *and* CROWD:
Hip, hip!

Soldier boy! Soldier boy!
What are we for?!
A clean, sterilized,
Well directed war!

Citizens! Citizens!
Who do we hate?
Achilles Pakapopulous
He's second rate!

TV ANNOUNCER *amplified*:

Good afternoon, citizens of the world. ITV, International Television, is proud to present this afternoon's attraction live and in full Technicolor. Welcome to The World versus Achilles Pakapopulous, the trial of the century. Those cheers you just heard and saw were the spontaneous outbursts of healthy hate coming from our fun-loving, justice-demanding citizens led by the Vestal Virgin High School cheerleaders of Muscatine, Iowa. As you can see, the grandstand here is crammed full and many families have overflowed into the courtroom area. The Supreme Judge is due at any moment. He is just now putting on his vestments in the court chamber. To your right is the jury box. As you can see, the jury is already seated. ITV will stay on the air until a verdict is reached. In the event of an immediate execution, we will bring it to you, live. The prisoner has not yet been brought in.

BRISEIS sits resigned but angry. The WOMAN is busy selling flowers and souvenir buttons. One of the CHEERLEADERS has been lifted into the grandstand where she is kissing several members of the crowd. A meek court CLERK enters.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

CLERK: Oyez! Oyez!
TV ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen! The clerk is here. He has oyezied this assembly to order. The trial is about to begin. We now take you down live to the court-arena.
TV DIRECTOR: Get this, Ed! Get it!
CLERK: The First Circuitous Court of the World is now in session.

The judge emerges puffing on a big unlit Groucho Marx cigar, dressed in black, his head covered by an outlandish blonde wig. The judge is the SERGEANT. The LAWYER jumps to his feet waving a huge bundle of papers. DIPLOMATS pass him more papers. The crowd is stunned silent. The CHEER-LEADERS, except for one in the grandstand, confer with their leader. The jury trade hushed remarks. BRISEIS stands. The SERGEANT nods quietly to her. The WOMAN hands him a carnation which he carefully puts in his lapel.

LAWYER: I object! I object!

The SERGEANT has a dignity which overcomes his ludicrous costume.

SERGEANT:
Overruled. Citizens, members of the jury, attorneys, diplomats, generals, world. I realize that you are shocked. I myself admit discomfort standing before you like this at this solemn moment. However, let me stifle your surprise and outrage by pledging myself and you to a fair trial. As the defendant, it is most reasonable that I should want a fair trial. I ask all of you honestly—those present here and those present in front of your tv sets—I ask you, who can better judge my errors than me? Who better knows the whole truth about myself? Who can more judiciously distinguish between fact and hearsay in the testimony we are about to hear? Who can more clearly weigh the evidence—both pro and con—and who can more sincerely instruct the jury?

CROWD: He's right!! *etc.*
LAWYER: This is without precedent. I demand that you recuse yourself.
CROWD: He's right!! *etc.*
SERGEANT: If I recuse myself, I cast aspersions on myself. That in turn might influence the jury. The trial will begin.
LAWYER: I will not go along with this farce!
CROWD MEMBER: Oh, go farce yourself!!

Throws a banana peel at the LAWYER.

ANOTHER CROWD MEMBER:
Quit stalling! Get this show on the road!

More tossed garbage backs up the CROWD's demand.

CLERK: Silence! Silence in the courtroom!

SERGEANT *to the* LAWYER:
If you refuse to participate, I'll hold you in contempt.

CHEERLEADER *timidly*:
Can we do a little cheer now?

SERGEANT:
Denied. The court will maintain its dignity. Remember no matter what you may feel personally—matters of life and death will be decided here today. Cheer during recess.

He looks up at the klieg lights.

And turn those damned lights off!!

TV DIRECTOR: Your honor. You're on the air. The International Communications
 Commission—
SERGEANT: Damn the Commission! Dim the lights!
TV DIRECTOR: Yes, your honor.

The lights are slightly dimmed.

SERGEANT *to the* LAWYER:
Present your case.

*The LAWYER confers briefly with the DIPLOMATS. He returns before the bench loaded with papers.
He stuffs some in his pockets.*

LAWYER: Under the circumstances, your honor, I proceed under protest. I shall appeal—
SERGEANT: This is the court of last appeal. Proceed.

As the LAWYER talks, he begins to pace. The camera booms swing feverishly through the air in an attempt to follow him. He speaks at first slowly and then more and more rapidly. His plea begins quietly and grows until he is hysterical. He moves at first only in front of the jury, but then addresses the crowd and the cameras. Everyone follows him carefully, their eyes glued on him as though he were a tennis ball in a championship match.

LAWYER:
Our society is based on order. On structure. On the inevitable quid pro quo. When this delicate balance is upset, confusion follows. And if confusion is not immediately remedied by strict order we are left with chaos. And—as we all know from the Bible—which each of us as God fearing and God loving men—have read and worship—as we all know from the Bible, chaos is what the world began with. Or rather, to be more explicit, as is necessary in a court of law, what the world was before it came into being, chaos having preceded the act of creation. Therefore, if we end with what we began—or what is worse—with what there was before we began—we have less than nothing. All humanity will have struggled for less than nothing. The defendant, your honor, you—are on trial



FIGURE 9.2: The Sergeant presides over his own trial. From the left, Clerk/Stuart Velasco, TV Director/Edward Reid, Woman/Janet Swanson, Cheerleaders/Wendy Bessinger, Virginia Flick, Celia Scott, Carole Weinman, Judge-Sergeant/Thomas Markus, Lawyer/Robert Merritt, Briseis/Katherine Preston. Unnamed other spectators, camera people, and soldiers. Photograph courtesy of Tulane Theatre and Dance Department.

on that greatest of all charges: chaos. If this charge is proved, as I sincerely believe it will be, you are guilty of bringing the world back to where it was before God put it in order. I am not merely arguing epistemology or cosmology or any kind of mology. I am arguing the bone and marrow of civilization. These documents which are in triplicate, will bear this out in every paragraph, every sentence, every word, every colon, semicolon, comma, and period! And, mind you, bear this out not once, not twice, but three times! However, enough introductory remarks. I shall call witnesses to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that you moved this world from inchoation to chaos. That you upset the balance of nature. I shall call the Captain to testify to your desertion and insubordination; I shall call Agamemnon to testify to your usurpation and impersonation; I shall call Patroclus to testify to your defamation and ostentation. I shall call this poor distracted girl—this angel in the first blossom of her former virginity—to testify to your fornication, impregnation, and dissipation. I shall call them all to testify to your stagnation! And may I emphasize before the Court, stagnation is the very threshold of chaos. For as chaos whirls about chaotically, stagnation lies still stagnantly. Yes—these crimes have an order to them. They have a hierarchy or—if you prefer—if you insist on delicacies—they have a lowerarchy and then a middlearchy and ultimately a hierarchy. First, your honor, you deserted. Then you fornicated, by which same act you impregnated since this girl at that time was unmarried, a state which she doggedly maintains. Next you were insubordinate. This led to, as is inexorably the case, defamation. And then, stuffed full with the grandeur of your heinous crimes, you grew ostentatious. Being ostentatious you became stagnant. And, I repeat, stagnation leads to chaos!! I shall call these witnesses—all of them—to prove my case. I shall call them one at a time. And in pairs. I shall call them in triples and in manys. In groups and hordes. I shall call them in arithmetic and geometric progression. In all these combinations shall I call them. Then, not resting, I shall call them by their Christian and Hebrew and Buddhist and Islamic and Hindu and Pagan and Other names. I shall call them in the name of mankind! I shall call them in the name of the Holy One, Blessed Be His Name! I shall call them in the name of the Ineffable!! In

the name of the Nameless!!! But your honor—in any event—even if an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of re-entering the atmosphere at a speed that would frighten a meteorite without so much as a sunburned nosecone should detonate on me here and now—come hell and high water—fire and ice—come what come may—your honor—I shall call them!!!!

He collapses, exhausted. A huge scream of approbation rises from the crowd. The big lights come on full force once again and the camera booms wheel about wildly trying to catch the panorama. Garbage and hats and shirts are thrown. The TV DIRECTOR tries to direct this pandemonium. A DOCTOR comes in and attends to the LAWYER. Finally the LAWYER is carried out on a stretcher by two INTERNS.

SERGEANT *rapping his gavel:*
Order!! Order!! Order!! Order!!

DOCTOR: Your honor. The prosecution is resting under sedation.

SERGEANT *to the Jury:*

You have heard the case. I have but a few words in my defense. At the moment I acted, I did as I saw fit. At different times I had different motives. Captain—I meant only to protect my troops. Agamemnon—I meant only to protect my life and increase my honor. Patroclus—you annoyed me. Briseis—at one time I loved you. I admit that I did too little out of public responsibility and too much out of personal pleasure. But then, members of the jury, like yourselves—I am only human.

There is silence as the jury huddles.

SERGEANT: Well? Have you reached your verdict?

BRISEIS: Wait.

SERGEANT: What?

BRISEIS: I want to talk.

BRISEIS stands, slowly takes the dog tags from around her neck.

SERGEANT: Once I asked you for these, remember?
My dog tags.

BRISEIS: You wouldn't give them to me. You said they told you who you were. But Patroclus took them from you anyway and threw them away. I found them, and I kept them. And now I am going to have your baby. Without these, maybe you forgot who you were.

BRISEIS crosses to the SERGEANT and gives him the tags.

PATROCLUS: Get to the point!

BRISEIS: The point? He owes me more than he owes any of you. And I forgive him his debts.

Pause.

SERGEANT: If there are no further witnesses, the jury will deliver its verdict.
CAPTAIN: Guilty! Death! By firing squad.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

AGAMEMNON: Guilty! Death! By public stoning.
PATROCLUS: Guilty! Death! By the slowest means.
BRISEIS: Guilty or innocent or whatever you are, I don't care!
SERGEANT: The jury has spoken. I hereby pronounce you—I mean me—guilty
as charged.

With a roar, the crowd turns their thumbs down.

CHEERLEADERS: But the jury has not agreed on a punishment. Therefore, I hereby
suspend sentence and place you—I mean me—under probation for life.
Probation! Probation!
This trial is over.
Elation! Elation!
We're all in clover.

All the thumbs are up.

SERGEANT: Clerk! Clear the court.
BRISEIS: What about me?

SERGEANT *to the WOMAN*:
Bring her to my chamber.

WOMAN: Yes, your honor.

SERGEANT *To BRISEIS*:
You have a very civil complaint.

BRISEIS *her hands on her belly*:
I'm having our baby!! Quick, quick!!

Blackout

2

Several hours later. The same scene, but desolate, full of uncollected trash. BRISEIS and her newborn are resting, attended by the WOMAN. The SERGEANT sits in the first row of the grandstand, holding his dog tags.

SERGEANT: 176 333 459, 176 333, 459.
WOMAN: You're a father. A boy.
SERGEANT: How are they?
WOMAN: Resting.
SERGEANT: Then I can go.
WOMAN: Of course.
SERGEANT: Not every man can be Achilles.
WOMAN: Sergeant. You're the head of a family.
SERGEANT: Do I have to pay my whole life for one night? Not even all night?

WOMAN: Don't start whining again.
SERGEANT: What business is it of yours?
WOMAN: I make the entries. Perform the last rites.
SERGEANT: Don't give me that. *Pause.* Listen. One day someone puts a rifle in your hand and they say, "Kill." And you kill. The next day they put a scepter in your hand and they say, "Rule." And you rule. The next day they put a gavel in your hand and they say, "Judge." And you judge. But you're the same man—it doesn't matter what they say. I've killed with spears and stones and guns and bombs and rockets. It all adds up to the same thing: dead people. You tell me I'm a father now. Well, good. I leave it to my son.
BRISEIS: I feel better now.
SERGEANT: Have you heard? I've resigned everything. I'm just a common man.
BRISEIS: Do you love me?
SERGEANT: I've got to enlist now. In this new automated army, you've got to be early or you get left out.

Exits. The distant sound of martial music. The WOMAN's song.

BRISEIS: Collect your flowers. Put them in the wheelbarrow. We'll follow him to his war.
WOMAN: But your baby.
BRISEIS: You'll teach me lullabies. You know a lot of songs.

Putting the baby in the wheelbarrow, arranging the flowers over it, as a blanket.

WOMAN: When I get a fresh stock, you'll have to carry him.

BRISEIS, *singing softly*:
Roses for my young one,
Violets near his head;
Poppies for my loved one
I'll not think of the dead.

SOLDIERS enter marching. The SERGEANT leads them.

SERGEANT: Once you're in, you're always in,
Where you end, you start to begin,
So shoot the enemy full of lead
Make mighty sure you know he's really dead!
Sound off!
SOLDIERS: One, Two!
SERGEANT: Sound off!
SOLDIERS: Three, Four!
SERGEANT: Cadence count!
SOLDIERS: One, two, three, four.
One-two! Three-four!

As he passes BRISEIS, the SERGEANT proudly salutes.

SCHECHNER PLAYS

SERGEANT: Hi ya, honey!
SOLDIERS: Hi ya, honey!
SERGEANT: Sound off!
SOLDIERS: One! Two!
SERGEANT: Sound off!
SERGEANT: Three! Four!
SERGEANT: Cadence count!
SOLDIERS: One, two, three, four.
One-two! Three-four!

The SERGEANT and the SOLDIERS march off.

BRISEIS: On one single day I saw my brothers and husband killed.

WOMAN *singing, joined by* BRISEIS:

Give the dead their due
With flowers of every hue!
Roses for the young ones
Violets for the old
Poppies for the dumb ones
Vine wreathes for the bold.

Singing they follow the SERGEANT and SOLDIERS. Lights slowly dim to blackout.

NOTES

1. I “volunteered for the draft.” See note 7 *Dionysus in 69* this volume.
2. See my Introduction to *The Blessing of the Fleet* for more on my Provincetown experiences.
3. Brecht’s *The Mother* is on the list, but I had not read it before I wrote *Briseis and the Sergeant*. Also, importantly, I am much more aware now than I was in the late 1950s–early 1960s, of Brecht’s complex if not questionable representations of women. I agree with Sara Lennox who wrote: “Brecht’s works also contain, though in rudimentary form, elements which point beyond his limitations with respect to women’s concerns. Unbeknownst to Brecht and contrary to his conscious intentions, women in his work exert a subversive potential, pointing in directions qualitatively different from the position Brecht consciously represented in his theoretical writings. Brecht’s women figures [...] are double-edged. On the one hand they demonstrate both his blindness to women themselves and to a whole range of issues which women have been taken to represent. But simultaneously they call forth a potentially utopian dimension which might be elaborated in contemporary reutilizations of his works” (1978: 84).

10

The Blessing of the Fleet, 1958, 1961

Introduction

I wrote the first version of *The Blessing of the Fleet* during the academic year 1957–58 while studying at the University of Iowa both in the regular English Department and as a member of Paul Engle's Iowa Writers' Workshop. *Blessing* is my MA thesis and my first full-length play. The play was produced at Iowa in 1958 and then in May 1961 at the Playwrights' Showcase in New Orleans.¹ I was in New Orleans because from September 1960 I was studying for my PhD in the Theatre Department of Tulane University — I finished my degree in May 1962, after which I joined the Department as an assistant professor. Without doubt *Blessing* comes from my experience of living in Provincetown in the summers of 1957, 1958, and 1960. In addition to my summers' experiences, I was influenced by Provincetown's most famous playwright, Eugene O'Neill, who knew well the sea-faring coast and islands of Massachusetts.

At the end of the summer of 1957, I started East End Players—see my introduction to “Lot's Daughters” this volume. A year later, I and Karl Harshbarger whom I'd met at the University of Iowa launched East End Players as a full-season summer theatre. In P'town I met the painter Jack Tworkov and his daughters Hermine and Helen. Hermine performed the Student in my production of Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* and Helen was my assistant. A generation later, through no doing of mine, Hermine's son Erik Moskowitz performed in *Sakonnet Point* (1975) and *Nayatt School* (1978) with members of The Performance Group who were to become The Wooster Group after I left TPG in 1980. What goes around comes around.

Back to *The Blessing of the Fleet*. Not only was I reading a lot of O'Neill back then, I fell in love with P'town. So much so that at the end of East End Players' 1958 summer season, after the tourists and summer residents departed, I stayed on until November enjoying the nearly empty streets, the brisk fall breezes (but no hurricanes), and the clam chowder and tales of my storied 84-year-old landlady, the venerable, feisty, and politically radical Mary Heaton Vorse.² For the summer I'd rented a room in Mary's 466 Commercial Street home³ not knowing when I first met her that she had any connection to O'Neill. I soon found out from Mary that she was a member of the Provincetown Players⁴ and owned the building on Lewis Wharf where The Players made their theatre in 1915–16.

Mary regaled me with tales about the Players. She flattered me by saying that I reminded her of O'Neill. As with so many determinant events in life, my meeting Mary was happenstance. In late June 1958, I was looking for a place where I and other East End Players could rent rooms. I think that on the fence to Mary's home was a notice of rooms for rent. When I arranged for several, I had no idea who she was. My day job was as a short-order cook at Chef's Restaurant on Provincetown's main wharf. My job was to turn out plenty of broiled and boiled lobsters and grilled steaks for the midday crowd arriving by boat from Boston. These day trippers wanted their lunch fast and hot before rushing around Provincetown and then catching the boat back

to Beantown late in the afternoon. Part of the advantage of my job was that I was finished by 3 p.m. I could devote the rest of my afternoons and evenings to theatre, my passion.

I soon found out that Mary, too, not only had a passion for theatre, but a significant place in American theatre history. It was not long before she began telling me about “Gene” and the others. She told me that my intensity reminded her of O’Neill. “You will go far,” she predicted. When Labor Day came, I decided to stay on and Mary was happy to have me. But by November I was ready to take my next step. I went to my legal residence in South Orange, New Jersey, and volunteered to be drafted into the US Army. My years in the army further changed who I am. I came into close contact with people I would otherwise never have met; and I was subject to a kind of control I had not previously experienced. But I also learned how to game the army, able to write and serve simultaneously. After my discharge in August 1960, and an academic year at Tulane University studying for my PhD, I returned to P’town for the summer of 1961—one more season directing East End Players. I think again we rented rooms in Mary’s home, though I am not certain of that. My theatre colleagues that summer were artists-classmates of mine from Tulane and some actors from New York. At the end of that summer, I boarded a ship for Cherbourg and six months in Paris researching and writing my PhD dissertation on the early plays of Eugène Ionesco. I returned to New Orleans in the late spring of 1962 to defend my dissertation. In September, I become an assistant professor of theatre at Tulane and editor of the *Tulane Drama Review*.

But when did I write *The Blessing of the Fleet*? Up until October 5, 2022, I thought I composed it in Mary’s house in the early fall of 1958. My times in Provincetown occupy a big room in my construction of self. Ah, that wishing could make it so! But scholarship will out. A little research turned up the play in the University of Iowa library as my MA thesis submitted in June 1958. So although I lived in Mary Heaton Vorse’s home, and learned much from her, the fact is I wrote *The Blessing of the Fleet*, or at least the first version of it, during the academic year 1957–58, after one summer on Cape Cod split between Brewster and Provincetown, and before I met Mary. The text published here is a slightly revised version of my 1958 thesis. I cannot locate the 1961 production text.

The Blessing of the Fleet

Production (see note 1)

Director Lorraine Murphy

Performers (see note 1)

Gene Ray Roberts
Belinda Dolores Tyre

Characters:

Shooler: Strong, dark, proud Portuguese fisherman, 35
Belinda: Pretty, intelligent, experienced, 25
Gene: Gaunt, disheartened, solver of the mystery of life, 30
Mrs. Vrondi: Has seen better days, 55
John Gaspé: Silver-haired, tan, ex-fisherman, 60
Ed: Owner of the Wharfside Tavern, 40
Male Radio Voice

Setting:

A tavern on a wharf in Provincetown, Massachusetts, early October. The setting should be simple, suggestive.

1 The Night Before the Storm

SHOOLER is finishing a happy, quick Portuguese sea-song, accompanying himself on the guitar. Around him are MRS. VRONDI, BELINDA, and JOHN. GENE is sitting alone, above them. ED is behind the bar.

BELINDA: Come on, another one!
MRS. VRONDI: Indeed! More, Mr. Shooler! Your Portuguese is so like the Count's Spanish!
SHOOLER: You tire me out! Hey Ed! More beer! Another round!
BELINDA: Do you know any songs we could all sing together?
SHOOLER: English I don't know good. And you don't know Portuguese.
BELINDA: Anything! Come on! *Singing.* "Oh, beautiful, for spacious skies—"

Everyone laughs, applauds.

GENE: Spare me the flag.
MRS. VRONDI: Mr. Shooler, did you study voice in your native Portugal?
SHOOLER: No, Mrs. Vrondi. My father sings a lot at home, so I sing. Anyway, I'm not from Portugal, really. The Azores are my home. The islands, the storms. But I leave there nineteen years ago. So now America is my home. Come, Belinda—sing American song!
BELINDA: No—never mind—
SHOOLER: Well—everybody drink! Drink up big! One last drink on Shooler! Then Shooler goes home.
MRS. VRONDI: No. You're not going?
BELINDA: Stay, Shooler. The party's just started—
SHOOLER: No. I got to sleep long tonight. Hard day of fishing tomorrow.
JOHN: So you're still going out?
SHOOLER: Sure, John.
JOHN: Don't you believe me?
SHOOLER: Sure I believe you! I believe the radio. I believe the Coast Guard. Shooler believes everybody!
JOHN: Then what're you being a damned fool for?
SHOOLER: Look, John. I'm fisherman. I need money. Fish are running—so I go out. Storm comes—wind blows—I come in.
JOHN: Pride—pride!
SHOOLER: Look—I stay in tomorrow and then I stay in day after tomorrow for Blessing. That's two days. I can't do that.
JOHN: You'll drown, Shooler.
SHOOLER: Ah, my friend. You think of your wife—

JOHN: That's not the reason!

SHOOLER: It is most of the reason. Come, John, we not argue. I go out early, scoop up big mamas, and am back past the point before wind comes. Then we have real party tomorrow night, with big mama lobsters and melted butter! Huh? Ok, that's good?

BELINDA: Why don't you listen to John, Shooler?

SHOOLER: What you say, my friend? You come have party with Shooler? And the next day we go to the Blessing of the Fleet together and the Bishop sprinkles water! Ok?

JOHN: I'll be here, Shooler.

SHOOLER: Good! I see you straight off the dock! Now drink your schooner and I go.

JOHN: Yes—and may God be with you tomorrow.

GENE: Amen!

SHOOLER: Thank you, John. It is for that I wait. *Exits.*

GENE *laughing*: Do you think he'll get it, old man? Do you think he'll be bashed in by the waves?

MRS. VRONDI: Mr. Shooler is an example of a fine, robust, primitive type.

BELINDA: Will the storm be bad, John?

JOHN: In '38, we had a great hurricane. Tomorrow we're going to have another.

MRS. VRONDI: I saw no mention of it in the day's journals.

ED: It's all over the radio. But they don't know if it's coming this way yet. It sure knocked the hell out of North Carolina, though.

BELINDA: Will we be safe here? I mean we're just a few feet above sea level—

MRS. VRONDI: Oh, dear! Is there any danger? Ahhh, so be it ... I do not expect to live for many months anyway.

GENE: That's right, Contessa. The old cancer.

JOHN: We'll be safe enough here. The dunes are high. Some folks may get cut off down by the pond—the tide'll cross the road there—but we'll be dry in town. The danger's out there—beyond the buoys and the break, out in the high water, where's there's nothing but wind—

GENE: The big blow's right here, old man.

MRS. VRONDI: Edward, bring me the day's journals, if you don't mind. I set them behind the bar—

GENE: Draw me one first, Ed. That is—if the Contessa can wait—

MRS. VRONDI: Surely—

BELINDA: Gene, please—

GENE: Ah, I am recognized. I am seen. I am at center stage.

JOHN: You're drunk.

GENE: The salt air—the salt air—

BELINDA: You always manage to get to center stage.

GENE: No, no—you misread me. I like sitting up here, looking down, watching the marionettes, counting their strings. And the nice thing about you, little girl, is that your—hinges—are loose, but well oiled, I expect.

BELINDA *taking JOHN's hand*:

Thank you, Gene—but I already have a date. For tonight.

GENE: For tonight? Well, that still gives me a chance, for another time. Right? Ed! Where's my schooner!

MRS. VRONDI: There is nothing in The New York Times about a hurricane, Mr. Gaspé.

JOHN: I don't read the newspapers, Mrs. Vrondi! I read the sky.

MRS. VRONDI: Really? I shall check The Herald Tribune. It is, in my opinion, the most reliable New York journal.

JOHN: I tell you I don't read the papers!

ED: It was on the radio, Mrs. Vrondi.

MRS. VRONDI: I distrust the wireless. I rely solely upon the journals.

BELINDA: I wish Shooler were still here. We would be singing.

ED: I'm gonna have 'em put up the storm boards first thing in the morning.

MRS. VRONDI: I'll be in for my usual morning coffee.

ED: Sure thing, Mrs. Vrondi.

JOHN: I'll be on the wharf, then I'll stop by for a schooner.

GENE: Round and round we go. Where we stop, only I know.

BELINDA: What?

GENE: I asked why you won't sleep with me.

BELINDA: That's not what you said!

GENE: Ah, my little marionette, but it's what I wanted to say.

JOHN: Come on, Belinda—let's go.

MRS. VRONDI: You're not deserting us too, are you?

JOHN: I'm sleepy. Had too much beer. Got too much to worry about.

GENE: What do you have to worry about, old man? You died twenty years ago.

JOHN: Listen—

GENE: If you were still alive you'd be on the boat with Shooler, hauling in the pots, feeding the gulls—

JOHN: Just what do you do? Where do you work?

GENE: I'm a kingfisher. With a sharp beak, and silver feathers. I fly and dive and catch my food. And my feathers never get wet.

JOHN: You're a goddamn loafer! A summer scab that stayed on! Well it's October, boy. It's time you went back to New York! To BELINDA. Come on.

MRS. VRONDI: Please—don't go. I feel lost when I'm alone.

GENE: You mustn't desert the Contessa—

BELINDA *eyes on* GENE:
Go ahead, John. I'll be along in a little.

JOHN: All right. See you later, Belinda. Good night, Ed, Mrs. Vrondi.

GENE: Wait a minute, old man. Don't I deserve the courtesy of a farewell? JOHN *turns sharply and exits*. GENE *laughs*. Well, I can't have everything. Can I—young lady—Belinda?

BELINDA: You could have more than you've got.

GENE: Offering yourself to the devil? I'm sorry, but I promised the Contessa I'd make love to her tonight.

MRS. VRONDI: Morbid humor is a symptom of a sick soul.

GENE: But we must face facts. "Face the facts"—isn't that your motto? Alive today, dead by next winter?

MRS. VRONDI: I wish to be alone with Belinda.

GENE: Oh, Contessa. There's no privacy in a place like this. A bar is a theatre.

BELINDA: What did you want to talk to me about, Mrs. Vrondi?

GENE: Bars and theatres, Contessa. Places for exposing the passions.

BELINDA: Gene. Stop it! Can't you be kind? For my sake?

GENE: The girl begs me. That deserves another schooner. Ed!

MRS. VRONDI: I haven't been feeling very well lately, my dear. I think—I think—it's my heart—

GENE: Not the old cancer, gnawing away like a gray mouse on some fat yellow American cheese?

MRS. VRONDI: I will not have my diseases mocked!

GENE: Goddamn your mockery!

MRS. VRONDI: And I will not tolerate profanity.

GENE: We have come to an impasse, then, my dear aristocrat. For I view your entire existence as a profanity.

MRS. VRONDI: I've lived my life honorably and honestly. My husband was a Count—

GENE: We've heard it all. I want to talk about your eternal soul.

BELINDA: Gene, please—

GENE: Here you are—dying of cancer—or is it a coronary? Do you know what the symptoms of thrombosis are? A tug over the belly, a tremor in your shoulder—like some young man was trying to get your attention—and then pain! pain! pain! Jabbing through your chest, like knives, sharp silver knives—

MRS. VRONDI: Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!

She exits.

BELINDA: Why do you—?

GENE: You see—? Now we are alone.

BELINDA: Not for long.

GENE: Go ahead. Beat it back to your old man—and I mean—old—man.

BELINDA: What's it to you? Am I your daughter? Will you write a note to teacher so I won't get in trouble?

GENE: It's no business of mine. Forget I opened my eyes.

BELINDA: John's a strong man—

GENE: No explaining, please—

BELINDA: Listen! I don't love him. Understand? There are no ropes around my neck. But he's a good man. And I enjoy his company.

GENE: I saw your lips move, but I didn't hear a thing. *Pause.* You know what I think?

BELINDA: I'll tell you what I think. I think you could be a good man too—but you're afraid—God knows of what—and someday, someday soon, Gene—we're going to have it out—you and me—alone. Do you hear me?

GENE: She walks, she talks, she lies on her back like a—

BELINDA: You don't fool me, Gene; you're a human being like the rest of us—
GENE: Go on, beat it! Get out! If he's such a man why doesn't he go out with the rest of 'em? Why does he stand dry on the dock in the morning with his neck cocked up toward the sky like a—a—Who is he? God! God! Do you think he's God?

She exits. GENE sits. Then softly.

Belinda—Belinda—come back. I—I—just want to talk. To talk. *Shouting.*
Ed! Ed! Where the hell are you?
ED: Washing glasses. Do it every night.
GENE: Time for another beer?
ED: You're running up quite a tab.
GENE: Don't you think I know it?
ED: Sure.
GENE: When I want an accountant, I'll hire one. Will you draw me a beer?
ED: Last one for tonight. Got to close up.
GENE: She wouldn't even sit here and talk to me. That's all I wanted. A little talking.
ED: Sure thing. Now drink up and get out. I want to go to sleep. Got to put up the storm windows tomorrow.
GENE: Storm windows? You're an idiot. The hurricane'll never happen in October.
ED: It's a crazy day when John Gaspé's wrong about the weather.
GENE: So you think he's God, too? The fisherman love him; The girl loves him. You love him. He's too good to be true.
ED: Come on. Go home.
GENE: Yeah. Got to get some sleep. *Stops.* Ed—I lost my job—
ED: Sure. That's always happening, Gene.
GENE: I mean—I'm broke.
ED: No news there. Sleep it off. Everybody needs a dishwasher. And how about writing? I hear you were quite the thing a few years ago—
GENE: No. I can't do that—any more. Well, goodnight—
ED: So long, Gene—
GENE: Ed. I didn't pay old lady Johnson the rent. You know what I mean? Those landladies—they don't take any bull—either it's ten dollars in the palm, or boom, you're out—
ED: Ok, Gene. Flop in the back. I don't have a mattress, but there's an old army blanket in the closet. Sometimes between you and Mrs. Vrondi, I don't know whether I'm running a bar or flophouse.
GENE: Thanks, Ed. It's only for a day or two. I got a college degree. English major. Oberlin College in Ohio. Good school, straight state. They can't keep a BA down, can they? And keep a tally of the beers. Yeah. Ed, I just wanted to talk to her. Oh fuck, she's pretty.

Blackout

2 The Morning of the Storm

MRS. VRONDI is reading a huge stack of newspapers. ED is pouring her some coffee. Sound of hammering outside.

- MRS. VRONDI: Thank you, Edward. I have a terrible chill.
 ED: Nothing at all, Mrs. Vrondi. Had to boil the pot for myself anyway. I need some java to give me the strength to clean the place up.
 MRS. VRONDI: I know I should go to a breakfast shop, but I do so like your intimate tavern here by the seaside.
 ED: Sure thing, Mrs. Vrondi.
 MRS. VRONDI: And I am keeping the strictest account of what I owe you.
 ED: You bet.
 MRS. VRONDI: I am simply not myself until I have had my morning coffee. Usually three cups with cream—but no sugar.
 ED: I have Carnation. Will that do?
 MRS. VRONDI: It must do. As soon as my quarterly check arrives from the Manufacturer's Trust on Fifth Avenue—
 ED: Coffee's on the house.
 MRS. VRONDI: What a dear man you are! There are so few kind souls left. Now you must not construe my statement as an out and out condemnation of our young people. No, indeed. We have some very substantial persons among our youth. But there are, also, so many wastrels abroad. Now you take Gene—
 ED: He's got his problems.
 MRS. VRONDI: His problems are no excuse for his manners.
 ED: You know—he was an author once. Published a book—a novel—and everyone liked it.
 MRS. VRONDI: Well that's good to know—though I do prefer poetry.
 ED: Then he stopped writing. He told me he had no more to say.
 MRS. VRONDI: You seem to be very informed—
 ED: People talk to me. You know—a bartender—that kind of thing.
 MRS. VRONDI: If Gene has nothing more to say, he should remain silent. He always has something to say to me. He should face the facts—we must all face the facts.

Hammering again. Part of the sunlight streaming into the place is obscured.

- ED: What are the workmen doing? They've eclipsed the sun!
 Remember the hurricane? The 10 o'clock news said it was past the Virginia Capes, moving due north. They're still not sure we're going to get it. But I'm having the windows boarded up anyway. I don't take chances.
 MRS. VRONDI: The morning journals are mute. There is no mention of an impending gale.
 ED: Are you sure you have today's paper?
 MRS. VRONDI: Well—I didn't buy the paper—but Mr. Patrick across the way was kind enough to give me several journals—very reputable ones, from New York and Boston and Hyannis.

ED: I don't take chances.
MRS. VRONDI: In my home in Mexico—with the Count—we had reservoirs of sunlight! There is so little light in these northern climes—and now you have your men nail out whatever little there is.
ED: Tomorrow there'll be plenty of sun.
MRS. VRONDI: My husband was an aristocrat—a Spanish Count. Ah, there was a man, Edward! Even while he slept he kept his posture!
ED: You've told me.
MRS. VRONDI: Have I? I shall never understand why he left me. It is the riddle—the pivotal enigma—of my life. The Count and I were so suited for each other. He called me his “angel.” His desertion—though it is buried 28 years in the past—still leaves me dumbfounded. Ahhh, so be it! I must read the journals. *She looks at the papers.* I don't know why I read the journals. They are so depressing—
ED: I wouldn't know about that, Mrs. Vrondi. I got too much to worry about right here.
MRS. VRONDI: I understand that the winds of business can severely buffet an entrepreneur setting out across the sea of life in his little skiff—
ED: Sure thing.
MRS. VRONDI: But even in the midst of the storm we must not lose sight of the larger issues. The Count was always fond of the Reverend John Keats' aphorism: “No man is an island unto himself.”
ED: I have a couple of donuts, if you want—
MRS. VRONDI: That is so kind of you! But naturally I suffer from a slightly diabetic constitution and must shun sweets.
ED: I should've remembered—
MRS. VRONDI: Surely I've told you many times that I'm a dying woman?

Hammering again. Window is covered. ED turns on the lights.

ED: So we shall have no more sun today?
ED: Tomorrow—
MRS. VRONDI: Ah, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace—. Are you familiar with Hamlet?
ED: I don't get time to read. I think I was supposed to read it in high school—
MRS. VRONDI: A lovely drama. He kills his young wife. For no reason apparently. Well—. As I was saying, Edward, it is sad to realize it, but the bald fact must be faced. My inner machinery is rusting—corroding—falling apart. I expect to die this winter.

Sound of GENE laughing in the backroom.

ED: What's that?
ED: Gene. He had no place to go. So he slept in the store-room.
MRS. VRONDI: But what's he laughing at?

ED: Beats me.
 MRS. VRONDI: Can he hear us?
 ED: I don't think so.
 MRS. VRONDI: Well—it's true. I shall die this winter—be planted with the winter grass. I only hope that I shall survive until Christmas, for I do so like to see the little ones have a jolly time—
 ED: You have grandchildren then?
 MRS. VRONDI: How nice of you to say so! But I regret that the one pressing sorrow of my otherwise expansive and abundant life has been my lack of progeny. *Wistfully.* The Count, you see, was impotent. But in all other respects, what a man! No, Edward, the children I was referring to are the little ones within the purview of my winter home in New York. Annually I entertain the tikes at yuletide. I fancy that my little house party is a tradition by now. I shall hate to part with it when I die.
 ED: Then you're going back to New York?
 MRS. VRONDI: As soon as my check from the Manufacturer's Trust on Fifth Avenue arrives—
 ED: Oh. I understand.

GENE *comes in, bedraggled.*

GENE: Good morning.
 ED: Some coffee?
 GENE: Sure. God, it's dark in here.
 ED: I Put the storm boards up.
 GENE: Can you see the papers in this light, Contessa?
 MRS. VRONDI: My eyes are in perfect condition.
 GENE: My head's killing me. What the hell did you put in the beer last night, Ed?
 ED: Sit down. Have some stiff coffee.
 MRS. VRONDI: Edward was telling me that you're a novelist—
 GENE: Forget it.
 MRS. VRONDI: Is your style like that of Joseph Conrad? I so liked his tome, *The Old Man and the Sea*.
 GENE: Ernest Hemingway.
 MRS. VRONDI: No—no—Conrad didn't write Ernest Hemingway.
 GENE: Forget it, Contessa. Read the papers.
 MRS. VRONDI: Do you write adventure tales?
 GENE: I do nothing. I'm proud of doing nothing. I don't care about anything—I don't think about anything—I don't do anything. I just exist, as clean as a pebble in the tide. Now read your newspapers and leave me alone.
 ED: Gene. I was thinking—this morning—you know—can you mix drinks?
 GENE: I can swallow. That's about it.
 ED: There's not much business around here in the winter—but I got to get some rest—
 GENE: Are you offering me a job?

ED: I can put a bed in the backroom, give you enough money to eat, and as for drinks—

GENE:

Ed, you don't understand. Not working is a principle with me. Do you know what brings pain into the world? It's people who work, who do things, who think. People who love. Do you follow my meaning? A tomato never harmed anybody. A rock can't hurt you—unless some bastard throws it at you. I want to be like a rock. Dumb, mute, blind. Just part of the world, just there—no involvement, no emotion, nothing. For a while I worked in the Pepsi-Cola bottling plant in Wellfleet. All I did was sit and watch the damned bottles go by—and if one of them missed a cap, or was half filled, I pushed a button and that stopped the line. Then another guy came and took the bad bottle away. That's all I did from ten at night to six in the morning, five days a week. But pushing that button was too much. Maybe three or four times a night, I'd have to push that little red son-of-a-bitch. Even that was too much.

ED: But you gotta eat.

GENE: If they stop feeding me, I'll get thin. Who cares?

MRS. VRONDI: That's not a very positive view of life—

GENE: What the hell's positive about life, huh? We sit here like mushrooms in a dark cellar. Then one day someone'll push a button—like my Pepsi-Cola button—and out of the sky'll come hell—Armageddon—do you know what that is?—hell on earth! And all the mushrooms'll lose their heads, even the priests, even the millionaires. Everyone. So what's left? A little sport. Sometimes you make love, sometimes you kick a dog, sometimes you sit on the toilet and try to imagine what God looks like.

MRS. VRONDI: Please—

GENE: Do you know what God's like, Contessa?

MRS. VRONDI: I know what my God is like—

GENE: God's a fat black woman, with saggy breasts, playing solitaire.

MRS. VRONDI: The Count would have never tolerated either your insolence or your blasphemy. He was a man of the Church. He would throw down his gage, give you your choice of weapons, and demand you defend your honor with your life.

GENE: Choice of weapons? Of course, Contessa. I choose words. Now where would your noble defender of the faith be?

MRS. VRONDI *gathering her papers*:

I shall remove myself to elsewhere.

GENE: Wait a minute! You started me talking. You're frittering away your last days on the newspapers, as if they were the reckoning books of heaven. Think, Contessa, you are about to pit your pitiful little soul against God.

MRS. VRONDI: I—

GENE: Do you know what She'll say? You know what God'll say? She'll look up at you, scratch her crotch, and turn over another card. And down you'll go, Contessa—you, and your memories, and the Count, and your cancer, and

heart condition, and diabetes—all of it—down, down, passing away from the blissful face of God as quickly as Her eye blinks.

MRS. VRONDI: No, no. That's not true!

GENE *smiling*:

Forget it, Contessa. Sit down. Read the papers.

MRS. VRONDI: What you say is not true!

ED: Come on, Mrs. Vrondi, he was only joking.

GENE: Sure, Contessa. What does it matter? We've got other things to worry about—foreign policy, Cuba, checks from Manufacturer's Trust. Our souls are little, weightless things, not worth thinking about. Drink your coffee. I was only joking.

ED: Come on, Gene, help me out back. I got to get the ashcans in and tie things down, just in case the wind does come.

GENE: I told you, Ed. I've given up working.

ED: This isn't a job, just a favor.

MRS. VRONDI: Don't concern yourselves over me. If anyone comes in who needs you, I'll sound the alarms. I am not afraid of solitude.

GENE *sitting*: Here I stand. I cannot stand elsewhere.

ED: I stand you to beers, let you crash in the back, and you won't even—?

GENE: It's a philosophical position, Ed.

ED: Bullshit! John's right. You're lazy. Your "philosophical position" is your butt on the bottom of a chair!

Exits back.

MRS. VRONDI: I must confess, Gene, you're not gallant or grateful.

GENE: So he throws me out. He's got every reason to.

MRS. VRONDI: Edward's a kind soul.

GENE: That he is. And I'm a bastard.

MRS. VRONDI: Please, your language.

GENE: But I do what I think, Contessa. And at present I'm not thinking.

MRS. VRONDI: Several minutes ago—before you came out front—you were laughing.

GENE: I like laughing.

MRS. VRONDI: What did you find—or hear—that was so amusing?

GENE: You think I overheard you?

MRS. VRONDI: I draw no conclusions. I merely ask you a question.

GENE: How polite. Well, Contessa, I was laughing at myself.

MRS. VRONDI: Yourself?

GENE: I woke up. And I thought that was hilarious.

MRS. VRONDI: I find it quite normal to awaken in the morning.

GENE: I was sleeping so well. No dreams, no visions. Then I woke up and everything was here—re-created by my waking up. I had come back, the traveler had returned from that country from whose bourn no traveler returns.

MRS. VRONDI: Pardon?
GENE: Have you ever been outside yourself, Contessa? There I was—on another planet—on no planet—watching myself. The little things—pissing, scratching the dust out of my eyes—yawning, and farting. It's ridiculous, isn't it?—to be cursed with it all?
MRS. VRONDI: I have always believed that life is a blessing.
GENE: Sleep is a blessing, Contessa. Living in your mother's belly is a blessing. Death is a blessing. We're surrounded by blessings, overwhelmed with blessings. Everything is a blessing! Everything but living.

BELINDA *enters.*

MRS. VRONDI: Good morning, my dear! We are just now having the most exhilarating conversation.
GENE: Well. Take it up with her. I want to drink my coffee and forget about the rest.
BELINDA: Shooler went out.
MRS. VRONDI: Oh, there's no reason to be afraid for him. He's a noble man. The Iberian passion burns in Shooler as it glowed in the Count.
GENE: Where's your keeper?
BELINDA: If you mean John, he's out back helping Ed. They're lashing down the garbage cans and moving the movables inside.
GENE: How was last night?
BELINDA: That's no business of yours.
MRS. VRONDI: If you young people wish to talk, please move away. I want to finish reading the journals.
GENE: I don't want to talk.
BELINDA: But I'd like to. Do you mind?
GENE: Be my guest.
BELINDA: I'm glad you're here.
GENE: God, you're bright and buoyant this morning.
BELINDA: I feel good.
GENE: Well lubricated?
BELINDA: Very.
GENE: Ok. You win. I can't even get you angry.
BELINDA: That's right.
GENE: Come on up here then—sit with me.

He raises his right hand.

BELINDA: I swear to tell the truth, the half truth, and everything but the truth. Coffee?
GENE: Is there any around?
BELINDA: Ed made some. I'll get it.
GENE: Stay on the witness chair. Where is it?
BELINDA: Behind the bar. On your left. Here, get me another cup, too. Please.

BELINDA: My my! So polite. What's up?
 GENE: I have my moods. You've just cured me of depression.
 BELINDA: I'm glad.
 GENE: Good.
 BELINDA: Tell me what I did—and I'll try to do it again.
 GENE: Oh, don't be so innocent.
 BELINDA: If there's one thing I'm not, it's innocent.
 GENE: I know. You've been around.
 BELINDA: And back again.

She sits. He raises his cup.

GENE: Here's to the girl who's been around and back.
 BELINDA: I'll drink to that. *Pause.* Gene, I'd toast you right back, if I knew what you want.
 GENE: The truth be told?
 BELINDA: Cross my heart.
 GENE: You're getting a little tired of the old man.
 BELINDA: He's strong. That's what I like about him.
 GENE: Like your father.
 BELINDA: Put your Freud back on the shelf. I'm through with all that. Forget about John. Let's talk about you.
 GENE: Everyone wants to talk about me this morning.
 BELINDA: Not everyone, Gene. Just me.
 GENE: You think I'm special?
 BELINDA: You're special to me. I know what you want.
 GENE: Do you?
 BELINDA: I know who you are.
 GENE: Congratulations.
 BELINDA: I mean, Gene behind the mask.
 GENE: Believe me, there's no mask.
 BELINDA: I even read your book.
 GENE: So have about fifty-five thousand other people, if I remember the royalty checks correctly.
 BELINDA: That was about four years ago—
 GENE: Written six years ago. Never wrote another line.
 BELINDA: It's a beautiful book.
 GENE: It sure was.
 BELINDA: I mean it!
 GENE: I mean it too. "The most promising young American novelist of his generation," that's what *The New York Times* said.
 MRS. VRONDI: Did you mention the *New York Times*?
 GENE: Go back home, Mrs. Vrondi. We're busy.
 BELINDA: And then what happened?

GENE: I made the big discovery of my life. I found out that I had written everything I had to say. I shot my load, as the saying goes. And I retired—at age 23. I dumped my typewriter in the East River, left the big city, and retired to a life of indolent leisure and keen observation.

BELINDA: You gave up.

GENE: Soap-opera, Belinda. I didn't give up. I triumphed over the American dream of wealth, success, love, and fame. I am now myself alone, and I am trying to become nothing.

BELINDA: I love you.

GENE: If you're seducing me that's an awfully good start.

BELINDA: Gene. I said: I love you.

GENE: The emotion is in excess of its cause

BELINDA: It's what I feel.

GENE: And what do you feel about John?

BELINDA: Why does it matter?

GENE: I do not, cannot, and will not spread my affection over your lovely body.

BELINDA: Do you know why I love you?

GENE: Love is absurd. I come, it goes.

BELINDA: All summer and fall I've been watching you.

GENE: You know what I think? I think you love young pants. And that's fine by me. I don't care who's run over you. You can take a bath and smell sweet again. Just tell John you're not going home with him tonight. I'll keep the light on for you.

BELINDA: I want you to marry me.

GENE: My oh my. How dramatic.

BELINDA: It's the truth.

GENE: The truth is you're a little too hot between the legs.

She slaps him hard.

That feels good. Give me a second helping.

BELINDA: God damn you.

GENE: She'll get her chance. But when I stand before her, I'll be clean. Understand? I'll bring nothing with me. Not fear, not memories, not love. Nothing.

BELINDA: Go ahead, run away as fast as you can.

GENE: You've been watching me? I've been watching you. Every two weeks, another guy. How long has it been John? Ten days, eleven? You're water in a hot greasy frying pan. It doesn't bother me. Just don't dress it up in fancy clothes.

BELINDA: Don't you believe me?

GENE: I wouldn't believe you if you were a nun on judgment day standing on a mile high stack of bibles with the true cross on your back!

BELINDA lowers her head. GENE lifts it up.

But that doesn't mean I've got another date tonight.

BELINDA *gets up and moves away*. ED and JOHN *enter*.

ED: Well, everything's lashed down. We're ship shape.
 JOHN: And not a minute too soon! Did you see those clouds boiling and buckling?
 Storm clouds.
 GENE: I'm going for a walk.

BELINDA *to* JOHN:
 Is Shooler safe?

JOHN: Shooler's going to drown.
 GENE: Good for him. See y'all later.

Exits.

BELINDA: Are we going to Boston soon?
 JOHN: Boston?
 BELINDA: I need to do some shopping.
 JOHN: I haven't left Provincetown in fifteen years.
 BELINDA: Just take me to Boston.
 JOHN: After the storm, maybe then.
 BELINDA: No, now.
 JOHN: Stow it, girl. I'm the one who's 60. I'm the one who should be in a hurry.
 MRS. VRONDI: Mr. Gaspé, I have perused all the available journals carefully and I see no
 mention of an impending gale.
 JOHN: Damn the papers. We're battened down.

Blackout

3 The Afternoon of the Storm

JOHN *is listening to the radio*. MRS. VRONDI *is reading the papers*. *It is raining outside, but there is no wind.*

RADIO VOICE:

At 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, hurricane Ella was located eighty-five miles east-south-east of Atlantic City, New Jersey and moving north-northeast at twenty-two miles an hour. Winds at the center of the storm have been clocked at 135 miles per hour, and hurricane winds extend out 150 miles to the north and east and 100 miles to the south and west. The New York Weather Bureau has posted hurricane warnings from Cape May, New Jersey to Block Island, Rhode Island, and has put the rest of the northeastern Atlantic seaboard from Block Island to Eastport, Maine on hurricane alert. The weather bureau describes Ella as an "intense, erratic, and extremely dangerous storm." The bureau adds that it hopes that the easterly curve developing in Ella will accelerate, keeping this vicious storm well at sea. However—

JOHN *snaps the radio off.*

JOHN *to himself:*

We're in for it. *Loud.* We're in for it! Ed! Ed!

ED *coming from the back room:*

Did you catch the forecast?

JOHN: It's aimed right at us!

ED: Are the warnings up?

JOHN: Not yet. We're on alert. But they'll be up in an hour or so. By tonight the wind'll be here. It's curving right for us. God help Shooler.

BELINDA *entering from outside:*

It's raining buckets.

ED: Here, Belinda, put your coat over here. You wet?

BELINDA: Like I just got out of the shower.

ED: Look, I got some clothes back there. They won't fit you like a Paris gown, but they're dry.

BELINDA: Thanks.

ED: They're on the hook to the left.

BELINDA *goes to the back. She shouts from there.*

JOHN: Where've you been?

BELINDA: On the wharf.

JOHN: Well?

BELINDA: Shooler radioed in. He's going to ride it out at sea. He says it's blowing at about 35 knots now from the northeast. He's pointing his boat into the wind. He says everything's ship-shape. The Coast Guard's cursing him out, but giving him instructions. They think he can make it.

MRS. VRONDI: If you're going out again, I'd appreciate the afternoon journals. I shall reimburse you.

BELINDA *comes back. She is dressed in man's clothes.*

BELINDA: How do I look?

ED: Like a Shrine Circus clown!

MRS. VRONDI: You certainly strike me as a lovely—lovely—absurdity!

ED: Only trouble is—you took the wrong clothes off the hook. I should've told you—those are Gene's.

BELINDA: Gene's?

ED: Yeah. He's moving in—just for a while—and he brought some stuff with him.

BELINDA: I'll change then.
 ED: Don't bother. He won't mind. He'll probably get a charge.
 BELINDA: I don't want to wear his clothes.
 ED: Go ahead, be a sport. Gene could use a few laughs and you look swell.
 MRS. VRONDI: Certainly, my dear. We understand that your clothes are wet—and that this masquerade is a necessity. You look like a character from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Do you know the play? It's all about a Duke who confuses two young people—a brother and a sister—

BELINDA: That's *Twelfth Night*.
 MRS. VRONDI: Oh, no. It's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. And it ends with him killing his young bride. Apparently for no reason.

BELINDA: That's *Othello*—
 MRS. VRONDI: Don't contradict me! I know English literature! I'm an educated woman. You put on Gene's clothes and you act like him! The Duke killed his young bride! For no reason at all. Smothered her with his handkerchief. It was horrible. I cried and cried. Young brides should be allowed to live. That's what young brides are for. The Duke was so like the Count—my Count—

BELINDA: Have it your way, Mrs. Vrondi. It's *Midsummer Night's Dream*—
 MRS. VRONDI: No, no, *Twelfth Night*—
 BELINDA: As you like it.
 MRS. VRONDI: Or *Hamlet*. I'm not sure anymore. *Softly*. My heart's been bothering me again. *Louder*. It murmurs, it squeaks, it cries out!

BELINDA: It'll pass.
 MRS. VRONDI: Yes. And tomorrow Edward will take the wood away from the window and there'll be light again. Pools of sunlight, warm sunlight, all over the floor, spilling into the dark corners, chasing the dust around in its beams. That will make me so happy!

BELINDA: John, you should see the wharf! There's no wind. But the waves are big, slow things, just rolling in, one after the other, from as far out as you can see through the rain.

JOHN: Hurricane swells. What about the boats?
 BELINDA: Everything's tied down. I never saw so much rope! The crews came down and put big truck tires over the sides, and big coils of rope.

JOHN: To cushion the boats when they swing against each other or the dock. Anybody go out to the middle of the harbor?

BELINDA: A few, the older guys, Jose and Da Silva.
 JOHN: They're smart. They can get behind the Truro highlands, the wind won't be so bad there. But Shooler is where there are no highlands, nothing to hold the waves back, nothing but the sea and the wind.

BELINDA: Don't worry about Shooler. The Coast Guard—
 JOHN: I heard the Coast Guard! It's 38 all over again.
 MRS. VRONDI: I've heard you mention 38 several times, Mr. Gaspé. But I can't follow your meaning.

JOHN: In 1938 I was a young man, Mrs. Vrondi. Younger than Shooler. Strong, ready to slap the world down, shake my hands at God, and take my chances. The fish were running—just like today—and I went out.

MRS. VRONDI: In a storm?

JOHN: Oh, we weren't sure the storm would come.

MRS. VRONDI: The march of meteorological science has been inexorable.

JOHN: We went out, the wind came, and many drowned.

MRS. VRONDI: The will of the Almighty.

JOHN: My wife among them.

MRS. VRONDI: I'm sorry. I didn't know.

JOHN: There're a lot of things you fancy New York people don't know!

MRS. VRONDI: I, too, Mr. Gaspé, have borne my share of grief during my more than half-century's sojourn upon God's good earth.

JOHN: In those days a man's wife was a fine mate. My wife was thick and strong—strong as a man. But the water took her.

MRS. VRONDI: Tell me the tale, if it is not too painful.

JOHN: No, it's not too painful anymore.

MRS. VRONDI: Please tell me.

JOHN: Not now. Maybe later.

MRS. VRONDI: Very well, at your own time. I still have to peruse the editorial page of the New York Times. I'm do not often agree with Mr. James Reston. He's left-wing. They call him "Scotty."

JOHN: Ed, how about a beer?

ED: I'm drawing your schooner now.

JOHN: You all battened down?

ED: As ready as I'm gonna get. This is a sturdy building.

JOHN:
Yes it is. In those days there were three hundred fishermen here. We were the biggest fishing port after Boston and New Bedford. Now they're 60, most of them old men, many older than me. In the old days we used to go out winter and summer, a whole fleet of net boats, with strong men, our flags flying. Sometimes a December gale froze them out stiff and straight like a man's hand. But we fished. God, how we fished! No draggers, no trawlers, just the men, a few women too, handheld nets, tough dinghy's, strong shoulders, quick hands. Good men, all of them. And each year we lost some, down they went. But there were few tears and no regrets. We took care of the widows and children. The Fishmongers, we met close to here in a big building on the wharf, the Fishmonger's Hall, we took care of them. We gave ten percent, in good days and bad, to feed them, keep coal in their stoves, make sure the kids went to school. And those children grew up. They left Provincetown for Boston, Providence, New York, out west. And then the trawlers came and the draggers with their big low nets run by machines. And they dragged the bottom, their claw nets like greedy hands, ripping up the bottom and the clams and sea-cucumbers and other fodder for fish, and the fish swam away from the empty banks and went somewhere else. Mostly all gone now, the fish and the fishermen both. We farmed badly here. We're barren now. Barren, cold, lost, alone. And we wait for the Bishop—sometimes from Boston, sometimes from New

Bedford—to come and bless our fleet. But a little holy water sprinkled on the sea? It'll take a lot more than holy water to put the bottom back on the sea.

MRS. VRONDI: Is that the Blessing of the Fleet?

JOHN:

Twice a year—once for the summer crop and once for the winter. Tomorrow is the winter Blessing. In the summer it's for the tourists—thousands of tourists with their cameras, watching the boats all decked out with red and white and blue and green awnings in a big circle on the smooth June bay—around and around they go, and when they pass the dock the bishop, in his big chair, with a dozen priests by him, up under a purple and gold umbrella, dressed in red and black, throws the holy water on each ship, and blesses them, and asks for good fishing, good men. Even the non-Catholics come by in their boats. Who are we to offend God? Any god? Those tourists, they've have taken the place of the fish. The nets are all hanging on fences somewhere. These days, most of us fish with our mouths. But the winter Blessing is different, coming in October, after the tourists have gone home, because it's too cold here, the days are short, and the sun is under the clouds. That Blessing is done in the chop, with the bishop and two or three priests, all dressed in black, no umbrella, no colored awnings—nothing but the naked prayer, the water, and the boats. We wait for that Blessing. Only a few boats, but all of them still fish, like Shooler. If it's a calm day, we think that's lucky. If it's a rough day, we think the winter's going to be rough too.

MRS. VRONDI: How will it be this year?

JOHN:

Depends on the hurricane. If it's a fast mover and the wind gets around to the northwest, that means the storm's well up the coast or far out at sea. The harbor'll be as smooth and bright as glass. But if the wind stays east, or south, then you'll see whitecaps, and floating debris, and sargasso weed thick as nets, red as clotted blood floating everywhere, gumming the motors, pushing the fish farther away, farther away.

MRS. VRONDI: I prognosticate the beneficent northwest wind.

JOHN: And I pray Shooler gets in with his boat and is first in line. He's been that, first, for the past seven years.

MRS. VRONDI: First?

JOHN: He's our best fisherman. He deserves first place. I used to be first.

MRS. VRONDI: And now?

JOHN: Mrs. Vrondi. For me, no more boat, no more fishing, no more Blessing.

GENE enters, soaking wet.

BELINDA: Gene!

GENE: Everyone's here, I see.

ED: Everyone.

GENE: Even my alter-ego.

BELINDA: If you mind, I'll take them off.

GENE: A delightful idea.
JOHN: How was it out there?
GENE: The same. Rain. No wind. I walked on the beach. Big wood is being washed in on the rollers. And the swells are so high you can't see over one to the next. The tide doesn't make any difference, they just keep coming in, and the rain's warm.

JOHN: Tropical rain, hot, bad.
GENE: It wasn't bad for me. It soaked in, got down deep, stirred things up inside me. Things I haven't felt move for years. The heavy clouds, the rain, the drone of the ocean—it all worked together—I saw it, I felt it—for the first time in years!

BELINDA: That's good, Gene.
GENE: Just for a moment. And then things fell apart again.
ED: Well we're snug in here.
GENE: Sure thing. How's the reading going, Contessa? I brought you a present. *He opens a big bag.* They're a little wet, but I stopped off at Patrick's and picked up the newspapers.

MRS. VRONDI: That was kind of you.
GENE: They're not exactly today's edition, but they'll do I'm sure.
MRS. VRONDI: The New York Times! And the Baltimore Sun! I haven't seen the Sun for weeks!

BELINDA: That was kind of you, Gene.
GENE: A dramatic demonstration that the devil has a soul.
JOHN: Are the warnings up?
GENE: Just small craft. The storm's still off Jersey. They're not sure yet which way it's going.

JOHN: There's no doubt in my mind.
GENE: I'm going back out. You want to come with me, Belinda?
BELINDA: Nope. I've had my shower for the day.
GENE: I'm going to walk out toward Race Point and the Highlands. I want to watch the tide come in from the open sea.

BELINDA: Be careful.
JOHN: That's right. Because when the wind comes, it'll come up fast! You won't have a chance to get out of the way.

GENE: Will it be loud?
JOHN: So loud it'll burst your ears.
GENE: And strong?
JOHN: So strong it'll throw you down on your face.
GENE: And the rain?
JOHN: Like needles and clubs, like fists and hammers.
GENE: Good! Excellent! Pounded by hammers and fists, stung by needles, beaten by clubs!

ED: Be careful. Don't get trapped.
JOHN: The tide'll jump in like a leaping tiger.
GENE: Oh, don't worry. And if I don't come back, don't weep.

Exits.

ED: He's got guts.
 JOHN: Is that what you say? He doesn't know what he's in for. He can't know. He's never been out in it.
 BELINDA: I'm afraid for him. Why did we let him go?
 JOHN: He's safer than Shooler. There's nothing between Shooler and God but three inches of maple wood, a pair of shoulders, and two strong hands.
 BELINDA: For both of them. I'm afraid for both of them. The one at sea and the one on the shore.
 MRS. VRONDI: My fears are closer to home. How will this wooden building stand up to the impending gale? Recall the three little pigs house of sticks.
 JOHN: This old building can take it, right Ed?. It has taken it. It's the safest spot in town.
 ED: We've got nothing to do but sit and wait and have a few beers. On the house, in honor of the storm.
 MRS. VRONDI: Then this is the time for the raconteur. Mr. Gaspé, would you mind telling us the story of 38?
 JOHN: Of my last voyage?
 BELINDA: I've never heard the story, John.
 ED: You don't have to, old friend, but—
 JOHN: But tonight's the night of a storm—we're locked in here for better or worse—and you want to hear a story?
 BELINDA: Not if it'll upset you.

JOHN:
 Oh, no. It's not a long story. I've told it before. I even lived it. I was forty-one, strong, like Shooler. The fish were running. We went out. We fished. Our nets were full, because the mackerel were running ahead of the wind, and our boats were heavy with them. And then, suddenly, late in the afternoon, it came. A black bar of clouds rising in the southeast. It came as quick as a passing squall. But it was no squall. The wind rose; it tore. The rain came sideways, and then there was no rain, only salt water. Salt water everywhere, driven between the hard planks of the cabin and into our faces. Our boats were wooden, light—but we were low in the water because of the fish—and we couldn't lighten our load—no one could stand on deck in that wind. The wind was wild from the east and it drove us closer and closer to the land. Soon we were in the break by the Highlands. The waves were rolling in for two miles, and everything was green and gray and white. I saw four or five boats rise, turn, and slide under and they were gone. We never got the bodies of those men—though one body was returned from Nova Scotia. My boat was the sturdiest—good teak it was, and hard maple. It could take the tons of water on deck. Then a tremendous wave, or maybe it was a log, crashed through the forward fish hatch and the water came into the hold and we went down, bow first. I got to deck, my wife too, the crew never made it. As the boat went down we pitched ourselves into the surf. Then the wind stopped. The eye, they call it—

MRS. VRONDI: Yes, I've heard the term. The eye, the vortex, the dead center.

JOHN:

And when the wind lifted, the waves stopped frothing, but they went up and down, thirty feet high and thirty feet into the trough. I got hold of a place of driftwood, wreckage. I saw my wife not far from me. I tried—yes, God—I tried to get to my wife.

A siren is heard wailing in the background. It continues to the end of the scene.

I couldn't reach her. She sank. Funny, but I remember her blonde hair like silk weed, fine and yellow, floating on top of the water, and then it was gone, she was gone. By God's chance I made it to shore before the wind started again and I dropped, half dead, up on the dunes and let the sand blow over me. My wife. My strong wife. But I was alive.

MRS. VRONDI: A tale of true valor, Mr. Gaspé. A tale of courage. A tale of the sea.

JOHN: My wife, yes she was pretty though her arms were thick, she was gone. I never fished again.

BELINDA: How terrible for you.

JOHN: It's long ago. More than twenty years now. I've told the story many times. The first the next morning when I stumbled back to town. I had to keep telling it over and over again. Every time I opened my mouth there it was, wanting to be told. Yes, I even think, sometimes, that it's just a story. It never happened to you, John Gaspé. It's just a story, but my wife is dead.

MRS. VRONDI: A tragic tale, much like King Lear.

GENE enters, running, excited.

GENE: Hear the sirens? The hurricane warning is up!

ED: Are you sure?

GENE: Two red flags with black square centers.

MRS. VRONDI: It was never mentioned in the journals.

JOHN: My wife.

GENE: We'll ride it out here?

ED: That's right. We're safe here.

MRS. VRONDI: I am supplied with enough reading matter to last me until morning.

GENE: That's the spirit, Contessa!

BELINDA: All of us together. A real hurricane party.

JOHN: God help that poor damned fool Shooler.

Blackout

4 The Storm

BELINDA, ED, JOHN, and MRS. VRONDI in the bar. It is very quiet, just rain.

ED: God, it's quiet. You'd never think a hurricane was coming.

BELINDA: Why did Gene go out again?

ED: You heard him. He wanted to watch.

JOHN: The wind'll hunt him down.
 MRS. VRONDI: I hope we're safe in here.
 BELINDA: He always wants to watch. That's his slogan. He could've watched from in here.
 ED: With the windows boarded up? Relax everyone. This isn't the end of the world.

He gets kerosene lamps.

JOHN: Any minute now. In a few seconds the storm'll be on us: like a tiger with claws of wind.
 MRS. VRONDI: The Count used to fear tornadoes, it was his only fear.
 JOHN: This is worse than a tornado. It's everywhere, and it lasts until it ends.

ED returning with the lamps:

Here you go. I'll put one of these on each table. Wooden matches, too. I've got enough kerosene to last out the night.

Goes to the back room.

I got some cheese and bread back here. We've got enough drinks for a year. It won't be so bad.

JOHN: I should go down to the Coast Guard station and see about Shooler.
 BELINDA: No you don't, John. Stay inside. It's bad enough that Gene's out there.
 MRS. VRONDI: We've become quite a little society, haven't we? Isolated, alone with each other, concerned for each other.
 JOHN: That's the way it is, Mrs. Vrondi. It takes a killer storm: the hunter and the hunted.
 MRS. VRONDI: If this building collapses, we'll all go together. For myself, I don't mind—my time is so short anyway.
 BELINDA: Don't talk that way.

ED returning with the food:

Here you go! A regular party. Mrs. Vrondi, Belinda—would you do the honors?

BELINDA: Are you hungry, John?
 ED: I don't know about friend Gaspé, but I could do with a sandwich or two.
 MRS. VRONDI: Why this is common American cheese!
 ED: You bet.
 MRS. VRONDI: I had expected at least Swiss, and perhaps even sharp cheddar or blue cheese. I detest American cheese.
 ED: It's all I got.
 MRS. VRONDI: And white bread!
 BELINDA *laughing*: Come on, Mrs. Vrondi, suffer with us.
 MRS. VRONDI: Yes, yes—of course. And, Edward, please add this to my account.

ED: When the check comes from the Manufacturer's Trust—
MRS. VRONDI: On Fifth Avenue.

There is a burst of wind. Everyone stands stock still.

BELINDA: Oh, God.
JOHN: It's here—the tiger.
MRS. VRONDI: This structure is trembling!
ED: Steady, everyone, steady.
MRS. VRONDI: Edward! Huff and puff, your building is being blown down!
JOHN: It's just the beginning. The first breath.
BELINDA: It's funny how the building shakes.
JOHN: It's no joke at sea.
BELINDA: Gene, Gene's out there.
ED: He's all right. Probably snug someplace.
BELINDA: He's near the surf. Do you have a nor'easter I can borrow? I need to find him.
ED: No way. No one goes out.
JOHN: Ed's right. Here we are, here we stay. Listen to that wind.
MRS. VRONDI: I can hardly butter the bread.

The electric lights flutter on and off.

ED: Soon we'll have to light the lamps.
BELINDA: I need to find Gene!
ED: This is my ship. You stay aboard. Gene's ok.
JOHN: Hear that wind? Hear it? It's ripping at us. It's clawing the roof, biting the door!
ED: Take it easy, old friend. This building's gone through worse.

The lights blink again, and go out.

BELINDA: The lights!
MRS. VRONDI: Oh, dear, how can I locate the cheese?
ED: Take it easy, everyone. Find the matches and light the lamps. We'll have plenty of light.
JOHN: Who are you kidding? No place is safe in a wind like this! It'll rip the roof off shingle by shingle. You can hear the tide right under this building! It'll lift us up, sweep us out to sea!

They light the lamps. Huge shadows. The wind rises.

ED:
Calm down, John. Now everyone listen up to me. I'm in charge here. There's no danger if we keep calm. We just sit, eat, drink some wine, or even some hard stuff if you want. Everything's on the house. We're eighteen feet above the water, no tide to worry about. No windows to blow in. I tell you, we're snug.

JOHN: What do you mean, snug? There's danger all around us. What do you know!

BELINDA: John, John, you're a strong man, remember that.

JOHN: A strong man, am I? Strong men, weak men, it doesn't matter. Does that wind care? Is any man strong enough for that wind?

BELINDA: Think of Shooler.

MRS. VRONDI: Here, Mr. Gaspé, try one of my cheese sandwiches. It will sustain you.

JOHN *eagerly eating*: You're right, a little ballast in the belly.

ED: That's right, John. Can't weather a hurricane on an empty stomach.

JOHN: It's not so bad yet. We can still hear each other. I tell you, it'll get worse. I got a little panicked back there. Couldn't help it. You people can take it calm, because you've never been out there in one of these. Yes, Shooler, not me, I'm here, I'm on shore—

MRS. VRONDI: Secure on terra firma. Although with the shaking, this edifice does not feel firma at present.

JOHN: Yes, terra firma. We're all right. It's Shooler, Shooler—

ED: Hey, Belinda, get me some rags from the back room. The water's coming in under the door.

JOHN *going over and putting his fingers in the water*:

It's sweet—rainwater. When it turns salty, watch out. That's not rain, but the sea grabbing everything.

BELINDA: We're on high ground here.

ED: This building is on deep, unmovable piles.

MRS. VRONDI: Isn't this adventurous, weathering the gale? The Count so loved adventure.

JOHN: Ed, I'll go back and check the storeroom.

ED: No need to, John. It's water-tight back there.

JOHN: It's on the side of the building that's taking the brunt.

BELINDA: No, the wind's hitting this side.

JOHN: The wind's shifting! In a hurricane it's always shifting!

ED: Well, if it'll make you feel better, go ahead.

JOHN: I'll just check that the door's secure. Give me that lamp, will you Mrs. Vrondi?

MRS. VRONDI: I need this lantern, Mr. Gaspé, to illuminate the victuals I am preparing for us all.

JOHN: Give me the lamp!

ED: Take it easy, John. Have this one from the bar. And I'll give you a good stiff drink when you come back.

JOHN: That's what I need. Something for the bones. I won't be but a minute.

He goes and closes the door.

ED: Hey! Leave the door open!

JOHN's shouting from the back room:

I don't want to take any chances, in case the outside door blows open.

ED: I'm glad the old man's got something to do. He was getting on my nerves.
BELINDA: He was afraid. John Gaspé was afraid.
ED: He's gone through a lot in his life, Belinda. He's entitled to fear.
MRS. VRONDI: The count said, "action cures fear." I sincerely believe he was correct.
BELINDA: I've never seen John afraid.
ED: It's not fear, but respect for the elements.
BELINDA: He was shaking. And Gene? What about Gene!

The outside door opens, GENE enters on BELINDA's line. He's drenched.

GENE: Right on cue!
BELINDA: Gene!
GENE: A perfect entrance, as if I were summoned!
BELINDA: You're OK?
GENE: I am as I am. It was tough walking, but not so bad yet. Maybe it's blowing 60 miles per hour. The last I heard before the power went out was that we'll get to a hundred and twenty five. And the eye might go right through here. It'll get worse tonight.
MRS. VRONDI: It's sufficiently windy for me at present.
GENE: Where's the old man?
ED: In the back, putting things ship-shape.
GENE: I thought he might be outside helping.
BELINDA: Helping?
GENE: A couple of boats broke mooring. They're trying to fix it right now.
BELINDA: And Shooler?
GENE: I heard he radioed he was having a grand time, 40 miles out, living it up, having a ball. In a hundred and fifty mile an hour gale!
BELINDA: Is he safe—?
GENE: Having a ball, they said! Laughing, eating it up, shouting, loving it!
BELINDA: John was right. It's just pride, stupid pride.
ED: You didn't offer to help the fishermen?
GENE: I don't see you out there.
ED: This is my ship.
GENE: Oh? Very good! Bravo! A landlocked steamer. Pretty proud of yourself.
ED: And you?
GENE: I told you this morning. I don't work. I don't rescue. I don't help. I watch.
MRS. VRONDI: Would you care for a cheese sandwich?
GENE: How's the old cancer, Contessa?
MRS. VRONDI: It's only American cheese.
GENE: Forgot all about your mortal illness in the face of the gale?
MRS. VRONDI: I am contributing to the common good.
GENE: Touché, Contessa. And you, Belinda, what are you up to?

SCHECHNER PLAYS

BELINDA: I'm wearing your clothes. I'm watching.
 GENE: Clothes don't make the woman.
 ED: Hey, John. How are things in there?
No answer. John, John! He goes to the door. It is locked.
 The door's locked! John! John! Are you ok?
 BELINDA: Maybe something's happened to him.
 GENE: See? Involved again.
 MRS. VRONDI: He was so brave to venture out.
 GENE: Oh, Contessa, you've read too many novels. But don't worry about the old phony. Can I take a drink, Ed?
 ED: Sure. John! John!
 JOHN'S VOICE: Leave me alone!
 ED: But you locked the door.
 JOHN'S VOICE: The wind's jammed it shut! The cabin's wet! There's salt water everywhere! We're going to sink!
 ED: The crazy fool's locked himself in.
 MRS. VRONDI: Did he say salt water? Are we afloat?
 GENE *laughing*: Floating, Contessa? Yes, we're adrift, wild, careening, moorless! Maybe they'll send a boat load of strong brown fishermen to tie us up! How would you like that, Contessa?
 JOHN'S VOICE: We'll never make it through!
 MRS. VRONDI: Please silence him! He is disrupting my equilibrium.
 JOHN'S VOICE: Smell the salt?! We're rolling over!
 GENE: Here, Contessa, have a shot of good Scotch!
 MRS. VRONDI: But my physician.
 GENE: To hell with him. Come on, Contessa, down the hatch.
 ED: That crazy bastard's locked himself in.
 BELINDA: We've got to get him out.
 JOHN'S VOICE: The forward hatch! It's broken! Listen to the water! We're going down! Hear me? We're capsizing!

MRS. VRONDI *downing a big drink*:
 It does generate warmth.

GENE: Just what you need. Here, have another.
 ED: The door's strong, but maybe we can break it. Gene, come on, give me a hand—
 GENE: No way. Now that the circus has come to town I want to watch the animals on parade.
 BELINDA: But John may be in trouble back there.
 ED: Off your butt, Gene. Help me break in the door.
 GENE: How long does it take you people to understand? I'm not budging. The Contessa and me—we're off on a merry bender, aren't we?
 MRS. VRONDI: Exhilarating. Extremely warming.
 ED: I'll do it myself. Get out of the way, Belinda.

JOHN'S VOICE *as ED crashes against the door:*
The wood's splintering! The water's coming in!

GENE: And a third, Contessa. The big third.
MRS. VRONDI: Can I dip the American cheese in it?
GENE: Down it straight, my noble lady.

ED lunges against the door again.

BELINDA *to* GENE:
You're more of a bastard than I thought.

GENE: Everyone's got to swallow their own medicine tonight. What's yours?

ED crashes against the door again. It opens.

JOHN'S VOICE: Leave me alone! I am going down with my boat! I belong on the bottom!
ED'S VOICE: Come on, sport, come on out here and join the party.
GENE: Yeah, that's right! We're having a great time!
BELINDA: Why wouldn't you help?
GENE: Maybe your medicine is a roll in the hay? A little stick up your butt? Or maybe wearing my clothes will turn the trick.
BELINDA: I hate you.

ED brings JOHN in: shaking, pale, afraid.

MRS. VRONDI: God Almighty! What has befallen dear John?
GENE: He looked in the mirror, Contessa.
JOHN: We're going to go down.
ED: We're on dry land, sailor.
BELINDA: The Coast Guard says Shooler's made it. He's OK.
JOHN: Let him go down! Let him find my wife on the bottom!
GENE: Observe, Contessa, the wages of cowardice.
MRS. VRONDI: I'm giddy. Dizzy. Light and floating.
ED: Sit down, John. Have a drink.
BELINDA: What's your pleasure?
ED: Down this brandy, friend.
JOHN: My wife, she sank.
ED: Sure, old man, sure. Swallow some of this.

ED coaxes some brandy down JOHN's throat.

JOHN: Who does Shooler think he is?

Smashing the glass out of ED's hand.

I saw her blonde hair floating on the water like corn silk. Then she was gone.
 ED: Another drink, Belinda.
 GENE: Hear that, Contessa? The old man watched his own wife drown.
 MRS. VRONDI: I'm so dizzy. I suffer from vertigo.
 JOHN: Shooler's afraid right now! He's on his belly in his cabin begging God to let him come to a safe harbor.

BELINDA returns with the bottle of brandy.

ED: When I open his mouth, pour some down. That'll knock him out.
 GENE: How's the stomach feeling, Contessa? How's the heart? The diabetes? The cancer?
 ED: Here you go, sport.

JOHN takes the bottle, drinks.

JOHN: He's no better than me.

MRS. VRONDI *dunk*:
 Red peppers, tortillas, merengues—

GENE: Old Mexico—
 MRS. VRONDI: Lovely, lovely.
 GENE: Another shot, Senora?
 BELINDA: For god's sake, leave her alone!
 GENE: Keep out of my business.
 ED: Take it easy everyone. The storm's almost over.
 GENE: Says who? We've got to have the eye first, and then it starts all over again from the opposite direction.
 BELINDA: Do you do it for kicks, Gene?
 GENE: No kicks like Shooler, no memories like John, no compassion, like you. I'm free. And now, Contessa, tell me about the Count.
 MRS. VRONDI: He called me his angel de amor.
 GENE: And that you are. Our angel of love.
 MRS. VRONDI: It was springtime yes, with little yellow daffodils all around the patio. It was extremely hot for April. The Count came down for breakfast and when he saw me, he "Buenos dias, mi angel!" And then he said, in English, "I can't live with an angel." As he walked out, the yellow flowers brushed against his legs. I never saw him again.
 GENE: How La Scala! What a great curtain line.
 MRS. VRONDI: I'll never forget him walking through the yellow daffodils.
 ED: I'm gonna put John to bed in the back.
 BELINDA: Let me help you.
 ED: No need, he's light. Come on, sport. Time for bed.

JOHN: Shooler'll say I am right. That's what Shooler'll say.
ED: Up we go.
JOHN: Goddamn him! Goddamn his soul!
GENE: Sweet dreams, old man.

ED takes JOHN off.

GENE: Bon voyage. And now, Contessa, your turn to face some facts.
MRS. VRONDI: Yes. Face forthrightly the facts.
GENE: Have another drink.
MRS. VRONDI: Am I going to die? Am I really going to die?
GENE: Everyone dies, Contessa. Some soon, some late
MRS. VRONDI: I shouldn't drink, my diabetes.
GENE: It'll help the diabetes thrive, it'll make the cancer grow.
MRS. VRONDI: I'm having difficulty breathing.
GENE: Sure you are.
BELINDA: Gene, Gene.
GENE: Vamoose! Your old man's back there.
MRS. VRONDI: Come sit close to me, both of you.
BELINDA: Mrs. Vrondi—
MRS. VRONDI: I'm perishing. I was a fool. Asked my doctor to tell me the truth. And he was a fool. He told me.
GENE: But at the last minute, the Count'll come back, he will walk backwards through the yellow flowers like a movie in reverse.
MRS. VRONDI: What a man! Bred by generations of Spanish finesse.
BELINDA: It's all right, Mrs. Vrondi.
MRS. VRONDI: Fetch me some more liqueur. To warm me. I'm cold, arctically cold.
GENE: Tell me, what did the doctor say?
MRS. VRONDI: Six months! A little more, a little less! That was in April. It's October now.
GENE: It's good to know, isn't it, that your times up? You know where you stand. We're not all that lucky. Belinda and me—we're not that lucky. We don't know whether we've got six minutes or 60 years. But you know—you're secure—your time's up. You're living on borrowed time.
MRS. VRONDI: Yes, indeed. Borrowed. Time.
GENE: How I'd like to change places with you! How glorious to be sure. To know next year I'll be a tree, next year my leaves will drink in the wind, will bathe in the sunlight; my roots will go down and wrap their nets around the water, my bark will be hard and numb to the cold, my sap will be thick and sweet. Maybe someone will come and cut into me and tap me and drink my blood, my sap.
MRS. VRONDI: I don't know. I don't know.
GENE: Belinda? Do you get it? To be nothing, to be wind, to be sand, to be the rocks receiving countless blows of water.
BELINDA: Gene, Gene. I think I understand.

GENE: I want to be out there, pure as a star, far away, just light, weightless silent energy, part of it all, and part of nothing.
 MRS. VRONDI: I don't know. I don't know.
 GENE: But I do know, Contessa!

BELINDA *rubbing his temples*:

Gene—dearest Gene—you must be tired. Do you want to sleep?

GENE: Sleep? No. I want to be reborn as empty as an empty glass.
 BELINDA: You want to sleep without dreams.
 GENE: I'm nothing!
 MRS. VRONDI: I don't know. I don't know.
 BELINDA: Feel my fingers? Doesn't that feel good?
 GENE: I don't want you.
 BELINDA: No?
 GENE: Unless you are clean.
 BELINDA: What do you mean, clean?
 GENE: Without love, without attachment. Just one piece of flesh on another piece of flesh. Not warm, not cold. Just bones and blood and flesh. No words, no words.
 MRS. VRONDI: I don't know. I don't know.
 BELINDA: It won't be as you say, but I'll try.

Suddenly it is quiet. The eye of the storm.

GENE: Listen. Listen!
 BELINDA: It's stopped.
 MRS. VRONDI: I don't know. I don't know.
 BELINDA: The wind's stopped.
 GENE: The eye.
 BELINDA: Let's try now. While it's quiet.
 GENE: While the wind's stopped. While everything's breathless. While there's no God, no rain, no town, nothing.
 BELINDA: Let's go—
 GENE: Yes—yes.
 BELINDA: Me and you.
 GENE: No one.

They exit.

MRS. VRONDI *reaching for the bottle*:

I shouldn't drink. My doctor forbade me alcohol. But I'm so cold, so abysmally cold.

ED *coming from the backroom*:

Well, that's done. He's asleep. Where're Belinda and Gene?

MRS. VRONDI: I have disobeyed my physician—
ED: Gone?
MRS. VRONDI: I don't know.
ED: Out in the wind?
MRS. VRONDI: There is no wind.
ED: You're right. It's stopped. But it'll come again. It's temporary, just a breather. Come on, Mrs. Vrondi. I can put you to bed, too. Do you mind sleeping with old John?
MRS. VRONDI: The Count must have died many years ago.
ED: Come on, Mrs. Vrondi, we'd better get you bedded down before it starts again.

Blackout

5 The Morning After the Storm

SHOOLER *is speaking to ED. The sunlight is brilliant.*

SHOOLER: Another schooner, Ed!
ED: Coming up!

SHOOLER:

So the wind come! I laugh! I say: We take her out to deep water! Shooler plays with hurricane out in open sea! The ropes pull loose, the boat she creaks and groans—but we laugh and dance on the deck to lash things down. The fish they jump out of the holds! The lobsters they break their claws! The water it comes down like a big hand wanting to push Shooler to the bottom! But we ride on top, like good Portugee cork, and I keep the boat into the wind! Ah, it is the best storm I ever see! The best time I ever have! The whole ocean is white, white, white like snow in February, but it is all foam, warm salt foam!

ED: Anyone get hurt?

SHOOLER:

No—no! I got good crew! All strong Portugee fishermen like Shooler! We know what water is like! When wind gets too strong we sit in the cabin, hold onto storm ropes, and sing! Then, early this morning, wind stops. Water keeps going up and down—like a good woman—ha! ha!—you know what I mean?!—but not bad, and we come back in, still with half a load! And when we get into harbor the fishermen are down at the wharf. Their eyes are on Shooler. They make believe they think Shooler is a fool, a nuts fool! But in the back of their eyes I see them thinking they want to be Shooler. But I am Shooler. And when we tie the boat up, they all shout, “Shooler! Shooler!!” and that makes me feel good. And the water in the bay, she is smooth and ready for the Blessing.

ED: The bishop's here?

SHOOLER: From New Bedford. A hurricane stops that Boston bishop—but New Bedford, that's a town of fishing boats—the New Bedford bishop he comes through. And dressed all fancy too. But where's John? He's not on wharf this morning. I want him on my boat with me for Blessing.

ED: He's sleeping in the backroom.

SHOOLER: Sleeping!? So it was bad in town, huh?

ED: Oh, not too bad. A little wind, a lot of rain. The powerlines are down, a few busted windows up near the East End, a piece of Busa's house went out to sea.

SHOOLER: His house floats every time there is a high tide!

ED: We got through it all right.

SHOOLER: I go back now and wake John up! He not sleep this long usually! We got to get to Blessing by noon!

ED: Shooler, wait.

SHOOLER: What for?

ED: John's tired.

SHOOLER: He's on shore! What he got to be tired from?

ED: He was, Shooler, he was afraid.

SHOOLER: Old salt-whiskers John?

ED: I had to feed him a bottle to put him to sleep.

SHOOLER: Why John's best sailor in this whole town, except me.

ED: Believe me, Shooler. Things happened to him last night.

SHOOLER: What happen to John? A board fall on him?

ED: Inside, inside his head.

SHOOLER: Well, when he see his friend Shooler, he be 100 percent!

JOHN appears from the backroom, haggard.

JOHN: Shooler.

SHOOLER: There you are, my old friend! See, water not swallow me!

JOHN: Fool.

SHOOLER: Hurricane is like riding surfboard.

JOHN: Why aren't you dead?

SHOOLER: Ah, friend, give me time! Let's go to the Blessing now, huh?

JOHN: Leave me alone, get out of here!

SHOOLER: The fishermen wait for you.

JOHN: Let them wait. I don't want to see them. I don't want to see you. Ed, give me a shot, anything.

ED: Coming up, John.

JOHN slugs two down quickly:

Go on, Shooler! Go to your goddamned Blessing!

SHOOLER: What is it, John?

JOHN: They're waiting for you, aren't they? They're cheering you! Go on. Get on your boat, smile up at the bishop, let him sprinkle his water on you! Let him tell you that God's blessed you! Just leave me out of it.

SHOOLER: Ok, John. I go down now and scrub boat. But I come back for you. I not leave my old friend on shore for Blessing. I come back.

Exits.

JOHN: Give me the bottle, Ed. The whole bottle.

ED: Sure, pal.

JOHN: He wants to laugh at me, doesn't he? The whole town to laugh at me.

ED: Have a few drinks

JOHN: I was right, though, wasn't I? That was a big storm! He wants me on his boat so I look like a caught goat. He wants to parade me around the harbor where everyone can see me, see what I really am, and laugh at me!

MRS. VRONDI *from the backroom:*

Edward, I have determined that my former diet is worthless. You may sugar my coffee with three spoonsful, if you don't mind. And cream, lots of cream. And some donuts, two glazed donuts. *She sits.* But first, a large glass of tomato juice, please.

ED: Right, Mrs. Vrondi. And I picked up the papers for you this morning.

MRS. VRONDI: Later—later. My head is fuzzy.

ED: There're lots of pictures of the storm.

MRS. VRONDI: The tomato juice, s'il vous plait. And the donuts and coffee, with sugar, please.

JOHN: Join me in a drink, Mrs. Vrondi? Hair of the dog.

MRS. VRONDI: Pardon, Mr. Gaspé. I certainly do not want any canine fur in my coffee. I have a hangover.

JOHN: No fooling? The bottle cures it.

MRS. VRONDI: You may escape into strong spirits, if you like. I prefer to forthrightly face the facts. As I see them.

JOHN: The facts? Haven't we had enough facts?

MRS. VRONDI: We never have enough facts, Mr. Gaspé. There is never a super-abundance of facts.

ED *bringing MRS. VRONDI her stuff:*

Is that what the Count used to say?

MRS. VRONDI: I do not remember the Count very well. He must be dead by now.

JOHN: Dead? How do you know?

MRS. VRONDI: And now it's my turn. I have cancer, you know.

ED: Well, Mrs. Vrondi, I'm glad to see you're getting back to normal.

MRS. VRONDI: It's a different cancer this morning. It's a real cancer. I can feel it in here, growing, multiplying. Did you know, Mr. Gaspé, that cancer multiples?

JOHN: It grows like grass. It's alive. It's not so much that you die but that the cancer wants to live. That's what's so wonderful about cancer!

MRS. VRONDI: You know, Mrs. Vrondi, what I found out last night? I'm a coward. I was afraid in '38 and I was afraid again last night.

JOHN: A coward, Mr. Gaspé? *Así que lo que?* Everyone knows you are Le Monsieur John Gaspé. You have no secrets. We have always known. We know that you're a strong man.

MRS. VRONDI: No. That's not true. That's not the fact.

JOHN: The fact is, Mr. Gaspé, if you don't mind me saying so, that you are a fool.

MRS. VRONDI: A fool? Yes, you're right.

JOHN: A fool to think of anything but life. Life is so important.

MRS. VRONDI: But I was terrified. I shit my pants.

JOHN: Life is so very important.

MRS. VRONDI: I am ashamed.

ED: Swallow your shame, Mr. Gaspé. Edward, more donuts, the glazed ones. And I will take a peek at the journals now. If they are current.

JOHN: Bought 'em this morning.

MRS. VRONDI: All I remember is my wife's blonde hair—

JOHN: Silence, Mr. Gaspé. Keep that to yourself. I have no desire to know.

MRS. VRONDI: But—

MRS. VRONDI: Silencio!

GENE *and* BELINDA *enter*.

BELINDA: Everyone safe?

ED: All here.

MRS. VRONDI: Have you been out strolling?

BELINDA: I brought you a letter, Mrs. Vrondi. It was waiting for you in General Delivery.

GENE: We, uh, slept through the second part of the storm. Was it bad?

ED: Not as fierce as the first half—

MRS. VRONDI: It's from my bank. The Manufacturer's Trust on Fifth Avenue. My quarterly check. Edward, my account, per favor.

ED: Your check?!

MRS. VRONDI: Haven't I told you? Haven't I always said that I receive quarterly checks from my bank, The Manufacturer's Trust on Fifth Avenue in New York?

ED: Yes—but.

MRS. VRONDI: Then the account, please.

BELINDA: Dear Mrs. Vrondi! It's so lovely out. The sun's warm—and the bay's smooth. No one got killed, not even injured. Isn't that miraculous? A terrible storm like that and we all came through with flying colors?

GENE *moves away from her and sits by himself*.

ED: I thought there were some people hurt.
BELINDA: Nobody. The fishermen are all talking about it. A few bits of wood here and there—a lot of sand over the highway near the dunes.

MRS. VRONDI *as she hands ED a check*:
Voila, Edward, paid in full. It restores one's faith.

GENE: Faith in what?
BELINDA: Oh, Gene, don't start again.
MRS. VRONDI: That's all right, my dear. Faith in God, young man.
GENE: Whose God? Yours or mine?
MRS. VRONDI: Whichever one you like.
GENE: My old fat lady wouldn't allow you a choice—
MRS. VRONDI: But She's busy playing solitaire, isn't She?
JOHN: Did Shooler say he's coming back?
ED: Sure did. He's coming to take you to the Blessing, John.
BELINDA: Is he all right?
ED: As happy as I've ever seen him! He had a good time out there!
GENE: I told you all last night. We were all messed up here, but out there, where things are purer, Shooler was in his element.
JOHN: So the Blessing is going on as scheduled?
ED: You bet.
GENE: It's a simple case of a rising barometer.
ED: Is the barometer high enough for you to do some work?
GENE: Lead on, Macduff!
ED: The cans got loose last night. I need to straighten them out.

ED and GENE *exit back*.

MRS. VRONDI: Young lady, may a dying woman give you some advice?
BELINDA: How can I deny a request like that?
MRS. VRONDI: Guard your virginity.
BELINDA: Mrs. Vrondi, I'm afraid the fire engines have come too late.
MRS. VRONDI: Not the virginity between your legs, my dear. The virginity of the spirit. Chastity of soul.
JOHN: When's Shooler coming back? Let all of P'town sneer and laugh! John Gaspé'll be there, standing tall, proud as ever!
MRS. VRONDI: I've been thinking of Shakespeare's great Romeo and Juliet, you know, where the young bride dies at the hands of her lover. She should've kept what she had, fought for it, kicked, bit, scratched, kept it all, every scrap, everything!
JOHN: I was the best fisherman in this town before Shooler was born!
BELINDA: He has hands, delicate hands, does that mean anything, Mrs. Vrondi?
MRS. VRONDI: Hands are a good beginning. A young bride can do a great deal with a fine pair of hands.

JOHN: We used to fish with our hands. Just the hands, dipping in under the net, over and up and on board, full of fish—

SHOOLER *entering*: Ah, John! There you are! You have a few drinks? You ready yet?

JOHN: I'll go with you, Shooler. But not a smile, I don't want to see even one of your goddamned Portugee teeth!

SHOOLER *laughing*: Sure, John. I keep a straight face. Come on, the bishop he is already on his way to the dock. The whole town waits for you—and me!

JOHN: Let's go.

SHOOLER: Yes! Everyone is invited! All of you! The Blessing is a lot of wine and singing after the prayers and the sprinkling water. What do you say? Huh? You all come with me on my boat? We can have a swell party!

MRS. VRONDI: I shall be happy to accompany you. Will your ship toss about?

SHOOLER: Ah, no, today the water is smooth as glass on the bay. Not a ripple.

MRS. VRONDI: Even after the storm?

SHOOLER: The storm comes. She goes.

JOHN: The wind's northwest, no sargasso weed.

MRS. VRONDI: Very well. Shall I bring the journals?

SHOOLER: Senhora, you have no time for reading! You drink wine, eat lobster, sing with us!

JOHN: Come on, Belinda!

BELINDA: I'll wait for Gene and Ed. We'll be along.

SHOOLER: But quick. The bishop, he not wait.

SHOOLER, MRS. VRONDI, JOHN *exit*.

BELINDA *at back door*:

Gene! Gene! Ed! Come on, hurry up! We're going to The Blessing of the Fleet!

ED and GENE *come in from back*.

ED: What's up?

BELINDA: Lock the place. The Blessing's starting. Shooler's invited us on his boat for a party.

ED: And John went?

BELINDA: Yes. Even Mrs. Vrondi. Everyone. They're waiting for us on the dock.

GENE: You want to see that lousy bishop water his crops?

BELINDA: It'll be so much fun.

GENE: Go on, beat it. I don't go for blessings.

ED: Well, I'm game. Come on, Gene—

GENE: Go ahead, Ed. I'll stay here and make sure nobody runs off with the place.

BELINDA: This is your last chance, Gene.

GENE: You heard me. Beat it. It may be a new day, but it's not that new.

ED: Have it your way. See you later.

BELINDA: Please, Gene.

THE BLESSING OF THE FLEET, 1958, 1961

GENE: Scat. I'll down a few beers, payment for being a watchman. *Brief pause.*
Plan B. Belinda, stay here with me.
BELINDA: No thanks. I want to be with the rest of them.
ED: Hurry up, Belinda! We'll miss it!

Exits.

BELINDA: Well, Gene? *He doesn't budge.* Ok, have it your way. I don't know. Maybe everything you say is right. Maybe the rest of the world is wrong. Does that make you less of a fool?

She exits. GENE draws himself a beer, sits down, looks at it. Then he stands up, pours it down the drain.

GENE: Oh, fuck it! The hell with it all! Belinda! Wait for me! I'm on my way! Wait for me! Belinda!

Blackout

NOTES

1. Unfortunately, I cannot find any program or reviews of the productions. Therefore, I cannot name any of the production team from Iowa and anything beyond the director and two actors from New Orleans. The artists listed are identified in the caption of a photograph published in the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* May 7, 1961, Section 2, p. 13.
2. When I met Mary Heaton Vorse, I didn't know how important a labor rights and women's rights journalist she was. She was most active from around 1915 through the 1940s. She wrote for the radical *The Masses* and for newspapers. Over her lifetime she published 18 books and many articles. She was a founding member of the Provincetown Players (see note 4). She wrote a book about Provincetown, *Time and the Town* (1942).
3. Now restored to how it looked in 1916, the house is currently an art center owned by Ken Fulk, a San Francisco interior designer.
4. The Provincetown Players performed during the summers of 1915 and 1916 on the Lewis Wharf, owned by Mary Heaton Vorse. The Players included Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, George Cram Cook, and Vorse (see note 2). The Players second season premiered O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff* and Glaspell's *Trifles*. The Players continued for six years in New York at the Provincetown Playhouse on MacDougal Street. Its pioneering work changed the American theatre.

11

“Lot’s Daughters,” 1957

Introduction

“Lot’s Daughters” was performed twice as a staged reading in August, 1957, at the Provincetown Yacht and Tennis Club. What got me to Provincetown? I graduated from Cornell University in 1956 after majoring in English and working intensely for four years at the *Cornell Daily Sun*, an independent student-run paper. I wrote regular news stories, political and social commentary, and play reviews. After Cornell, for the academic year 1956–57, I was a member of Elliott Coleman’s Writing Seminars, at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore where I was also studying in the “regular” English Department. In the Seminars, I wrote short stories, poetry, and possibly “The Last Day of FK” (the final play in this book).

I left Hopkins in May 1957 with no postgraduate degree—I was not happy in the English Department, despite The Writing Seminars. Thinking of myself as a writer, maybe even a playwright, I started the summer of 1957 employed as a “drama counsellor” in Camp Dartmuthe (note spelling), a girls camp in Brewster MA, on the elbow of Cape Cod. But very soon into my tenure there, things went south. I did not like the camp’s owner-director, Mrs. Catherine C. Crocker, and she did not like me. On July 7, I wrote in my notebook, “Trouble here at camp.” On July 9: “Am sitting in Mrs. Crocker’s office [...]. This is the showdown meeting.” Later the same day, “I’ve quit. I’m in the car at Orleans. I’ll probably work as a short order cook.” Truth is, I didn’t want to be on the Cape’s elbow but at its very finger-tip, Provincetown, where Eugene O’Neill got his start. So that’s where I went.

On July 13, I wrote:

Found a piece of rope in the street in Provincetown tonight. A comely brown strand of rope disintwined on either end. I’m in a cubicle that’s all brown. In front of me a bunch of drunks. Kids in a dark corner are singing. The place is called Neptune’s Roost. [...] I have a schooner of beer and my Luckies on the table in front of me. The woman running the place has a man’s face and man’s clothes on. She’s about 40. There’s a girl. Her daughter or maybe her girlfriend—they are whispering.

I worked as a short-order cook in Chef’s Restaurant on the main wharf serving up lobsters and steaks for tourists pouring into Provincetown on day boats from Boston. I was good at that kind of cooking, and liked it. Throwing live lobsters into a boiling pot of water or splaying them on a gas-burning open grill while turning six steaks at a time. Hot, quick, loud.

During my hours off, I explored. I remember tasting my very first pesto on pasta at Ciro and Sal’s, and poking my head into one art gallery after another, where kitsch competed with abstract expressionism. Somehow during my explorations I found out that some people were going to

stage Federico García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, a play I had reviewed for the *Sun*. I auditioned and was cast as Leonardo, the male romantic lead.

The group doing *Blood Wedding* had no money, so we each chipped in to pay for costumes, props, and the rent for two nights at the Provincetown Yacht and Tennis Club on the east end of town. I don't remember who the director was. As best I recall, two of my fellow actors were Ilona Ricardo and John Unterecker. I do remember what happened to the production. A few days before we were to open, the director skipped town, taking with him what was left of our money, about \$500 I think, a considerable sum in 1957. Betrayed and abandoned, we thespians were despondent. We met to talk over our situation. We'd paid for the theatre, a few tickets had been sold, and we'd told our friends to come. But we hadn't finished rehearsing. We didn't feel comfortable showing what we had to a public. In the midst of our angry and despairing meeting, I piped up: "I've written a play. Why don't we do a staged reading of it? I can direct." My colleagues jumped at the idea. We had two or three days to prepare. We agreed to meet the next morning for rehearsal.

Only one problem. I had not written the play. I had an idea, maybe a draft. Nothing more. During the night, I wrote furiously. By the next morning's rehearsal, "Lot's Daughters" was ready. Did I revise during the days of rehearsing? Possibly. What I know for sure is that we performed the staged reading twice to small but enthusiastic audiences. East End Players was born.

"Lot's Daughters" is about what leads to the only instance of incest in the Bible. The story is told succinctly in Genesis 19: 30–36. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt:

Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar; and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the first-born said to the younger: "Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth. Come let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the seed of our father." [...] Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

Lot's daughters took matters into their own hands, literally. In the Bible, Lot's daughters seduce their father on successive nights after getting him drunk both times. In both cases, drunken oblivion shields Lot from knowing what he did. In my play, there is no wine-drinking; and the play ends as the seduction begins. What drives the action in "Lot's Daughters" is Lot's yearning for his wife and his daughters' desire for children and sex. In Genesis, neither Lot's daughters nor his wife are named. Is this patriarchal sexism? Apocryphally, Lot's wife is "Idit," the name I use in the play. The daughters remain nameless, identified by age.

And what about the sexuality of the incest? From the Renaissance on, painters depict Lot's daughters naked preparing for sex or engaging in foreplay with their father; they are both with him at the same time engaging in a menage-a-trois.¹ This hot scene contradicts the Bible which states that the incest happened on consecutive nights, one daughter at a time, with the sole purpose of reproduction. My depiction of sex in "Lot's Daughters" is a lot tamer than what the painters show. In "Lot's Daughters," there is no sex or even much foreplay. I concentrate on the family's isolation, the consequences of the destruction of Sodom, the obsessive behavior of Lot, and his daughters' increasing need to separate themselves from their father. The irony, of course, is that this very need causes the intimacy the play ends with.

"Lot's Daughters" ended the summer of 1957 for me. I left Provincetown for the University of Iowa where I joined Paul Engle's Iowa Writers' Workshop. There I wrote *The Blessing of the*

Fleet (this volume), my MA thesis. I also was part of the regular English Department where I taught “Communication Skills,” actually freshman English with some speech and rhetoric thrown in. During the academic year 1957–58, I planned for the coming summer. I knew I wanted to continue what “Lot’s Daughters” had started. So, during the summer of 1958, I co-ran East End Players as a full-fledged theatre. My partner co-director was Karl Harshbarger, whose father was chair of the University of Iowa’s English Department. When the summer ended, I stayed on in Provincetown living in Mary Heaton Vorse’s house until I became a soldier by volunteering for the draft in November. See the Introduction to *The Blessing of the Fleet* for more on Provincetown and my two years in the US Army.

“Lot’s Daughters”

Characters

First Daughter	Ilona Ricardo
Second Daughter	?
Lot	John Unterecker

1

A cave. To the left is the outside, to the right the back of the cave. The only furniture is a simple wood chair downstage left. Toward the back of the cave, almost out of view, a fireplace.

Afternoon.

*The FIRST DAUGHTER, 32 years old, is looking out of the cave at the surrounding wild hilly country.
The SECOND DAUGHTER, 23 years old, looks straight ahead at the spectators.*

FIRST DAUGHTER:

No clothes! No water! No people! Look outside, go ahead, there’s no one. How long has it been? I can’t remember. It seems just this side of forever. How long have we been here in this hole in a mountain with no one but you and me and father? Is there any city nearby? I don’t know. He never lets us go into the valley. Never!

She turns and faces SECOND DAUGHTER.

I won’t live this way—I won’t—

SECOND DAUGHTER: But we are living this way. Without light or carpets, with neither friends nor future. With no one but ourselves.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Where has he gone this time?

SECOND DAUGHTER: I don’t know. He didn’t say.

FIRST DAUGHTER: He never says. He just comes and goes. He does not even change his clothes.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Dressed? You call his rags clothes? When I look at him I pity him. He used to have shoes, but no more. I think he walks along the side of the mountain and sings to himself—

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Sings? No, he prays, prays, prays. "Oh, God, forgive her. Give her peace, oh God. Let us come away from our prison. Give me a sign, oh dear God, give me a sign." Then he waits—his long rough arms raised and outstretched as if heaven would stoop down and embrace him. Nothing happens. Then he goes on. "I have two daughters who have not known man. Let me, I pray you, bring them unto you. They should be married. Send my roots rain. Let my seed grow. Give me a sign." Then he waits again. And then when nothing happens—

SECOND DAUGHTER: You expect something?

FIRST DAUGHTER: —he sits down on a rock and cries. Yes, with real tears. "I will go on," he says. "I will atone for her forever." *Pause.* It's disgusting, I think it's disgusting. Oh, yes, I followed him once. You didn't know? And I heard it all. I'm not making any of it up. He's a fool—

SECOND DAUGHTER: But he is our father. He's Lot, among the chosen, the most righteous man in Sodom.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

The only righteous man in Sodom. Ha, ha! It's very funny. What has our father's righteousness got us? We rot here. We grow older day by day. Come here, come over here and look. See? I saw. Without mirrors it was hard, but I saw. Gray hairs. Gray hairs but no children. No man whose weight I feel on top of me. Nothing but a dim cave and a crazy father.

Pause, and then more softly.

I've watched that tree out there push out leaves and branches spring and summer for nineteen years. And I have nothing new but some hate. For him and for God and for mother too.

SECOND DAUGHTER: For her?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

When I'm awake I can't recall her face. But I remember her at night when he turns the lantern down and we are alone and all I hear is the expansion and contraction of our breaths. Then I remember her. Do you remember? You were only four. She had hair soft like yours and black eyes like mine. And she was alive! She danced and hummed all day while she cooked and sewed and attended him.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Was she cruel? Did she pray all day like he does?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Cruel? Mother? Never. She was as gentle as the rains that came to Sodom every November. *Pause, remembering.* It is hard, hard to remember. How beautiful it was there! We had a garden with many flowers, red and blue and yellow. Not just these sick purple flowers hanging on to stringy vines in desperation. And we had swings and sand to play in. And friends, friends. You remember that? Dozens of friends.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Yes. *Pause.* I think so.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

She used to sing to us at night to put us to sleep.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Yes! Yes, I remember now. She used to bend over us and cover our faces with her hair. I can smell it. So soft and thick. It smelled from the flowers. *Pause.* Sometimes he was there too.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Sometimes. In those days he was kind. He was “papa” not “father.” He’d take you up into his lap, remember? He told us both stories. He used to hold mama and talk to her. They would sit in the garden together and he would fold her up in his arms. I remember them going out together too.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

In Sodom? In that place?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Oh, you know Sodom only by what he tells you. “A place of sin, a place of unrighteousness. Of usury and whores! A place now burnt and sunken in the desert. All ashes, sand, and dust.” But it’s not true. Sodom was a glorious place. It had twenty palaces, each as grand as the temple, and wide roads full of people. And it had music, lovely music. *Pause.* And men. Such men! Men as big as boulders with strong hands. Oh, I’m older and I remember. Sodom was glorious. And then one day we had to leave it because he said so. A stranger, a very tall man without a beard, came and told us to leave because God was going to destroy Sodom. So without so much as a “How can you be so sure?” we left. And then, mama, she loved Sodom. I can’t talk about it. *Pause.* Do you know what I think? Do you want to know? I’ll tell you. That man, he called himself Abraham, was a plotter. He wanted power. I could see it in his hands. Huge hands that he twisted in his lap when he spoke. He wanted all of Sodom for himself, the whole plain. And father was his enemy. Oh, he talked sweetly enough—though I didn’t hear it all—he talked of God and sin and destruction—but he really was threatening father and all of us. When we left they burned the city to the ground. Do you know why? So the big shots in Jerusalem could have this country all to themselves. They drove us out of our home. You know what we are? We are exiles. We are homeless. *To herself.* That’s all we are. Homeless exiles.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

And mother? What about her? What about the story father tells of the golden fire behind us and of her turning just once to look at it and then—then changing into a heap of salt—

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Ha! Do you believe that? Preposterous. Heap of salt! What a fantastic fairy tale! It happened at night, didn’t it? While we were both asleep.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Yes. It happened the second night after we left. I remember that much. How could I ever forget that? I heard a terrible scream. It woke me up. Then father rushed in and took us both in his arms. He cried for the whole night holding us. I was frightened. Father crying! And he didn't say anything the whole night but cried until the sun came up. Then we broke our camp and rushed on, faster than we had been flying before. But mother wasn't with us.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

And he didn't speak of her until we got here. How young even I was then, only thirteen. But I too cannot forget him sobbing the whole night.

She begins to state this a sexual, not a paternal, memory.

He put his head on my breasts. His arms wrapped around me. I remember the weight of his head, the smell in his beard.

Long pause.

And then when we got here, he told us that story, that outlandish story. We were children. He couldn't bear to tell us the truth. But I figured it out—it took me years, but I figured it out. Mother wasn't killed. Maybe she's still alive—

SECOND DAUGHTER:

How can you say that! Do you think so?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

I'm sure of it. He had her taken away. I remember some horse-
men coming from Sodom that night—

SECOND DAUGHTER:

Yes, yes! They galloped over the desert. Their horses were very
big. *Considering.* But they came from the other way. They didn't
come from Sodom. They came from in front of us. We never
looked back, father forbid that. He even strapped us on our
horses so we couldn't turn back.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

How can you be so naive? They came from Sodom, they
made a big circle so that they looked like they were coming
from another direction. But I know they came from
Sodom. Abraham was one of them. I saw him. The man
with no beard. His face glistening with sweat that looked
red because of the fire's glow. Abraham, he was their leader.
They came—

SECOND DAUGHTER:

They came and—?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

And took mother away. Mother was the prize Abraham took
from father in exchange for his life. Abraham galloped off with
our mother and made her his wife.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

No. No, no, no! I don't want to believe you.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Believe me. She probably still lives with Abraham in Zoar, in
his house as his second wife.

SECOND DAUGHTER:

But if what you say is so, then father did it for our lives too.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Yes, ours too. But at such a price? *Pause.* But here we are, alive, so I cannot curse father for doing what he did. *Pause.* But don't you believe the fairy tales he makes up as a cover up. It's his shame, that trade, his great shame. It has eaten his soul every day until there's nothing left. Only God and his sin are left. But his sin is not Sodom. And it's not what he says it is: Mother's disobeying God by turning around and looking at Sodom in flames. His sin is his trading her for us and for him. His overwhelming shame.

SECOND DAUGHTER: I can't believe what you're saying. It's too horrible. Mother? No. I can't.

FIRST DAUGHTER: I know it's true—

SECOND DAUGHTER: You know? But you said you constructed it—

FIRST DAUGHTER: Like constructing two and two are four. It's the only explanation that makes sense.

SECOND DAUGHTER: And the miracle? God's punishing mother? Father's way?

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Miracles! If there were miracles we wouldn't be here. If there was a God and if we were the good people saved from the condemned city, we wouldn't be here in this god-forsaken cave. We'd be dancing down there on the plain somewhere with handsome men. We'd be married with children running around us, tugging at our clothes. At night, we'd enjoy husbands breathing into our hair and kissing our mouths.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Children.

FIRST DAUGHTER: But we're doomed to live out our wretched lives here. Prisoners of an insane man paralyzed by shame.

SECOND DAUGHTER: We could leave him. We could go down onto the plain.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Women alone? What are women? And where? We have nothing. God! *She spits.* I spit at him. I ask him to throw lightning at me. Now! *Pause.* There! See? Nothing. Empty above, empty beneath.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Down there we'd have husbands and children.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Don't think about it. We have nothing now and we shall have nothing tomorrow. We are the cursed daughters of a cowardly father and a betrayed mother. It would've been better if we'd burned to death in Sodom.

Outside LOT is heard praying and talking slowly. His words are not clear, he is some distance away.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Be quiet! I hear him—

FIRST DAUGHTER: Quiet? I'm through with silence and nonsense. I will tell him. I will speak—

SECOND DAUGHTER: No, don't, please don't. He won't understand—how can he? Listen. Do you hear him praying? Talk? To him? No.

FIRST DAUGHTER *stands for a moment and then turns and runs to the back of the cave. LOT enters dressed in ragged clothes. He is about 55. His hands are raised and he himself bows and then raises himself from the waist, the Jewish practice of davening prayer. LOT is a big strong man with a tremendous voice.*

LOT:

For you will destroy Sodom because the cry of it is waxen great before your face, oh Lord! And thus you overthrew the cities of the plain, and consumed in fire all the inhabitants of those cities. You scorched all that grew upon the ground. Almighty God, you chose us as your righteous when you wiped Sodom and Gomorrah off the face of the earth with your fiery hand. Only we were saved. The smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace, but we were saved and brought here by your outstretched arm. Only I and my daughters remain to atone for the sins of the cities, for their deep disobeyal. And we have atoned. All these years, I have prayed every wakening moment and have dreamt prayers every night when I sleep. And my daughters. *Pause with deep feeling.* My daughters. I have raised them with nothing in their hearts but penance. Me, with my own strength, have brought them up, me alone with no wife to help me. There was no other hand in their upbringing but yours. And now they are women. For their sake, oh, God, forgive. Show us how to leave this place. Guide us to a little city. To olive trees and grape vines. There my soul might thrive. Please, oh God, give me a sign! Look at my daughters. Their hair is long and their breasts have swelled. And look at me. My hair is white and my hands are twisted in prayer. Send me a sign, a single sign—

SECOND DAUGHTER: Father—
LOT: A sign.

He collapses into the chair and covers his face with his hands.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Father.

She goes over to him, but does not touch him. She is moved by his passion and dejection.

Stop, stop crying.

She steps closer and touches him. He does not move.

Have you eaten? We have made some stew. Come, come and eat.

She puts her hands on his shoulders and tries to raise him.

LOT *looking up*: You're so thin—
 Eat? Eat you say? What need have I for food? I am hungry for forgiveness. God's mercy is nourishment enough.
SECOND DAUGHTER: Forgiveness for what? Haven't you done enough?
LOT: Enough! And for what you ask? *He gets up.* Oh, God, do you hear my youngest daughter? Strike her. My own daughter. With your left arm strike her! *To her.* When we left our home and

that city of shame and your mother—your mother—raised her fist to God's command and he turned her into a pillar of salt. Then he brought us here and told us to wait. You ask for what! And for how long?

SECOND DAUGHTER: But does God want our lives too? Isn't yours enough for him? Wasn't mother's enough?

LOT: We were given lives only so we could pray.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Why don't we leave this place? I don't even know what a city looks like, what houses are—

LOT: We cannot leave without a sign. All I want is a sign. A rainbow over there or a bird that flies into our cave or ears of corn ripe before their season. Without a sign I cannot leave—

SECOND DAUGHTER: And us?! Our lives? Don't you and your God care about them?

LOT: My God is your God, there is only one God. And your lives are bound to my life and my life is bound to God's will.

SECOND DAUGHTER: But I want children and a husband—

LOT: If God wills it, you will have them. *Pause.* Where's the stew? I've walked all day. I'm hungry.

LOT goes to the back of the cave. SECOND DAUGHTER stands dejected. After a pause, FIRST DAUGHTER's voice is heard from the back of the cave.

FIRST DAUGHTER: We've stayed with you and your God too long! We're going!

LOT: May God strike you! May he strike you dead!

FIRST DAUGHTER: You lied! You lied! I tell you, we're going. Stay here if you want to, but we're going! I know the truth and we're going!

SECOND DAUGHTER slowly raises her hands, one over the other, to her breasts never looking up.

2

Almost night, the same day.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Where is he?

FIRST DAUGHTER: Asleep.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Peacefully I hope.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Never peacefully. He tosses and turns and moans as if he were dying. *Pause.* I wish he were.

SECOND DAUGHTER *after a long pause:*
Are we really going?

FIRST DAUGHTER: Yes! Down there are cities. Have you seen the gray smoke from the houses? I have. Sometimes I go out to the hillside and watch

for hours. It's like soft mist. Way off to the south I see smoke.
I can almost smell it.
SECOND DAUGHTER: I've seen it.
FIRST DAUGHTER: Smoke means people. And men! Do you know what a man is like?
SECOND DAUGHTER: Father—

FIRST DAUGHTER:
He's no man! He's a crazy child, a child. A man is sweet tasting and fast breathing, he's two arms knotted around you and legs braided with muscles. He's wonderful words spinning in your hair and a heavy weight on you. I know men!

SECOND DAUGHTER *laughing*:
No you haven't! How could you? We've been here forever. But even your fantasies excite me. I want to believe you. A husband and children! What's stopping us?

LOT listens out of view of his daughters.

FIRST DAUGHTER *whispering a secret*:
I know what a man is like. Once, a few years ago, some hunters strayed up this mountain. They got very close to this cave. I saw them. Big men with strong brown hands and beautiful faces. They were not a hundred feet from me and I called to them. They came to me. But when I told them my name and the name of our father, they ran away. Oh, why did I tell them? They were afraid of father. Big men, hunters, afraid of him—

SECOND DAUGHTER: Father's strong—
FIRST DAUGHTER: It wasn't that. They think he can curse them! They think he can bring fire down on them. What fools! *Pause*. If I hadn't told them, they would've taken me—
SECOND DAUGHTER: No. I don't believe you. *Pause*. Are we really going?
FIRST DAUGHTER: Yes.
SECOND DAUGHTER: To where there's music? To where I can dance? To where I can marry?
FIRST DAUGHTER: Yes.

LOT coming forward and facing them:
What do I hear? A great sin! I tell you, you will never leave this place until God tells me we can go. If you try to leave, I will choke you with my own hands. I will sacrifice you.

He hits FIRST DAUGHTER.

You are the devil! I will punish you!

SECOND DAUGHTER: Father! Stop!

LOT:

Cross this entrance and I will kill you. So you know men, do you? You spoke to men, did you? Oh. Oh. Now I understand. You have broken God's word too. You have been our curse these years. You. You, my daughter. *Softer.* Had you held your tongue, had you bent your head in prayer instead going over to those men, surely God would have sent a sign by now. You are the cause. *Shouting.* You are the lewdness here! First my own wife! Then my own daughter!

SECOND DAUGHTER: Father, oh, father stop. You'll kill yourself with this rage!

LOT: And better dead too.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Yes, better dead. I told you before, I tell you again. We're leaving! What right do you have to lock us up here in this mountain? To not give us the chance to live?

LOT: God has the right to do what he wills—

FIRST DAUGHTER: No, not even God! We want husbands and children. We want music and flowers. We want homes.

LOT: Not until a sign has been given.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

You had them, each other and us, and friends. You and mother. I remember it. I remember how much you loved Sodom. It was a city full of wine and pleasure, music and dancing, trees and birds and vines. I remember you went out and danced, you got drunk. Yes, drunk! I tell you I've seen him drunk. I've seen strong men carrying him home and handing him to mother. And you had us, didn't you? Was that some kind of magic? Do you remember those nights when you fathered us? Remember them.

LOT sits, his head in his hands.

Those nights with your hands on mother's breasts and your head in her hair. Those nights when she perfumed your soul. Ah, they were wonderful nights, weren't they! You had them. But you won't allow us to have them? We have nothing. Not even sunlight, not even cloth to make clothes with. Nothing but your prayers, always your prayers.

LOT *weeping softly, almost unnoticeably:*

My wife was soft. Idit was so soft.

FIRST DAUGHTER:

Yes, you remember her now, don't you? Here in this godforsaken place you remember her. And what did you promise her? What did you and your Idit plan for us, your daughters? Did you talk about how grandchildren would please your white hair and her eyes? How much their laughter would bring you back to the sweet nights you enjoyed with your wife. Go ahead, remember that! Remember it with the bones in your hands and legs. Remember the friends you had in Sodom. Noam and Amnon and fat Eliezer. Do you remember them? I do. I was young but I remember them. I remember your laughter—how loud it was, especially when you were full of wine. And what happened? What happened. Can you tell me what happened?

LOT: God destroyed the city because it was wicked! He brought his fire from the sky and destroyed it. We alone of the whole city were saved. "Lot is upright and God-fearing," he said to my heart. And so he saved me and mine. Everything else, God destroyed.

FIRST DAUGHTER: No. No, it wasn't God. Remember how it was. Pause. Remember Abraham—

LOT: No! That man is dead. No!

FIRST DAUGHTER: Remember that man! He was God's messenger, wasn't he? He came to Sodom and told you to leave, didn't he? It wasn't God. It was Abraham.

LOT: No, no!

SECOND DAUGHTER: Stop. You're killing him.

FIRST DAUGHTER: I cannot stop. Nineteen years here won't let me stop. And Abraham came again and took mother away. It's true. I know it's true. And your sweet-smelling, soft-breasted wife went with that man. You gave her and he took her and she went—

LOT: It was God's will! First he destroyed the city and then her.

FIRST DAUGHTER: You betrayed your city and your wife. That's the way it was. And now you will not let us go. You hold us so tightly because you can no longer hold her.

LOT: Do not listen, oh, God, to my daughter! She spits snake's venom. Do not listen.

FIRST DAUGHTER: It's true—

LOT *building to a scream*:
She turned into a pillar of salt! And she turned into a pillar of salt. And she turned into a pillar of salt! And she turned into a pillar of salt!!

FIRST DAUGHTER: You betrayed her. We're leaving this place. We're going to the cities. We're going to find men and live with them. *Pause*. Hear me? Hear me?

Silence.

SECOND DAUGHTER *tenderly*:
He can't hear you. He can't hear anything anymore.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Father! Listen! We're going.

LOT: A pillar of salt because she disobeyed God.

FIRST DAUGHTER *shaking him, shouting into his closed eyes*:
We want to go! We want to live like you and mother lived! Understand?

SECOND DAUGHTER: He doesn't understand. How can he understand?

SCHECHNER PLAYS

LOT: God shall curse this house. He has cursed it once and he shall curse it again.
SECOND DAUGHTER: Father, oh my dear father—
LOT: It was soft. But now she's dead.
SECOND DAUGHTER: How can we leave him when he's this way? He'll die if we go, he's helpless. *Pause.* He's our father.

She falls across on top of her father who is sitting slumped, head down. FIRST DAUGHTER stands facing them.

FIRST DAUGHTER: But we can't bring him down to the cities. Everyone would run from us if they saw him. No man would come to us.
SECOND DAUGHTER: God has truly cursed us.
FIRST DAUGHTER: Even those strong hunters ran at the sound of his name.

3

Weeks have passed. It is night. The stage is dimly lit and the figures are silhouettes.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Where have you been all day? He's been asking for you.
FIRST DAUGHTER: I've been to the cliff. Tomorrow you can go. From there you can watch the smoke of the city. The smoke is gray and warm. It warms me to watch it twist up from the valleys. It is so thin as it blows towards here. But I can almost smell it.
SECOND DAUGHTER: How far away do you think the city is?
FIRST DAUGHTER: Too far. Many miles. If only we could kill him. If only he would die! How's he been?
SECOND DAUGHTER: The same. Docile. He talks about mother all the time. He talks about their times in Sodom and about our home. But I don't think he knows who I am.
FIRST DAUGHTER: And Abraham?
SECOND DAUGHTER: He doesn't recognize the name. But if you repeat it and shout it he heats up, he gets red and says, "She turned into a pillar of salt—" You know how he gets.
FIRST DAUGHTER: Yes I know.
SECOND DAUGHTER: But mostly he's calm. And today—would you believe it—he laughed and started talking to me as if I were a child again. He sang and tried to tell me a bedtime story.
FIRST DAUGHTER: He's happy, almost.
SECOND DAUGHTER: Yes, I'm sure he is.
FIRST DAUGHTER: But us? Oh, us. We are still here. Our hopes are disappearing like the thin smoke down there.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Sometimes I believe in God, the God who's cursed us. But then he smiles, or hums something, or asks me to sit next to him. Then it isn't so bad. When he's happy.

FIRST DAUGHTER: If only it was God who curses us! But our lives are not God's fault. They are his fault. They are our own fault.

SECOND DAUGHTER *pause*:
No one's strayed by?

FIRST DAUGHTER: No one. Who comes by here anymore? He's stopped being a curiosity. We've become part of this cave, this hillside.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Today he thought this was our old home in Sodom. He asked me to bring in some flowers and tend the garden more carefully. Once he even thought I was mother. It's funny, being wife and daughter to the same man.

FIRST DAUGHTER: You think it's funny?

SECOND DAUGHTER: He tried to fondle me and called me Idit. Three or four times he did that.

FIRST DAUGHTER: You didn't find it disgusting? He's your father.

SECOND DAUGHTER: If he didn't have that beard, he'd be handsome. Even at his age. Without his beard and in clean clothes. Do you notice how big-boned he is? How strong his hands are?

FIRST DAUGHTER: Don't think of it.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Teach me how not to. It consumes me. For you it's not so hard. You're getting old.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Don't talk that way.

SECOND DAUGHTER: We should try to make him comfortable. We're his daughters, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood.

FIRST DAUGHTER: When he dies, we will go down to the city. You will still be young. Some men will want you. But me? Ah, look at me. Can you see the wrinkles? Sometimes I don't even care how I look. that's a sure sign I'm getting old. Oh, you will have your chance, but not me.

SECOND DAUGHTER: You will. I know you will. *Pause*. But why are we talking this way? Once he cared for us, loved us, now we must love and care for him.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Cared for us? Ha!

SECOND DAUGHTER: What is there to do? We must bear it. We're not murderers.

FIRST DAUGHTER:
That we must bear it is true. That we must do it gracefully or in silence is not true. I can't be silent. I would explode in silence. I must speak, and speak, and always speak. Let me tell you a secret. No matter how old I am, I can smell men, like I can smell the smoke from down there. Can't you smell them?

Pause.

Sometimes when I'm near him, I imagine he's not our father anymore. He's some stranger gone crazy in our home. Then I imagine him on top of me.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Yes. And a baby. That's all I want!

LOT enters, walking slowly. His voice is meek.

LOT: Is that you, my daughters? My sweet children. Come here and let me touch you. Let me bless you, my children.

He puts one hand on each DAUGHTER's head.

May the Lord bless you and keep you; may he cause his countenance to shine upon you; and may he give you peace.

Pause. Then with more spirit.

SECOND DAUGHTER: And where is mother today? Has she gone out again?
 LOT: Yes, father.
 LOT: She goes out so much nowadays. But we are here, aren't we? Let me touch you again. There. How it pleases me to have you here and not worry about you running around on the streets! When mother comes back, we will eat supper. And tonight we'll go to the hanging gardens and sing. All four of us.
 SECOND DAUGHTER: Yes, father. All four of us.
 LOT: What time is it?
 FIRST DAUGHTER: Late.
 LOT: Then Idit should be home soon. I shouldn't say her name to my daughters. Are you too young to know that your mother is a beautiful woman?
 SECOND DAUGHTER: We know, father.
 FIRST DAUGHTER: Maybe we should eat without her.
 LOT: No. How could we? She will be back soon. I know it. Where could she be so late?

Walks to the entrance of the cave.

FIRST DAUGHTER: I will wait for her. From here I can see her coming.
 SECOND DAUGHTER: Was he this way all day?
 FIRST DAUGHTER: All day.
 FIRST DAUGHTER: This is the way he's been for weeks. But he's getting stronger. Haven't you noticed? Look how young his face is.

She calls to him, seductively.

"LOT'S DAUGHTERS," 1957

LOT *approaching*: Come here, father.
FIRST DAUGHTER: I don't see her. Not anywhere.
How good you look, father! But how can we go to the gardens unless you shave? You shouldn't be so sloppy in the city. And mother will like you better if you shaved.
LOT: I wonder where she is. Do you really think so, my sweet one?
FIRST DAUGHTER: I know it. She just this morning told me that very thing.
LOT: Then I must shave. I must.

Exits.

FIRST DAUGHTER: Quick, brush your hair out. Quick now!

She goes to SECOND DAUGHTER and unties the ribbon holding her hair.

SECOND DAUGHTER: But why?
FIRST DAUGHTER: Do as I say.
SECOND DAUGHTER: I know what you're thinking. Have you gone mad too?
FIRST DAUGHTER: There is no time. Brush it out.

SECOND DAUGHTER *fluffs her hair so it falls freely on her shoulders and down her back.*

SECOND DAUGHTER: And I'll get some juice for you to put on—
Juice?
FIRST DAUGHTER: Yes, from the vines outside. Quickly now.
LOT *from offstage*: And tonight we will all go to the gardens.

LOT *enters slowly, rubbing his face. He's shaved off his beard.*

LOT: How does this look, dear one?
SECOND DAUGHTER: Fine, father.
LOT: Will she like me better this way?
SECOND DAUGHTER: I'm sure of it.
LOT: Good! I'm going outside to wait for Idit.

LOT *exits*. FIRST DAUGHTER *returns with the flowers.*

FIRST DAUGHTER: Here. Rub these into your skin—
SECOND DAUGHTER: Are you sure?
FIRST DAUGHTER: We will feel a man on us. We will have children. We will be both daughter and wife to him—
SECOND DAUGHTER: How can we? How can we?
FIRST DAUGHTER: He's not our father now. He's our lover.
SECOND DAUGHTER: But he is our father. You know that. I know that.
FIRST DAUGHTER: A sweet lover come to court us. A husband for us. A homemaker.

Very excited.

You are wrong. We are no longer his daughters, but his wives! You are his younger wife, and I am his older wife. Soon we will hear children laughing, our children. Then all of us—all three of us—will be happy here! Ha, ha, ha! Don't be jealous of me and I won't be jealous of you. The three of us will be happy lovers. A family of lovers. Here, rub this perfume into your skin. Go ahead—

SECOND DAUGHTER: You too? You too?
 FIRST DAUGHTER: Rub it into your skin. Quickly before he comes back. Don't you want children?
 SECOND DAUGHTER: I want them. But not his children. Not my father's children.
 FIRST DAUGHTER: What other children do you expect to find here?
 SECOND DAUGHTER: Maybe it's better to have none—
 FIRST DAUGHTER: To have none? No! Let's turn our curse into our blessing. If our life is out here alone, forgotten, then let's make something good from it. This is the only way—
 SECOND DAUGHTER: Oh, God.

FIRST DAUGHTER:
 The only way.

She rubs the fragrant oil on to the arms, neck, and between the breasts of SECOND DAUGHTER.

There. Smell that sweet perfume. Now it is all set. And soon our lover will come in. Soon we will feel him. First you, because you are the prettiest, then me. But both of us! And not only tonight but every night. Every night. We will know his body. His strong body. I've been watching it and I know it's strong. He's exercised it with all these years walking through the hills. We can even make some wine from the wild berries that grow around here.

SECOND DAUGHTER: Berries? Wine?

FIRST DAUGHTER:
 At last we have reversed the curse. We have turned it toward ourselves. Out here beyond the world, we have become the blessed. Oh, how beautiful you are! How he will love you! And here, here there's some left for me.

She anoints herself with the fragrant oil.

Do you think he will notice my gray hair? No, no, he won't notice. Once a man gets excited, he doesn't notice anything at all. We will have all boys, strong men. I know it, I know it.

LOT enters left and looks at SECOND DAUGHTER. *As he speaks,* FIRST DAUGHTER *pushes* SECOND DAUGHTER *towards* LOT. FIRST DAUGHTER *hesitates but finally steps toward him, looking down avoiding his gaze. Her hands are at her side. But as* LOT *moves towards her she repeats*

"LOT'S DAUGHTERS," 1957

exactly the gesture that ended the first scene: slowly raising her hands, one over the other, to her breasts never looking up.

LOT: Is that you Idit, my wife, my soft beautiful wife? You came in the back way? You thought I wouldn't see you? But I see you now. *Pause.* You should never leave me. Not for an hour. Not for a minute. I need you with me for all time.

Pause. Then he steps forward preparing to embrace SECOND DAUGHTER.

Ah, how glad it makes me to see you—

Blackout

NOTE

1. Lot and his daughters are the subject of many paintings since those of Lucas van Leyden of 1530 and Peter Pau Rubens in 1613–14. The most recent I could find is by Stojan Milanov in 2017. The story is theorized in Robert Polhemus's *Lot's Daughters* (2005). Of course, both Milanov's painting and Polhemus's book appeared well after I wrote "Lot's Daughters."

12

“The Last Day of FK,” 1957, 1961

Introduction

“The Last Day of FK” was probably written in the academic year 1956–57 when I was a member of The Writing Seminars directed by Elliott Coleman in the English Department of The Johns Hopkins University. I have no definitive record. I do know that “The Last Day of FK” was staged only once, on January 14, 1961, the second day of the Winter One-Act Festival of the Tulane University Theatre Department. I was a student in Tulane’s PhD program. Other plays in the Festival included originals by students and plays by Luigi Pirandello, Sean O’Casey, Lewis Beach, and the anonymous early Renaissance farce, *Pierre Patelin*.

The play reflects both my reading of Franz Kafka and my troubled relationship with my father, Sheridan Schechner (1905–92). Things got much better between me and my father as we both grew older, but my teenage years and early adulthood were a monstrous period of conflicts, misunderstandings, and love-hate. I was enraged, fearful, and dependent. I don’t know what my father felt because he didn’t share his intimate feelings with me. However, he was, and remained throughout his long life, unstintingly generous to me financially, paying for my undergraduate education at Cornell University and for my first term as a PhD student at Tulane University. Later in life, he loaned me money to make a down payment on a living loft in Manhattan. Generous as he was when it came to material resources, he had problems expressing intimacy and tenderness—at least to me and, I think, to my three brothers¹ (I have no sisters). More than being withholding, my father scared me. His frequent rages were fierce. When I was a little boy, on Sunday mornings, my two older brothers and I would play and wrestle in their bedroom. When this “rumpus” as my father called it woke him, he stormed into the bedroom wielding his white leather belt and shouting, “I’m going to whip you to within an inch of your life!” Mostly he missed as we scurried under beds and behind chairs. My older brothers sometimes laughed, evoking even more rage, shouting, and thrashing. Possibly, my father never intended to hit us. And our “rough-housing” doubtlessly caused him much “aggravation,” cutting short his one morning sleeping in. Still, he terrified me. Even as an adult, I wanted to give my father’s anger a very wide berth.

In the 1950s, I avidly read Kafka’s diaries and fiction. In Kafka, I found a brother-in-the-heart: an alienated, unhappy Jewish young man. Certainly, “The Last Day of FK” is more than an echo of Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. The text published here is changed from the original typescript only in that the character “Franz,” too obviously Kafka, becomes the more ambiguous (but still obvious) “FK.” When did I write “The Last Day of FK”? The autumn before its production? Possibly. But I think earlier. I have no clear record. I believe I wrote at least a draft during the academic year 1956–57 while at Hopkins. That year in Baltimore was bleak for me. I was clinically depressed and psychotherapy didn’t help much. Aside from the Writing Seminars, I disliked Hopkins. I

didn't have fun in Baltimore. I spent a lot of time in bed, fantasizing, avoiding "life" whatever that meant. Some people, especially Susan Pamela Huntington Hooker (who passed in 2000), helped me through. The Writing Seminars helped too. I learned to shape my facts into fictions. Not yet sophisticated—as "The Last Day of FK" testifies—but a step along the way.

So this book ends where my playwriting begins. At least, as far as I can determine from a period of my life where my notebook entries are thin, my memories distorted or absent. Among what I can touch is this short play. A text that narrates an abused "Great One" who curls up on a couch in his father's house [...] and dies. Happily, this was not to be my fate. The FK of the play is—to quote myself from a much later, and better, epoch in my life—"not me" and "not not me."

"The Last Day of FK"

Production

Director Robert Merritt

Performers

FK	John Chase
Visitor	David Reiff
Mother	Emily Martin
Sister	Carol Kerr
Father	Ed Owens

Late afternoon of a recent day. The living-dining room of a middle-class apartment in New York. Three doors: to the kitchen, to the bedrooms, and to a hall leading to four flights of stairs to the street. A couch with big fluffy cushions. A dining room table and chairs. FK is a man of 30 looking for his place in life. The VISITOR is an authoritative man of 35. The MOTHER is an energetic woman of 50. The SISTER is a warm-hearted young woman of 20. The FATHER is a large, loud, demanding man of 55.

FK: You must help me. My mother and sister are out now to the big shopping center over near the Yonkers bridge and my father won't be home from the office for another hour.

VISITOR: I'm a busy man. I shall give you exactly two minutes. Then I shall diagnose your case, write out my remedy, and be gone.

FK: One doctor says—

VISITOR: I'm not a doctor.

FK: But this is important.

VISITOR: Very well. Be brief.

FK:

This doctor says it's all due to my constipation. He continually sends me letters with the single phrase, "Ex-lax" written on the paper. Three times a week I get the same letter from this particular doctor. Here. See? Hundreds of letters. And then once a month he sends me a bill I can barely pay, it is so large. And this despite the fact that I never consulted him. I met him in my office

one day where he came to increase his insurance coverage. He took a single piercing look at me and said, "An interesting case. Constipation." I've not been able to rid myself of him since. He follows me from toilet to toilet and writes on the walls.

VISITOR: Enough wasted time. I have made the notation: "Tight bowels resulting in money problems." What else?

FK: Each night I sit down at the table and write. I think the great moment will come and rip me open—but nothing happens. Then I sleep and howling dreams pursue me until dawn. When I wake I'm ready to die, to curl up in a ball on the floor of my office and die; be swept away by the janitor and burned with the day's trash.

VISITOR: It is noted: "Delusions of grandeur, followed by guilt, dreams, and ending in suicide syndrome." What about your family?

FK: Who can love them? Those great noisy animals. My father especially. Have you ever seen him eat?

VISITOR: Don't be absurd.

FK: He takes the great bones, dripping with blood, and rips them to shreds with his tiger teeth. My mother watches and marvels. She wrings her hands in ecstasy and moans, "Oh, Joseph, more! Try a lamb bone!"

VISITOR: And your sister? You have a younger sister. I have seen her. A delightful breath of innocence.

FK:

Innocence! She sluts around with every guy that lets her. On many evenings I've walked up the four flights of stairs to this apartment and seen her on the second landing, clutching a pimply boy to her, two shadows merged into one, fornicating through her clothes. That's my sister. Thinking I'm deaf, she whispers, "Quiet, quiet, F is coming." But in the greasy darkness I hear the wet kisses. I can smell them. The cheesy smell of mating beasts. I was born in the wrong family, at the wrong time, in the wrong place. I should have been conceived of priests and virgins, bred in the cool marble corners of temples, schooled with ascetic monks, and set to work atop the highest towers where even sunlight is untainted by dust. But here I am, down in the circus pit and sawdust, in the foul butcher shop, rubbed and violated by animals.

VISITOR: Your time is up. The case is simple. Die. Good day.

Exits.

FK: Die?

VISITOR *throwing the door open*:

Here I have written it out. I shall mail my bill. Good day.

Exits. FK stands looking at the small note-paper. In the hall, the noisy laughter of his MOTHER and SISTER. They burst into the room.

MOTHER: Take the package into the kitchen, dear.
SISTER: Yes, mama.
MOTHER: F! Don't just stand there like a helpless child! Be a gentleman. Help your sister! Here you are, thirty years old, still living at home. And you refuse to lift a finger to help us!

FK starts to help his SISTER.

And don't run away while I'm talking to you! You're driving me to an early grave. Look at my head. Come here and look, F. What do you see? Don't be ashamed and close your eyes. Open them wide and tell me what you see?
FK: Hair, mother.
MOTHER: Yes, hair, you ungrateful boy! But what color? Gray, gray—almost all gray. Because of you! Years ago you should have been married, but you just sit here and mope. And you won't even help your sister with the groceries?! Well? Why don't you go to the kitchen and help her?

F and SISTER collide at the kitchen door.

SISTER: Don't pick on little F, mother.

MOTHER, to FK:
And what have you got in your hand? Trying to sneak away to the kitchen with it, eh? What is it? A message? Someone phoned while we were gone? What does it say? Tell me.

FK: It's for me.

MOTHER and SISTER *laughing*:
For you?

MOTHER:
Impossible. You have no friends. And it's no surprise to me either. You have an anti-social disposition. Give me my message.

She takes the message.

Why it says "Die" here. So this is another one of your pitiful jokes, is it? I go out shopping for your dinner—take two busses and the subway so that you can have what you like—and you sit here thinking up ways to torment me. Is that your game? Oh, F, you know how much I want people to phone me! That's why I had an extra phone put in the bedroom at no small expense. I want people to phone, to bring some life into my—my—existence! And all you can do is mock me. Now go and wash your face, F. It's all sweaty. You always sweat so profusely when I'm home. I'm sure you sweat less at the office. You do it simply to irk me. Now go and wash. Your father will be home soon and If he sees you in this condition he'll beat you again. Old as you are, he'll take off his white leather belt and horse-whip you.

F exits to a bedroom. MOTHER sits on the couch.

Oh, that boy will be the death of me yet.

SISTER: He means nothing by his jokes, mama. I think he's dimwitted.

MOTHER: F? Oh, no. He's smart. He's playing his infernal game to drive me and your father to early graves. He keeps juggling our insurance policies—that much I know for a fact. What do you think he does at the dinner table so late at night? All those papers!

SISTER: Mother you imagine so much. F means well.

MOTHER:

And I had so many hopes for him! A boy with his face. Like an angel. And his brain! I saw him as a doctor—or at least a dentist. And what does he do, your brother F? He sits here day after day, hardly ever going to work, rotting here—a living curse on all of us. By this time he should be sending fat monthly checks home, begging his dear parents to take the money and retire to Westchester or maybe even St. Petersburg. But what does he do? He eats, eats, eats!

SISTER: F doesn't eat much. He eats less than any of us.

MOTHER:

And that's another thing—worrying me to death the way he picks and plays with his food instead of simply gobbling it like his father. Now when your father takes a beef bone, he grabs it by the middle and bears down on it. He cracks it, chews it, devours it. He sucks it. I get all excited—just watching your father eat! But F just looks at the bone like it's going to bite him instead of him biting it. He lets the meat hang in tatters from the ends. He never thinks of the marrow, and hardly picks the poor thing up at all. That's no way to eat. That's the kind of thing that drives good mothers to their graves.

SISTER: Mama, you're getting all worked up over nothing—

MOTHER: The truth of the matter is that F doesn't love us!

SISTER: Mama!

MOTHER: He's a mother-hater!

MOTHER rushes in tears to the kitchen. F comes in quietly from his room. His hair has been combed, his face washed.

FK: Is mother gone?

SISTER: Gone, F.

FK: I think I will leave home.

SISTER: Where will you go?

FK: I've always wanted to get out.

SISTER: Oh, F. Don't be ridiculous.

FK: I know nothing about camping, that's true. No one has ever taught me to pitch a tent, boil water, catch a fish. Knots in ropes look all the same to me.

SISTER: The ocean is just a word five miles away. I was too old for the cub scouts, too weak for the boy scouts, too timid for the explorer scouts. But you know what? Tell me. Dear F. Sit next to me and tell me.

FK: I am going to fly away.

SISTER: Now—after all these years?

FK: Yes. I'll take a few blankets, a kitchen pot, a box of matches, a knife and fork—some string, maybe twine—string always comes in handy—and a large piece of canvas and go far away!

SISTER: Where to?

FK:
I'll go down the steps and out onto the street. I'll get on the subway. I'll ride and ride uptown until I get to the George Washington Bridge. Yes, right underneath the bridge. Then I'll wait until it was nighttime before coming up from the ground. I'll surface when the stars have burst over the bridge, when the electric lights are on, when all the steel ropes are gray and silver. I hope there's a moon, too. Then I'll put my blankets out under the bridge. I'll take my knife and cut off several branches from a tree to make a tripod and put the pot underneath the tripod on some tinder. I'll start a small fire. I love setting fires. Then I'll lay down on the blankets and stare up at the bridge and listen to the traffic humming over me and marvel at the great, thick, twisted cables over the traffic and the sky over it all. Underneath me I'll hear the river, that gentle, deep Hudson River with its somersaulting currents that coil and sing softly in the night. All night I'll lay there. I'll sleep in the day, and so on—

SISTER: You're such a baby, F. You could never leave home.

FK:
All night for several nights under the bridge. And then I'll die. Starve to death of course. With the traffic over me and the river under me. The police would come, find the shriveled body, wrap me in the canvas—you see, I brought it for that purpose—tie me up with the twine, and throw me in the river. But I'll be so light—so full of soul—that I'll rise up in the air and zigzag away on the currents of air. Smaller, smaller—gone into the sky. Like a summer night's breeze.

Pause.

Would you lend me the fifteen cents for the subway?

SISTER: You always tease me. You talk so beautifully. And I love you so much.

FK: Will you lend me the fifteen cents? Without subway fare I'll never be able to make it. Smaller, smaller, gone into the sky.

SISTER: I have to help mother with supper now. You lay down on the couch and rest. Father will be home soon.

SISTER exits to the kitchen.

FK *as the door closes*:

I really need the fifteen cents.

The hall door opens. F starts in fright. But it is not FATHER. It is the VISITOR.

Oh, it's you. I was afraid my father had come home.

VISITOR: I have studied your case, consulted associates, and concluded that—
 FK: That?
 VISITOR: Constipation is not your major trouble. A mere symbol, a cipher for the general clogging in your soul. Of course we can make no final judgment until we study every detail, work each minute infinitesimal out. But I fear, young man, that you have been attending to the plumbing and garbage disposal units when, quite clearly, the major power plant is unbelievably warped—
 FK: Warped?
 VISITOR: Twisted, melted—torn out of shape by fire. Incapable of a normal energy output. Therefore, I urge you stop focusing on trivia and bring all your power to bear on your central problem. It's the only way to save yourself.
 FK: But what's my central problem?
 VISITOR: Cohesion. An imposed unity of the whole. A total reconstruction. And I add: If you wish to drive new divisive wedges into your already fragmented and tottering machine, you have only to camp out under the George Washington Bridge.
 FK: You heard that?
 VISITOR: Of course. I was crouching by the keyhole. Gave myself a wretched back-ache, too. It will all be reflected in my bill.
 FK: You were spying on me?
 VISITOR: I am your hired confidante. Your accountable advisor. It's nothing new—this keyhole peeping—I've been doing it for years. My time is short. *Pause.* I want you to come with me.
 FK: With you?
 VISITOR: Yes, I have your cure prepared and ready in my office.
 FK: But my father's coming home soon. He'll be furious if I'm not here for supper.
 VISITOR: You're thirty years old, and you still cower before your father?
 FK: You don't know my father. He demands honor and obedience.
 VISITOR: I have your cure. The ultimate remedy. The antidote for—chaos.
 FK: After supper then. The antidote will be as good in two hours. If I leave before my father comes home—
 VISITOR: There is no arguing with a fool. Your father is your enemy. Don't you know that? You are battling him for your life.
 FK: I hear my father on the steps! Go. Go quickly! He must not find you here!
 VISITOR: Why? What would he do?
 FK: Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill! He'll tear you limb from limb and run around this room shrieking, waving your dismembered arms. Oh, it's happened before to friends of mine! And then my mother, sister, and I will have to spend all

day Saturday scrubbing the walls with hot soapy water. The floors too. And the furniture. My father is a terrible man to those he dislikes! Please, please leave!

VISITOR: Until later then—

FK: No, not out that door. He's on the third landing already. Hear him? Are you deaf? He'll see you, he'll ask insufferable questions. I can't lie to him, it will all come out. He'll beat me to within an inch of my life, laugh at me, hold me up to shame. Here, go out the window and down the fire escape. Quick, quick!

VISITOR: I leave as I came.

VISITOR exits out the hall door. In a flurry, FK hides on the couch by throwing the cushions over himself. His FATHER enters from the hall.

FATHER: Your father is home! Everyone!! Listen!! The paterfamilias is home!!

MOTHER and SISTER rush from the kitchen to embrace FATHER. Much joviality and kissing. Even a little dance as the two women join hands and run around the FATHER.

Hello my little kittens! Greetings, my little lambs! Ah, my pretty harem! How beautiful you are tonight. A kiss for you dear mother! And one for you dear daughter!

MOTHER and SISTER:

Papa's home! Papa's home! The house is alive! We are alive! Because papa is home!

FATHER stands to one side. The following catechism is delivered very rapidly, as if memorized. FK remains hidden under the cushions, burrowing ever deeper into them.

FATHER: Ahem! You may ask the questions!

MOTHER: How was the office?

FATHER: Business never was better.

SISTER: And your secretary?

FATHER: A young working girl never was prettier!

MOTHER: Did you make love to her?

FATHER: Twice during morning coffee break and eight times during lunch hour.

SISTER: And how was lunch?

FATHER: The economic business-man's blue plate special never was tastier!

MOTHER: What did you eat?

FATHER: The usual. Two prime sirloin steaks, seven ears of garden-fresh corn, a gallon of extra-dry beer, five chef's delight tossed green salads, a quart of dairy rich creamy ice-cream, six cups of ground on the premises, specially roasted coffee, and twelve slices of guaranteed home-baked cake!

SISTER: Was it prepared as well as at home?

FATHER: Not at all. The steaks were burned, the corn unbuttered, the beer flat, the salad without dressing, the ice-cream rancid, the coffee bitter, and the cake stale!

MOTHER *and* SISTER:
Then you are—

FATHER: Glad to be home!

MOTHER *and* SISTER:
And we are glad to have you home!

FATHER: Now scat into the kitchen, my delicious wife and my delightful daughter.
Finish preparing my dinner! I'm starved!

SISTER: Here's your evening paper—

MOTHER: And your cigar—

SISTER: And your slippers—

MOTHER: Matches—

SISTER: Ashtray—

FATHER: Thank you wife, thank you daughter! Now the two of you scat into our full
of appliances modern kitchen and fix my sumptuous dinner!

FATHER *settles into his chair. Lights his cigar. Opens his newspaper.*

FK: Good evening, father.

FATHER *reading*:
HMMMMMMMM.

FK: Hello, father.

FATHER: Corning Glass, up an eighth.

FK: Are you comfortable, father?

FATHER: Ford Motor Common, down a half.

FK: Can I get you something, father?

FATHER *turning pages furiously*:
The Yankees are in sixth place!

FK: More cigars, father?

FATHER, *turning more pages*:
Mandrake the Magician trapped, Superman paralyzed by kryptonite, Li'l Abner blurred. Damned
newsprint!

FK: I can run to the store and buy you a new newspaper, father.

FATHER *getting to the front page:*

War in Asia: damned Chinamen! War in Europe: damned Commies! Riots in Atlanta: damned blacks! A hundred and twenty legislators in Louisiana inserting themselves between five colored children and the public schools: damned racists! Everything is normal in the world.

FK: Do you love me, father?

FATHER *shouting:*

Where is my dinner? It's past six! You know I eat exactly at six, not a second sooner, not a second later.

MOTHER and SISTER *from the kitchen:*

Just one more minute!

FK *louder, pleading:*

Do you love me, father?

FATHER *standing, throwing the paper down, raging:*

I will not wait for my dinner!

FK *coming out from the sofa:*

Do you love me, father?!

FATHER *storming to the dinner table:*

Here I sit! Paterfamilias on his throne. Food! Food! Food! Food! Food! Food!

FK *kneeling:*

Father, dearest father, do you love me? I am your son, F. The first born of your loins. Your only son.

FATHER: In restaurants, I never wait. At the office when I order my secretary to strip, she's naked before I get to the "p" of strip. But here, in my own home—my castle—nothing but disobedience, neglect, and dishonor. Food!! Food!!

FK: Just one word for me, father! A single word would be enough. Look at me father, your son, F. Say something to me—!

MOTHER and SISTER *enter from the kitchen with a sumptuous meal covered with silver lids. They place it all in front of the FATHER. As they uncover each dish, the FATHER smacks his lips and begins to eat furiously.*

MOTHER: Onion soup, au gratin.

SISTER: Potatoes lyonnaise.

MOTHER: Pheasant under glass

SISTER: Brazed asparagus tips.

MOTHER: Tossed green salad with Roquefort dressing.

SISTER: Red wine.

MOTHER: Beaujolais!
 SISTER: Chocolate ice-box cake!!
 MOTHER: Baked Alaska!!!
 SISTER: Mode a la mode!!!
 FATHER: Mmmmmm! Yesss! Ahhhh! Ohhhh! Morrrre! Miiinnne! Ahhhhh! Mmmmmm!
 MOTHER: Just a little something we prepared for you during the last half-hour.
 SISTER: A mere tidbit, a snack.

FATHER *animal sounds*:

Mmmmm! Aaaaachhh! Raaachhch! Arrrrrewach!

FATHER *continues to eat voraciously, furiously. FK remains kneeling by his side.*

FK: And do you love me, father???

FATHER *suddenly stops eating. Everyone is awed and frightened into silence. FATHER looks up and around him.*

FATHER: And where, may I ask, is F? If I've told him once, I've told him a hundred times,
 I will not tolerate him being late to the dinner table. Where is my son F?
 SISTER: He's kneeling by your side, father.

FATHER *discovering FK*:

So he is, kneeling by my side. Like my favorite dog. *Laughs.* Yes. Well, let's play a little game then,
 eh son? You be a dog and I'll feed you!

MOTHER: This will be fun! Oh, my dearest husband, you know so many good games!
 FATHER: All right, F. Bark!
 FK: Love, father—
 FATHER: What's that? A word? No food for the bad doggy tonight. The heel of my shoe
 he'll get instead. Bad dog! Shall I give him a kick?! *Laughs.* F, you are a dog!
 Remember that. Now bark!
 FK: Woof. Woof.
 FATHER: You call that barking? Again, cur, like a real dog. With gusto!
 FK: Woouuff! Woouuff!

FATHER:

That's a little better. Here's a pheasant wing. No, no don't grab it—beg. That's right—up on
 your hind legs, puppy! Now put your paws in front of you. Oh, this is delicious! Look at that,
 my son the dog! Now beg, beg!

MOTHER and SISTER *laugh uproariously, delighted at the game.*

Good. Here's a drumstick. No, no. Don't use your paws. Just take it with your teeth. Use your
 snout—play with it on the floor with your snout. Sniff it. Good. Now let's hear a few happy,

Bread and water for you tonight! No pheasant.

FK crawls up onto the couch whimpering. He burrows under the cushions and lays there panting.

SISTER: I think he's sick.

FATHER: Nonsense. Don't leave the table. We must finish eating before this gorgeous meal gets cold. Then we must say grace to God for his blessing of food!

SISTER: But F isn't well.

She starts to go to F.

FATHER: Sit. I am master here! You remain at this table until I tell you to go.

There is a knock at the hall door.

Who can that be? Doesn't everyone know that we are enjoying a quiet family supper? I will not be aggravated.

MOTHER goes to the door.

For the responsible businessman there is never a moment's peace!

The VISITOR steps inside.

VISITOR: Pardonnez-moi, but I am an associate of your son's. May I see him?

MOTHER: We are having dinner—

VISITOR *advancing*:

Nein, danke. I've eaten already.

FATHER: You are aggravating me!

VISITOR *nonplussed*:

I see your son, there, on the couch. I shall speak with him sotto voce. You may continue eating.

FATHER: This is outrageous! I am the paterfamilias. Wife, call the superintendent at once!

VISITOR: Madame. Don't touch the phone. The neighbors are already calling to complain of the racket up here. They say you are keeping wild beasts. Let me put things in order al momento.

FATHER: We speak English in this house. Whatever you are going to do, do it quickly. Suppertime is holy to me.

VISITOR:

Yo entiendo.

He goes over to FK.

My boy, I have finally definitively diagnosed your case. It is painfully clear to me now. All tests confirm it. What seemed to be the fire-wasted wreckage of your power plant was, in truth, an infinitely complex and sophisticated superior model. You appear constipated because, in fact you produce no waste. You are not a human being. Your metabolism is too rich; your brain cells too highly developed. You are some kind of super-human creature, perhaps the product of mutation, or divine will—

MOTHER: Divine will!

VISITOR: My boy, you must rise now to the level of your great potential. You must turn your massive brain capacity to the problems confronting us all! You must sit at the head of the highest councils, be girded by the most stringent protections. You are the last, most precious, hope of a humanity which even now stands anxiously teetering on the fiery brinks of hate, war, destruction, and death.

SISTER: Most precious hope!

VISITOR: Between humankind and chaos stands only you, FK. You must teach us to work, to understand, to love. You must solve those riddles our little mentalities are too miniscule even to perceive. Your mission in life has found you. You are The Great One!

FK: Me?

VISITOR: You.

FK: Meeee?!?!

VISITOR *with awe*:

The Great One.

FK: Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaiiiiiiiiiiiii!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

FK falls back on the couch.

FATHER *to the* VISITOR:

Leave this instant. See what you've done?

MOTHER: F is overworked. We need him for ourselves.

FATHER: You can see how he is.

MOTHER: He sleeps at the drop of a hat.

FATHER: He is, ahem, my son. I could serve in his place.

MOTHER: F will see you in the morning.

FATHER: I am familiar with the machinery of business, of politics.

MOTHER: Will F's salary be—substantial?

VISITOR: Through him all of you will gain money, fame, and salvation.

MOTHER: Will you have some coffee?

SISTER: Chocolate ice-box cake!

MOTHER: Baked Alaska!!

VISITOR: No thank you. Good evening. I shall not return.

FATHER: Not return! I will not permit your absence. I guarantee that F will be calmer in the morning. But you and I must discuss terms. F has no business sense. I am his representative in all things! My son, The Great One? I knew it! I suspected it all the time.

VISITOR *quietly, almost patronizingly*:

FK has performed his duty for us already. He has seen it all, assessed it, and finally, by embracing his vision, he has rejected it. Good evening.

Exits.

FATHER: What can that man mean by all that?

Pause.

MOTHER: Never mind. I will finish dessert.

FATHER: This is probably just another one of F's tricks. One of his jokes.

FATHER: The baked Alaska is melting. No matter what that man said, F's worthless.

SISTER *going over to FK on the couch*:

Oh God.

FATHER: Pass the baked Alaska! Do I have to say it a third time?

MOTHER: Come daughter, finish your supper.

Passes the desserts to FATHER.

SISTER: Don't interrupt the digestive process. We can look after F later.

MOTHER: Mother, father, I think F is dead.

MOTHER: Don't be silly, my dear. F's The Great One.

SISTER: Yes, I'm sure F's dead. His heart has stopped beating.

MOTHER joins SISTER on the couch. Both put their heads down on FK's chest to listen to his heart.

FATHER: Will you two stop acting like insane canaries and pass me the chocolate sauce before my ice cream melts!

Blackout

NOTE

1. David Schechner (1929–2018), Arthur Schechner (1931–), and William Schechner (1941–2023). I, the third son, was born in 1934.

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