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THE STRUCTURE OF PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS IN ARRABAL'S THE ARCHITECT AND THE EMPEROR OF ASSYRIA

by

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ABSTRACT

The language of theatre is performance, and the history of the theatre is essentially a sequence of successive attempts to articulate that language in various forms. Since Aristotle, drama has been established as the major performance mode in the theatre, and despite many attempts to usurp the pre-eminence of that tradition the communication system inherent to dramatic form has been the most prominent in Western culture. In the post-absurd contemporary theatre, however, there are practitioners who are attempting to utilize other performance modes in their theatrical structures.

In his 1967 play, The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, Arrabal articulates at least three different performance structures: that of drama, ritual and the performing-self. Each of these systems exhibits a peculiar method of handling material, both quantitatively and qualitatively. By matrixing the performance factors indigeneous to each system to conventional theatrical devices--notably role-playing--Arrabal elicits a special kind of audience response. As a result of the juxtaposition of the various kinds of percipient response to which the

various performance factors give rise, appreciation of the world of the play proceeds not by linear intellection, but rather via a complex apprehension of theatrical images that are empathetic, directly sensual and intellectual simultaneously.

The experience of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria is thus native to theatrical performance in that its basic grammar is pure theatrical language. The performance structures of the play, as a result, are best appreciated from the perspective of actual performance: the time-space event that is defined by percipient apprehension of the world of Arrabal.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The course of twentieth century theatre has been profoundly affected by the movement Martin Esslin has termed the "theatre of the absurd." Artistic movements, in any art form, essentially provide alternative ways of seeing the world. They present novel configurations of the elements of existence; new arrangements of the bits of information that the artist deems important vis à vis his expression of the cosmos and man's relation to that cosmos. The network of information bits, ideas and images, that gave rise to the absurd are well-documented.[1] An essentially philosophical problem, expounded perhaps most eloquently by Camus, engendered a formal correlative in the hands of the playwrights of the absurd. Given the absurd Weltanschauung, the absurdists strove, and to a large extent succeeded in developing performance systems that were consistent with a universe that defied logical and linear exegesis.

Based on the techniques developed by the turn-of-the-

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[1]Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969); Arnold P. Hinchliffe, The Absurd (London: Methuen, 1969); John Killinger, World in Collapse: The Vision of Absurd Drama (New York: Dell, 1971).

century avant-garde which found full bloom in Jarry, the theatrical vocabulary of the absurdist playwright centres on presentational images rather than on conceptualized ideas. Although such a modus operandi is not unique to the absurd, in fact it might be argued that it is the method inherent in all non-realistic drama, it does present a considerable re-alteration of focus for twentieth century theatre art. There are no pièces à thèse nor "problem plays" in the absurdist canon. The archetypal absurdist plays--Beckett's Waiting for Godot and Ionesco's The Bald Soprano--are not written, but designed. They exhibit a "plot" in the pure sense elaborated by Aristotle: a dynamic structure manifesting countour, shape and texture.

The emergence of the absurd play and its inherent premise that its images are corporeal rather than purely intellectual has refocussed our perspective on the quintessential aspect of the play. It is not a literary document, but a set of blueprints for the arrangement of a structure. And that structure is performance, the essence of which can be best defined as a process of communication.

This prime function of performance--the creation of an experience that directly and instantly relates some facet of dynamic existence to an audience--delineates the basic difference between the play as performed work and

the play as written text. Performance, and the process of communication at its core, is latent in the text, but the actual, instantaneous experience of communication occurs only when the "word becomes flesh": when printed stage directions become action, written dialogue between characters becomes the dynamic interchange between people, and an audience perceives not an experience of literature, but rather, an experience of life.

In this sense, then, all plays exist primarily as scripts, sets of various verbal and visual stimuli addressed to an audience through performance. The particular arrangement of these stimuli in any one performance will initiate a particular reading of the mise-en-scène. The text thus presents a new experience each and every time it is performed in that the nature of the communication precipitated is determined by all the elements that affect performance: acting, direction, audience disposition, etc. Oedipus Rex continues to be performed not because it is a "literary" classic, but rather because it continues to communicate a vital existential experience to succeeding generations. Theatrical art consists not in actualizing the written text, but in using the text as the basis of communication in performance.

Fortunately, there are theatre practitioners around

the world who are dedicated to the concept of theatre as performance. The more prominent directors, Peter Brook, Jonathan Miller, Jerzy Grotowski. Jean-Louis Barrault--to name but a few, have demonstrated in their productions that performance structures within any play are open, variable, and decidedly not limited to linear readings of the text. Such a theatre demands that its playwrights design structures that articulate ideas and images within the parameter of performance. The writer is not writing a thesis on the state of the world, but providing networks whereby other artists--specifically, actors, directors and scenic designers--can delineate various expressions through, by, and in the playwright's structures and thereby communicate a coherent sense of life to an audience.

Arrabal is just such a playwright. After exploring admittedly imitative absurdist themes in his early plays, he has moved into an extensive concern for creating design structures for performance theatre. His approach is eclectic:

> *Je rêve d'un théâtre où humour et peosie, panique et amour ne feraient qu'un. Le rite théâtral se changerait alors en un opera-mundi comme les phantasmes de Don Quichotte, les cauchemars d'Alice, le délire de K., voire les songes humanoides qui hanteraient les nuits d'une machine IBM. (V, p. 8.)*[2]

[2]Fernando Arrabal, Théâtre, V (Paris: Editions Christian Bourgois, 1967). All subsequent references to the plays and prefaces of Arrabal are from this nine volume edition of his collected works for the theatre. The parenthetical reference notes the volume and page number.

However, it is this eclecticism that makes Arrabal's work eminently suited to a theatre concerned with overlaying presentational images. Arrabal's work for what he calls the "theatre of panic" is totally performance oriented. This approach makes his theatre pieces decidedly theatrical, and, corollarily, difficult to grasp critically. A study of the Arrabal text can be fruitful, but it is admittedly incomplete. The task is analagous to attempting an assessment of Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes by studying black and white photographs of the work. One can see and appreciate basic forms and approaches, but a sense of the whole could only be perceived conceptually. Similarly, the aesthetic experience rooted in the play is only fully realized in performance, and is manifestly incomplete outside of that context.

Such a multi-faceted work as The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria would seem to demand examination within the context of performance. However, the critical history of the play, and of Arrabal in general, is peculiarly limited. Although Arrabal has been writing for the stage for over twenty years, there is yet to appear a full-length, English-language study of his work. Even in Arrabal's working language--French--only two major works have appeared, one of which is a collection of interviews.[3]

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[3] cf. Bernard Gille, Fernando Arrabal (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1970); and, Alain Schifres, Entretiens avec Arrabal (Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond, 1969).

The paucity of critical comment is unfortunately matched by the kind of criticism that has been offered. The typical approach is that presented by Esslin in The Theatre of the Absurd. The five pages he devotes to Arrabal largely consist of plot summaries and a summarily expressed view that Arrabal is concerned with writing "compulsion rituals of a private neurosis."[4] The tendency Esslin succumbs to here--seeing the Arrabal canon as what Jacques Guicharnaud calls "documents of pathological cases"[5]--is reflected in most studies that attempt to provide more than a cursory examination of Arrabal's work.[6] Other monistic approaches that come to mind--besides the psychological-biographical one that seems to dominate--would also appear to be inadequate. Thematic criticism, for example, might tend to view The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria as little more than an exotic rendering of the Robinson Crusoe saga. These kinds of approaches--

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[4]Esslin, p. 222.

[5]Jacques Guichaurnaud, Modern French Theatre From Giraudoux to Genet (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 186.

[6]cf. Guicharnaud, pp. 184-87; Killinger, pp. 26-31; Ruby Cohn, Currents in Contemporary Drama (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 29-31, 81-83, 254-56.
It should be noted that Cohn does attempt a discussion of Arrabal's use of theatrical device, and role-playing in particular. However, her analysis is considerably incomplete, and at one point she summarily and vaguely ends her discussion of role-playing by interpreting it as a "morality of guilt and expiation." (p. 256)

viewing the play as a sequence of "literary" themes, or in terms of the fantasies that may or may not occupy Arrabal--do not provide for discussion of the central feature of the play as a performed work: the nature and quality of the communication which the playwright is striving to achieve.

The elements of this communication, the building blocks of performance, are varied and multi-faceted in any performed work. Moreover, it is essential that these various modes of performance be seen in relation to one another. Fortunately, the critical approach developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his examination of anthropological questions provides the open-ended instrument that the analysis of performance text requires. The structuralist model allows, in fact demands, examination by cross-section rather than by linear charting. Richard Schechner has succinctly delineated the advantages of the structuralist approach:

> Structuralism is an analytic method which works from concrete instances. It makes no separation between form and content. The structure is the arrangement of the content --and these arrangements may be multiple and simultaneous within a single art work. They may include language, movement, subtextual actions, ideas: there is no definable limit. Nor is there a 'best' structure. There are many structures. One can look into an artwork to find its internal system or to find its relationship to external systems. Ultimately, the structure of theatre takes one into the

> theatre--to work out the problems during rehearsal and performance.[7]

The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria is a play that manifests several performance systems running concomitantly through the text. These systems, which Lévi-Strauss would term "bundles of relations," taken together, form the essential design structure of the text. The three modes that find focus in this study--the dramatic, the ritualistic, and that of the performing-self--produce an inter-locking network that is the blueprint of the performed play.

This study proceeds by examining the nature of the three modes and their relation to each other as performance structures. An examination of Arrabal's use of the three systems in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria follows--with particular attention to the playwright's use of the elements of theatrical art as a means of communication with an audience. In conclusion, an assessment of the total structure of the play includes an outline of what would appear to be the essential qualities of a fully realized performance of the work.

This study is strictly limited to The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria in that the play serves as a paradigm of Arrabal's oeuvre for what John Lahr has termed "perfor-

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[7]Richard Schechner, Public Domain (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 105.

mance theatre."[8] This contemporary mode--the theatre of Grotowski, Barba, Chaikin, Brook and those of similar persuasion--is attempting to chart both a philosophical and formal course for the post-absurd theatre. Then too, of all of Arrabal's thirty published plays, The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria appears as his most fully realised attempt to create a true "poetry of the stage": to use the theatre and its various elements as a means of audience communication. In focusing on the functioning of these elements in a single play, moreover, a concise appreciation of the workings of this theatre should emerge.

The matrix of this study, then, is fixed on the internal dynamics and the structural elements of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. As such, there will be no attempt made to relate the play to the rest of the Arrabal canon, nor to assess its place in theatre history. Nonetheless, the limited scope of this enquiry should help to illustrate one contemporary playwright's mode of communication via the theatre, and more generally, to suggest an important current in the contemporary theatre: the conviction that writing for the theatre is writing for performance, and is not simply dramatic literature.

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[8]John Lahr, Up Against the Fourth Wall (New York: Grove Press, 1970), p. 213.

CHAPTER I

DRAMA, RITUAL AND THE PERFORMING-SELF

The three performance structures I am about to discuss do not function independently within The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, although my separate analysis of each system might seem to so infer. They are distinctly different modes, however, and thus it is essential that the nature of each be clearly delineated. Moreover, the discussion of each system is limited to those aspects which are central to each mode as a performance structure. As such then, the following analyses do not aspire to be definitive statements as to the complete nature of each system, but rather expositions of what I believe to be the seminal concepts in each mode relevant to the functioning of the structure in performance. However, as my analysis of the presentation of the three systems in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, delineated in Chapter Two, will illustrate, the performance structures in any play do not function uniquely, but are articulated simultaneously in overlayed patterns that are discernable in a work.

1. Drama

Since Aristotle, drama has been enshrined as the highest form of poetry in the Western tradition. Moreover, Poetics is the touchstone for over two thousand years of dramatic art--and dramatic criticism--and thus, despite its incompleteness, the work as a whole, and especially the discussion of tragedy, do provide a method and a vocabulary whereby the nature of drama can be delineated.

"Imitation of an action" is one of the more controversial phrases in the history of literary criticism,[1] and I do not intend on miring this discussion in an attempt to fully explicate the term. Rather, I prefer to remain deliberately general, and assume that my reading of the phrase, which immediately follows, is adequate even though it lacks full elaboration:

> Francis Ferguson has pointed out that praxis does not refer to any specific physical event per se, but rather to the motivation behind the event.[2] "Action" finds

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[1] cf. Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953); Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form (New York: Random House, 1957); S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (London: 1932); J. E. Springarn, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (New York: 1938).

[2] Aristotle, Poetics, tr. S. H. Butcher (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 8.

its source in the raw materials of life, but, in Butcher's definition, is "mainly a psychic energy working outwards."[3] The artist, then,--and in this context, the dramatist--chooses from life a "movement of spirit"[4] and attempts to present it within the formal requirements of artistic expression. This latter aspect, formal presentation, is the matter of "imitation": a representation that renders the "action" comprehensively and comprehensibly. Lévi-Strauss has suggested that all art is formally concerned with making "miniatures." That is to say formal expression consists of reducing aspects of "action": "The intrinsic value of a small-scale model is that it compensates for the renunciation of sensible dimensions by the acquisition of intelligible dimensions."[5] The formal requirements of drama can be seen as the reduction of elements of real life, and expression through the essentials of dramatic form: plot, character, thought, language arts and spectacle.

Of these five elements, the first four can be seen manifest in any literary work, even dramatic forms not specifically performance oriented (e.g. Browning's dramatic monologues or epic narratives such as the Odyssey and Paradise Lost). Spec-

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid. The expression "movement of spirit" is that of Dante.

[5] Claude Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 24.

tacle is at the heart of performance, and although Aristotle feels it to be "the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry,"[6] it is essential to drama in that it provides a medium for drama to be performed. In dramatic work for the stage, spectacle can find concrete delineation through the mise en scène.

More importantly, though, it is the peculiar aspect of dramatic action that differentiates it from other literary modes. In drama we are presented with action "in the form of action." The "movement of spirit" to which an audience is witness is dynamic, a "pure event" taking place "now" on the time-space continuum. The action of drama is concerned with a direct encounter with experience. Moreover, during performance, an audience undergoes a similar process in that the aesthetic experience is a direct encounter with the dramatic action: an encounter with an encounter. This immediacy provides the unique experience that is the raison d'être of drama performed. It is a "real" event taking place during performance.

Encounter here and now and dynamic action together form both the internal movement of the dramatic work and the tension inherent in perceiving drama on the part of an audience. Traditionally, this tension is formally expressed via aspects of conflict within a work, and it is this conflict which makes

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[6]Aristotle, p. 64.

drama "dramatic," in the popular sense of the word.

Thus, Eric Bentley correctly suggests that "to see drama in something is to perceive elements of conflict..."[7] Within the art form these elements of conflict are presented via relationships, and usually through the relationships of characters to one another and/or the universe. The charting of this conflict, or the series of conflicts, within the work is plot. Plot is not simply narrative, nor a selection of elements from a narrative. In Santayana's phrase, it is a "synthesis of actions,"[8] and by actions is meant the dynamic "movements of spirit" that are peculiar to drama, and not merely "things that happen."

Dramatic action relates this charting completely, i.e., it has a beginning, middle and an end. At the core of drama and the dramatic system is this idea of completed action. The dramatic action in any play--be it Oedipus Rex or Waiting for Godot--moves to this completed action through conflict, suspense and resolution.

Susanne Langer describes this aspect of drama which sees it continually pointing towards completion as "form in suspense"[9]:

> Drama deals with realities that are not

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[7]Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 4.

[8]quoted by Bentley, p. 62.

[9]Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 311. The term originates with Charles Morgan.

> finished but immediate, visible responses directed toward the future.
>
> . . .
>
> Dramatic action is a semblance of an action so constructed that a whole indivisible piece of virtual history is implicit in it.[10]

Although Langer disassociates the concept of "form in suspense" from the idea of suspense in plot (which she describes as ignorance of what is about to happen), the concepts are complementary. "Suspended form" which is implicit in drama can be seen as being dependent on the fact that action is being virtually created before an audience's eyes. This action, which unravels during performance time, can only be seen in toto once the performance is over. Suspense, in the sense of ignorance of what is about to happen, serves as a technique in directing an audience towards that completion. As a technique, suspense (holding back information) is most evident, and transparent, in the popular drama of intrigue, which uses the device almost as its only raison d'être.[11] Nonetheless, even when used more sophisticatedly as in Oedipus Rex, suspense (holding back information) gives dramatic action and its "suspended form" a method of involving an audience in the dynamism of its movement.

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Note particularly the films of Alfred Hitchcock, the "Master of Suspense."

The dramatic system presents a completed action, but perception of this completeness is only implicit. In this sense, all dramas are formally alike and the nature of a dramatic action is predictable. An audience "knows" that drama will always find resolution, even if the resolution is contained in a "non-event" as in Waiting for Godot. This "predictability" of the dramatic system has been seen by Gene Youngblood as particularly limiting: "If there is any knowledge to be gained through art it is the experience of the form or style of knowing the subject, rather than knowledge of the subject itself."[12]

The experience of drama, formally, is always the same. Granted, the quality of that experience is manifestly different in varying structures--compare, for example, the worlds of Scribe and Shakespeare--but, nonetheless, the method by which an audience perceives these worlds, our "style of knowing" is exactly the same. We bring to the performance of either Shakespeare or Scribe a predetermined manner of viewing: we expect to be brought through conflict and suspense into resolution.

Drama, in this formal sense then, can be defined as a closed system that functions on the basis of an audience's familiarity with and expectations from the form.

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[12]Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), p. 70.

In approaching the dramatic system we know that we will be experiencing an "imitation" of an "action": formal expression will be an experience from life with which we are at least conceptually familiar. Simply, drama presents, in Langer's phrase, a "semblance of life."[13] Obviously, the semblance offered by Sophocles, Shakespeare and Ionesco are manifestly divergent, based on each playwright's particular version of reality. Nonetheless, all dramatic systems and the semblance they present are so structured as to present a complete action through conflict, suspense and resolution.

Since the dramatic system presents a semblance of life, it could be termed a "concrete" mode. By concrete I mean that its referents in real life can be perceived outside the art form either sensibly of conceptually. The concreteness of the dramatic system, moreover, directly affects audience response.

Bentley concludes his definition of drama by stating that perception of elements of conflict leads an audience to "respond emotionally to them."[14] Aristotle, of course, speaks of the emotive response to tragedy in terms of catharsis, the purgation of pity and fear. Such

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[13]Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 251.

[14]Bentley, p. 4.

a reaction on the part of an audience would appear natural. In that drama is concrete, its semblance being of dynamic lived experience, an audience tends to "identify" with the dramatic event, associating the semblance being presented with referential elements in their own lives. Of course, the distinction between art and life is maintained through what Edward Bullogh called "psychical distance,"[15] and the "closeness" the spectator feels to drama has nothing to do with Bullogh's concept of aesthetic distance which is ensured through formal presentation. The mechanics of "identification" are complicated, and I shall have more to say on the matter in my discussion of the performing-self,[16] but for now, suffice it to say that the illusionistic nature of the dramatic system (illusionistic in the sense of presenting one particular semblance of life) requires identification on the part of an audience. For an audience to appreciate the sense of complete action, it must move through the stages of "action": conflict, suspense and resolution. In doing so, the spectator establishes a relationship to the dramatic event, and this usually entails the development of some kind of emotional rapport to those elements of the system that have concrete referents in life, usually characters

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[15] Edward Bullogh, "Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and as an Aesthetic Principle," British Journal of Psychology, V (1912), part II, pp. 87-118.

[16] cf. below, pp. 29-33.

in situation.[17]

This concreteness of the dramatic system and the emotive response it calls forth directly affects the nature of performing itself within the mode. The system requires a sustained illusion to present a completed action, and thus the performer is required to sustain the illusion within his own performance by remaining within the bounds of the semblance of life offered by the system. Historically, all dramatic performing systems have tended to follow Epictetus' dictum: "For this is your business, to act well the character assigned to you,"[18] according to the dictates of contemporary acting conventions. In drama, performing consists of "holding a mirror up to nature," whatever both the mirror and nature are taken to be in any particular era. The performer in drama is required to determine the nature of his character within the particular semblance of life which the dramatic system is presenting, and articulate that character <u>solely within the limits of the dramatic system</u>.

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[17]"Emotional rapport" with the dramatic event can, of course, arise out of perception of essentially "intellectual" or "conceptual" stimuli. Although the appeal of intellectual referents is of a different nature than that of pure "emotional" referents, the effect is basically the same: the establishment of a concrete bridge to the action. A prime example of the use of intellectual stimuli in deference to pure empathetic referents is the theatre of Bertolt Brecht.

[18]quoted by Cohn, <u>Currents</u>, p. 271.

Dramatic performance is totally monistic.[19] Any attempt to embellish the performance with elements that do not strictly belong to the semblance the character presents is considered "bad acting." The function of the performer in drama is to "get the character down" and present a performance that is credible, i.e. true to the system. If this is accomplished, an audience can relate to the illusion being presented through the system. For both the performer and the audience in drama, "acting is believing."

In summary, then, the essential features of drama as a performance structure are as follows:

1) it is a closed system because its structure is always predictable: dramatic action moves from conflict and suspense into resolution;

2) it is concrete in that the semblance it offers has recognizable referents in real life, whether the recognition is activated by either "intellectual" or "emotive" stimuli;

3) it is empathetic since the semblance of life is such that an audience finds its

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[19]The dualistic performing system espoused by Brecht reflects some of the performance principles I have associated with ritual (see below, pp. 20-23.). Nonetheless, the idea of a performer "commenting" on the character he is playing is still matrixed to the dramatic action as a whole, in that the illusion the character presents and the performer's comment are perceived by the audience as part of the whole dramatic structure of the play, and thus an emotive response still occurs. However, the appearance of the performing-self can appreciably alter this effect (See my discussion of The Threepenny Opera, below, pp. 20-23).

quantitative elements similar to those of real life and naturally proceeds to vent an emotional response to those elements.

4) performing is monistic since the nature of the system requires the sustaining of a particular "illusion" of reality.

2. Ritual

Any discussion of the use of ritual as a performance system in the theatre should begin with a few words of caution. The contemporary theatre, and especially the "new" theatre in the fore-front of the avant-garde, seems plagued by theorists and practitioners who make much ado about ritual and myth. Arrabal is probably the most vociferous propagandizer of this view of theatre:

> The theatrical ritual--the panic ceremony--must be looked upon by the spectator as a kind of sacrifice. . .It's a vast domain, shrouded in ambiguities, and patrolled very carefully by the mad hound that stalks the night.[20]

This kind of rhetoric is typical of Arrabal's flamboyant style, but more importantly, it reflects a very particular attitude towards the material of the theatre. Unfortunately though, this type of language is highly seductive, and one is tempted to draw conclusions from it that are mis-

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[20]Fernando Arrabal, "Auto-Interview," tr. Bettina Knapp, TDR 41 (Fall, 1968), p. 89.

leading.

For example, this statement by Arrabal seems to suggest that theatre and ritual are the same thing; they are decidedly not. Ritual is a manifestation of pre-rational thought. Theatre, as an art form, is the product of rational processes. And in that essential dichotomy there lies a world of difference. However, when Arrabal and company speak of ritual in the theatre they are making legitimate claims as to the nature of performance systems within their theatrical structures. They are not creating rituals, but using aspects of the ritual experience as a basis for their work. As such, ritual and mythic thought exist only as referents, simply because, outside of vestigial church ceremony, ritual does not exist in our culture.[21]

In Philosophy in a New Key, Langer has delineated the workings of ritual and myth, and her analysis clearly outlines that the motivation for ritual is distinctly foreign to the workings of the rational mind.[22] Primitive

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[21]Nonetheless, many aspects of the ritual experience still permeate post-primitive life. The existential forms of ritual--its use of repeated rhythms, the theatricality of its ceremony, its inherent premise of mass participation, etc.--still find expression in such widely diverse "experiences" as the military, sports events, and the contemporary rock music festival. Such manifestations are not rituals per se, but rather contemporary uses of some of the psycho-biological appeal of original ritual effects.

[22]Susanne Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: New American Library, 1951), chapters vi-vii, passim.

thought does function logically, but as Lévi-Strauss has pointed out, according to a system completely unlike our own.[23] According to Langer, all thought--primitive and rational alike--is essentially a process of symbolization. The process of symbolization grows more and more sophisticated as we move along the continuum from primitive to rational thought. Ritual finds its source in that particular aspect of the primitive mind which leads it to function by apprehension, rather than through comprehension, the latter being a salient characteristic of rational thought.[24] Since the primitive mind cannot conceive things conceptually but only sensibly, it is forced to function metaphorically in order to come to terms with the world. For example, equating the sun with "life-force" might be a logical process. Primitive man would see life all about him and being unable to conceive the abstract idea of life-force, he might use the sun, because of its analagous sensible properties, as a metaphor for this apprehension of a life-force. However, in the primitive mind, the sun is not a symbol, but a concretization of the idea. Gradually, the symbol itself takes on paramount importance, not its meaning.[25] Langer suggests that these symbols (although they are not conceived as such) become the centre of

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[23]Lévi-Strauss, Savage Mind, chapter i, passim.

[24]Langer, Philosophy, p. 131

[25]Ibid.

formalized expression--ritual. The rationally trained mind, of course, sees through the symbol to its meaning, but the primitive mind does not conceive the continuum: idea-"metaphorization"-symbol. Rather, the idea is the symbol. Lévi-Strauss:

> Savage thought is definable both by a consuming symbolic action, the likes of which humanity has never again seen rivalled and by scrupulous attention directed ultimately towards the concrete, and finally by the implicit conviction that these two alternatives are but one.[26]

Thus, it is simply impossible for the rationally-trained mind to give birth to true ritual. This is not to suggest that modern man is totally incapable of thinking in a pre-rational manner. Indeed, much of modern art, with its roots in romanticism, is an attempt to bring that particular element of human thought that functions "irrationally," or at least outside of text-book logic, to the fore. As such, ritual thought has found expression in art. Ritual and art are similar in that they are both manifestations of what Langer calls "non-discursive" thought and present "the active termination of a symbolic transformation of logic."[27] The ensuing discussion, however, does not focus on ritual per se, but on its use as performance system in the theatre,

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[26]Lévi-Strauss, Savage Mind, pp. 219-20.

[27]Langer, Philosophy, p. 49.

and in particular, its relation to the dramatic mode.

According to Lévi-Strauss, myth exists outside history.[28] Myth, and its expression in ritual, are not simply bodies of lore isolated in time, but rather dynamic statements that are timeless and universal. Myth essentially freezes time and serves as an expression of attitude and orientation, rather than being merely ancient narrative. Primitive ritual essentially takes the past and its "methods of observation and reflection,"[29] and actualizes these attitudes in the present. This particular function of ritual has a special appeal to contemporary theatre practitioners. Critic John Lahr, in discussing The Open Theatre's production of The Serpent states that:

> The intention of the performance is to create a new totality in the actor, to call up a world ultimately connected with the imaginative past as well as the concrete present.[30]

Myth and ritual are concerned with archetype, and as such exist outside of time. Rather, they are matrixed to what Jung termed "collective consciousness"; that is their praxis. Rather than referring to drama's "whole indivisible piece of virtual history," the matter of ritual thought has

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[28]Edmund Leach, Lévi-Strauss (London: Fontana/Collins, 1970), p. 55.

[29]Lévi-Strauss, Savage Mind, p. 13.

[30]Lahr, Fourth Wall, p. 162.

no boundaries in time. The construction of drama, based as it is on the relation of complete action, cannot contain the scope of mythic time, which is never complete. Jean-Claude van Itallie has termed his approach to mythic time as "vertical" as opposed to "linear" charting in drama.[31] In the ritualistic performing system, "imitation" consists of selecting and presenting presentational images that reflect aspects of the open-ended mythic continuum. In that there is no concern for relating one complete action, the mechanical devices that form the complete action in drama--conflict, suspense, resolution--are not to be found formally arranged in the ritualistic performing system. For example, the first three scenes in The Serpent present a doctor performing an autopsy, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and the birth of Eve in the Garden of Eden.[32] There is obviously no linear progression manifest in this sequence, but seen vertically they are dynamic images of life and death. Thus, the ritualistic performing system can be seen as being open, in that it is not restricted to linear structuring and is able to draw upon any image that is qualitatively referential.

I have suggested that the "action" of the ritual-

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[31] Ibid., p. 167.

[32] Jean-Claude van Itallie in collaboration with The Open Theatre, The Serpent (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 5-18.

istic performing system exists outside of time, but there is an even more important difference between it and the "action" of drama. The dramatic system draws its impetus from those elements of life that have concrete referents. The spectator "sees" in drama a presentation of those "movements of spirit" with which he can readily associate; the process is basically one of re-cognition. The ritualistic system, on the other hand, deals precisely with those elements of life for which there are no concrete referents. As we have seen, the original motive for primitive ritual was the ordering of sensible phenomena that appear to be meaningless (eg. the sun and "life-force"). Wilhelm Wörringer has suggested that this process is an attempt "to wrest the object . . .out of its natural context . . . and to purify it of all dependence on life . . . and to appropriate it to its absolute value."[33] The ritualistic system strives to remove elements from life and to examine them in an abstract context. And by abstract, I mean essentially a contraction or synthesis of sensible elements into a schema that renders them intelligible. The matter of ritual and myth has always been the great theme of human existence--life, death--and the ritualistic system functions by moving

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[33]Wilhelm Wörringer, Abstraction and Empathy, quoted by Jay Wright, "Myth and Discovery," The Rarer Action (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutger's Univ. Press, 1970), p. 342.

concrete elements into this context. The method of explaining the world in primitive ritual thus becomes, in the contemporary ritualistic performing system, a structure whereby abstract absolute questions can be explored. Lahr has noted this particular aspect of the system:

> The ability to make life transparent, to confront its complexity with the clarity of living symbols is . . . a mythological impulse discovering convictions in oneself, and reconciling man with the abyss.[34]

In primitive thought this focus on abstract absolutes is readily seen as giving rise to religion and its "explanation" for phenomena that defy interpretation. In a performing system, the "mythological impulse" finds its end in simply presenting the abstract and exploring aspects of it.

The question of spectator response to the ritualistic performing system is compounded by the fact that there is no correlative in the primitive ritual model. In primitive ritual, there are no spectators, only participants. Nonetheless, my remarks on the "abstractness" of the mode seem to suggest an approach. If, indeed, the concern of the ritualistic performing system can be seen as moving from the "natural context" to a more abstract level, the amount of intellectual distancing would seem to increase proportionally. As we have seen, the concreteness of the dramatic

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[34]Lahr, p. 167.

system and its close reference to actual lived experience as expressed through character in situation provokes an empathetic response to the information flow in the system. Primitive ritual is looked upon by its participants as a given, and the ideas it presentationally concerns itself with must be perceived as being relatively remote from simple personal concerns. Jay Wright has suggested that rituals "require a detachment and formulative ability on the part of the participant precisely because they are objectively presented."[35] The ritualistic system is primarily a statement vis à vis the abstract values with which it is concerned. Langer:

> Ritual 'expresses feelings' in the logical rather than the psychological sense. It may have what Aristotle called 'cathartic' value, but that is not its characteristic; it is primarily an articulation of feeling. The ultimate product of such articulation is not a simple emotion, but a complex, personal attitude. . .A rite regularly performed is the constant reiteration of sentiments toward 'first and last' things; it is not a free expression of emotion, but a disciplined rehearsal of right attitudes.[36]

In a contemporary performing system, audience response to the ritual mode is largely determined by the nature of actual performance in the system. In ritual,

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[35]Wright, p. 341.

[36]Langer, Philosophy, p. 134.

the performer has two functions and operates on two distinct performing levels. The dual nature of this performance is suggested by Peter Brook in The Empty Space. He is discussing the apotheosis of a Haitian in a voodoo ceremony:

> The gods need a human vehicle, and they choose one of the participants. A kick, a moan or two, a short paroxysm on the ground, and a man is possessed. He gets to his feet, no longer himself, but filled with the god. The god now has form. He is someone who can joke, get drunk, and listen to everyone's complaints . . . He's a god alright, but no longer unreal: he is there, on our level, attainable. The ordinary man or woman now can talk to him, pump his hand, argue, curse him, go to bed with him . . . [37]

Obviously, the Haitian has gone into a trance and the performers of the ritual commonly assent to the fact that he is possessed. Nonetheless, the performer here, who on one level is a god, also functions as a human being. His human faculties--in this case, joking, getting drunk, etc.--are still appreciated and used by the participants. He is both abstract divinity and human performer.

In the Performance Group's Dionysus in 69, one of the performers steps forward and says:

> Good evening . . .My name is Joan McIntosh, daughter of Walter McIntosh and June Wyatt. I was born twenty-three years ago in a hospital in Newark, New Jersey. I have come

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[37] Peter Brook, The Empty Space (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 58.

> here tonight . . .to announce my divinity. I am a god.[38]

Here the performer is clearly expressing the dichotomy--and duality--inherent in her performance. Such a statement as this one by Miss McIntosh would of course have no place in a dramatic structure--the dramatic illusion would be immediately shattered. In the ritualistic performing system, however, where there is no concern for illusion nor character-playing, Miss McIntosh's performance gesture is perfectly matrixed to the functioning of the system. In effect, Miss McIntosh is saying, "I am a performer, a person in this space here and now, but I am also functioning as a dynamic image in the abstract concerns of this play." The immediacy of the performance gesture and the dual responsibility of the performer in the ritualistic performing system appears to me as a complex elaboration of the monistic system of the dramatic mode. These performance problems are the central concern of the research of Jerzy Grotowski, and their complexity is suggested by Joseph Chaikin:

> Acting involves a dialectic between the experiences of restraint and of abandon in performance. The actor is playing in time present and comes to an unmistakable

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[38]The Performance Group, Dionysus in 69 (New York: Noonday Press, 1970). Pages in the script are not numbered.

> clarity that the act is being created and destroyed in the same instant.[39]

The fact that the ritualistic system articulates attitudes toward abstract values and the dualism of actual performing would seem to inhibit any extensive identification on the part of an audience. However, neither of these two factors precludes the affective "contact" a percipient establishes with the ritual event. The use of presentational imagery in the system leads to an immediate sensuous arousal of an audience. Images upon perception are not processed through the "idea-metaphorization-symbol" schema of discursive thought but are received directly. The image cannot be discursively articulated but rather can only be perceived and accepted as the instantaneous effect it produces. The appeal is neither purely "intellectual" nor empathetic.[40] In the theatre, the direct sensuous appeal of the ritual image is usually used in an attempt to circumvent any intellectual-empathetic response: the traditional precipitate of drama.[41]

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[39]Joseph Chaikin, "Notes on Character...and The Setup," Performance I (December, 1971), p. 81.

[40]There is no precise critical term to describe audience response to the direct stimuli of "ritual" effects. There are unquestionably emotional, intellectual and psycho-biological elements at work, but they manifest themselves in a total frisson on the part of a percipient that engages all the faculties directly and simultaneously.

[41]eg. in Dieu tenté pas les mathématiques (VIII, pp. 90-189). Arrabal has attempted a theatre piece which creates an

Audience response, then, is not one of identification on either the intellectual or empathetic level. The reference to abstract values and the dual nature of actual performance which functions both actually and symbolically (eg. Joan McIntosh--the god) prevents the total symbolic identification that occurs in drama. Rather, the system initiates a direct, almost visceral appreciation of its images.

The ritualistic performance system thus features:

1) an open structure in that its referents are aspects of mythic consciousness that transcend the parameters of time and history;

2) abstract "action" because it deals with formulations that are centred on absolute values and not the concrete referents of lived experience as in drama;

3) an immediate sensuous appreciation on the part of an audience in that the images of the system are presentational and thus tend to circumvent an intellectual-empathetic response. Moreover, extensive identification is precluded by the abstract action and complicated by the

4) dualistic nature of performance which arises

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experience of pure kinesis rather than of drama or any other intellectual/empathetic mode. The work presents various sculpture-like pieces moving through time and space accompanied by a musique concrete score.

> out of the essential nature of the system which functions both actually and symbolically.

3. The Performing-self

Although I am about to discuss the performing-self in terms of the performance factors to which I have matrixed drama and ritual, there is a distinct methodological difference between the performing-self and the other two modes. Drama and ritual are essentially methods of handling material, formal genres whereby action is presented through a specific kind of "imitation." The performing-self is not a genre, in that its prime function is not the presentation of an artistic semblance of life. Rather, it presents a specific attitude on the part of the artist towards the material he is presenting through a genre. Simply, this attitude treats the art work as a stage for dramatizing the self as performer.[42] Although the system can be seen in terms of action-as-attitude, i.e., a formal expression of a dynamic experiential view, the major feature of the performing-self in theatrical performance is its effect on the quality of communication provided, and thus the influence on spectator response.

Secondly, a facet which will be explored in this

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[42]Richard Poirier, The Performing Self (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 86.

chapter, is the fact that, unlike drama and ritual, the performing-self can not function independently within an art work: it can only operate symbiotically in conjunction with another system. Nonetheless, by viewing the performing-self in relation to the determining characteristics outlined for drama and ritual, an integrated method of approaching the functioning of the three systems in Arrabal's play becomes feasible.

Richard Poirier in The Performing Self (which, along with Robert Garis' The Dickens Theatre form the basis of this discussion) describes this particular style of performance as "any self-discovering, self-watching, finally self-pleasuring response to the difficulties of living and creating ."[43] Performance, then, presents itself as an omni-present "doing," a shaping and conscious manipulation of device and the technology of the art form.

Garis uses an episode from Tom Jones to illustrate this concept of performance. Tom, Mrs. Miller, and Partridge have just seen Garrick's Hamlet, and Tom asks Partridge which of the actors he enjoyed the most. Partridge replies:

> 'The king, without doubt.'--'Indeed Mr. Partridge,' says Mrs. Miller. 'You are not of the same opinion with the town; for they all agree that Hamlet is acted by the best player who ever was on the stage.'--'He the

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[43] Ibid., p. xiv.

> best player!' cries Partridge, with a contemptous sneer; 'why I could act as well as he myself. I am sure, if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner, and done just as he did. And then, to be sure, in that scene, as you called it, between him and his mother, where you told me he acted so fine, why, Lord help me, any man, that is, any good man, that had such a mother would have done exactly the same. I know you are only joking with me; but indeed, madam, though I was never at a play in London, yet I have seen acting before in the country: and the king for my money; he speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other.--Anybody may see he is an actor.[44]

The humour in this passages arises, of course, from Partridge's ignorance of the qualities of acting that the London sophisticates see in Garrick. We can safely assume, I should think, that the king was played by a ranter-and-raver who bellowed his way from clap-trap to clap-trap. But it is obviously just those qualities that Partridge likes. Garrick's naturalness is just that, too natural for "real" acting in Partridge's eyes. The king, on the other hand, lets the audience know that he is an actor, that he is playing someone else, not being someone else. Garrick acts, the king performs. The performing-self is consciously appreciated by an audience. Partridge enjoys the king because as a spectator he sees and knows exactly what the performer is doing.

A contemporary example of the performing-self is most readily found in the work of Norman Mailer. Obviously,

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[44]Henry Fielding, Tom Jones (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. 761.

any writer capable of entitling a retrospective of his work Advertisements for Myself is concerned with the nature of his performance. The following extract from Miami and the Siege of Chicago, cited by Poirier, illustrates one of the major features of the performing-self. Mailer has just been wakened at three a.m. and told of the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy:

> 'No,' he bellowed. 'No, No! No!' his voice railing with an ugliness and pain reminiscent to his ear of the wild grunts of a wounded pig. (Where he had heard that he did not at the moment remember.) He felt as if he were being despoiled of a vital part of himself and in the middle of this horror noted that he screamed like a pig, not a lion, nor a bear. The reporter [Mailer] had gone for years on the premise that one must balance every moment between the angel in oneself and the swine--the sound of his own voice shocked him therefore profoundly. The balance was not what he had thought it to be. He watched television for the next hours in a state which drifted rudderless between two horrors. Then, knowing that no good answer would come for days, if at all, he went back to bed and lay in a sweat of complicity, as if his own lack of moral witness (to the subtle heroism of Bobby Kennedy's attempt to run for President) could be found in the dance of evasions his taste for a merry life and a married one had become, as if this precise lack has contributed (in the vast architectronics of the cathedral of history) to one less piton of mooring for Senator Kennedy in his lonely ascent to those vaulted walls, as if finally the efforts of brave men depended in part on the protection of other men who saw themselves as at least provisionally brave, or sometimes brave, or at least--if not brave--balanced at least on a stability between

> selfishness and appetite and therefore--by practical purposes--decent. But he was close to having become too much of appetite--he had spent the afternoon preceeding this night of the assassination in enjoying a dalliance--let us leave it at that--a not uncharacteristic way to have spent his time. . . .he prayed the Lord to take the price of his own poor mortal self (since he had flesh in surfeit to offer) he begged that God spare Senator Kennedy's life, and he would give up something, give up what?--give up some of the magic he could bring to bear on someone or another of the women . . .and so fell asleep with some gnawing sense of the Devil there to snatch his offering after the angel had moved on in disgust.[45]

I have quoted from Mailer at length because I believe it essential that the development of Mailer's performance be seen in toto. It is obvious that Mailer's reportorial function has been upstaged, and the passage finds its focus on Mailer rather than on Kennedy. The event gives Mailer an opportunity to perform. Mailer is recording his own reactions very carefully (note that he bellows like a pig, not a lion nor a bear), and is ultimately concerned with himself, not Kennedy at all. The passage is totally self-conscious and this tendency to move oneself centre stage is central to the concept of the performing-self.

However, performance as a conspicuous aspect in art has long been deemed a fault. We like the work of art to

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[45]Norman Mailer, Miami and the Siege of Chicago (New York: New American Library, 1968), pp. 93-95.

emerge unblemished from the creative process. The less apparent the manipulations of the material by the artist, the better the work of art. As an aesthetic, this concept implies that the work of art stands off from life, floating in a realm of truth and beauty and transcendent knowledge, unfettered by the causes and effects of the act of creation.

Despite "willing suspension of disbelief," this "disappearing artist" formulation is ultimately inadequate in dealing with theatrical art. Even though we concede the dramatic illusion (for the next two hours I will pretend that that lighted space is Thebes, that those actors are really kings and queens), we are still aware that a playwright and/or director are fabricating it all for us. Ultimately, as Garis suggests, our primary interest in the theatre is with the artist's "routines," the performance the playwright puts on during the traffic of the stage.[46]

The dramatic performing system attempts to reduce our perception of this performance, and "realism"[47] is the ultimate mode of sustaining illusion. By seeing people who look just like we do, who do things just like we do, and who live in places just like the places we live in, an

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[46]Robert Garis, The Dickens Theatre (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 53-54.

[47]By "realism" here, I essentially mean any performance system that establishes a particular illusion of reality within performance and which maintains that illusion consistently.

audience responds: "Yes, that's just the way it really is" or "People are really like that." This kind of response, perpetuated by what might be called the Chekhov-Stanislavski syndrome,[48] is the familiar one of the twentieth century theatre. Artists operating from the Chekhov-Stanislavski perspective can create such outstanding psychological portraits and place them in such concrete situations that an audience will make that aesthetic leap of faith and jump into the "lives" of the characters we see on stage. But this is obviously the playwright's intention. The playwright does not want to perform, and so he, with our complicity, disappears from the theatre. An audience is left with his "people" and its belief in them.

In dramatic structures in non-realistic theatre it would seem much more difficult for the playwright not to

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[48]Although the plays of Chekhov themselves do not display the disappearing artist formulation, in fact they point towards the symbolist theatre and the very active presence of the playwright found in that tradition, the productions of The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, The Three Sisters and The Cherry Orchard under the direction of Stanislavski at the Moscow Art Theatre were precedent-setting approaches to dramatic production. The quality of these productions, matrixed to the Stanislavski performing style, has permeated twentieth century production approaches. For Chekhov's own rebellion against this style, note the difficulties that emerged during the production of The Cherry Orchard (cf. Ernest J. Simmons, Chekhov: A Biography [Boston: Little, Brown, 1962], p. 606, seq.).

perform. But once again, the audience can accomplish the "disappearing act." In analyzing the "theatre of the absurd" for example, we note such things as the "radical devaluation of language" and "poetry emerging from the concrete and objective images of the stage itself."[49] We are obviously constructing a vocabulary with which to deal with these plays. A means of defining a dramatic structure are found, and we literally rationalize a recognizable dramatic system. With this kind of disposition, an audience can approach a play such as The Bald Soprano and see it as a valid reflection of concrete action: "Yes, that's just the way it really is." "People are really like that."

And what has happened to the Ionesco who sat down and copied out phrases from an English primer? Again, he has disappeared. Despite the incredible constructs of language and formal "anti-structuring," he has been upstaged by the dramatic performing system. The life-styles of the characters are, frankly, quite absorbing. And similar to our reaction to the realistic drama, we leap into the stage lives of these characters. "What about the bald soprano?" is a question in which we are fundamentally interested.

Thus, despite the fact that the theatre would seem

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[49]Esslin, Absurd, p. 7.

to be incondusive to the disappearing artist formulation (in comparison to the novel, for example), dramatic performing systems which foster a myopic refusal to see a playwright on the part of an audience sustain the concept of the work as what Edmund Wilson calls a "self-developing organism."[50] The audience is content to see the playwright become a switchboard operator: off somewhere making all the connections, but whom it never really wants to see.

Nonetheless, active, visible performance by an artist in the work of art seems to me to be a valid expression, and the performing-self as performance structure worthy of attention. As I have suggested, it is difficult to manage when functioning beside a dramatic structure, but as we shall see, Arrabal would appear to have solved the problem ingeniously in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. However, first an examination of the dynamics of the performing-self as performance structure:

Earlier in this discussion, I stated that the performing-self does not manifest itself as a performing system unless it appears in conjunction with another mode. My examples from Fielding and Mailer illustrate this restrictive feature of the performing-self system. The performance by the king that draws Partridge's acclaim is obviously limited

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[50] quoted by Garis, p. 31.

by his role in the play and the structure of Hamlet. The king's performance is tightly matrixed to the play: he can only perform when Claudius appears on stage, and when Claudius dies, the performance is over. Similarly, Mailer's performance is dependent on outside events presenting him with material with which to perform. Certainly as Norman Mailer, a live human being, he always has material at his disposal in real life. However, within the framework of the novel, Norman Mailer, performer, is restricted by the events with which he finds himself concerned.

As such then the performing-self is a closed system. Bound as it is to information flow from other systems, it can only function via the parameter delineated by the system it uses as a stage.

The "action" of the performing-self is also restricted, but unlike the concrete action of the dramatic system which is directed outwards to referents in lived experience, the performing-self finds its source in the inward personality of the artist. Mailer has stated that "first art work in an artist is the shaping of his personality."[51] Needless to say, this personality-becoming-art is bound to the particular desires and style of expression that are unique to each individual artist. However, the personality model is matrixed to all the factors that go into the

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[51]quoted by Poirier, p. 102.

making of the artist. Thus, despite the uniqueness of the personality set, the "action" of the performing-self is concrete.

Harold Rosenberg's description of the work of the painter de Kooning suggests the nature of actual performance within the system:

> De Kooning's performance is . . .an act in the arena of art history, a display of skill and imagination put on before an imaginary gallery of the great masters.[52]

The performing-self is perhaps most evident in the visual arts of the twentieth century, and especially in certain aspects of Dadaism and Abstract Expressionism. Duchamp's mustachioed Mona Lisa and the "instant" paintings of a de Kooning or Pollack constantly refer us to the artist himself and his performance. Their cry "See what I'm doing!" continually points to their unique performances. They are solo performers and the performance itself has only one referent: themselves. In the theatre, however, a playwright--or any other artist for that matter--must find a way of demonstrating his performance (if, indeed, he is concerned with self-performance). Theatrical structure is much more complex than any of the visual arts in that there are other performance structures with which to contend. Norman Mailer can solve the problem in the novel by simply

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[52]Harold Rosenberg, The Anxious Object (New York: Horizon Press, 1964), p. 127.

making himself into the major character. The theatre artist must find devices inherent in the structure of the performance piece that will allow his performance to become manifest.

The history of drama features many dramatists who, for one reason or another, are not content to function according to the disciplines of the disappearing artist formulation. Although their participation within the work may not appear as blatant performance-for-the-sake-of-performance as is the case with Partridge's king, the examples I shall present in a moment clearly suggest that the effect of their performance is tantamount to either that of the king or Mailer.

Essentially, conscious appreciation of the performing-self on the part of the percipient effectively distances the artist from the work and thus provides the spectator with a double perspective from which to view the work. The spectator not only perceives the work per se, but also the artist's own comment on the work. This second perspective also allows for a direct appreciation of the artist's skill in handling material. Partridge's appreciation of the king, for example, is clearly centred solely on this latter aspect. He seems to have relatively little interest in the prime work, Hamlet, and is merely fascinated by the king's acting. However, assuming that the aesthetic experience is not always eclipsed

by the pyrotechnics of sheer performance, the functioning of the performing-self within an art work would seem to enrich audience response by providing an ad hoc perspective from which to view the work.

The double perspective can be presented through an implicit or an explicit style of self-performance in drama. Bertolt Brecht serves as an example of the former case. Note the finale of The Threepenny Opera:

> Peachum: So, gentlemen, to this point we have come.
> You all can see what Captain Mackie's
> fate is.
> Which proves that in the whole of
> Christendom
> Nothing is granted any of us gratis.
>
> But lest you jump to the con-
> clusion
> That we are parties to the deal, and in
> collusion,
> Macheath will not be hanged till he is dead.
> We have devised another end instead.
>
> You all will hear (yes, all; it's rather
> loud)
> Mercy gives Justice quite a dreadful hiding.
> This is an opera, and we mean to do you
> proud
> The Royal Messenger will make his entrance
> --riding.
> (p. 95.)[53]

As a coda to Macheath's "miraculous" rescue, Brecht is quick

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[53]Bertolt Brecht, The Threepenny Opera, tr. Desmond Vesey and Eric Bentley (New York: Grove Press, 1964). All subsequent references to the play are from this edition.

It should be noted that the effect Brecht achieves here is similar to the one inherent in Brecht's source, John Gay's The Beggar's Opera.

to add an ironic twist:

> Mounted messengers from the queen come far too seldom, and if you kick a man he kicks you back again. Therefore never be too eager to combat justice.
> ...
> Remember: this whole vale of tribulation
> Is black as pitch and cold as any stone.
> (p. 96.)

Using the persona of Peachum, Brecht is offering his comments on the "happy-ending" tradition of the "culinary" theatre in stating that reality does not function according to sentimental taste. By providing a mock finale, Brecht makes his attitudes vis à vis the world much more apparent than had he merely hung Macheath. The underlining of theatrical device points directly to the playwright: he does not disappear, but stands before us at the curtain presenting not only his vision of the world, but, perhaps even more importantly, a critique of the theatre and its handling of "reality."[54]

Brecht's performance is implicit in The Threepenny Opera in that he does not appear directly on the stage under the guise of any specific character per se, but rather disseminates his "role" over many elements of

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[54]The performing-self is especially noticeable in plays that offer a critique of dramatic and/or theatrical practices. For further examples, see Aristophanes, The Frogs; Francis Beaumont, The Knight of the Burning Pestle; George Villiers, The Rehearsal; and Richard Brindsley Sheridan, The Critic.

the mise-en-scène. Explicit performance, which presents the playwright unequivocably on the stage in one form or another, is another method of dramatizing the self as performer.

A prime example of this mode is E. E. Cumming's play Him, which specifically is a work about "the sort of a man--who is writing a play about a man who is writing a sort of a play." (p. 30.)[55] At one level, the piece centres on the particular problem of writing for the theatre, and the major character, Him, is clearly Cummings struggling with the process of artistic creation:

> Him (Pacing up and down): I feel only one thing, I have only one conviction; it sits on three chairs in Heaven. Sometimes I look at it, with terror: it is such a perfect acrobat! The three chairs are three facts --it will quickly kick them out from under itself and will stand on air; and in that moment (because everyone will be disappointed) everyone will applaud. Meanwhile, some thousands of miles over everyone's head, over a billion empty faces, it rocks carefully and smilingly at three things, on three facts, on: I am an artist, I am a man, I am a failure--it rocks and it swings and it smiles and it does not collapse tumble or die because it pays no attention to anything but itself. (Passionately) I feel, I am aware--every minute, every instant, I watch this trick, I sway--selfish and smiling and careful--above all the people. (To himself) And always I am repeating a simple and dark little formula...always

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[55] E. E. Cummings, Him (New York: Liverright, 1927). All subsequent references to the play are from this edition.

> myself mutters and remutters a trivial microscopic idiom--I breathe, and I swing; and I whisper: "An artist, a man, a failure, MUST PROCEED."
>
> (pp. 12-13.)

Him constantly re-asserts itself as a play still-born, and constantly reminds its audience that it is witness to an illusion created by Cummings, especially the second act which is a series of scenes directly presented by Him as "samples" of his work.

Cumming's explicit performance,[56] like that of Mailer and Partridge's king, and the implicit performance of Brecht, obviously effect audience response. The discernable presence of the performing-self in drama breaks down the illusionistic "willing suspension of disbelief" manifest in the Chekhov-Stanislavski syndrome and allows the percipient to view the theatrical event from a double perspective, usually precipitating an ironic response.

The performance system of the performing-self manifests, then,

1) a closed structure since it is inextricably bound to another performing system to function;
2) concrete "action" in that its referent, the personality of the artist is fixed,

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[56] For other examples of explicit performance, see Molière, L'Impromptu de Versailles; Jean Giraudoux, L'Impromptu du Paris; N. F. Simpson, A Resounding Tinkle; and Eugène Ionesco, L'Impromptu d'Alma, ou le Caméléon du Berger.

3) a variable spectator response, dependent on the amount of discernable distance the artist establishes between his performing-self and the art work. Perception of this distance provides another perspective from which to evaluate the aesthetic experience.

4) performing that is either monistic, perceivable as a definite, observable structure (Mailer), or diffuse, discernable in various elements spread throughout a work (theatre).

4. Conclusion

My attempt at delineating the elemental performance structures of these three systems might appear arbitrary, and to a certain extent, it is. However, the parameters established here--the dynamism of the structure, the basis of the "action," the type of audience response, and the nature of actual performance--appear to me, if not totally inclusive, the essential instruments with which to examine basic structures in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. Radical similarities and differences among the systems should be apparent, and in now turning to the workings of each system within Arrabal's play, the essential structuring of the work should emerge.

CHAPTER II

THE FUNCTIONING OF THE PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS: THE MISE-EN-SCENE OF THE ARCHITECT AND THE EMPEROR OF ASSYRIA

The use of role-playing as a theatrical device is one of the more common techniques in the history of drama. It has served as a means of exploring the nature of appearance and reality for over two thousand years. In the modern theatre, as evidenced in the work of Pirandello and Genet especially, the concept has taken on peculiar relevance in twentieth century man's quest for "reality." Arrabal's play is an extensive exploration of the use of the device, and much of the power inherent in the work emerges from the effects Arrabal creates through his handling of the technique.

Role-playing is a particularly apt theatrical device in that its essential nature is basically that of the theatre itself. Role-playing posits an implicit two part schema: a "role" can only be perceptable when it is juxtaposed against a "reality." When someone is "playing" someone, we know that the person "played" is only a mask, and that there is a "real" person beneath

that mask. Similarly, theatre is only perceptable as "theatre," i.e., something distinguishable from life, when an audience is able to perceive an event as illusion, as a semblance, and differentiate that semblance from "reality." The stage event is only a mask, behind which lie actors "playing" characters, a set "representing" a scene, dialogue "substituting" for speech, etc. By introducing role-playing into the mise-en-scène of theatrical performance, the playwright is directly using the grammar of the theatre in the theatre. Now, the language of the theatre exists a priori solely as a communication device: to dynamically reveal aspects of existence to an audience. By centering a performance structure on pure theatrical language--as is the case of role-playing in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria--the playwright is able to create a work that communicates directly to an audience. In the context of this study of Arrabal's play then, the central issue is not the themes explored, the action revealed, nor the philosophical speculations to which the work gives rise. Rather, the major feature of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria is that by using a pure theatrical grammar, Arrabal communicates an immediate experience of life to an audience that is greater in sheer effect than appreciation of a dramatic, ritualistic or performing-self sequence of "actions."

The three performance structures delineated in Chapter One are matrixed to the role-playing device and find articulation through the juxtaposition of the various roles played by the two characters in the course of the play. Drama, ritual and the performing-self each have their own "action referent," that is they each delineate a unique "movement of spirit," but they are not revealed consecutively nor in a linear fashion. Rather, using the role-playing device as an instrument, and accompanied by other theatrical devices, Arrabal plays these three separate action referents as a sequence of musical-like chords throughout the work. These "chords" are sounded in various ways in the piece, melodically, harmonically, even discordantly, but nonetheless they are coherently structured into the play as a whole.

The following analysis of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria is thus an attempt to determine the nature of the communication Arrabal is presenting by providing a reading of his "orchestration" of the play in terms of the three performance structures delineated above.[1] In order to suggest some of the development in

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[1]The three performance structures I have isolated in the play are not, of course, the only systems evident in the play. For example, I have articulated the ritual system by means of an initiation rite model, but it could also be seen in terms of the "redemption" rite of the Catholic liturgy--the Mass.

the play, my analysis proceeds chronologically through the play from curtain to curtain. Although such an approach might appear constricting, it does provide a method whereby audience response to Arrabal's treatment of material can be more clearly suggested.

1.

The extremely brief opening scene of the play establishes the basic context wherein the action referents will be delineated. Principally, the scene functions dramatically: it initiates the spectator to the specific conflict-suspense-resolution continuum along which the dramatic system functions. The tableau establishes the essential polarity between the Architect and the Emperor. The Architect is the illiterate savage, little more than an animal, who finds his solitary existence invaded by the Emperor, the sole survivor of an air accident. The situation immediately suggests Robinson Crusoe and Friday, Prospero and Caliban, and the almost archetypal theme of "civilization" encountering "nature" head on. Arrabal is obviously giving rise to suspense. The scene poses questions, the answers to which an audience eventually expects to learn, namely: what is this version of Crusoe going to be like, and this Friday?; what will be the nature of their relationship?; will the savage be "civilized,"

or will civilized man "return to nature"? These types of questions, whether consciously conceived or not, proceed directly out of the opening situation.

However, the appearance of neither the Architect as a screaming, illiterate beast, nor the Emperor, as a bewildered air traveller who politely asks, "Monsieur, venez à mon secours, je suis le seul survivant de l'accident," (V, p. 78.) prepares an audience for the Architect and the Emperor it meets in the second scene of the play. Early in the scene, Arrabal's Crusoe explains his life:

> *(Il se lève en faisant de grands gestes.)*
> *Je me levais aux premières lueurs de l'aube, toutes les églises, toutes les synagogues tous les temples faisaient sonner leur trompettes. Le jour commencait à poindre. Mon père venait m'éveiller suivi d'un régiment de violinistes. Ah! la musique. Quelle merveille!*
> . . .
> *Quels matins! Quels réveils! Puis accouraient mes divines esclaves aveugles qui m'enseignaient la philosophie!*
>
> (V, pp. 80-81.)

and the Architect describes his impressions of civilization:

> *où il y a des voitures, des disques et la télévision et des femmes et des assiettes de confetti et des kilomètres de pensées et de jeudis plus longs que nature et ...*
>
> (V, p. 82.)

It is obvious that the principals of Arrabal's robinsonade

are not following an expected pattern. The polite, slightly terrified man who possesses "a certain forced elegance" in the opening scene now appears as a grandiose, strutting, "Emperor of Assyria." On the other hand, the terrified, illiterate savage is now seen as an eloquent, albeit bizarre, would-be student of philosophy and architecture. This contrast between the opening sequence of the second scene and the tableau that opens the play is quite jarring. Arrabal accomplishes the effective juxtaposition by using audience expectations aroused in the first scene in a novel manner. The opening scene is almost cliched in the information it presents: it merely suggests the Crusoe matrix. However, the Architect and the Emperor as they appear in the second scene are really two completely different characters from those presented in the opening tableau. An audience expects elaboration of the questions posed by the tableau, but not in the manner Arrabal begins to explore them: via a fantastic "Emperor of Assyria" and a native with a thirst for philosophy. The appearance of these two characters and their opening dialogue, which dwells on the Architect's learning of language, the Emperor's mornings in the court of Assyria and the Architect's impressions of civilization, is surprising because the opening scene does not prepare an audience in any way for these developments.

Then too, there is an essential difference in textural quality between the tableau and the opening sequences between the "Emperor of Assyria" and his Friday. The opening scene--which is not really a scene at all, but rather a kind of prologue--uses direct sensual "ritual" effects to present the dramatic action. The tableau appears in performance as an explosion of sound and light--the airplane, the crash, the Architect's incoherent screaming--punctuated by the single line of dialogue that establishes the Crusoe action. By setting a single discursive element amidst the sheer physical bombardment of light and sound, the play literally explodes into life and the effect is to involve the audience not solely by presenting an implicitly dramatic situation, but to engage awareness by creating the frisson that accompanies direct sensual stimulation.

This frisson is the essential quality inherent in the first scene and it does accompany recognition of the Crusoe matrix. However revealing the quantitative information contained in the prologue--establishing the robinsonade--is not the primary function of the scene. Rather, the tableau makes an audience directly and sensually aware of the situation via a frisson and not simply by eliciting intellectual recognition.

Arrabal then proceeds to immediately juxtapose the tableau, qualitatively set at a high pitch of direct arousal, with the opening sequences of the major scene, the Architect's "lessons." These latter scenes are conventionally presented in terms of qualitative information. The scene functions discursively--dialogue interchanges about philosophy, architecture as well as the other things the Architect wants to know. Thus, there is a direct juxtaposition between ritualistic treatment of action--the prologue--and dramatic treatment--the lessons.

As for audience expectations, Arrabal has thus effected a double reversal in the opening few moments of the play. The quantitative information of the prologue initiates the dramatic action, but is presented through ritual technique. The quantitative information of the second scene is superficially dramatic, but as we shall see in a moment, actually presents the ritual action, but articulated through dramatic, discursive technique.

The technique Arrabal uses here--utilizing audience expectations to lead it to an unexpected turn--is one of the major structural patterns evident in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. The series of games and charades that the two characters played are arranged throughout the work such that the qualitative information contained in one sequence is juxtaposed against the infor-

mation, which may be radically different, contained in a following sequence. Nonetheless, the action referents of the three performance systems are still clearly articulated even though they are presented over the course of the many scenarios enacted by the characters.

This is most clearly evident in the presentation of the major dramatic action of the play. From this perspective, The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria is essentially a monodrama centred on the internal conflict of the Emperor: defining the "real" Emperor behind the mask of the "Emperor of Assyria." Structurally, the dramatic action is of classic proportions,[2] but Arrabal reveals the essentials of his Crusoe's life almost totally through the juxtaposition of role-playing sequences.

These role-playing sequences--in the form of the games played by the characters and the charades they perform--are the structural units upon which the entire performance action of the play is constructed. At first glance, there appears to be no apparent overt systematization

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[2]Similar to Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, as the plot of Arrabal's play moves forward in chronological time, the action concerns itself with revealing incidents in the past life of the major character. Moreover, the information revealed precipitates a crisis in both plays that leads to a terminal action: exile for Oedipus and death for the Emperor. The concrete referent of the dramatic action in Arrabal's play is the past life of the Emperor, and dramatic "imitation" is so constructed that the revelation of this life becomes the centre of audience attention.

of the sequences. Nonetheless, essential information, both quantitatively, ie., that which reveals the three action referents, and qualitatively--that which engages audience interest--is matrixed to the role-playing scenarios.

These games early in the first act essentially present fragments of information about the "real" Emperor, but more importantly, demonstrate the facility with which both the Architect and, especially, the Emperor assume roles. The Emperor is usually the initiator of the game, and he usually ends it. The Architect, on the other hand, seems incapable of distinguishing the games from reality. In the Bishop of Chess sequence, he takes the Emperor for dead and starts burying him. However, despite the humour in many of these first act charades, the action is profoundly serious.

Here again, Arrabal is playing with audience expectations. Initial audience reaction to the "fun and games" of the first act, I would suggest, is one of amusement. The rapid shift in roles and the nature of the games themselves are profoundly entertaining. The Architect and the Emperor are good performers, and the bizarre games they play are fascinating. However, Arrabal is having his characters reveal their inner natures and pre-

senting the action referents of the play as a whole. The major movements of the play are defined in the role-playing sequences, and an audience expecting to find out "what the play is all about" by waiting for those moments when the characters are not "playing" will find themselves ignorant of the action referents of the piece.

The major dramatic movement is obviously defined in terms of the Emperor's major role as "Emperor of Assyria," and similarly the action referent of the ritual system finds expression in the role-playing technique. The abstract action of the ritual system focuses on the encounter of civilization and nature, the kinds of Weltanschauung and Lebensanschauung these concepts present, and the function of these two diametrically opposed systems in a life-and-death cycle. The two poles of the theme are, of course, actualized in the Architect and the Emperor. However, both concepts are delineated via role-playing. Civilization is that of the "Emperor of Assyria": it is extravagantly grotesque and part of the "real" Emperor's mask:

> *Tu veux dire le monde civilisé. Quelle merveille! Pendant des milliers de siècles l'homme a emmaganasiné des connaisances et enrichi son intelligence jusqu'à ce qu'il ait atteint cette merveilleuse perfection qu'est devenue la vie. Partout le bonheur, la joie, la tranquillité, les rires, la compréhension. Tout est conçu pour rendre*

> *l'existence de l'homme plus simple, son bonheur plus grand et la paix durable. L' homme a découvert tout ce qui est nécessaire à son confort et aujourd'hui c'est l'être le plus heureux et le serein de la création.*
>
> (V, p. 112.)

The Emperor's explanation of civilized society appears as a bare-faced parody of humanistic positivism, but it is the kind of utopianism that filters its way into the Architect's comprehension of civilization:

> *où il y a des voitures, des disques, et la télévision et des femmes et des assiettes de confetti et des kilomètres de pensées et de jeudis plus longs que nature et...*
>
> (V, p. 82.)

Although this concept of civilization is perceived by an audience as a rather extreme type of black humour, it does function as the paradigm of the outside world for the isolated inhabitants of the Architect's island. More importantly though, in this context, is the fact that the concept of civilization originates in the baroque artifice of the mask that is the "Emperor of Assyria."

On the other hand, "nature" is presented not directly in one of the Architect's roles, but in the essentially "real" Architect who lies behind the figure who has learned language and desires knowledge of philosophy and architecture. As we learn later, this is a man who lives forever, is eternally of youthful appearance, has no ancestors, and can perform feats of magic: moving

mountains, changing night into day, commanding animals, etc. This is, of course, Adam before The Fall, and the Architect--the Great Organizer--has complete dominion over the physical world. To the civilized Emperor this is all quite incredible, and to cope with it, he can only muster the "greatness" of his civilization in defense. For example, the Architect has turned night into day, and under the Emperor's questioning, explains the "magic" he uses:

> *L'Architecte: Je les pronounce comme ca, sans savoir pourquoi. Mais la nuit peut aussi tomber sans elles. Il suffit que je le souhaite.*
> *L'Empereur, (intrigué.) Et ces paroles... (Se reprenant.) Brute ignorante! Tu n'as rien vu! T'ai je entretenu de la télévision, du Coca-Cola, des tanks, des musées de Babylone, de nos ministres, de nos papes, de l'immensité de l'océan, de la profondeur de nos théories...*
> *L'Architecte: Raconte, raconte!* (V, p. 102.)

Raising Coca-Cola as one of the great achievements of the civilized world is, of course, ludicrous, but more intriguing about the above interchange is that fact that both the Architect and the Emperor have a passionate interest in each other's world. This interest forms the basic tension that gives the ritual performing system a dynamic centre.

However both character's interest is sparked by

aspects of the other's role. The Architect is interested in the Emperor's mask, and the Emperor is fascinated by the Architect's "reality." Moreover, the movement central to the ritual system, a type of initiation rite,[3] is essen-

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[3]Mircea Eliade, in Rites and Symbols of Initiation (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), has provided an extensive analysis of both the function and form of the initiation rite. Eliade's work helps to delineate some of the abstract values to which this particular rite refers, and some of his observations appear adaptable to the ritual performing system in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. Specifically, Eliade's definition of "initiation" is quite revealing:

> "The term initiation in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become another."
>
> (p.ix.)

In Arrabal's play, the stage events that occur during performance time can be seen as the "body of rites and oral teachings" that lead to a new status for both novitiates and their progress in becoming "another."

Eliade has broken down the initiation scenario into four basic sections, and the similarity to the ritual system in Arrabal's play is quite extraordinary:

> "Basically speaking, the initiation ceremony comprises the following phases: first, the preparation of 'sacred ground,' where the men will remain in isolation during the festival; second, the separation of the novices from their mothers and, in general, from all women; third, their segregation in the bush, or in a special isolated camp, where they will be instructed in the religious traditions of the tribe; fourth, certain operations performed on the novices, usually circumcision, the extraction of a

tially a transposition of roles for the Architect and the Emperor. The Architect becomes civilized, and in so doing becomes the "Emperor of Assyria"--that is the "real" Emperor's mask. Similarly, in his "rites of passage" towards nature, the Emperor acquires the "reality" of the Architect: he literally becomes the Architect, and can even perform miracles. In the ritual system, Arrabal is again toying with audience expectations by completely reversing his characters' roles. The Architect we first meet in the opening scene--the illiterate savage--is not the Architect we see in the major scenes of the play--the man learning about civilization--is not the Architect encountered at the end of the play--the "Emperor of Assyria." Similarly, the polite, frightened air traveller becomes the mask "Emperor of Assyria" in the central section, and then immortal--in the Architect--after his death.

Essentially, both the dramatic and ritualistic actions are games, and they manifest an elaborate magnification of the simple-role playing games scattered throughout the play. Moreover, Arrabal's handling of this material--from the briefest mime to such an extended

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tooth, or subincision. . ."
(p. 4.)

The first two phases have already been established in Arrabal's play, both figuratively and literally, before the action begins, and the ritual system in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria presents the last two phases of this ritual model.

charade as the Emperor's monologue or the second act trial--is essentially the same. Thus, in now turning to an examination of the dynamics and texture of the game in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, the basic pattern of the play, and of audience involvement should become apparent.

2.

It is obvious that the Arrabalian game is a serious matter. Like the Emperor's pin-ball proof of the existence of God, it attempts to be efficacious. The seriousness of the games played by the Architect and the Emperor is best seen in terms of the aspect it takes on when seen from the perspective of ritual. Lévi-Strauss has delineated the basic difference between games as play and their function in ritual.[4] In the former case, he terms games "disjunctive." They begin with a basic equality between sides, and end when one side has established a difference between the two, that is, a basic inequality: one side "wins," the other "loses." On the other hand, ritual games are "conjunctive." There is a basic inequality, or established difference between the two sides, and

> the 'game' consists in making all the participants pass to the winning side by means of events . . .and brings about a union,

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[4]Lévi-Strauss, Savage Mind, pp. 30-33.

> or in any case an organic relation between two initially separate groups.[5]

The games in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria are similarly constructed. There are, of course, two "winning" sides: for the Architect it is civilization, and for the Emperor, nature. The games are constructed so that each learns the mysteries of the order to which they are aspiring, and the ritual action has them both accomplish their "winning" sides.

The games played in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria are conjunctive in this ritual sense, and, moreover, the play as a whole manifests a master "game-plan" to effect this conjunction. In the first act, the scenarios are generally bracketed by the opening situation: the Emperor teaches the Architect about civilization. At this level, all the games can be seen as the Emperor's "teaching aids." The facility with which the Architect plays these games suggests that he has played them before, but nonetheless, the action referents of the games present a virtual compendium of examples of civilized life: aspects of religion, war, and inter-personal relationships. In the second act, the trial provides the "game-brackets," and the role-playing games in that act all assist in resolving the trial, i.e., in bringing the Emperor to his death.

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[5] Ibid., p. 32.

From this very general framework, however, Arrabal contracts the games such that each and every game, mime and re-enactment reveals something essential to perception of the action referents of the piece, and elicits a peculiar audience response. Note, for example, the following sequence:

L'Empereur: Tu es le fils d'une sirène et d'un centaure. L'union parfaite!
(Très triste:)
Maman, maman.
(Il fait quelques pas pour la chercher sous son trône.)
Maman, où es-tu? C'est moi, je suis seul ici, tous m'ont oublié, mais toi...
L'Architecte, (il s'est mis un viole sur la tête, et joue la mère.): Mon enfant, qu'as-tu? Tu n'es pas seul, c'est moi, maman!
L'Empereur: Maman, tout le monde me déteste, on m'a abandonné sur cette île.
L'Architecte, (très maternel, il le protège en le couvrant de ses bras.): Non, mon enfant. Je suis là pour te protéger. Il ne faut pas que tu te sentes seul. Allons, raconte tout à ta mère.
L'Empereur: Maman, l'Architecte veut m'abandonner, il a construit une pirogue pour s'en aller et je resterai seul ici.
L'Architecte, (mère): Ne crois pas cela, tu verras que c'est pour ton bien, il ira chercher du secours et on viendra te sauver.
L'Empereur: Tu en es sûre maman?
L'Architecte: Oui, mon enfant.
L'Empereur: Maman, ne t'en va pas, reste avec moi.
L'Architecte: Oui mon enfant, je resterai avec toi ici, jour et nuit.
L'Empereur: Petite maman chérie, embrasse-moi.
(L'Architecte s'approche pour lui donner un baiser. L'Empereur le

repousse brutalement.)
Tu pues! Tu pues! Que diable as-tu mangé?
. . .
Prends rendez-vous chez le dentiste.
(V, pp. 89-90.)

The charade is typical of all the role-playing games throughout the play both quantitatively and qualitatively. Firstly, the scene is concretely referential in that it directly reveals aspects of the "real" Emperor--in this case, one side of his love-hate relationship to his mother. Secondly, the scene also operates on several levels. As well as presenting the "real" Emperor-mother relationship, it also presents an aspect of the Architect-Emperor relationship--here, the real concern and love between the two. Thirdly, there is a definite erotic element--presented in this instance through a homosexual kiss--which tends to permeate all the games played by the characters. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, the charade is not completed. The Emperor brings us back to "reality" by jumping out of the role to comment on the Architect's breath, and thus effectively ending the game. This pattern is repeated again and again throughout the role-playing scenes and this handling of the elements of the game is Arrabal's major method of maintaining audience interest throughout the play.

Percipient response is initiated by the balance

each scenario maintains between the action referents of the three performance structures, and by the peculiar interest the textural quality of the scenarios elicit. For example, in the "mother-child" sequence quoted above, the dualistic nature of the performing functions similarly to the Joan McIntosh-god duality cited in Chapter One. Here, the Architect and the Emperor symbolically represent the "real" Emperor and his mother. Within this formulation --symbolic representation-- they are functioning in the dramatic system, obviously referring the audience to the "real" life of the Emperor. On the level of "actual presentation," i.e., in terms of ritual performance, the characters are themselves, presenting their feelings towards one another. The tension between the Architect and the Emperor at this level serves as reference to the tension of the ritual action and its vacillation between nature and civilization. By using the role-playing device to manifest at least two different referents, Arrabal essentially moves the game from the context of sheer play and allows it to be perceived "seriously," in the context of conjunctive games as described above.

Reinforcing this latter aspect are the two major qualitative elements of the scenarios: the inherent eroticism and the fragmented, incomplete nature. The eroticism that each scene manifests functions to cast the scenarios in a grotesque light. The erotic jokes,

references to irregular sexual acts, and the aura of implied homosexuality that pervades the play, function in the scenarios to alternately intrigue and repel an audience. For example, the "hot line" charade (V, pp. 108-09.) is humourous because it presents the idea of a nuclear holocaust precipitated by a homosexual squabble between two heads of states. Arrabal is obviously mocking the "big issues" by seeing them in terms of sexuality, and moreover, a sexuality that would most likely be seen by the majority of spectators as perverse. This grotesque element, which elicits laughter from a situation that in another context is profoundly serious, serves to jar audience sensibilities by having the laughter qualified by recognition of the fact that that which the spectator finds amusing is not inherently humourous.

The jarring of sensibilities by means of the grotesque is modified by the incomplete nature of most of the games. Arrabal has his players launch into a scenario, only to have them ended without completion. Some scenes, such as the "crucifixion" charade (V, p. 82.), and the "confession" sequence (V, p. 96.), never actually start: the Architect and the Emperor cannot decide on the roles they are to play. Others begin, seem to develop some sort of action, and then are abruptly stopped. For example: the "horse and rider" game (V, p. 83.) is stopped

by the Emperor because the Architect is not wearing spurs; the first "fiancée" mime (V, p. 86-87.) comes to a halt because the Emperor is bothered by the fact that he doesn't have his costume.

Arrabal's technique is to mercilessly frustrate audience expectations. Just at the point where the scenario appears to be approaching some kind of internal climax, Arrabal immediately drops his characters and his audience out of the game reality. Moreover, he then proceeds, almost immediately, to launch into yet another game, and the pattern is repeated again. In the course of the games played before the Emperor's monologue, only two games are actually completed. The first, the "war" game (V, 93-95.) ends in an absurd stalemate,[6] and the second, the "Bishop of Chess" sequence (V, pp. 103-05.) ends with the Architect taking the Emperor for dead and actually trying to bury him. Both these games, however, reverse audience expectations: the former "should" end with someone victorious, but it doesn't; and the latter, a "real" burial of the Emperor, should not occur, but does.

Thus, by the time the Emperor is ready to present his monologue, Arrabal has conditioned his audience to the

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[6]The "war" game is an almost-perfect two-page contraction of Arrabal's first play, Picnic on the Battlefield (cf. II, pp. 171-196.)

essential style of the play. The performance action moves through the action referents of the three systems by constantly jarring audience expectations. The element of the grotesque in the charades moves the percipient between laughter and serious apprehension. The incomplete nature of the sequences frustrates perception of a complete "mini-drama" by playing against audience expectation of complete action. This series of fragments, in turn, presents a constant juxtaposition of masks and realities. Thus, the mise-en-scène does not follow a linear development. Rather, like a roller coaster ride that has the audience as its passengers, the performance action rushes from various points in the three action referents, turning unexpected corners, stopping mid-way in a climactical build, to only then reverse directions and climb to another peak.

This "roller coaster" effect is the basic pattern of audience engagement throughout the play. This quality of the Arrabalian game--constantly moving from mask to reality, from laughter to serious apprehension, and from fragmented action to fragmented action--and yet all the while articulating the performance structures is Arrabal's major technique of involving the percipient. The use of unexpected reversals is best exemplified in the structuring of the two major "games"--the Emperor's monologue and the trial--and they serve as paradigms of Arrabal's use of role-playing.

3.

The major set piece of the first act is the Emperor's monologue, and Arrabal's use of this relatively conventional dramatic device clearly underscores the major feature of the role-playing schema.

In his analysis of performance, Garis points out two methods of encountering the inner life of a character. He terms these two methods "continuous registration" and "sudden revelation."[7] According to Garis, "continuous registration" of inner life is best exemplified in the Shakespearian soliloquy. He notes that this type of direct address to the audience, perfected by Shakespeare, has been totally accepted as a dramatic convention, and therefore is "eminently natural."[8] Certainly, the great power inherent in much of Shakespeare is directly attributable to the contact an audience is afforded with a Hamlet or a Richard III through the soliloquy device. Arrabal is treading on potent ground, but imitation of the technique is dangerous. Garis cites Shelley's use of the device in The Cenci as an example of where the technique yields not contact with inner life, but only "lurid sensationalism."[9]

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[7]Garis, Dickens Theatre, p. 46.

[8]Ibid., p. 47.

[9]Ibid.

After one of their arguments in the first act, the Architect leaves the Emperor alone on the stage, and the latter, pacing "la scène avec majesté" intones, "Soit! Soyons shakespeariens! Ceci me fournit l'occasion d'un monologue." (V, pp. 98-99.) The soliloquy is cut short by the sudden return of the Architect, but later in the act, the Emperor is left alone once again and this time presents a monologue that extends over twenty-five pages in the script. However, the sequence does not appear as a soliloquy in performance at all, for Arrabal has recourse to the role-playing device and decidedly alters the impact of the speech.

Once the Architect has left the stage, the Emperor emerges from the hut, stripped of his Emperor's costume, and speaks in language that is far removed from that of the strutting "Emperor of Assyria":

> *Et je me construirai une cage en bois et je m'enfermerai à l'intérieur. De là je pardonnerai à l'humanité toute la haine qu'elle a toujours montrée envers moi . . .*
>
> (V, p. 117.)

Continuing in this self-reproachful vein, he constructs a scarecrow and dresses it in his clothes, those of his mask, the "Emperor of Assyria." Arrabal has literally taken the mask off of his Crusoe, left it visibly on stage in the form of the scarecrow, and presented us with the "real"

Emperor, who both figuratively and literally is naked before the audience. Moreover, the "real" Emperor's soliloquy takes the form of a dramatic monologue addressed to the scarecrow-Emperor. This stage image of the "real" Emperor playing to his fantasy mask brilliantly underscores the revelations the "real" Emperor presents concerning himself.

The soliloquy obviously contains a wealth of detail necessary to our understanding of the "real" Emperor, but more importantly, Arrabal's technique presents both mask and reality simultaneously on the stage. The scene presents a direct juxtaposition of the "real" Emperor and his mask, the "Emperor of Assyria." In the role-playing games that preceed the monologue, the audience perceives suggestions that there is a "real" Emperor behind the mask, but in the soliloquy Arrabal directly presents his little bureaucrat in conversation with the fantasy "Emperor of Assyria" incarnate in the scarecrow.

The internal structure of the monologue follows the pattern established for the games that preceed the sequence. The scene begins quietly with the Emperor emerging from the hut, but as soon as he realizes that the Architect has truly left him alone, he begins to panic. Aggravated by the reminiscences of his failures,

the panic takes the form of role-playing. Arrabal carefully elaborates the role-playing into a crescendo. At first, the role-playing finds expression in his dialogue with the scarecrow-Emperor, but he gradually adds pieces of female attire until he presents himself as a Carmelite nun (V, p. 131.). From this point forward, the Emperor becomes a one-man show, playing in rapid succession and at times simultaneously, the nun, her confessor, a doctor, a pregnant woman, a "sacred camel" and a Martian. As with the previous roles, these games are short, erotic, and fragmented and they move an audience by means of the "roller coaster" effect described above.

The role-playing sequences function dramatically, but are presented through ritualistic performance. This articulation through a dualistic performing schema is no more apparent than in the "birth" episode (V, pp. 132-136.) In terms of the initiation rite, the Emperor can be seen as giving birth to himself--the birth ordeal is part of his movement towards nature. More importantly though, the birth serves as a direct presentational image introducing the birth theme to the nature-civilization continuum. In the dramatic system, the episode serves to identify the Emperor with the mother image that permeates the play. Like his own mother, the Emperor-mother is to die at the hands of "her son"--the Architect.

The major feature of the monologue is, however, the fact that it presents the role-playing schema in a single figure, and thus directly juxtaposes mask and reality.[10] However, what is reality? The scarecrow Emperor is a mask; the nun, confessor et al., are masks, and the "real" Emperor's domestic life--his relationship to his wife, his mother, the use of pin-ball to prove the existence of God--is anything but normal. The monologue takes us to the "real" Emperor, but is he not as fantastic as the "Emperor of Assyria"? However, within the context of the play and the dramatic system, the domestic Emperor is read as being concretely referential, mainly because the "Emperor of Assyria" is even more extravagant than the man using pin-ball to prove the existence of God, and as we shall see in a moment, Arrabal makes the mask more outrageous for a very particular reason.

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[10]Just prior to the Emperor's monologue, the Architect engages in a similar solo performance wherein he attempts to lure the Emperor out of the hut by playing a girl (V, pp. 114-17.). Here too there is a direct juxtaposition of mask and reality in a single figure, and the scene functions dramatically and ritually. In the dramatic system it expresses the Architect's feelings for the Emperor through the girl mask. In the ritual structure, the scenario presents the Architect's movement towards civilization. Playing a role is a faculty that has obviously been learned from the Emperor, i.e., civilization, and is basically "unnatural" in that context defined by Arrabal through the "real" Architect. The brief scenario, thus while demonstrating all the characteristics of the Arrabalian game, also foreshadows the complete assumption of civilization and role-playing by the Architect when he literally becomes the Emperor at the end of the play.

The scene directly reinforces audience suspicions (provoked by the suspense-laden question presented in the opening scene: who is this Crusoe?) that the extravagant "Emperor of Assyria" is a completely different "character" from that of the "real" Emperor. Moreover, although natural dramatic focus (as well as audience expectations) would lead us to expect the "real" Emperor to be the prime centre of attention, Arrabal clearly makes the "Emperor of Assyria" much more theatrically interesting than the "little man" action. This Emperor:

> *Tu ne peux imaginer: tous les matins la télévision d'Assyrie transmettait mon réveil, mon peuple contemplait ce spectacle avec une telle émotion que les femmes pleuraient et les hommes répétaient mon nom en murmure.*
>
> (V, p. 112.)

exudes a vibrancy and a theatrical presence that seems only nominally related to this Emperor:

> *Bien sûr à la fin je ne les voyais plus mes amis... J'avais aussi beaucoup de travail et je ne pouvais pas m'occuper d'eux. Quand on besogne huit heures par jour et qu'on prend le train, le métro et... je n'avais plus le temps de rien faire et puis j'étais devenu indespensable c'est ce que m'affirmaient les chefs.*
>
> (V, p. 123.)

It would be perhaps too simplistic to suggest that megalomania is more interesting than paranoid schizophrenia, but nonetheless, in Arrabal's presentation of these "two"

characters, the strutting Emperor, the mask, does create a stronger impression on an audience than the albeit bizarre "real" Emperor, the reality, at the dramatic core. The "Emperor of Assyria" is a very strong source of audience stimulation. He dresses extravagantly, his speech is heightened, and his world, the court of Assyria, the likes of which no audience member is likely to have encountered, is fascinating. On the other hand, the "real" Emperor is bland in comparison. When we first encounter him for any great length of time, during the course of the monologue with the scarecrow-Emperor, he is naked, his speech is prosaic and pedestrian, and his fantasy world is perceived at the level of "psychological" reality. This is not to suggest that the "real" Emperor is not unique, indeed the idea of chopping up one's mother and feeding her to the dog is certainly, at least, different. Nonetheless, the revelation of this "real" Emperor and his domestic life is the matter of the dramatic system. Dramatic suspense has lead the spectator to this man, and no matter how fantastic his domestic exploits, the "real" Emperor will be interpreted in terms of concrete referents. Within this context, the Emperor's domestic adventures are reduced to manifestations of his <u>character</u>. In short, the audience sees the "real" Emperor as being mentally disturbed and his actions as manifestations of that "illness." The "Emperor of Assyria" can, of course, be seen as yet another symptom of the Emperor's

deranged mind, but the mask appears disassociated from the "real" Emperor because the mask has a life of its own. The "Emperor of Assyria" is someone an audience has never encountered before; the "real" Emperor, despite his domestic fantasies, appears as the all too familiar twentieth-century everyman, "a man like all of us," to use Arrabal's own description:

> *un petit minable qui veut aimer, un petit minable qui a tout raté, qui rêve d'écrire, de se libérer de sa mère. C'est un homme comme nous tous, avec un soif immense d'amour.*[11]

Thus, although the dramatic system leads us to the "real" Emperor, the theatrical devices Arrabal uses to present the mode tend to function in variance with the drama of the play. Indeed, the quality of information presented by the "Emperor of Assyria" upstages the dramatic action to such an extent that the little man drama of the play seems to appear of minor importance. Thus, the extravagant, posing "Emperor of Assyria" is not merely a psychological geste on the part of the "real" Emperor. The mask also serves as an independent system within the structure of the play as a whole: obviously, the mask of Arrabal's performing-self. However, the performing-self is more important in terms of the added dimension it gives to

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[11]Schifres, Entretiens, p. 103.

the role-playing schema and audience stimulation than the nature of the action referent of the system per se.[12]

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[12]The action referent of the performing-self in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria relates Arrabal's stance vis à vis the concept of artistic creation. The "Emperor of Assyria" is a blatant performer and his reflections on the very nature of performance form the action of the performing-self system. He is continually taking on literary poses and constantly making allusions to his "talent" and its place in the history of art. His dialogue is sprinkled with quotes from Breton, Tzara, Carroll, Dante and Shakespeare. Moreover, he continually reiterates his place in the literary pantheon:

> " *L'Empereur: Je t'ai dit qu'il faut m'incinérer...*
> *(Sublime.)*
> *Et tu jetteras mes cendres à la mer*
> *comme celles de Byron, de Shakespeare,*
> *du Phénix, de Neptune, et du Pluton.*
> (V, p. 105.)
>
> . . .
>
> *J'ai fait de fameux sonnets! Et quelles*
> *pièces de théâtre avec leur monologues*
> *et leur apartés. Aucun écrivain n'a*
> *réussi à m'égaler. Les meilleurs m'ont*
> *copié! Beethoven, d'Annunzio, James*
> *Joyce, Charles Quint, Shakespeare lui-*
> *même, et son neveu Bernstein!*
> (V, p. 113.)
>
> . . .
>
> *T'ai-je entretenu quelque fois de mes*
> *quatorze secrétaires?*
> *L'Architecte: Les-quatorze-secrétaires-tou-*
> *jours-nues-qui-écrivaient-les-chefs-*
> *d'oeuvre-que-tu-leur-dictais...*
> *L'Empereur: Tu as l'audace de dauber sur*
> *ma littérature? Sache que j'ai été*
> *Prix...comment déjà allons...*
> *L'Architecte: Prix-Nobel-et-tu-l'as-refusé*
> *parce-que..."*
> (V, p. 100.)

The Emperor is thus exceedingly arrogant about his talent, and this arrogance reaches a climax in the final scene of the play:

> " *Quel homme! . . .Personne ne saura de*
> *quel talent dispose cet unique habitant*

This latter action, which by definition is only perceptable when consciously appreciated by an audience, serves mainly as a technique in providing another perspective from which to view the play. The "Emperor of Assyria" mask, which in this context presents Arrabal's comments on himself and on the events of the play, provides an aspect of parody and an ironic context within which the facets of role-playing are delineated. Irony, which posits both a positive and a negative reaction to events, is harmonically related to the similar vacillation between mask and reality seen in the role-playing schema. For example, the following quote from the "Emperor of Assyria"-Arrabal is double-edged:

> *J'ai fait de fameux sonnets! et quelles pièces de théâtre avec leur monologues et leur apartés. Aucun écrivain n'a réussi à m'égaler. Les meilleurs m'ont copié! Beethoven, d'Annunzio, James Joyce, Charles Quint, Shakespeare lui-même, et son neveu Bernstein!*
>
> (V, p. 113.)

> *d'une planète, je veux dire d'une île solitaire. Et à présent, puisque personne ne m'entend...*
>
> *(Fou de joie.)*
>
> *Vive moi! Vive moi! Vive moi! Et merde pour les autres! Vive moi! Vive moi! Vive moi!"*
>
> (V, p. 196-97.)

This arrogance and self-indulgence typifies Arrabal's performance in the play, and places him in a distinct historical light. He appears as the potache extraordinaire, part of the French literary tradition that began with Rimbaud and found ultimate expression in Jarry: the adolescent-like, clown figure of artistic anarchy.

Arrabal is mocking himself through the "Emperor of Assyria" mask in the performing-self system, but in the dramatic system, the speech is a serious proclamation of the "real" Emperor through the mask. This kind of ironic statement permeates Arrabal's performance and yet is also essential to the delineation of the "Emperor of Assyria" mask. The baroque extravagance, the arrogance, and the grandiose perception of self-worth are central to the essential nature of the mask and yet it serves two completely different functions. Thus, as is the case of the mask-reality schema in dramatic and ritualistic role-playing, Arrabal continually attempts to thwart audience perception of a constant. A mask can serve many purposes, and thus nothing in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria tends to be objectively definable. Even the "Emperor of Assyria," the character most strongly presented in the play, is placed within ironic brackets.

Arrabal's method, then, is to prevent audience fulfillment of expectations, at least in a conventional method. The suspense created in the first scene of the play finds exploration in the role-playing games that find articulation in the first act. However, the action referents are not to be found in the realities behind the masks, but rather in the constant juxtaposition between mask and reality. The dramatic action finds its

central focus in the "Emperor of Assyria" mask. The tension of the ritual system arises out of the Architect's quest for the Emperor's mask and the Emperor's desire for the Architect's reality. Arrabal's self-performance is also delineated through the Emperor's mask, but as seen from an ironic perspective. Arrabal's technique is not to question the nature of the mask, but to accept it as a given and exploit it as the source of the major movements of the play. Otherwise, Arrabal's technique is conventional: for example, the use of the soliloquy as a device for revealing inner character. In the second act, Arrabal continues to use this device of reversing audience expectations by using traditional techniques in a different manner but for relatively unconventional purposes.

4.

The major set piece of the second act is the Emperor's trial. A trial, of course, is as familiar a dramatic device as the seemingly innumerable dei ex machina of the Greco-Roman theatre, but Arrabal's use of the device--through role-playing--makes it decidedly unique.

In Garis' terminology, the trial presents the second mode of revealing inner life, through "sudden revelation." Essentially, "sudden revelation" rests on a tension between behaviour and feeling and presents itself when a character

says or does something that ironically reveals some facet of the inner life that a character does not want to reveal.[13] Initially, the trial appears as just another of the charades played by the Architect and the Emperor: the Architect "playing" the judge, and the Emperor "playing" himself--the accused--as well as all the witnesses. However, the Emperor is not "playing": the grand performer, that is, the "Emperor of Assyria," appears only infrequently in this scene. Rather, in giving testimony as his wife, his brother, and the other witnesses, the "real" Emperor finds himself caught in a process that demands self-effacement. He presents so much evidence that he condemns himself, that he finally screams to the world, and most importantly, to himself: "Que tous les siècles m'entendent: c'est vrai j'ai tué ma mère, moi-même, sans l'aide de personne." (V, p. 180.)

For the Architect, the game continues, and functioning fully in the role of judge, he condemns the Emperor to death. It is only when he finally senses that the Emperor is serious that he tries to end, what is to him, only a game:

> *L'Architecte, (en levant sa toque): Empereur, parles-tu sérieusement?*
> *L'Empereur, (grave): Très sérieusement.*
> *L'Architecte: Ce n'était qu'une farce de plus: ton jugement, ton procès...mais il semble que tu le prennes au sérieux. Empereur, tu sais que je t'aime.*

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[13]Garis, p. 46.

. . .

L'Empereur: Mais aujourd'hui nous ne jouions pas.
L'Architecte: Aujourd'hui, c'était un jour comme les autres.
L'Empereur: C'était différent, tu as appris beaucoup de choses que je ne voulais pas t'avouer.

. . .

Aujourd'hui tu me tueras tu m'as condamné à mort et tu dois exécuter la sentence.
L'Architecte: Mais mourir n'est pas un jeu comme les autres: c'est irréparable.
L'Empereur: Je l'exige, c'est mon châtiment.

(V, pp. 184-85.)

The reason for the Emperor's act of suicide is readily apparent. His fantasy life, the make-believe world of Assyria which he rules as omnipotent Emperor provided the only method whereby he could cope with the "real" world and his "real" self: the complete antithesis of the "Emperor of Assyria." Having developed the role-playing concept into a complete modus operandi, it ironically turns back on him in the trial. His dedication to "playing the part" demands that he present the witness' testimony perfectly and completely. Forced to admit to the Architect--and by extension, to the world, that he is a failure, the only option left open to him is death.

Arrabal's use of the mask to directly reveal information is best exemplified here. The Emperor condemns himself in the evidence he gives while playing principal figures in his life. The trial is a series of masks juxta-

posed against the "real" Emperor. An audience perceives both mask and reality simultaneously in the scene in that the masks of the Emperor's wife, brother, etc., are as concretely sensible as the scarecrow-Emperor in the first act soliloquy. The Architect, however, still perceives the trial as a charade because past experience, for example, the Bishop of Chess episode, has taught him to associate role-playing with games--as a mask that is not effective. However, the trial is decidedly not a game in that Arrabal is not using it merely as a dramatic device. It also serves the ritual system in moving it towards resolution.

The Emperor's trial is the seminal game in the rites of passage. For the Emperor, the "ordeal" is the purgation of his mortal self, the little man at the centre of the dramatic action, so that his immortal self, the "Emperor of Assyria," can function freely. To do so, of course, he must die, and be transubstantiated into the Architect,

> *Je désire que...je désire...enfin...que tu me manges...que tu me manges. Je veux que tu sois à la fois toi et moi. Tu me mangeras entièrment, Architecte, tu m' entends?*
>
> (V, p. 185.)

so that he can live forever:

> *Quel homme! Et comme je suis seul, l'humanité ne m'enveira pas, ne me persécutera pas. . . Et à présent, puisque personne ne m'entend...*

(Fou de joie.)
Vive moi! Vive moi! Vive moi! Vive moi! Et merde pour les autres! Vive moi! Vive moi! Vive moi!
(Il danse, heureux, fou de jois.)
(V, pp. 196-97.)

Moreover, the death of the Emperor provides the means whereby the Architect can achieve "civilization." If the trial were only play, the Emperor would not die, the Architect could not eat his body and thus become the "Emperor of Assyria"--civilized man in the context of the play.

Thus, role-playing serves a double function in the trial as Arrabal overlays the action referents of the dramatic and ritualistic systems. The mask-reality dichotomy is syncopated with the "games-as-play"--"games-as-ritual" polarity to produce the vacillation between that which is real and that which is illusion in both the minds of the characters and, perhaps more importantly, in the perceptions of the audience. The fact that the Emperor is actually going to die at the end of the trial comes as a surprise, for like the Architect, the audience looks upon the trial as just another charade. We expect it to end as have the other games to which we have been witness, probably humourously as in the Bishop of Chess episode. However, Arrabal reverses our expectations by

having the trial end not in a playful mood but very seriously in the Emperor's death.

With the death of the Emperor, the dramatic action is essentially over. This terminal action provides resolution of the internal conflict of the Emperor. In the context of the drama, he uses role-playing as a philosophical geste with which to cope with the world, and when no longer able to maintain that pose, he commits suicide. An audience has been brought through the stages of the Emperor's conflict by suspense (who is this man?; what is he "really" like?) and brought to an unexpected, though logical, resolution: his death. However, the play does not end with this terminal action. The two final scenes of the play are necessary for full articulation of the ritual and performing-self systems, and not surprisingly, Arrabal uses the role-playing device to its ultimate expression--a complete change of roles--in a manner that epitomizes his use of the device throughout the play.

5.

The essential difference between the dramatic and ritual systems is no more apparent than in the use of the death of the Emperor in both these systems. In the dramatic mode, it marks the end of the major action. In the ritual system, it functions as a stage in the ini-

tiation of both principals. Eliade has pointed out this function of death in the initiatory rite:

> The majority of initiatory ordeals more or less clearly imply a ritual death, followed by a resurrection or a new birth. The central moment of every initiation is represented by the ceremony symbolizing the death of the novice and his return to the fellowship of the living. But he returns to life a new man, assuming another mode of being.
> . . .
> Initiatory death provides the clean slate on which will be written the successive revelations whose end is the formation of a new man.[14]

The Emperor dies, and becomes the Architect. The Architect eats the Emperor's body, dies to himself, and becomes the Emperor. Both lose their earlier states in becoming the other: the Architect loses his powers, the Emperor his inner self, but both gain their desired states. The Architect will learn all the Emperor's thoughts, and the Emperor will have his chance at immortality, and he can even perform miracles--changing water into Javel!

The ritual system does not end with the transformation of the Architect and the Emperor into their new modes of being. The play ends as it began, with the new strutting Architect-Emperor turned into the illiterate savage and a new Emperor appearing on the island, suggesting that the whole initiation system--nature to civilization, civilization to nature--is a never-ending cycle.

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[14]Eliade, pp. xii-xiii.

At the technical level, there are basically two kinds of role-playing at work in the sequence, what might be termed "implicit" and "explicit" performing. Implicit role-playing can be best seen in the Architect in scene two. The Architect is performing at least three different roles in the sequence wherein he eats the Emperor's body. In the course of the trial, the Emperor related how he killed his mother by means of hammer blow to the head. This, of course, is the method the Architect "executed" the Emperor and thus the Architect is "playing" the Emperor in this re-enactment. Secondly, the Emperor also related that he disposed of his mother's body by feeding it in pieces to his dog. One of the charades played during the trial established the Architect as the Emperor's "chien-loup des îles" (V, p. 169), and now the Architect is "acting" just like the Emperor's original dog in eating his master's remains. Thirdly, the Emperor has instructed the Architect to dress in the former's mother's clothes when eating his body, and the Architect complies. Wearing a corset, shawl and "rococo hat," the Architect "plays" the Emperor's mother and eats "her son." In this sequence then, the Architect is playing three roles simultaneously. Arrabal has so structured the play and the use of role-playing that at this point the roles played are not simply one mask on top of a reality. Rather, in this sequence

especially, what lies behind the mask is another mask, and behind that mask there lies yet another, and so on. Arrabal has moved from simple juxtaposition of contrasting roles as manifested in the first act games to the point where a single character wears many masks simultaneously. The implicit roles of the Architect here are of course paralleled by the implicit roles played by the dead Emperor. He is, at one and the same time, the "real" Emperor, his mother, and the "Emperor of Assyria." The chinese-box effect thus elaborates the use of role-playing to such an extent that an audience is unable to discern any kind of "objective" reality.

After eating the Emperor's body, the Architect explicitly becomes the Emperor. Arrabal accomplishes this by having the part of the Architect played by the actor who was the Emperor. The figure we see pacing the stage at the end of the play just before the final coda is explicitly the "Emperor of Assyria"-- the strutting, arrogant, fantastic mask of the "real" Emperor transformed into a reality. This "character" who is both the Architect and the Emperor, as well as the performing-self of Arrabal, is a brilliant synthesis of the use of role-playing throughout the play. In essence, the stage image of this Architect-Emperor-Arrabal draws all the threads of the three performance systems and their action referents to

itself as well as serving as a concretization of all the masks and realities explored in the work. The Architect-Emperor-Arrabal decidedly exists: he stands before us raving about his uniqueness. Yet, we have come to see both the Architect and the Emperor as a series of masks, of illusions, and so, logically speaking, this figure is existentially only a sum of these illusions. However, it is apparent that Arrabal is not simply probing the nature of illusion and reality. The Architect-Emperor-Arrabal figure does not pose a Pirandellian "what is reality?" question, but rather the image effectively destroys any concept of the objectively concrete. The "realities" behind the masks--the "real" Emperor, the "real" Architect, perhaps even the "real" Arrabal--are as fantastic as the masks themselves. Arrabal's technique of peeling away masks--through the games and Garis' dramatic techniques--have led us not to concrete, phenomenally absolute referents, but rather to other masks which in turn are stripped away. The result, expressed in the Architect-Emperor-Arrabal figure, is to leave an audience with the conclusion that all is mask and that this ultimate reversal is the "reality" of the play.

Like the Emperor's proof of the existence of God then, audience certainty as to the essential nature of the

Architect-Emperor-Arrabal figure has been thwarted by Arrabal's tilting of the pin-ball machine that is The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. For nothing appears "real"--especially this Architect-Emperor-Arrabal--and yet it manifestly exists.

As if our confusion as to the exact nature of the Architect-Emperor-Arrabal figure were not enough to jar audience expectations, the final coda of the play serves as the coup de grâce in Arrabal's treatment of role-playing. The scene is a re-play of the opening scene of the play, except of course, with the Emperor playing the Architect and vice versa. The effect of reversing the roles is to completely destroy any sense, if any might remain, that the Architect and the Emperor are illusionistic characters in the traditional convention. The scene reminds us that the characters we have seen role-playing throughout the course of the play are "really" actors who have played roles within roles. A Verfremdungseffekt of the highest order, the role-reversal immediately removes an audience from the Architect's island and places it back in the theatre, where we have been all along. The role-reversal makes an audience consciously aware that role-playing--apart from its psychological implications for drama, its value in presenting polar referents for ritual and its function as a stage for the performing-self--is primarily a theatrical technique that has been used by

Arrabal to stimulate an audience by playing with its expectations and predetermined concepts as to the difference between appearance and reality.

6.

Arrabal's major means of audience involvement is his use of the role-playing device. It is the play's major metaphor and is used to delineate the workings of the performance structures in the work. However, accompanying the functioning of the device, Arrabal establishes a special method of handling elements of the theatrical mise-en-scène. Arrabal's method, which modifies the role-playing technique, finds its source in ritual thought and can be best seen in that context.

In his analysis of primitive thought, Lévi-Strauss has noted the particular way in which information sets are constructed.[15] The savage mind constructs detailed schema about the order of the world by arranging the sensible images presented to it. The images function as pure signs, and information structures are created by arranging these signs into some kind of perceptual framework. Scientific thought, on the other hand, builds its information structures through concepts, that is to say by interpreting signs as symbols, and moving beyond their

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[15] Lévi-Strauss, p. 20, seq.

sensible qualities into their referential function. Lévi-Strauss has likened the workings of the savage mind to the operations of a handy-man, the bricoleur, who can do just about everything, but has a limited set of tools with which to function.[16] The bricoleur and the savage mind create structures by using given, sensible "tools" to build information sets:

> The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repetoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repetoire, however, whatever the task in hand because it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual bricolage . . .[17]
>
> . . .
>
> The elements which the bricoleur collects and uses are pre- 'pre-constrained' like the constitutive units of myth, the possible combinations of which are restricted by the fact that they are drawn from the language any organizing system where they are already possess a sense which sets a limit on their freedom of manoeuvre.[18]

The bricolage concept finds a striking formal correlative in Arrabal's handling of the elements of the mise-en-scène. Essentially, the ritual system and the method it uses of structuring information in the play

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[16] Ibid., p. 12.

[17] Ibid., p. 13.

[18] Ibid., p. 19.

presents a "heterogeneous repetoire" of stage properties. The systems created by the Architect and the Emperor are built theatrically--that is to say at the level perceived by an audience--out of the scenic elements inherent to an island where a plane has crashed. All properties and costumes spring from the situation, and the Architect and the Emperor "make do" with that which is at hand.

All the role-playing scenarios require various theatrical properties, and both the Architect and the Emperor have their own "closets" from which to provide essential items. Moreover, the nature of the properties is determined by their ontological source: the Emperor's are those of civilization, the Architect's that of nature.

For example, when they are playing war, Arrabal suggests in his stage directions that the props required by the characters should be created ad lib:

> *(Ils se préparent.*
> *Ils s'accroupissent. Ils saisissent des 'mitrailleuses'. Ils tirent: tac-tac-tac-tac . . .*
> *Ils portent chacun un 'casque' et un 'drapeau'.)*
>
> (V, p. 93.)

Arrabal has placed the machine guns, helmets and flags between quotation marks, and has suggested elsewhere[19] that the director is free to use whatever he feels appropriate as props in the sequence. Other properties

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[19]Schifres, p. 126.

noted in the script, however, are more definitely denoted--a stone for a cigar-box, a grass skirt for the fiancée's costume--and, as with the war toys, spring directly from the natural props at the Architect's command.

Similarly, the Emperor has brought with him to the island quite a cornucopia of paraphenalia which he presses into service as properties and costumes. In his large suitcase, he carries not only his own costumes--"garde-robe bien fournie, vêtements anciens et modernes, de style baroque," (V, p. 76.)--but also an incredible melange of articles from the civilized world. His properties include a cane, a length of chain, an umbrella, a nun's habit, a collection of masks, binoculars, blind man's glasses and, of course, an assorted collection of his mother's clothing, including a corset, garter-belt, slip, nightgown and brassiere.

Both Architect and Emperor draw upon their repetoires to provide the formal action of the play, but despite the fact that both property and costume sources are extensive, the Architect and the Emperor are limited to what is contained in their respective stores.

By restricting stage mechanics to that which is almost realistically possible, Arrabal focuses audience attention on the dynamics of the character interrelations

as expressed in the role-playing sequences. This functions throughout the play and helps to maintain what could be best described as an organic sense to the mise-en-scène. The role-playing scenes appear to spring ad lib from the situations presented by Arrabal, and the use of props and costumes that are readily available in the Architect and the Emperor's "closets" underscores the impromptu quality of the role-playing scenarios. The bricolage concept thus helps impart a sense of dynamism to the role-playing action, and is thus in perfect harmony with the rapid shifts and juxtapositions of the role-playing technique.

7.

Arrabal describes The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria as "une pièce d'une telle tendresse, au bord de larme à l'oeil."[20] However, the play is manifestly not a "tear-jerker." The dramatic action of the play might so appear, but Arrabal's techniques preclude exclusive focus on the little man story of the "real" Emperor. Role-playing, as expressed through the peculiar quality of the Arrabalian game, in conjunction with technical bricolage, continually moves an audience between the poles of mask and reality such that focus on any one particular

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[20] Ibid., p. 103.

aspect is virtually impossible. Arrabal's handling of the three systems is seemingly eclectic: dramatic action expressed through ritual technique; ritual action presented through the drama inherent in the Crusoe situation; and the performing-self manifest through a mask that is central to both drama and ritual. The audience is assaulted with intellectual stimuli, elements that provoke empathy, and direct, sensual theatrical effects. Coupled with the distancing-effect of the presence of the performing-self, the theatrical effect of the play is to move an audience via staccato-like jumps from the action referent of one system to that of another. By effectively juxtaposing heterogeneous role-playing games and percipient stimuli, Arrabal delineates the action referents not by means of the theatrical techniques, but rather in the techniques directly.

Thus, in that the play is directly articulated in theatrical language, the world of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria can only be truly appreciated in the formal expression of that language--performance. Role-playing and theatrical bricolage are essentially of the theatrical lexicon, and thus their effect cannot be properly gauged "translated" into a literary form. The text of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria is thus most pointedly a script, and therefore any attempt

at synthesizing the action referents of the piece and Arrabal's handling of the material can only be truly seen in terms of performance.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PERFORMANCE SYSTEMS

The three performance systems I have isolated in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria are complex movements. Each possesses its own peculiar set of performance factors and produces three qualitatively different sets of information. That the three modes should each emit a completely unique information set is quite remarkable in that it is obvious that the same basic elements of the mise-en-scène are used in each mode. The role-playing device is central to the dramatic action, the ritualistic system and the performing-self. It is, of course, the peculiar use of the device in each system that allows for the production of different effects.

The preceeding chapter has suggested the manner in which Arrabal has overlayed the three action referents by creating a role-playing schema that provides for a constant juxtaposition of mask and reality. Reinforced by the bricolage at the heart of the technical mise-en-scène, the effect of the role-playing device is to decidedly alter audience response by using percipient expectations in a novel manner. Moreover, this response

is complicated by the fact that all the performance factors of the three systems (outlined in Chapter One) are matrixed to the performance action (outlined in Chapter Two) to create the ultimate work: The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria in performance.

The following chapter is intended as a performance blueprint of the play, a type of rehearsal document that will serve in the context of this study as a suggestion as to how the performance action can be approached in production. In synthesizing, comparing and contrasting the articulation of the performance factors of the three systems in this manner it should be apparent that only in performance can The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria communicate the complex experience of the world that is the play.

1. System Orientation: Time

The "open-closed" differentiation of each system presents a special ordering and use of time as a determining characteristic. Both the dramatic action and the performing-self system were seen as essentially closed in that there is a set time for their duration. They both have a beginning and an end. The dramatic system begins with the exposition of the Emperor's problem at the opening of the play, and ends with the resolution of this problem

in his suicide. The performing-self, centred on the "Emperor of Assyria," presents no definite movement per se, existing as it does as an attitude professed by Arrabal. It does, however, have limits in performance time: the performing Emperor-Arrabal appears in the first appearance of the "Emperor of Assyria," and the performance reaches apogee in the "Vive moi!" sequence at the end of the play. On the other hand, the ritual system exists outside of time and encompasses the entire action of the play.

Figure One (p. 98 .) is an attempt to present the sectionings of time within the play according to the above parameters. Line AB represents the chronological performance time of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. Point A presents the beginning of the play; point C, the emergence of the performing Emperor; point D, the death of the "real" Emperor; point E, the "Vive moi!" sequence; and point B, the end of the play. The schematic representation conveys some sense of the overlapping nature of the time parameters of each system. The ritual system uses all the performance time available, the performing-self presents a time schema that uses a little less performance time in that it excludes the opening and closing tableaux, and drama makes use of the least amount of time since it has no function after the death of the

Emperor.

2. Action

Although the use of time provides a convenient referent by which to compare the three systems in terms of the open-closed structure each manifests, the disparity between the concerns of their respective "actions" tends to make any comparison via a constant difficult. The action of the drama is the revelation of the "real" Emperor; that of ritual, aspects of the nature-civilization continuum; that of the performing-self, the presentation of Arrabal's performance. The only truly discernable relation takes us away from the "actions" themselves: role-playing, as theatrical device, figures in all three.

Nonetheless, all three modes are performed, and they are performed in time, and a graphic illustration elaborating Figure One might assist in presenting a vertical reading of the three actions. The schema of Figure One appears slightly inadequate in this context, however. The ritual action never ends; it is a continuous movement that never finds completion, and as the final tableau of the play suggests, is a cyclical pattern. A sine wave (Figure Two, p. 98.), which in the mathematical lexicon is a "smooth, never-ending rising and falling. . .curve,"[1]

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[1] J. R. Pierce, Symbols, Signals and Noise (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 293.

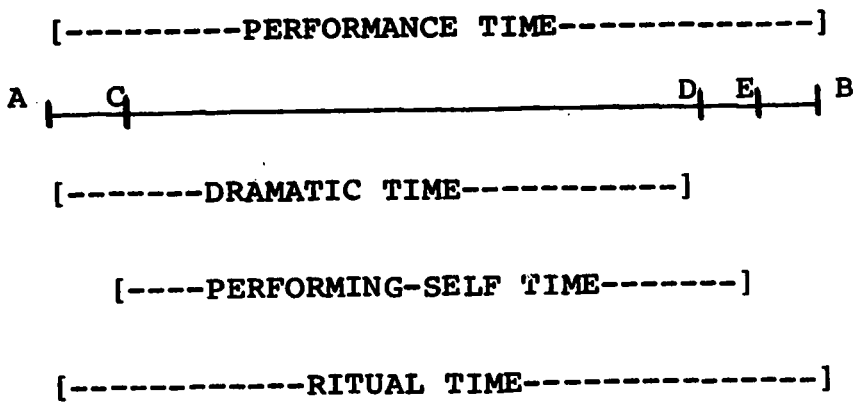

Figure 1:

Time Structures

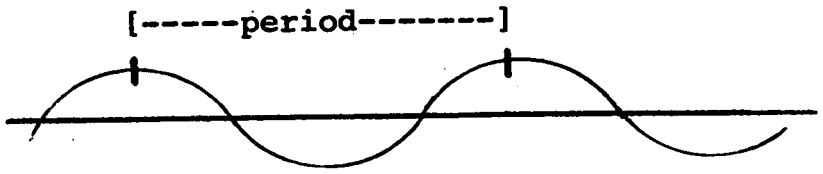

Figure 2:

Sine Wave

would seem to be an appropriate representation of this movement central to the ritual action. The period of the wave can be seen as corresponding to the chronological performance time of the play. Figure Three (p.101 .) extends and slightly modifies the sine wave schema to include provision for the dramatic and performing-self actions.

The figure presents one segment of the continuous sine wave that is suggested by the ritual system as the entire, never-ending total action of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. The segment corresponds to the total total performance time of the work. The two overlayed sine waves represent the movements of the Architect (wave HJ) and the Emperor (wave FG) through the three actions the play encompasses. Figure One is underlayed beneath the sine waves to incorporate the time structure as discussed above.

The major concern of the ritual action is the movement along the nature-civilization continuum and this continuum can be seen in the amplitude of the waves. At the beginning of the play (points F and H), the Emperor and the Architect are both at the maximum distance away from obtaining their desired initiatory states. The Emperor, bearing the remains of his civilization in his suitcase, and the Architect, the wild illiterate savage,

begin a movement from this point in performance time that leads them on their rites of passage to the point where they accomplish their transformation. In the figure, point D represents this stage where the following events occur: the "real" Emperor dies, the Architect eats the Emperor, and the Architect becomes the Emperor and vice versa in the Architect-Emperor image. Beyond this point, a brief second in performance time elapses, and the Emperor turns into the illiterate savage and the Architect appears as the Emperor, bringing us to points J and G, the end of the performance, but the beginning of the ritual system and, of course, the play. (i.e., points J and G=points F and H.)

The dramatic action can also be seen in terms of the Architect and the Emperor's "sine waves." The major dramatic action, the revelation of the "real" Emperor, is segment FD of the Emperor's wave, beginning with his appearance on stage and ending with his death. The Architect's dramatic action, correspondingly, is segment HD of this wave, which charts his function in the Emperor's action, and his "civilization" process in that action.

Segment KL on the Emperor's wave presents the action of the "Emperor of Assyria" mask and thus Arrabal's

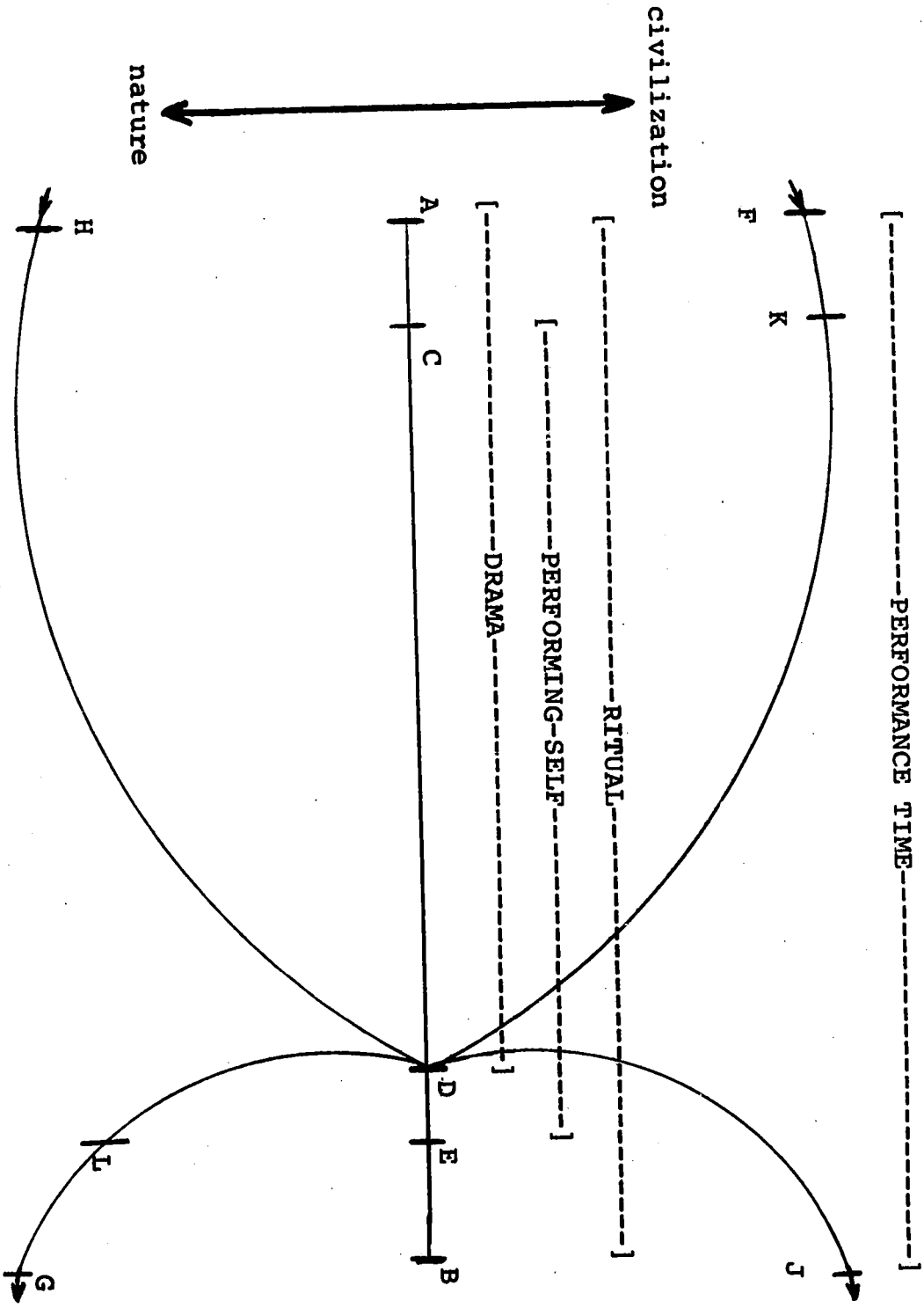

Figure 3:

Performance Structures

performance and the performing-self system. As already noted, it extends from the second scene of the play to the "Vive moi!" sequence.

Although Figure Three is complex, but hopefully not confusing, it does suggest the nature of the structure of the three actions in the play. Arrabal has his actors moving through three distinct movements that, as evident in the diagram, are overlapping, interrelated and yet are quite discernable. The actions have widely diverse concerns, but are all matrixed to the overall structure of the work.

3. Performing

The burdens of performing these systems, especially in light of the complex structure of the action, appear enormous. An actor performing either of these roles is faced with the problem of articulating seemingly disparate and at times, even contradictory functions:

The Emperor	The Architect
dramatic system	
function: presentation of illusionistic character named "the Emperor."	function: presentation of illusionistic character named "the Architect."
referent: an office worker who has crashed on the Architect's island; a paranoid schizophrenic, he has	referent: an illiterate savage, with preternatural powers, who lives alone on a deserted island; under the influence of

The Emperor	The Architect
adopted role-playing as a means of coping with the failure of his life. In the course of the role-playing games he plays with the Architect, he reveals his love-hate relationship with his mother and how he finally came to murder her. Realizing that he has exposed himself as a sham, and unable to continue role-playing, he commits suicide.	the Emperor, who has crashed on the island, he learns about civilization. In the course of this action he becomes involved in the Emperor's role crisis, and unwittingly partakes in the latter's death.
ritual system	
function: relation of one aspect of the abstract action which centres on a nature-civilization polarity.	function: relation of complementary aspect of nature-civilization polarity.
referent: presenting quest for immortality, and the ability to transcend rational processes; partaking in an initiation rite that moves from a given existential condition, civilization, to the opposite pole, nature.	referent: presenting quest for ability to comprehend abstract concepts (happiness, philosophy, etc.), to function via a systemized code of symbolization (language), partaking in an initiation rite that moves from a given existential condition, nature, to the opposite pole, civilization.
performing-self system	
function: presentation of Arrabal's own performance in the work.	function: same as Emperor.
referent: a self-indulgent, arrogant "literary" performer, continually conscious that his work exists as a part of literary history, constantly	referent: same as Emperor. (The actor playing the Architect takes on the "Emperor of Assyria" role for a brief time--point D in Figure Three--during his process of becoming the Emperor, but the transformation

The Emperor	The Architect
comparing his work to that of other masters of artistic creation. These attitudes presented in an apparent self-mocking tone, the arrogance thus qualified by the elements of parody.	is not fully articulated until the conjoined Architect-Emperor is taken over by the actor playing the Emperor. cf. V, pp. 186-195.)

The performing referent of the actors in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria thus takes on the form of a triptych. Three wholly independent actions are evident in the work and the function of the actors is to present these actions such that they are perceivable to an audience.

The relations between the three systems, however, make the actual performance of the systems somewhat easier to accomplish, despite their apparent independent homogeneity. As we have seen, role-playing is a central device in all three systems, and thus correspondences exist between the nature of performance in one system and that of another. For example, the "Emperor of Assyria" role functions in all three systems. In the drama of the play, it relates the "real" Emperor's fantasy life. The ritual system uses the mask to manifest the paradigm of the civilized world, and in the performing-self, it presents Arrabal's performance. Moreover, the very nature of the role-playing device itself is based on a simple binary opposition. The implicit dialectic of the "role" presents

a polarity between mask and reality. This binary relationship, although complexly overlaid throughout all aspects of the play, is at the core of performing the three systems.

The set of correspondences (Figure Four, p. 106.) presents a schema whereby the actor can relate his performance functions in each system to the other systems and the play as a whole via binary relationships. The figure reiterates the importance of the role-playing device. The denominator in each correspondence presents the medium whereby the "role" denoted in the numerator finds expression. For example, in the performing-self system, Arrabal uses the play as a whole for a stage in presenting his performance. This is formally expressed in the action of the play by the "Emperor of Assyria," which correspondingly uses the Architect and the Emperor as the physical embodiments of its movement. The figure could be rearranged to show other relationships inherent in the play. The ritual correlations could also be coded:

$$\frac{\text{Emperor}}{\text{Architect}} :: \frac{\text{Civilization}}{\text{Nature}}$$

to express the relationship of the Emperor and the Architect to one another in terms of the relationship between the two poles of the ritual continuum. Similarly, any other correct mathematical permutation of the correspondences could be seen as manifesting an inherent relation-

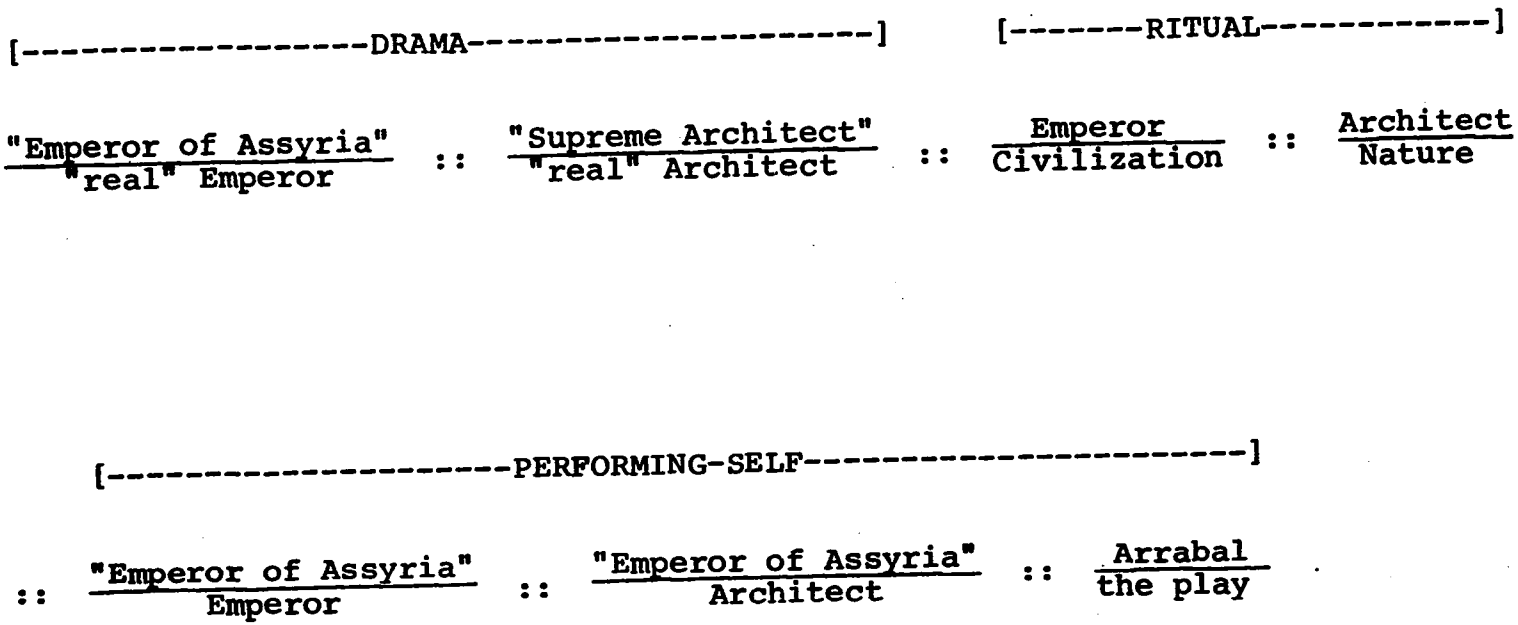

Figure 4:

Acting Correspondences

ship in the play.

Actual performance in the work, then, is as complicated as the actions it must present. The performance matrices of each system require different effects: illusionistic "acting" in drama, dualistic "presentation" in ritual, and a coherent "referring" to Arrabal in the performing-self. Nonetheless, the elementary binary relationships that exist in all three systems present a consistent schema whereby the performance structures of each system can be integrated into a coherent program for the actor.

4. Audience Response

In charting Arrabal's articulation of the performance action through role-playing in Chapter Two, I suggested the effect on the percipient of the juxtaposition of mask and reality, the result of reversing spectator expectations and the consequence of an organic mise-en-scène expressed through technical bricolage. Complicating response is, of course, the presence of the performing-self, which, as we have seen, filters audience reaction through its ironic distancing. Moreover, the problem of delineating, or at least of suggesting, response to the entire structure is further complicated by the fact that each particular action referent calls forth a decidedly different response.

The distancing-effect of the performing-self directly focuses on the dramatic action. As we have seen, the "real" Emperor's story is quite a pathetic "tear-jerker." However, the distinct presence of Arrabal in the "Emperor of Assyria" mask prevents a total empathetic identification with the Emperor. For example, by deliberately introducing the Emperor's soliloquy as a device--"Soit! Soyons shakespeariens!"--Arrabal, like Brecht in the finale to The Threepenny Opera, establishes a theatrical context within which we are to perceive the action. We may respond to the Emperor's plight, but our response is highly coloured by the fact that we are consciously made aware that we are watching not life, but theatre.

Moreover, the grotesque quality of Arrabal's theatrical images--exemplified in the eating scene in the play--coupled with the scatology, nudity and obscenity function as "ritual effects" to circumvent total emotional rapport. The direct, sensuous attack of much of the play's images effectively prevent either "intellectualization" or sympathy. For example, note the Emperor's description of the murder of his mother:

> *Je lui ai assené un coup de marteau sur la tête pendant son sommeil.*
> . . .
> *Quelle curieuse impression, de sa tête fendue se sont échappées comme des vapeurs et j'ai cru voir un lézard sortir de la bles-*

> *sure. Il s'est placé sur la table, en face de moi, sa gorge goitreuse se soulevait en cadence et il me regardait fixement. En l' examinant de plus près, j'ai pu voir que son visage était mon visage. Alors que je m'apprêtais à le saisir, il a disparu comme s'il n'était qu'un phantasme.*
>
> (V, pp. 180-181.)

The image is typical of the play, where cannibalism, sado-masochism and necrophilia are the day to day world of the Architect and the Emperor. The direct assault on percipient sensibilities, which I term the outrageous gesture, prevents an audience from seeing either the Architect or the Emperor as illusionistic characters. The outrageous gesture moves them from the pure dramatic context and establishes both characters as alternating sources of purely sensuous stimuli. These stimuli, though obviously matrixed to the concrete referents of drama and the abstract action of the ritual system, again serve to reinforce the theatrical context. The outrageous gesture shatters emotional-intellectual involvement and establishes the spectator as a percipient of direct images, images that are theatrically rooted and expressed.

Role-playing, technical bricolage, the performing-self and the outrageous gesture are Arrabal's major communicating devices in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. The devices are purely theatrical because they are defined only in their perception by an audience.

Ultimately, The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria must be seen by an audience as a game, a jeu de théâtre, because the action referents of the three systems find articulation exclusively through these devices. The play is play.

For all of Arrabal's "theatricalizing" though, I am about to suggest that the play does give rise to an inherent empathetic response. What I have termed the Chekhov-Stanislavski syndrome is the archetypal referent for the twentieth century theatre-goer and playwright, so much so that it is virtually impossible for any performance structure that presents the slightest suggestion of an illusionistic character not to elicit an empathetic response.

In the course of the dramatic action, Arrabal allows us to become very familiar with his characters: their personal habits, their fantasies, and their feelings towards one another.[2] Moreover, in that there are only two performers, focus is readily turned on the Architect and the Emperor. For all the grotesque events in the play, both characters are eminently likeable. They both display innocence and tenderness, such that, despite the elements in

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[2]At one level, the play can be perceived simply as a love story, albeit one of grotesque, bizarre proportions. And, as Erich Segal has recently demonstrated, love stories precipitate an intense empathetic response.

the play that an audience might find distasteful, the Architect and the Emperor quite readily become the objects of an empathetic response.

A performance of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria that would not attempt to reduce the effect of the Chekhov-Stanislavski syndrome could conceivably destroy the play. A general empathetic response to the work as a whole is grossly inproportionate to the relative importance of the dramatic system in the play. In order to reveal the ritualistic and performing-self systems, a tempering of those elements which are inherently empathetic, and a consistent underlining of the "distancing" elements--role-playing, bricolage, the performing-self, and the outrageous gesture--would create the proper atmosphere for perception in all three systems of the play.

5. Conclusion

In a program note to the original production of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria in 1967, Eugène Ionesco succinctly describes the play and Arrabal's theatrical vision:

> From the beginning we have an unexpected, surprising event; from the moment the curtain rises, it is as though we look at a world we didn't know and which we nevertheless recognize, a world in which only the important and the essential appear, in

> which actions and gestures happen swiftly, distinctly, surely, each event being surprising; from the beginning the situation is tense, the image violent, dynamic.
>
> This is what it is to have a dramatic vision of the world, and when the world appears to you in this way, you can only express it by theatre.[3]

The world of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria is a theatrical world because it is defined in a language that emerges from the theatre itself. Arrabal's handling of the mise-en-scène firmly places him in the fore-front of contemporary theatre practitioners who are delineating a new performance mode. Tom F. Driver:

> What has occurred is a shift from thinking of drama as the imitation of action or of life to thinking of it as the imitation of theatre and of consciousness. When the theatre imitates theatre the result is an intensification of the sense of theatre, an ironic reduplication of the theatrical idea.[4]

This "theatrical idea" is the core of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, and thus the inherent power of the play is derived from the possibilities it presents as a performed work. It is a moving drama, a complex exploration of the psychology of two men and their relation to the world. It is an open, epic contemporary theatre ritual, probing no less a theme than the process

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[3]quoted by Cohn, Currents, p. 31.

[4]Tom F. Driver, History of the Modern Theatre (New York: Dell, 1970), pp. 378-79.

of human civilization. It is a blatant, arrogant artistic manifesto, an uncompromising glimpse into the workings and attitudes of Arrabal as artist. Arrabal's play is "about" all of these, and is presented in a theatrical language that is stunningly effective, a vibrant, exciting "poetry of the stage." This analysis has attempted to suggest some of the complex workings of the piece, but as I have suggested, The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria only really comes to life in performance.

For Arrabal, performance is a process for which he holds little responsibility:

> *Mon travail me procure, à moi personnellement, une immense satisfaction. J'en reviens toujours à ce moment d'écrire . . . Voilà ma libération. Et puis il y a un autre moment: celui de la mise en scène. Celle-ci ne doit avoir rien à voir avec ce que j'écris. Pour moi, c'est une course de relais, le metteur en scène prend ce canevas, et il fait autre chose. Il crée de grands moments, et moi, je dois regarder son travail et en profiter pour ma prochaine pièce.*[5]

This "canvas" that is The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria demands full articulation, and a fully realized performance would present all three systems in its mise-en-scène. To do otherwise would be to deny the full operation of Arrabal's theatrical devices and techniques,

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[5]Schifres, Entretiens, p. 77.

and to restrict audience appreciation of the complete world of the play.

Arrabal likes to describe theatre as a ceremony, and certainly The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria would appear as a celebration of the art of the stage. The play attempts to incorporate three distinct performance systems, a complex acting schema, scenic requirements that offer a designer a chance to extend his imagination to the limit, and perhaps most importantly, a staggering directorial challenge: to communicate all of this to an audience. Ultimately, of course, this communication is the central concern of the play. Arrabal found his inspiration for The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria in a passage in Artaud, the visionary who attempted to delineate a new mode of theatrical communication:

> It is not a matter of the cruelty we show to one another by mutually cutting up our bodies. . .or of those Emperors of Assyria who sent each other bags full of human ears through the mails. . .We are not free. And the heavens may fall on our heads. And the theatre is there to teach us that.[6]

Arrabal's play may or may not exist as a statement vis à vis human freedom; certainly the "meaning" of the play is for each individual spectator to find. None-

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[6]Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 79.

theless, the structure of the performance systems in the play, expressed through a flamboyant, visceral and entertaining mise-en-scène, provide a performance score that is rich in suggestion, striking in the ideas it presents, and, above all, is a theatrical tour de force that offers both theatre artist and audience member alike a unique vision of the world.

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