

PSYCHICAL DISTANCE IN THEATRE
A STUDY IN AESTHETICS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Philosophy Department
Ohio University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Philosophy

by
Jacob Kolawole Gbadebo Oladipupo

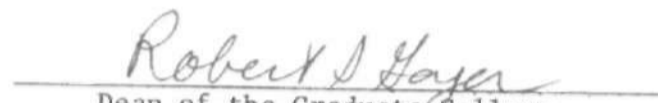
March 1979

This Thesis has been Approved
for
The Philosophy Department
and the
Graduate College of the Ohio University

by



Professor Gene Blocker
Thesis Director



Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express his thanks:

to his sponsor the Federal Scholarship Board of Nigeria and his employer, the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, whose award of a scholarship/fellowship helped him to make his advanced degree in Philosophy a possibility;

to Professors Gene Blocker and Stanley Grean, who have both read and critized each of the several drafts of this thesis. Through their extensive knowledge in the field of Aesthetics, many pages have been improved by their suggestions. What an immense gratitude for their support, patience, inspiration and encouragements throughout the study!

to the two other members of his Thesis committee: Professors Algis Mickunas and Seabury Quinn, whose critical reading also enhanced the quality of the author's work;

to Dr. Bob Trevas, Messers. Jim Snow and Dennis Dalen, who individually encouraged the author and offered useful advice and materials which have helped to make this task a rewarding experience;

to Professors Warren Ruchti and Donald Borchert, who both are the author's close friends and major advisors throughout his graduate program at Ohio University. Their guidance and support in the preparation of this thesis were most invaluable; and

to his children Gloria, Joy, Blessing, and Florence
and Agnes Jolade Oladipupo (his wife), without whose love
and understanding this thesis would never have materialized.
Their encouragement and sacrifice are most commendable.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father,
Adekanye Aremu Oladipupo, a very special person, who in
his life-time always believed that my talents were bound-
less. His love and support have helped me

to grow;

to reach out;

to love;

and to attain more than I ever thought possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
Concept of Distance in Theatre	10
2. BRECHT AND OVER-DISTANCING	26
3. ARTAUD AND UNDER-DISTANCING	41
4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	54
NOTES	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
APPENDIX A	76

Chapter 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A person who goes to the theatre wants nothing better than to identify with the person on the stage. Some people, however, simply want to enjoy the show. If any chance is provided by the show, the spectator will be able to forget his own life and yield to the appeal of an imaginary one. At the same time, the spectator is well aware that he is a member of the audience watching the performance of a play. Despite his identification and involvement, he maintains a certain "distance".

Dating back to the early 18th century there has been a related concept known as detachment in aesthetic experience. It has long been recognized that certain forms of theatrical presentation endanger the maintenance of distance. A sudden dramatic outburst, for example, may cause the audience to confuse the play-action with real life. There are other features of stage-presentation which may exercise an opposite influence. These are lighting, stage decór, costuming and the conventional arrangement of the stage all of which may increase our consciousness that it is after all, only a play.

Early in this century, Edward Bullough popularized this concept. He treated distance psychologically and distinguished between degrees of "over and under-distancing". He held that when an individual becomes too personally

involved he is said to under-distance the work; while on the other hand, an appreciator of a theatrical work who has little involvement with the work is said to over-distance it. Bullough wrote when idealism still flourished in Great Britain and he refers to the object of aesthetic interest in terms of psychological experiences in his concept of psychical distance.

What is his concept of psychical distance all about? "Distance" is disengaging our practical, personal (selfish) interest in a thing and then looking at it anew from this new perspective. In our ordinary practical attitude we see only as much of the object as is necessary to the practical business at hand. The rest we don't notice. In the case of Theatre, distance means, not becoming so involved in the lives of the characters or taking the action so seriously that one fails to realize that it is, after all a play. This would not only be a misperception of reality but would also prevent a person from noticing the symbolic aspects of the play - that is, failing to see the universal aspect, say, of Hamlet.

A crop of other philosophers either criticized or supported this notion. In an article published in The British Journal of Aesthetics ("Psychical distance: In a fog at sea", Winter 1973), George Dickie examines at some length the foundations of Bullough's theory of psychical distance and suggests that the theory is fundamentally wrong and trivial. He disputes Bullough's theory on two

counts: first, he claims that distance is not a kind of voluntary action which people who frequently experience art are capable of bringing about consciously, and that he (Dickie) has personally never experienced such an act nor does he know of anyone who has. He says:

Is there, however, any evidence that acts of distancing and states of being distanced even actually occur in connection with our experience of art? When the curtain goes up, when we walk up to a painting or when we look at a sunset, do we ever commit acts of distancing and are we ever induced into a state of being distanced? I cannot recall committing any action which suspends practical activities or being in a psychological state which prevents practical activity.¹

Second, he maintains there is no special distinction between practical and aesthetical activity such as is implied by Bullough and other "distance" theorists, and therefore that the entire phenomenon of art experience does not need to be explained by reference to any special attitude which puts the spectator in a peculiar relationship to the work, but is simply a case of giving greater attention to the work concerned. As such, the condition of shutting out practical reactions does not arise. Dickie maintains that in establishing the psychological state of distancing Bullough uses hypothetical cases which are not typical for the experience of art but are rather "desperate instances". He therefore seems to suggest that if a spectator maintains a sensible attitude to the theatre or any other art work and is able to bring to bear the correct degree of attention upon the performance, he is sure to appreciate it aesthetically and therefore has no need of any special mental attitude.

No doubt it is true, as Dickie suggests, that when one enters a theatre one does not have to consciously act to suspend practical activities or be gotten into a state of mind in which impulses to action are actively suppressed because the convention of the theatre is a strong enough force and well enough learned from early years to make the spectator desist from taking any practical action. He is quite aware from the start that watching a play is not a practical activity. None the less, any number of conventions or knowledge as to the unrealistic nature of the performance will not help the spectator to appreciate the work aesthetically if he is not in that particular frame of mind, and he may continue to have all kinds of practical impulses even though he is sensible enough to desist from putting them into action.

By reducing the aesthetic response to a simple act of attention, Dickie overlooks a fundamental aspect of the experience, viz. its intimately personal nature. Detachment is necessary precisely because of the initial deep involvement. The factors which distract the mind from a work of art are psychologically involved with the stuff of which the work is constituted and therefore require a psychological process to overcome.

Challenging Dickie and supporting Bullough are Price and Casebier. Despite Dickie, Bullough's concept of distance can be made to serve as a more fundamental principle than just about any other concept in aesthetics. Audiences have varying levels of response. Mental obstacles are

essentially prejudices which can arise owing to the limitations of an art work or to certain notions, ideas, beliefs, attitudes, emotional preoccupations and the cultural and educational background of the subject as related to the work.

When Dickie says that it is not a psychological force that helps to restrain spectators from practical action but only the institutional convention of which the spectator is aware, he misunderstands the value and nature of the blocking process. Dickie's interpretation of what one is blocking is not any practical action and responses but only those disturbing thoughts which interfere with one's specific attitude towards a particular work.

Distancing therefore is fundamental for a theory of the appreciation and creation of art. Theatre has long been seen as the best example of where the concept of distance is practiced but this concept of distance has not been systematically developed, and therefore, I propose to work out systematically and in detail the relation of this philosophical concept of distance to two trends on contemporary theatre: alienation and living.

Theatre has always been regarded as a good example of the application of the concepts of over and under-distancing. This is especially true with regards to contemporary theatre. As an art, every play has a level of reality which we all recognize and interpret in a similar way. On the other hand, each observer has his own subjective response towards what is happening. In normal instances of art

appreciation which are devoid of strong emotional content, no real-life emotions occur and therefore do not need blocking out. In other words, the distancing process is required mainly because of the intensity of the emotional involvement. The stronger it is the greater is its appeal.

It is difficult to determine a solution, even with the help of modern experimental psychology, to the problem of whether or not a psychic state is experienced equally by every member of the audience at the end of a play. The emotion, the pity which one feels within oneself and which continues after the play - do they indicate an inclination to surmount and control passions immediately? Three men suffering from sea-sickness will have the same symptoms and can perhaps, be treated with the same medicine; but it is more than likely that these same men, while watching a film depicting a typhoon, will have three different types of experience. This is analogous to each spectator; identifying with the unreal characters of a play. By identifying himself with sorrows and sufferings which are as illusory as the characters are unreal, he (the spectator) gets an opportunity to escape from the moral responsibilities of real life.

This aesthetic identification or empathy has often been discussed in terms of Bullough's psychical distance. Bullough's theory is relational; part from object and part from subject. In any aesthetic experience, Bullough thought, there lies a psychical distance between the subject and the object which is the source of experience. During an aesthetic experience man remains personally detached from the offered

subject. The pleasure derived from a work of art is flexible enough to include a large number of variations and exceptions. For instance, Bullough readily admits that some degree of predisposition on our part is called for in order to appreciate a work of art more fully. A spectator who in his private life has suffered from jealousy may appreciate Othello more than a man who has never experienced jealousy, provided that he succeeds in keeping the distance between the action of the play and his personal feelings.

The physical presence of living human beings as vehicles of dramatic art is a difficulty which no other art has to face in the same way. Here, Bullough makes an interesting comment on the justifiability of the censorship of theatre. The only justification for censorship lies in the fact that aesthetic identification with the imaginary characters of the stage is much too common. If the audience could be trusted to maintain distance there would be no sense whatever in the censorship of plays.

Tragedies, especially as Rousseau saw them, with their absurd costumes, their highly affected verbiage and their characters drawn from the distant past who were either too sublime or too monstrous, had so unreal an effect on the audience that emotional and moral identification was difficult, and at times impossible. But this was not the case with comedies, where both the theme and the characters were much closer to life. The moral problems represented in comedy have a more immediate rapport with

ours and its characters resemble men more closely. And, it is because of this particular feature, which is so frequently exploited, that comedy makes fun of our moral responsibilities.

While Rosseau condemns theatre, because it excludes the spectator's direct participation with what is being represented, Brecht's aim is not to condemn theatre on any moral ground but to reform it. He makes it an instrument for social and political revolution. If theatre has any role in changing the nature of things, the audience must not be allowed to get emotionally involved because, as Brecht says, "Sorrow is the enemy of thought".²

Playwrights in the 20th century deliberately have moved away from a balance of over and under-distancing of the audience's attitude and moved toward extremes of distancing. The idea of balancing, according to Bullough, was present in traditional theatre, otherwise known as "realist or illusionistic". To understand this kind of theatre means seeing man in his everyday life, in his environment and social commitments. It was the business of realistic theatre to uncover social abuse, discuss the relationship between the individual and society and, in the literal meaning, proves itself a theatre of purpose. Besides the realistic stage setting and costume, traditional theatre had its music, lighting, primarily serving the plot. The audience would in effect differ in their evaluation because they would be involved in the fate of characters who are almost real.

In Brecht's over-distancing and Artaud's under-distancing however, the cases are different. In the former, the audience is relatively detached but absorbed in the idea. An example of this is Brecht's "Mother Courage" where the space, the setting and even the characters were monumental. The actors are never consistent. It is a theatre that acknowledges the presence of its audience, and so, even though it is a real happening going on, the audience is merely eavesdropping because of its vast space and large cast.

The latter, (under-distancing) is very much akin to "Street Theatre" where a play seems to merge with real life. In "Street Theatre", otherwise known as living theatre, under-distancing sometimes threatens the audience. For example, it's not uncommon to find some actors selling coffee to people in the front rows while the voices of some of the actors are sometimes heard from the rear through loudspeakers. Still, one doesn't see how the activity on the stage could arouse any real fear, or hope or despair. So, what this kind of theatre does is to touch the spectator directly in his own life without his having completely forgotten it is theatre.

Theatre critics talk about these extremes of over and under-distancing in different languages. Some describe them in terms of "estrangement", some "alienation"; some style it Living/Street/Guerilla Theatre and others merely speak of it as "engagement".

By bringing together the philosophical concept of distance and recent theatre ideas, philosophy can be brought to bear on contemporary theatre phenomena. This has not been done. And since the situation is complicated, there is a great need for this study on distance.

Concept of Distance in Theatre

The concept of psychological distance in art has enjoyed considerable support since it was introduced by William Bullough in 1912. I intend in this section to explain Bullough's theory, review the objections recently raised against the theory, concentrating on the objections of George Dickie, see how Casebier defends Bullough against these objections and conclude the chapter by my own resolution of the debate in which I decide how far Bullough's theory can be clearly explained and defended.

Bullough maintains that distancing was relevant to the act, both of creating an artistic form and of responding to a work of art. It is as much an essential experience for the spectator as for the artist. The relation to the object of art is still personal; often emotionally colored but of a peculiar character. Its peculiarity lies in that the personal character of the relation has been, so to speak, filtered. He speaks of distance as something that has to be present so that a state of aesthetic consciousness can be achieved.

To know that something is an art work necessarily

involves for Bullough, knowing it is not a real thing but a representation of a thing. In order to appreciate an art work, especially a drama, one must know that it is an art work and that the appreciator is related to it as spectator. As a spectator therefore, one would reflect on what the artist is trying to say through the art-work to the effect that with distance the observer or audience focuses on how the subject matter is portrayed in the play, on stage (thereby focusing on the lighting, stage design, acting, etc.) and not on the subject matter itself.

Bullough's example of distance is the "fog scene". It's about some passengers on a ship at sea who see the fog as a threat while the others on the same ship, who don't see the fog as a danger, appreciate its beauty. Many practical actions would conflict with the aesthetic appreciation of the fog because they require complete attention. For example, one of the passengers on the ship in question might be so terrified in a fog at sea that he could not appreciate anything. One can see here that the terrified individual is not appreciative nor ever could be, inasmuch as the fog to him, is a forewarning of an impending danger. If however, his fear can be allayed by the captain's display of confidence, or by being shown that the radar shows no obstructions in the water or any other reassurance that there is no danger, then perhaps, the frightened traveler can be brought to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the fog. If the fog is viewed practically, then it is

dangerous and unpleasant, but if it is not viewed practically, then he might see the art, the beauty, etc.

However, not all ordinary experiences are so sharply divided as this in actuality; more often they are mixed. A passenger may appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the fog without being psychologically restrained from practical concerns. In fact, he might even attend to and appreciate the fog's qualities at the same time that he takes practical action against the dangers that the fog brings about. A sailor, for example, might appreciate the sight of the milky opaqueness of the fog while securing lines (an activity that is a routine). Or he might appreciate the sight of the fog and the feel of the dampness on his face as he peers from the bow looking for obstacles. Such examples show that there is no necessary conflict between aesthetic appreciation and practical concern. Nonetheless, even though practical and aesthetic experience may be mixed, Bullough has succeeded in showing that there are indeed these two aspects or poles in experience which are important in analyzing the nature of aesthetic experience. Even where mixed, it is the distanced part of the experience which qualifies it as being aesthetic.

What Bullough seems to be saying here is that most of human life is this practical use of things for we are not ordinarily aware of those aspects of things, which do not touch us immediately nor are we generally conscious of impressions apart from our own self-concerns. If this same

passenger can curtail the practical disposition, i.e., not fully expressing it, this disposition then would be described as the negative aspect of distance, but there is also the positive side distance. If it is practical, then the fog scene becomes dangerous and unpleasant. If it is non-practical however, then the experience is beautiful, for there are properties of a situation one fails to see when viewing it from a practical standpoint but do see when viewing it from a distanced perspective. In Fry's penetrating analysis of aesthetic perception in Vision and Design, he distinguishes between seeing things in ordinary perception and looking at them in an aesthetic context:

The needs of our actual life are so imperative, that the sense of vision becomes highly specialized in their service. With an admirable economy we learn to see only so much as is needful for our purposes; but this is in fact very little, just enough to recognize and identify each object or person; that done, they go into an entry in our mental catalogue and are no more really seen. In actual life the normal person really needs the labels as it were on the objects around him and troubles no further... It is only when an object exists in our lives for no other purpose than to be seen that we really look at it. Biologically speaking, art is a blasphemy. We were given our eyes to see things, not to look at them. Life takes care that we all learn the lesson thoroughly. So that at a very early age we have acquired a very considerable ignorance of visual appearances...The subtlest differences of appearance that have a utility value still continue to be appreciated, while large and important visual characters, provided they are useless for life, will pass unnoticed...Children have not learned it fully, and so they look at things with some passion. Even the grown man keeps something at his unbiological, disinterested vision with regard to a few things. He still looks at flowers, and does not merely see them...The vision with which we regard such objects is quite distinct from the practical vision of our instinctive life. In the practical vision we have

no more concern after we have read the label on the object: Vision ceases the moment it has served its biological function.³

Besides the proposition that distance is personal, Bullough also asserts that it is variable. Consider the foregoing case of the fog scene where each attitude varies in intensity, i.e., the fright is either extreme or slight. These variations in intensity may be understood by referring to the actual variations in urgency of desire and vividness of impressions. A desire for safety might evoke for feelings of isolation and terror but where the disposition is curtailed then these feeble impressions become feeble characteristics of the scene. Distance also contains an "antinomy". This means the tendency of the properties that constitute the terror and fear to vanish from their objects as their intensity increases and decreases. This differs from person to person and from time to time.

The variables in distancing are based on the possibility of different intensities of the properties projected. The personal-ness of psychical distance therefore may be viewed as a set of properties, projected. Distance is operating when the scene one sees is "put out of gear" and allowed to stand outside the context of personal practical needs. I should remark here that Bullough holds to the view that some people do engage in an act of inhibition which enables objects to have distance from them.

His interpretation of the phrase--psychical distance--makes his thought explicit; showing that art is

what we project art to be; objectivity is abolished. In short, distance is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own-self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends.

One of the best known examples is to be found in our attitude to the characters of a drama. The case of a man who is jealous about his wife is a good equivalent of Shakerspeare's Othello. The jealous man will surely enter into the play inasmuch as the feelings and experiences of Othello coincide with his own. His under-distanced attitude, therefore, distorts the concept of the real Othello. If then the work is repulsive in its realism, it is under-distancing; but over-distancing produces the impression of artificiality and absurdity. If therefore the viewer is carried away by this artificiality instead of seeing Othello on stage, then he is, as earlier said, over-distanced.

This shows in either case that temporal remoteness produces distance and objects removed from us in point of time are distanced. Many pictures, plays and poems have reached the level of art only with the help of temporal distance. Others, on the contrary, often for the same reason have suffered a loss of distance through over-distancing. The physical presence of living human beings as vehicles of dramatic art is a difficulty which no other art would have to face in the same way. The form of presentation in the theatre sometimes endangers the maintenance of distance but it more frequently acts as a considerable support. Some

stage features like the make-up, lighting, costumes, even the language (especially verse) exercise an opposite influence. It's almost certain that the tendency to under-distance is felt more in comedy than tragedy. Why? Because the former is practical and appeals to persons rather than dealing with aesthetics. Apart from comedy and tragedy it is melodrama which now suffers over-distancing. It's excessive distance may however, impose on the public a personal relation to the events of the play as they would appear in real life. Distancing to Bullough is to be considered as the special and primary function of what he calls the creative act in artistic projection and therefore one of the distinguishing features of aesthetic consciousness.

Perhaps the kinds of things which may happen to the playwright's attention may not differ too much from those that may happen to an ordinary spectator, although they may have different motives and/or intentions. This is likely to be a similar case to that of a reader, e.g. a poet who reads the poem as history. All he's doing is, attending to an aspect of a poem just like the playwright watching the rehearsal of a play. Both of these artists are attending with ulterior motives to a work of art, although here the ulterior motives are critical and technical rather than mundane.

A practiced viewer does not have to be looking for a reason to judge the work; he may just notice an area in a play, e. g., acting, costuming, language, stage decór, etc.,

and this becomes a reason why he thinks the play better or worse. What happens when we reject a novel or a play because it conflicts with our moral beliefs? The answer is simply that we have not read the book aesthetically for we might have interposed moral responses of our own which are alien to it and this disrupt the aesthetic attitude.

One would appreciate Othello if he focused to some extent upon the ways in which the main character was symbolic of man and not the extraordinary extension of its psychological phenomenon. This focal awareness is therefore refocusing attention back upon internal qualities and perhaps the internal relations of features that contribute to the unification of all aspects of the play. The mere occurrence of jealousy in Othello as in any other play is not sufficient to warrant the individual spectator to transfer his inner feelings unnecessarily towards his relationship to his wife. When an observer therefore identifies himself so strongly with a character that he is unable to appreciate a play aesthetically, he has simply failed to distance himself. Through distance the play becomes a universal message from the playwright to the audience. This was first pointed out by Schopenhauer. E.g., in real life Othello is just another unfortunate case for curiosity, but in the play he reveals something about human nature generally. Conventions of theatrical distancing transform the action from that of any individual into a universal symbol. Distance makes the audience aware that they are viewing a

play about mankind (and not witnessing a murder) and so are prepared, more ready for this message. Secondly, an actor represents you and me while the stage represents space and time. And because of the interdependence of the actor and the stage, we cannot overlook one and completely avoid the other. The only way you can capture both is to view them aesthetically. The moment therefore you feel inattentive and let yourself be carried away, I would rather call this inattention of a kind and certainly not distancing. A distancing process is required mainly because of the intensity of the emotional involvement. Bullough draws attention to this point by talking about the variability of distance, the ideal of which is the utmost decrease of distance without its disappearance.

Even if distancing is not a voluntary act; it is still a conscious mental process employed in the appreciation of art, even as conceptualization is employed in an intellectual exercise. The mind is not only to be blocked but to be led gently on in the new channel opened up in consequence of the blocking, and the experience must be elaborated from this fresh point of view. This is what Bullough refers to as the positive aspect of distance. Aesthetic experience, therefore must be neither too personal nor too impersonal. As Ruth Saw puts it: "The balance is a state of exquisite awareness, neither the cold contemplation of a mere observer nor the passionate warmth of a partisan."⁴ It has been said repeatedly that theatre creates a perpetual present moment, but it is only a present filled with its

own future that is really dramatic. Acting is dependent upon the actor behaving as if the metaphorical present is the actual present. It is incumbent upon the actor playing Othello to behave as if he is actually strangling Desdemona. The tense of the actor is the present: "I am killing Desdemona", and yet this is only partially true. Susanne Langer says, "Theatre...moves not towards the present as narrative does but towards something beyond; it deals eventually with commitments and consequences".⁵ To satisfy Bullough's definition of psychical distance further we would have to argue that the actor is in a special state of mind. It is easy to do so if we once again remind ourselves that the actor is concerned with expressing meanings, i.e., delivering messages. The actor's state of mind has a fine control of both alternating special and temporal contexts. Psychical distance seems to be a useful term to describe this mental state. Both the actor and his spectator must adopt the aesthetic attitude toward drama - art; for it is by doing this we shall experience delight and pleasure. A man who is tone-deaf cannot enjoy music just as there is going to be no aesthetic response from one who has psychological problems. The concept of distance, whether little or much, therefore appears to lie between ourselves and our affections, i.e., affecting our being bodily or spiritually, e.g., as sensation, perception, emotional state or idea.

Distance not only marks one of the most important steps in the process of artistic creation, it also serves as

a distinguishing feature of what is commonly so loosely described as the "artistic temperament". It will be readily admitted that a work of art has the more chance of appealing to us the better it finds us prepared for its particular kind of appeal. Without some degree of predisposition on our part, it must necessarily remain incomprehensible, and to that extent unappreciated.

Distance, according to Bullough, raises art beyond the narrow sphere of individual interest and imparts to it that postulating character which the idealistic philosophy of the 19th century regarded as a metaphysical necessity. To speak therefore, of the pleasure - value of art and to introduce hedonism into aesthetic speculation, is even more irrelevant than to speak of moral hedonism in ethics. Aesthetic hedonism is a compromise. Insofar as distance becomes one of the distinguishing features of the aesthetic consciousness of that outlook upon experience and life, Bullough's concept is an excellent testimony to theatre as a living art: productive, creative and appreciative.

Dickie basically charges Bullough with being either trivial or false. Bullough's theory, Dickie alleges, is unclear and requires some interpretation to make it clear. There are two such interpretations, but on the first the theory is true but trivial and pretentious and on the second, it is simply false. Either Bullough is giving a new name to an ordinary case of plain inattention, in which case Bullough's theory amounts to no more than the trivial claim

that if you don't pay attention to a play you will miss out on it aesthetically. Of course that is true, Dickie says, but why confuse things by glorifying this with the fancy label "distancing" as though Bullough had discovered a new, special mental act which could be employed to enjoy art? This is the first interpretation. But if Bullough is really claiming that there is a special mental act called "distancing" then he is simply mistaken. Dickie himself claims he has never had such an experience, and is unable to have one and doesn't know of a single case of it on record.

What Dickie is denying therefore is that there is no more than one way to attend to an object. Bullough is saying that one can attend to a play in several ways, in a distancing way which makes the play worthwhile aesthetically or in a non-distancing way which spoils the play aesthetically. Dickie says, no; there is only one way...either you pay attention to something or you fail to pay attention to it. Therefore, Dickie argues that when Bullough talks about the failure to distance all he really means is that the person has stopped paying attention to the play and has begun paying attention to something else (e.g., his own personal problems). This is Dickie's analysis of Bullough's example of Othello. Where Bullough has said that the jealous husband underdistances, Dickie says no, he just starts thinking about (paying attention to) his wife and their marital problems and stops thinking about (paying attention to) the

play. You are therefore paying attention to a certain work of art or you are inattentive. Suppose that A and B are looking at a portrait of B's father. Instead of B noting and appreciating the colour harmony, spatial organization, or expressive features of the representation, he is simply reminded of his father and falls to musing and/or recounting tales about his father to A. B's behavior and state of mind would be characterized by aesthetic attention theorists as an example of attending transitively to the painting by using the work of art as a vehicle for associations, that is, as a case of attending with external factors in mind. In this case, therefore, B is not attending to the painting at all, although he may be facing it with his eyes open. He is otherwise attending to his musing or to the story he is telling, although he looked at the painting first and noticed that it was a portrait of his father. The object of B's attention is either his memories of his father or the story he is telling, but neither of these is an aspect of the painting and, hence, his musing or telling cannot be correctly described as attending to the painting interestedly. "In cases such as this one, what aesthetic attention theorists note is the occurrence of associations that distract the viewer from a painting or a play. And being distracted from something is not a special kind of attention to that thing; it is a kind of inattention to that thing."⁶ Despite the severity of Dickie's objections, the traditional notion of "Aesthetic distance" can be maintained, but only by

rewriting it in a more compelling light.

Casebier's main case against Dickie and in defense of Bullough is in the same terms stated in Dickie's objection. I.e., Casebier disagrees with Dickie that there is only one way to pay attention to a play. An example he offers in support of this argument is a series of different responses to a screening of Orson Welle's film Citizen Kane. A historian focuses his attention predominately on the historical accuracy of the film's portrayal of American life in the first half of the 20th century. There is no doubt about his attending to the film; it is important to note at the same time, that he is focusing attention on a certain select set of external relations - relations of the film to something outside it namely, to the American scene of the relevant period rather than focusing on internal qualities and internal relations.

Another would-be appreciator of the film, focuses his attention on still another set of external relations of the film - the relations of the visual and auditory qualities of the film to film-craft. He attends to the framing of the scenes, to camera movement, to editing, to the kind of color patterns, and other such qualities and compares them with their occurrence in films of similar structure and subject-matter. His focus, is, thus, on practical external relations of the film.

A woman, recently deserted, seizes upon the similarity between her own marital situation and that of Kane's

first wife, Emily. From that scene on, she becomes absorbed in thoughts about the breakdown of her marriage. For her, the film becomes a stimulus for a series of remembrances. Her reaction thus conforms to the kind of case that Dickie takes to be paradigmatic of a loss of distance. She does not attend to the film. Her attention is drawn off both internal and external relations of the object to focus upon her marriage and its dissolution.

Of these three responses, only one of them is an instance of inattention - the case where the abandoned wife is "triggered" into a chain of memories by a particular sequence in the film. The other two are both instances of attending to the object and these are paradigms of non-distanced responses. These are the kinds of cases that the father of the theory of distance, Edward Bullough, dwells upon.⁷

Again in the example of Shakespeare's Othello, we have two people: A and B. A watches Othello for the purpose of being able to analyze and criticize it in an examination and B sees the same play just as an entertainment. There certainly seems to be a difference between the motives and intentions of parties A and B. This however, does not mean either of them is looking at different plays. The questions we would advance here are: a) Are the two parties interested? b) Are they both attentive?

Where Bullough differs from Casebier is that Bullough maintains that one must hold a positive act of psychological

restraint in necessarily enjoying an art-work, whereas Casebier does not believe that distancing is a conscious mental act. My own view therefore agrees with Bullough's. Why? Because an appreciator attends to an object; depending on whether or not he has blocked his practical involvement. Attention or no attention, (Dickie's theory) the part of a jealous husband watching Othello cannot but be practical to him; and except he maintains some distance at least, he is likely to take the action of Desdemona as truly his wife's.

In subsequent chapters I will endeavor to treat the degree of psychical distance with respect to Brecht's and Artaud's over and under-distancing in the theatre.

Chapter 2

BRECHT AND OVER-DISTANCING

Epic Theatre is the theatre of destroyed illusions and the wide awake audience. It narrates events and compels the spectator to understand them. Unlike the traditional theatre or as Brecht calls it, the Aristotelian theatre, Epic Theatre acts upon the spectator's intellect.

The Traditional or Aristotelian Theatre	The Epic Theatre
1. Full of action	1. Always a narrator between artist and audience.
2. Involves the spectator in the stage action and destroys his own will to action	2. Makes the spectator an observer and arouses his will to action
3. Suggestion	3. Argument
4. Felling	4. Intellect
5. The spectator shares in emotional experience	5. The spectator is taught.
6. Man is given as a known quantity	6. Man - as a subject of investigation
7. Every scene preconditions the next	7. Every scene is independent
8. Straightforward	8. Abstract
9. Extensive use of stage decór, lighting, costume	9. Very little or none
10. Proscenium stage acting	10. Any large space

From the foregoing chart, one could easily deduce

that traditional drama relies on a broad background which is uncritically assumed or taken for granted; in Brecht's terms, traditional drama portrays the struggle of class instincts. Brecht demands that the struggle of class instincts be replaced by the struggle of social consciousness, of social convictions. He maintains that the situation must not only be felt, but explained, crystalized into the idea which will "overturn the world".

Yet the epic method of acting, though perhaps the most important, is only one element in Brecht's overall strategy of alienation or estrangement, e.g., epic acting, inscriptions projected upon the stage, music, etc., all comment on, rather than support the story. What he tries to do is to turn against an audience hungry for illusion. Brecht, as Martin Esslin explains, "makes it apparent to the spectators that they are not witnessing real events happening before their very eyes at this very moment, but that they are sitting in a theatre, listening to an account...of things that have happened in the past at a certain time and a certain place."⁸ But Brecht's theory disregards the traditional psychology of the audience and the pragmatic relationship of stage to spectator. The stage, because it is of the present, triumphs over the past of the events narrated; the audience will again and again try to overcome the most violent shocks of alienation. Over-distancing his theatre from the audience, Brecht's Epic theatre is the theatre of destroyed illusions. He attacks the traditional

theatre. According to him, this rests on empathy and illusion which makes man, a rational being, lose his critical abilities and cloud his brain with wishful thinking and dreams of harmony. Unlike this, therefore, he thinks the stage must strive to keep man sober, cool and above all, critical. His theatrical concepts therefore are very much in the anti-realistic school of contemporary European theatre. For his theatre, the audience is discouraged from losing its critical detachment through identifying with one or more of the characters. The opposite of this kind of identification is the maintenance of a separate existence of the characters by keeping them apart from the audience. This type of theatrical distancing does not attempt to create fixed, individualized characters. Each emerges from the social function of the individual and changes with that function. Some of the artistic peculiarities of Brecht are his large space, large cast, vast background, etc., which collectively awaken the spectator's critical faculty with regard to mankind from the point of view of social relationships. The use of masks are also particularly remarkable in his theatre. One may perhaps say this of Brecht; that he belongs so much to the past that he is of the future. Not in the habit of copying Nature, in practice, the epic theatre brings back to the stage, the sister arts of music, scenic design and choreography which are all but excluded by naturalist dramaturgy. Why? Because these elements were absent from that pro-realism of

daily life to be imitated. No longer does the stage suffer from the necessity of having "to put real butter on real bread". (American Organization Men and Moscow party officials agree on points of aesthetics.)⁹

During the days of the Weimar Republic, Brecht and Erwin Piscator lacked the money to stage one of their socialistic propaganda plays at their Berlin theatre. Instead, the actors gave a play-reading. Sitting at a table on the bare stage they read/spoke their lines; sometimes making a gesture, sometimes rising to indicate a move. But although the actors made no pretence of "being in character", as we say, the audience were more completely held than by the plays which attempted full theatrical illusion. Suddenly Brecht saw that what held them was not character, not illusion, but the moral relationship between the characters, the moral argument of the play. The actor was quoting the words, imitating the actions; he was estranged from the character. The moral conflict was seen isolated at a distance. This is the effect of "estrangement", of "alientation" which is Brecht's particular contribution to the theatre. He calls it the "VERFREMDUNGSEFFEKT."¹⁰

Not altogether new, Diderot propounded the same principles; hence, indeed Brecht formed a society which he calls DIDEROT SOCIETY. Diderot complained that "the audience leaves its vices in the cloakroom and collects them on the way out".¹¹ He therefore urges that the actor must not be lost in his part but detached from it. Diderot quotes with

approval the case of an actor in a dying scene who was so much in control of himself that he could arrange the position of a chair without losing his effect on the audience. In the same way, Brecht points to the Chinese actor, who, in his opinion, does not enter into his part but demonstrates it looking at the audience as though saying: "Doesn't it happen like this?". The actor in Brecht's own company is estranged from his part. He relates what the character said, describes what he did, with a kind of deliberation as though he realizes that the character could have acted or spoken otherwise, and yet did not. As a Marxist, Brecht is aware that every action has its alternative. In my opinion his epic play, "Mother Courage" is a living example. In this play, we know from the start that the heroine's degradation is inevitable. Divided into short scenes, each is a stage in her life. There is no climax. We are estranged from her because it is not her we see but only the actress who is telling us about her. She stands monumental in her rags against her wagon which is her means to livelihood. The huge, bare stage is her lifetime, the battlefields she treks through, the years she lives, as she turns and turns about. She is doomed because, as Brecht says over and over again, an individual cannot be good in an evil society. The war which gives her a living destroys her children. She is too degraded to understand how it all happened. She is inside the war, we are outside, estranged, listening to her story. Therefore, there is no catharsis (purgation) of

pity, no empathy as she goes on singing harshly the same hopeful song with which the play began.

Brecht's theatre is thus like an operating theatre. The human beings are exposed on the stage. Over-distanced from the audience, what we do is to watch but are not enthralled by illusion. Sometimes despite our detachment, we may give an angry laugh or a grunt of recognition at the truth of what we see. You are not made to forget that you are in the theatre but reminded of it, for the actors are caught when they appear pathetic at a moment of history. *Mother Courage* is related to but remote from the war; not allowed to be pathetic.

The key word in Brecht's theory of epic drama is estrangement (The Verfremdungseffekt), otherwise known in contemporary theatre as over-distancing. Terms like "epic theatre", "non-Aristotlelian drama", Verfremdungseffekt (alienation effect, abbreviated into V-effect), and other phrases from Brecht's theoretical writings have become more widely known than any of his creative work, and hence these find their way into the currency of theatrical criticism of readers who have never heard of Brecht, let alone seen any of his over-distanced plays.

Brecht always acknowledges his debt to a wide range of old theatrical conventions and traditions: The Elizabethan, the use of the chorus in Greek tragedy, etc. Yet he somehow created the impression that he was advocating something radically new and entirely revolutionary; perhaps

because of his excessive insistence that his was the only stage theory to meet the needs of a new, revolutionary, scientific age. A rebel, Brecht can only be understood in the light of what he rebelled against - a theatre that oscillates between emotional uplift and after-dinner entertainment. When he began to formulate his ideas in the late twenties he had already experimented with a variety of techniques, among which were plays that showed the influence of the Expressionist trend: their treatment of the characters as types rather than individuals and their concentrated poetic language. He especially worked with Erwin Piscator, whose stage transformed theatre into a forum for the discussion of current affairs. Brecht shows this influence when he wrote in 1931: "Today when human character must be understood as the totality of all social conditions, the epic form is the only one that can comprehend all the processes which could serve the drama as materials for a fully representative picture of the world."¹²

His objections against the theatre of illusion concern both the means employed and the uses to which these means are put. According to him, the Aristotelian drama (as he calls it) strives to create terror and pity in the spectator. It achieves this by conjuring before the public's eyes an illusion of real event, drawing each individual member of the audience into action by causing him to identify himself with the hero/heroine almost to the point of complete self-oblivion. The magical effect here is that it

hypnotizes the audience into a state of trance, which according to Brecht, is disgusting and obscene. They have neither the time nor the detachment to sit back and reflect in truly critical spirit on the social and moral implications of the play. And all this non-psychic distancing rests on the author, the director and the actors who all create the illusion of reality.

Brecht's answer is that the theatre must do its best to destroy in the bud any illusion of reality which tends to arise so that there will be at least some distancing. While the theatre of illusion is trying to re-create a present by pretending that the events of the play are actually taking place at the time of each performance, the epic theatre is strictly historical; it constantly reminds the audience that they are merely getting a report of past events. The pleasure that the latter gives is the discovery of new truths by creating a distance between the spectator and the characters. Familiar situations and human attitudes appear in a new light through astonishment, a new understanding of the human situation. This is how Brecht sums up the distinction between the old convention and his conception of the Theatre.

The spectator of dramatic theatre says:

Yes, I have felt the same - I'm just like this -
This human being's suffering moves me because there is
no way out for him. - I am weeping with those who weep
on the stage, laughing with those who laugh.

The spectator of the epic theatre says:

I shouldn't have thought so, - That's not the
way to do it - This is most surprising, hardly credible.

- This will have to stop. - This human being's suffering moves me because there would have been a way out for him. - I am laughing about those who weep on the stage, weeping about those who laugh.¹³

From the foregoing, one would see that Brecht's theatre (epic) is extrovert. The inner life of the characters is irrelevant to him except insofar as it is expressed in their outward attitudes and actions. Not the characters but the story in which they are involved becomes the main concern of the epic, narrative, historical theatre. Everything, I repeat, depends on the story; it is the centerpiece of the performance.

Brecht's over-distancing is designed to arouse indignation in the audience, a realization of contradictions. It is a theatre fitted for parody, caricature and denunciation, therefore essentially a negative theatre. In this kind of theatre, you hardly find positive heroes. This is a testimony of why their good characters are invariably crushed and defeated. What Brecht seems to be saying is, "Show the world in critical spirit and the audience will automatically see the need for a Marxist solution".¹⁴ For example the East Berlin audience which followed the play, Mother Courage saw poor dumb Katrine raped by the brutal soldier and compared this with Russian soldiers, and so they concluded that human nature has not changed. Brecht's insistence that his theories represented a truly Marxist theatre finally led him to abandon the name of the "epic" theatre and he took to his new title, "dialectical" theatre.

The act of practical involvement in Brecht's case can

therefore be seen as over-distancing which seems to be of considerable importance in the mechanism of his creative process. His commitment may thus be of importance mainly in stabilizing his personality and allowed him to rationalize his poetic impulse by giving it a purpose.

Most of Brecht's later plays deal with the iniquities of capitalism, the equation of business and crime, the injustice and brutality of a commercial society. What he wants is to over-distance in order to prevent any Einführung, any empathy, on the part of actors and audience. This he calls, "DIE AUFGABE DER ILLUSION ZUGUNSTEN DER DISKUTIERBARKEIT."¹⁵ How this distancing is to be achieved by the actor Brecht discusses in his essay, DIE STRASSENSZENE, the gist of which is that the actor's business is not very different from that of an eyewitness of a traffic accident who demonstrates to a quickly gathering crowd how the accident, of which he was the sole witness, occurred. With this kind of approach, the actor has become then, a teacher with a pointer. After all, the actor who identifies himself with the character he represents is only giving his interpretation of that character. He remains ultimately, always psychologically differentiated from that character so much so that his drive to play comes precisely from the subtle inter-relationship between the acting and normal personality.

What we witness, then, is not the Hamlet, but X's Hamlet and Y's Hamlet which are the result not of possible "identification," but of wanted identification. The degree

to which the actor allows a rapprochement between his acting and his normal personality is his own, and to determine it from the outset means to abolish the tension from which he derives his drive to play. I.e., traditionally an actor was free to identify with the character as much as he wished, a freedom which Brecht's theatre severely limits. All Brecht achieves with this rigorous demand is a loss of balance through over-distancing. What we get, then is a theatre from which all tension and antinomy have been removed, and which is demonstrating situations of a merely factual nature and relationship. Here theatre is turned into an institution for the presentation of painless, spoon-fed, and "guided" historical or perhaps ideological information. What is left of the art-value of such an institution is questionable, although Brecht describes his dialectical theatre as highly artistic. The audience is supposed to learn something conducive to social action. It is not to be entertained, or rather the "entertainment" is to be of a special sort. Let's see a bit of the difference between a Shakespearean play and Brecht's play, Mother Courage. A completely different context of ideas is implied within the framework of each of their plans. Shakespeare, is often interpreted as the humanist of the era of the Renaissance; in this sense he may be said to have composed a passionate hymn to universally significant, lofty passions and moral concept: love, honour, justice. He often seems to glorify love as a feeling organically inherent to the nature of man,

unconquerable, selfless and free. He glorifies justice, by which retribution is rendered in full measure to any hypocrite or violator, however high a social position he may occupy, according to the enormity of the crime he has committed. Keeping the plot outline of Shakespeare's comedy almost intact, Brecht refused to recognize universal meaning free of economic motivation or class struggle. He refused to recognize universal meaning free of class distinctions. In other words in a world of exploitation, where poor people can support themselves only by selling their labor, even love, a free selfless feeling becomes a commodity - an object one buys and sells. If therefore Brecht in some way parodies Shakespeare, it is by no means with the intention of discrediting this writer whom he highly respects. For himself he only sets a completely different task. Writing on this, he says, "realism presupposes latitude, not limitation. Reality itself is broad, varied, contradictory... Truth can be concealed in many ways, and communicated in many ways."¹⁶ We must remember that we determine our aesthetic just like our ethic, according to the demands of the struggle. In distancing however, Brecht emphasizes that what is important is that reality be correctly understood and accurately represented. Using philosophical fantasy and invention widely in his work, Brecht often stresses the advantages he sees in theatrical art: it helps the actor and spectator work out conclusions and generalizations of man's social position.

Brecht's influence on others has been enormous and his debt to Erwin Piscator must be mentioned to make his work more understandable. Who is this Piscator? A creator of "Proletarian Theatre", which Piscator wrote in 1919 as a manifesto addressed to the workers of Berlin and calling for a theatre of propagandistic agitation. The aim of his enterprise was not to produce art, but effective propaganda, to win over the politically still indifferent masses. The masses were to be tackled where they lived. Piscator's proletarian theatre was an instrument of class struggle. Appealing to the spectators with political, economic and social argumentation, he recalled in his book: Das Politische Theater (1929) "and we indiscriminately used every possible means: music, songs, acrobatics, cartoons, films, projected images, acted scenes, speeches". He repeatedly discussed the question of how to define his specific style. His purpose was an utmost intensification of effect by the use of extra-theatrical means.

We are so used to the concept of the stage as a faithful representation of the world that we tend to forget how recent a growth the naturalistic theatre is. It must at all times be made apparent to the spectators that they are not witnessing real events but that they are sitting in a theatre, listening to an account of things that have happened in the past. Let us therefore treat the theatre as a place of entertainment. Brecht's most original contribution to the theatre but also the most disputable - concerns

the reactions of the audience. From Greek Tragedy to Contemporary theatre the audience was supposed to be moved by what was presented on the stage. Whether they were to believe in the play as real or artificial, to regard the actors as skillful mimics or suffering human beings, they were to feel pity with them and to identify themselves with the experiences of the hero/heroine. Towards the end of his life, Brecht defended himself against the reproach that he wanted to banish emotion from the theatre altogether. In his rejection of identification between audience and characters he comes in conflict with the fundamental concept of psychology that regards process of identification as the basic mechanism by which one person communicates with another.

The real secret of Brecht's effect lies not in any formal principle of construction but in the inner tensions and contradictions within his mind. It seems that such deep conflicts within a personality are among the conditions without which major creative work cannot be produced. Brecht could not suffer the idea that he was not wholly in control of his own activity. He wanted to be a writer for the common people, as easy to understand as fair-ground comedians but the simpler he tried to be, the more complex his work became, so that only intellectuals could appreciate it; he wanted to serve the cause of revolution, but was regarded with suspicion. He wanted to arouse the critical faculties of his audience. He wanted to make his theatre a laboratory

of social change, a living proof that the world and mankind could be altered. He had to witness his villains acclaimed as heroes and his heroes mistaken for villains. He produced a rich texture of poetic ambiguity in which he abhorred the idea of beauty and created beauty. Such is the paradox of the creative process of Brecht that he failed but he became one of the most puzzling, one of the most hotly debated, but also one of the most important writers of his age. As though he realized that the character could have acted or spoken otherwise, yet he did not make him to. The actor is estranged from his part. Estrangement is the key word here in Brecht's theory of epic drama.

Applying his theory for Brueghel (the artist) Brecht is not only attracted by the group paintings but the more subtle "Fall of Icarus". In this picture, the ploughman in the foreground gets on unconcernedly with his ploughing, the shepherd watches his sheep and no one notices the catastrophe taking place in the distance over the sea. Far away the tremendous event makes its tiny splash. So, the epic drama isolates the inconspicuous moral drama, to estrange it; so that it is not taken for granted before it falls, dragged down by the weight of society. His own analogy for what he means by estrangement is that of watching a familiar object. But in order to understand what we are watching, we must stand at a distance and judge. While judging, we are rather powerless to help the actor but we can recognize where he suffers, goes wrong, etc.

Chapter 3

ARTAUD AND UNDER-DISTANCING

When, in 1949, Bertold Brecht returned to the rubble and ashes of Germany to create his Berliner Ensemble, it was clear that the contemporary theatre was in the process of redefinition. Armed with a definite aesthetic that evolved from a lifetime of struggle and work, Brecht had consciously set out to revolutionize the theatre by successfully synthesizing art with Marx, and to found a company quite unlike any other in the West. Equally inspired, but striving in opposite directions, Beckett combined absurdist metaphysics with metaphor, and in his unique way, developed an individualistic art.

By 1960, Brecht had been dead for four years, but his theatre was very much alive, even on the road to being institutionalized. Meanwhile, Antonin Artaud's theories of cruelty (a complex concept) were surfacing. Attracting a new generation of experimentalists, Artaud damned the traditional theatre of the playwright, and declared that visual images, gestures and "sounds beyond words" could be more theatrical than a standard text.

At the beginning of the sixties, however, neither Brecht, Beckett, nor Artaud had made any decisive dent on the work of American playwrights although plays by Brecht

and Beckett were produced in the U.S.A. Established, conventional playwrights still dominated the stage. Young audiences dwindled, many theatre houses were dark and fewer serious plays were optioned. Elsewhere, another kind of theatre was in the making. Meeting in any convenient place they could find, actors, directors, painters - aware of the aesthetics of both Brecht and Beckett who advocated over-distancing, but followers of neither - gathered to examine new concepts and new forms. Some of these artists were Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, the Living Theatre, The Open Theatre, the Environmentalists and the Happeners. As new artists, some of their performances were radical only in form, others in content. It was no accident that their appearance coincided with a decade that ushered in confrontation politics, participatory democracy, hippies, black power, sexual revolution, women's liberation, and so-called anti-art. This new theatre, sensing the theatricality of real life, was ultimately to question the value of theatre itself.

The young, in avowed rebellion against a political and economic system that encouraged racism, that betrayed its own commitments to ameliorate poverty and that created a gap between the rhetoric of freedom and a free "valid" life style, also looked upon the conventional theatre as an instrument of oppression. The young who disdained the system, and saw it as unredeemable, developed their own mores, culture, and language - not necessarily of words.

They repudiated theatre as literature and substituted in its place a non-verbal theatre, one of "cruelty" and ritual, and one of communal participation which might induce a more complete experience than the past had made possible. The actual theatre site itself had been regarded as being too restricting and artificial; they replaced it by theatre in churches, studios, streets, stadiums, gymnasiums, schools - or simply in any open space. The question arises: Was it then essential for the audience to be only spectators, or could the audience participate in aspects of the production as well? Could the spectators of a play be involved in a total experience?

Under the influence of Artaud's "cruelty" theories and of confrontation politics, the theatre attacked the audiences verbally. Others, influenced by ritual theatre, designed settings called Environmentals, which included the spectators in the action of the play. For them, the time had passed when "clean-cut" bourgeois audiences would be expected to sit passively in rows of chairs and watch a show. The spirit of the times had produced a necessary need for connection among the youth, who felt intensely alienated from the adult world. It was more of a counter-culture movement which represented an alternative force with its own language and style and its own claim to philosophical and psychological thought. It was a group known as an emblem of revolt, dissent and revolution. The group also attempted to be the antidote of corruption and alienation and also served an important aesthetic function: "under-

distancing in theatre". This enabled the actors who had always been exploited artistically to demand a creative role equal to that of the director, the scenic designer, and the playwright. The actors claimed that they could bring their own sensibilities to bear on old masterpieces and with their own bodies and voices create the MISE-EN-SCENE.¹⁷ Acting became not the grafting on of a new person, but the unmasking or the developing of the actor's hidden self. The new theatre's unifying characteristic was a departure from the traditional concept of theatre. This was a departure from the establishment's techniques and production structures with its producers, playwrights and stars, its box office, its reliance on elaborate costumes, sets and lights, and especially its bourgeois audiences who supported unpoetic language and predictable plots and characters. In short, everything the establishment theatre supported, glorified and merchandised was despised. The new theatre groups turned to nudity and sex, sensitivity training, pastoral and commune life, bi/homo sexuality and the merging of art and reality. These themes, considered radical, precisely were able to attract youthful audiences. For some, Antonin Artaud's theories are the most important theatrical development in the twentieth century.

Artaud's Living Theatre	Brecht's Epic Theatre
1. Wants theatre to change the world.	Wants theatre to change world.
2. Shocks the audience (Deals with Emotion)	Charges the audience to think (Deals with intellect)

Therefore Under-distancing	Therefore Over-distancing
3. Brings the public to see with their very eyes, e.g., Cruelty is an ingredient in his theatre which is ritualistic in nature	Instructs the public, e.g., His drama - not only epic but didactic
4. Advocates use of silence, gesture and sound	Uses language - more so from Narrator
5. Examples: 'Mad Mother'	Example: 'Mother Courage'

Antonin Artaud was born into the culture that had inherited the ideas of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarme. At an early age, he resisted the shackles of conventional bourgeois life by refusing to go into his family's business, throwing himself into the intellectual life of Paris. He began to write poetry and to draw, two activities he was to engage in for the rest of his life. At eighteen, he was already plagued by headaches and fits of depression; and his parents were advised to send him away for a "rest-cure". Although he recovered from this early break-down, his later sufferings from head pains led to his being diagnosed as schizophrenic. By 1920 he was fit and energetic and with his parents' support, sought his fortune in Paris. He found poetry writing therapeutic but he later chose his real ambition, the theatre. Dullin attracted Artaud, who became a member of Dullin's Atelier.

There Artaud came in contact with art, rather than entertainment. But Dullin could not hold Artaud for long. Why? Because Dullin's theatre was based on realism while

Artaud sought transcendence. Besides, Artaud was not considered a good actor. After a year at the Atelier, during which time he had neglected his poetry, Artaud began to write again. He later invented a new method of "poetry in space,"¹⁸ proliferated images mounted on "stage" in clusters. In the meantime Artaud watched and described his emotional reactions. He observed that he did not receive an idea rationally, but as a visual image transmitted to him via the senses. Hence, to re-create this inner life was to re-create visually. In 1925 he published several articles in the journal LA REVOLUTION SURREALISTE. After a few years of acting in surrealist films and writing for the movement's journals, Artaud left the movement and started his own theatre. THE ALFRED JARRY THEATRE, in honor of the man he acknowledged as his true antecedent. The said company opened in 1927 with Artaud's one-act play, MAD MOTHER and several others. However, the Jarry theatre failed and Artaud's depression increased until 1931 when he saw the Balinese Theatre Company in Paris. This company used the stage for ritual and transcendence. Its actors worshipped theatre as religion and appeared on stage as if in a hallucination. Characters had no relationship to plot; instead, they represented metaphysical states. Action consisted of fragments and pieces presented simultaneously but enjoyed as one entity. The Balinese Theatre's goal is to transcend the identification of the Western theatre, which generally maintains its "realist" illusion, but this

theatre deliberately abandons illusion. The use of platforms instead of standard sets; sound instead of speech make the audience to know and accept that the actors are "merely" acting. The MISE-EN-SCENE was the focus of the production, rather than the development of character and plot. A movement of the eyes, a turn of the head or shoulder, the raising of a leg or a hand, the pointing of a finger in a certain direction, all according to Artaud, conveyed a greater psychological or emotional force than words. Though some of the gestures were purely muscular, others were accompanied by sounds, cries, incantations and sometimes by musical instruments. No transition was necessary. For Artaud the actors were "animated hieroglyphs", enough to make them "forget the habit of speech".

The appearance of the Balinese Theatre confirmed Artaud's basic convictions: that the theatre must be magical. The actor must discover his real self, and be aware that he has a double reflected self through a mirror. Conscious that he is of two shadings, the actor must enter the metaphysical realm to discover his real psychic force. The audience on the other hand are unconscious, thus producing an interaction that transforms the audience as well as the actor.

The theatre, like plague, Artaud wrote, "is a delirium and is communicative". As an institution the theatre makes gestures and pushes them as far as they will go; like the plague it reforges the chain between what is and what

is not. Artaud compares the actors and the audience to victims of a great fire, "signalling through the flames",¹⁹ shrieking out in delirium, acting out their pain, screaming out their frenzy. The plague signified man's split between the physical and spiritual forces, and is a vivid metaphor for the theatre, not because it is contagious, but because like the plague it is the revelation, the exteriorization of a depth of latent cruelty by means of which all the perverse possibilities of the mind, whether of an individual or a people, are localized. The action of this type of theatre is beneficial in that, man sees himself as he is: it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness and hypocrisy of our world. It invites observers to take a heroic attitude they would never have assumed without it. Artaud's theatre of cruelty therefore presumes that man is beset by a grotesque illness from which neither the audience nor the actors are exempted, and that the audience comes to the theatre to undergo a violent therapy in hopes of being transformed. The actors, whose job it is to serve as "force of epidemic which attacks the feelings of the population, would carry the contagious epidemic all through the theatre",²⁰ thereby releasing the violent disorder and latent cruelty of man. Once the overwhelming disease is exposed, and the hated self released, the audience would find its real self.

In 1936, Artaud issued his first manifesto. He called for a theatre of cruelty, "...to elicit the guilt

of the audience, to make them feel as cruel as what they see portrayed on the stage...to make the audience leave the theatre in a state of irritation and hostility...shaken and irritated by the internal dynamism of the spectacle which bears a direct relation to the anguish and pre-occupations of his whole life."

He says:

I am not one of these who believe that civilization has to change in order for the theatre to change; but I do believe that the theatre, utilized in the highest and most difficult sense possible, has the power to influence the aspect and information of things.²¹

Although he believed that theatre affects behavior, Artaud eschewed a political theatre. What he envisioned instead was a ritual theatre of psychotherapy and spiritual transformation. He intended to bring back into theatre the magical idea of a modern psychoanalysis which consists in effecting a patient's cure by making him assume the apparent attitudes of the desired condition.

Some people believe that we usually go to the theatre to get away from ourselves to rediscover not so much the best of ourselves but the purest part, the part mostly marked with suffering. We perhaps seek an emotion on the stage in which the most secret movements will be exposed. The audience in this situation therefore comes face to face with its taste for crime, its utopian sense of life and even its cannibalism. In Artaud's theatrical terms, this means unifying sound, gesture and action into rich, image-like, harmonious patterns: the use of oriental-ritual

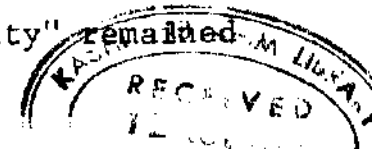
movements, non-verbalized sounds, grotesque masks, shocking costumes, etc. is extensive. In short, Artaud's intent was to unleash upon the audience objects that would elicit violent reactions, leading to catharsis.

As early as 1937, Artaud questioned the relevance of past literature as a foundation for theatrical presentations. He claimed the right to transform, transpose, re-write or completely abandon old masterpieces. He foresaw a theatre based on myth, not the Greeks' and the Romans', but new ones that would eventually arise from a modern consciousness. Why myth? Because according to this emotionally high-strong artist, myths always represent our relationship to the universe, help us to discover aspects of human psychology and to a reasonable extent, they define the symbolic and the primitive. They also tie the human race together by revealing common deeds, dreams, and fantasies; as they supply many with an ideal and an anti-ideal, because myth describes the human condition and the unchanging characteristics of man. Again, for Artaud, ancient myths were outdated and perhaps useless unless they could be re-interpreted in light of contemporary experience. The old, Western myth represented everything conservative and aristocratic while the twentieth century's myth is romantic and revolutionary. Many of Artaud's suggested plays were produced by the Living Theatre, the Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook.

Artaud claimed that playwrights, especially in France attached great importance to syntactical meaning,

and were addicted to explaining and describing discursively. Actors talked about their feelings, psychologized about their states, and depended only on dialogue while Artaud was advocating the use of silence, gesture and sound. In short the non-verbal occupied Artaud's mind incessantly. He maintained that sound alone could create various levels of meaning, that they could be as concrete as décor and lighting, and that random sound could be effectively synchronized with movement. Words are not sacrosanct, he argued. "The language of painting is paint; it is abstract and based on shapes; the language of film is based on visual images. Why must the language of the theatre be based on words?"²² Why has Artaud chosen "cruelty" as such an important ingredient in his theatre concepts? Defending this, he associated cruelty with an "appetite for life" - birth, death, love, ambition, creativity and power and all contingent on cruelty. It is an acknowledgement of existential realities, an acknowledgement that we are subject to "darker forces". Cruelty is not however, equated with sadism or superficial horror - rather, with man's perennial struggle to live. To overcome evil is cruelty and the pain of achievement is cruelty. It signifies decision and absolute determination. Above all, cruelty is a kind of rigid control and submission to necessity.

Although Artaud had written many essays on this theory, his practical application of "cruelty"



critically unsuccessful; he staged only one play, THE CENCI, which failed because of inadequate funds and too few rehearsals. Nevertheless, Artaud set the tone for the radical theatre of the sixties. More than any other theorist of his generation, he prophesied the death of naturalism. His theories are a demarcation between the old and the new but they are not entirely original. Certainly, his body of ideas was brilliant; his vision, shocking and imaginative, but his greatest weakness was his inability to put his theories into practice. One of the most important issues Artaud raised was the need to redefine the function of the theatre. Even though the question was not a new one, his idea of using theatre as therapy is quite unique.

Having examined Artaud's theory of theatre, in what sense exactly can we say that his theory is an example of under-distancing? Artaud under-distances primarily in the greater involvement and participation of both the audience and the actors. The audience is encouraged to participate in the action, and the actors are encouraged to "act out" their inner frustrations in a way Artaud claims is "ritualistic". By ritualistic Artaud is calling attention to the resemblance of his theatre to conventionalized forms of acting out some traumatic emotional experience. In certain tribes for example, there are mock battles with sticks. Another example might include the psychiatrist's device of letting the patient "act out" his or her fear or anxiety. In either case there is great personal, emotional

involvement and participation, but there is also a measure of distance maintained in the sense that neither the mock fighters nor the patients forget entirely the conventional, game nature of the activity. Distance is present but only at a minimal level. Thus we say it is under-distanced.

Again, it is this psychoanalytic "acting out" between the actor on one hand and the spectator on the other that the author talks about here as under-distancing. Even though the process is distractive, the act of taking part which is Artaud's "ritualistic" attempts to tap the emotion of his audience: making them to see with their very eyes, the ills of the society. But because there is little or no room for distancing themselves from what is going on they tend to under-distance the whole show.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Our senses are limited; we do not see everything in an object that we observe, and the function of art is to select those details which would naturally strike our attention and present them clearly to us. Art is not photography; it does not include everything that is visible to the eye. The picture of a flower that shows the insects crawling on the leaves, the drop of water on the petal, both of them so real that the beholder draws back from the insects, and looks to see if there is some actual source for the moisture, is clever drawing, but not great art. In fact, in the selection of detail lies the very essence of art but if the beholder fails to distance from the object, in this case the insects - then, the detail is there but not visible. As a representation rather than careful imitation, the test of theatre art is not in its ability to deceive us into think - that we are in the presence of reality; we do not wish to be cheated like the birds, into "picking at the grapes of Zeuxis".²³ We recognize always that we are in the presence of something made by man's artistic skill. There are certain artistic conventions that we are ready to accept. No matter how far realism may go on the stage, we are aware that the fourth wall is not

there.

In contemporary theatre the attitude of the distanced observer is influenced by the presence of what he sees. There is always a motor response: meaning we "feel in" the object suggested. The degree of this empathy with the object will vary markedly with different individuals. It will depend upon his experience, the strength of his own power of imagination, and the nature of his imagery.

It has been the purpose of this concluding chapter to suggest that the concept of distance: 1) expresses a genuine aesthetic response, 2) is sufficiently clear and defensible against its critics, 3) is useful in analyzing contemporary theatre, and 4) is both internally and externally sound. It is obvious from the examples that have been given that it is an unconscious phenomenon but much more work needs to be done whereby rhetoric and books on composition on how to instruct young writers and observers of today's theatre could be attained. Not one of the chapters pretends to be a complete treatment but we are keeping free from any attempt to lay down laws for the composition of distance.

With the feeling that distancing is beneficial to understand theatre art, contemporary playwrights feel that they can more successfully present a character by means of introspection on that character's part or by means merely of recording his behavior and that of the people with whom he comes in contact. This has a distinct advantage in rousing

the interest and stirring the feelings of the observer with some aesthetic balance. If we are particularly concerned with one character, we are glad to be invested as far as possible with the body of that person, to see with his eyes, to hear with his ears, to think his thoughts, to feel his emotions - but not be carried away.

A potential satisfaction from the theatre is the possibility of compensating for our own lacks through identification with a character who possesses qualities other than our own or who makes fuller use of capacities similar to our own. Human beings have, many latent capacities for modes of life and action that they would not particularly desire. The ability to understand and sympathize with others reflects this multiple character of the human being. Although we may see some characters as outside ourselves, that is, we may not identify ourselves with them as completely as we do with more congenial types - we are nevertheless able to enter into their behavior and emotions. What distance does in this respect is to enable us to see these characters with a certain detachment, and to arrive at a more objective understanding of our own situation and of our own motivation.

For example, a work like Hamlet can be a moving experience for the adolescent today. Besides its beautiful form, Shakespeare's Hamlet is in a mood of uncertainty and disillusionment; the hero being reluctant to undertake an aggressive action in a world gone awry! A vivid response to

a work like this has its roots in capacities and experiences already present in the personality and mind of the observer of his play. In short in any play an appreciator often finds meanings attached to what otherwise would be for him merely brute facts.

Similarly, in an interpretation of Othello, those who watch the play may show an extraordinary diversity of theatrical frameworks. One observer may emphasize Desdemona's and Othello's sense of racial difference and may base on that his explanation of Othello's readiness to believe in his wife's infidelity. Another might make out a case for Othello as an example of a man fundamentally unsure of his ability to hold Desdemona, and thus ready to believe himself betrayed. Yet another may react purely in terms of moral judgment and may see Othello's problem as the struggle between the nobler and the baser elements in his nature. Perhaps the last of these sampled spectators will accept the character's statements concerning the reason for their acts and assume that everything they do is consciously willed and therefore he would pass judgment accordingly.

Theatre today is a stimulus for the entire public, composed of various groups, whose cry to writers is:

Comfort me.
Amuse me.
Touch me.
Make me weep.
Make me dream.
Make me think.²⁴

No wonder why in the simplest terms our theatre today affords us the beauty and the grandeur of nature and the exotic

splendor of scenes in far distant lands. With aesthetic balancing however, there is more to it - a vehicle to demonstrate a need for change in the 20th century era.

Isn't this what Artaud was aiming at in his speechless, yet shocking drama? A ridicule of the society to its own eyes! This developmental approach to modern theatre requires that we see the personality in relation to the whole stream of the individual's life, the various influences to which he has been subjected and the situations and ugly events through which he has passed. As we become clearly aware of forces that pattern our lives: sex, politics, hatred, religion, etc., we acquire a certain power to resist or modify these forces. Whichever way we look at it, Artaud has rightly struck; but except we maintain distance, it could be more of an insult than a message for us, the audience.

That all art requires a distance-limit within only which aesthetic appreciation becomes possible, is the psychological formulation of a general characteristics of art, i.e., its anti realistic nature. Though seemingly paradoxical, this applies as much to 'naturalistic' as to 'idealistic' art. The difference commonly expressed as assumed in this paper is merely the difference in the degree of distance; and this produces, so far as naturalism and idealism in art are not meaningless labels, the usual result that what appears naturalistic to one person may be idealistic to another. To say that theatre is not realistic

simply insists upon the fact that it is not nature, never pretends to be nature and strongly resists any confusion with nature. This is to say that generally, art only copies nature with certain improvements and revisions. Artists themselves are often responsible for the spreading of this naturalistic misconception. The antithesis, art versus nature, is being rescued by the conception of distance as has been demonstrated in earlier pages.

The solution of the dilemma lies in the antinomy of distance with its demand: utmost decrease of distance without its disappearance. As we discussed in Artaud's under-distancing, the form of presentation sometimes endangers the maintenance of distance, but it more frequently acts as a considerable support. To counterbalance a confusion with nature, other features of stage presentation exercise an opposite influence. Such are the general theatrical MILIEU, the shape and arrangement of the stage, the artificial lighting, the costumes and make-up, even the language. Modern reforms of staging, aiming primarily at the removal of artistic incongruities between excessive decoration and the living figures of the actors inevitably works towards greater emphasis on distancing. Unquestionably, distance is not the only function of composition; it serves to render a grasp of the presentation easier and to increase its intelligibility. It may even in itself constitute the principal aesthetic feature of the object; this time the playwright's material on the stage. Yet, its distancing effect can hardly be underrated; for every kind of visibly

intentional arrangement or unification must, by the mere fact of its presence, enforce distance, by distinguishing the object from the confused and scattered forms of actual experience. Over and under-distancing are in fact two ingredients which have constantly varied in the history of theatre arts because they represent two sets of conditions to which art generally has been subject: the personal and the social factors. It is therefore distance which, on the one hand prevents the emptying of art of its concreteness and the development of the typical into abstractness. On the other hand it suppresses the directly personal element of its individualism.

Today the flexibility of dramatic and theatrical conventions is recognized everywhere. The modern theatre has been the most experimental, and therefore, the most varied in history. From a view of the theatre as an institution that exists primarily for the preservation of some cultural norm, we have arrived at the idea that theatre is the showplace of every conceivable display of ingenuity. There can be no doubt, that despite the instances of moralistic or political censorship in the Victorian and Post-Victorian periods, the modern stage has taken more liberties than anytime before in history. It has been truly the museum forum, and marketplace of opinions and speculations. But although this freedom of content is obviously important, the theatre and its audience might have misunderstood one another had not the latter kept some distance from the former. I am not implying, however,

that without proper distancing we may not enjoy or understand a play but that it would be better if there were balancing between the art and its appreciator.

In the modern theatre, there has been so much blending of effects that the question of which part of a play is real and which is "unreal" is sometimes meaningless. Feeling most at home on a platform, not isolating himself psychologically from the public, the pre-realistic actor treated the stage setting as mere background by playing in front of the scenery and by playing to the audience. The maintenance of the pre-illusionistic acting tradition of direct communication with the spectator made it almost impossible to establish a true sense of environment. In this respect, the actor keeps a distance by collaborating with his playwright who kept his characters in communication with the spectator by employing soliloquies and asides as the easiest way to convey information and express sentiment. It was the case that pre-realistic scenery was usually changed during the action in the presence of the audience, rather than behind the proscenium curtain as was done after the advent of realism. Indeed the mechanical changing of scenery which transported the minds of the audience, served the purpose of spectacle rather than drama. The result was artifice rather than realism or establishment of environment.

The style of acting introduced by realism not only called for natural behavior and speech but for the observance

of what came to be called the "fourth wall" convention: the assumption that the open space framed by the proscenium arch is the fourth wall of a room. In fourth wall staging, every effort is made to disguise the fact that the stage is a platform for players and to create the illusion that it is a true environment, separate from and independent of the auditorium. The important point here is, indeed, not what the actor does, but what he refrains from doing.

Distance, as I said before, is obtained by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self, by putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends. In the practice of the average person, a limit does exist which marks the minimum at which his appreciation can maintain itself in the aesthetic field, and this average minimum lies considerably higher than the distance-limit of the artist. It is impossible to fix this average limit of the artist in the absence of data, and on account of the wide fluctuations from person to person to which this limit is subject. Perhaps it is safe therefore to infer that, in art practice, especially theatre, explicit references to the material existence of the body, lie normally below the distance-limit and can only be treated with special precautions. This is to say that not only do persons differ from each other in their habitual measure of distance, but that the same physical and psychological individual differs in his ability to maintain it in the fact of different objects: painting, sculpture, drama, etc. Along with this is the

degree of distance offered by the object itself. There is therefore, an interplay between what the object offers and what the subject (appreciator) realizes. A result of both is the aesthetic experience; since loss of distance (due to object or subject) means loss of aesthetic appreciation.

To proceed to some more special points illustrating the distanced character of art, our earlier pages have raised the question of our contemporary theatre always safe-guarding its distanced view. Right from realistic presentation to Brecht's Epic and Artaud's Shockers, all subjects have been the accredited material of art which involves its subject to either under or over-distancing. But if every member of the public could be trusted to keep it, then there would be no sense in the existence of a censor of plays. There is, of course, no doubt that, speaking generally, theatrical performances run a special risk of a loss of distance owing to the presentation of its subject matter.

Contemporary dramatic practice has striven more and more to decrease aesthetic distance to the point of almost eliminating it; and the propagators of phrases such as "activating the audience", "restoring the unity of the audience and stage", even those who pretend to arrive at their conclusions by means of historical considerations, misconceive the nature of the theatre. On the other hand, we observe to a lesser degree, a tendency to over-distance,

as in Brecht's theatre; but this in the end achieves the same results as does its counterpart: loss, destruction of aesthetic distance.

Both of these effects are achieved by breaking up the one-level performance of the play and by activating the audience, although applying different means, both in the end achieve the same effect: loss or removal of aesthetic distance. Our modern playwrights use theatre technique of under-distancing not to show the audience how a play is put together but to advance whatever cause he has in mind. He will go one step further and insinuate the internal play upon the audience by means of making the audience one with the performers in the external play. In other words, we first look at the internal play by watching the actors (in the external play) carry on the mechanics of rehearsal. We are emotionally participating. In the process we lose our objectivity toward the external play (which is actually the piece of art that must convey the experience) and become emotionally involved to the point where our critical sense is eclipsed. We go to the theatre not to see re-enacted a scene from life, not to see re-enacted an experience we may have had in our own lives, but rather to see this experience re-enacted in such a way that we may become aware of its essence, of what it represents on the scale of human lives and values. If we are participants in this experience, there and then, our emotions become such that the essences are lost on us,

and we become concerned only with saying bitter things and perhaps swinging our fists. In other words, dramatic art should illuminate life not reflect it.

As we've already seen, one device used in the theatre within the theatre technique to reduce aesthetic distance is that of the stage director who directs the play within the play from the audience, thereby establishing an emotional link between audience and actors, and serving as a rather suggestive agent for the activating of the audience.

Another means of reducing aesthetic distance in theatre is the conscious evocation of an atmosphere of suspension between essence and appearance, between the world of the stage and real life. A major practice of contemporary theatre which tends to reduce distancing is yet, the use of a narrator or a commentator. Although this is in many cases employed to provide an increased sense of theatricality, his functions involve more than that. This is especially true of Wilder's "Our Town" where he has a triple function: as stage manager, he addresses both actors and audience, and he also participates as stage manager-clergyman in the play within the play. Here (he) the narrator is in both worlds or outside both stage and audience. He therefore constitutes a suggestive link between the two realms. That again raises the audience from its status of merely assisting at a performance. Thus, the destruction of illusion, of aesthetic distance does not appear to be

merely a gimmick, but seems to have a deeper reason and meaning. Given the present state of our consciousness, our perception, our knowledge, and our sense of truth, is it possible that we take the play of art (theatre and its related allies) very seriously? The phenomenon of destruction of aesthetic distance may therefore accordingly be the expression of awareness on the existential level of the questionability of a specific art form as handed down to us from times with an outlook and relation to the world very different from ours.

The playwright himself assumes his audience will no longer accept theatre as theatre, that it is too aware of the theatre as being a "swindle", not real (and here, not only the play, but also the playing of the actor is involved). Therefore, wishes to make known his awareness of the unrealness of theatre by playing with it, making fun of it, etc. By this making fun however, he established a sort of rapport between himself and the audience rather than between his art and his audience thereby hoping to reinforce the truth of his story. As the situation stands today, modern theatre does its best to be "not a debtor to the old". The spectator has been liberated from any fixed view-point. He is enabled to perceive new values - new values which always will have to be conveyed in terms of theatrical art. This means that the basic relativity and insecurity of our times should be represented, but within the form of art and not as principle of that form of art.

It is a law of the stage that people on it must want something. Samuel Beckett's refusal to accept this law has made him an inadequate playwright, except in "Waiting for Godot", where his characters at least want something: to wait. I take it, though, that the play's message is not just the admonition to "wait". The message really is: Why wait for nothing? Why don't you want to be like us? What is wrong with you?, etc. If you want and the actors want, then there is a balance but the very moment you over or under exercise your want, the scale turns. This simple axiom makes me believe that theatre can have only as much life as its audiences bring to it. No doubt, Bullough's theory seems to suggest that the act of distancing is a kind of trick that one can bring about voluntarily. In order to have an appropriate feeling response certain factors from one's mental make-up must be removed. This filtration takes place initially through a mental withdrawal from sensational and egoistical reactions.

The concept of psychological distance in art as introduced by William Bullough designs the relationship between what goes on stage and the response of the audience because the relation to the object of art is personal. The degree of distance therefore varies from spectator to spectator and so must neither be too personal nor too impersonal. In my own view, balancing is the more important guide. Let us go back a bit to see an example of this in Stephen Crane's, The Open Boat. Like Bullough's example, the open boat is a story of survivors of a shipwreck trying to make land in a

small boat. When the small boat capsizes within swimming distance of the shore, the men have already exhausted themselves rowing, and one of them, a war correspondent, encounters an obstacle, so that it appears likely that he will drown within a few yards of shore. Crane wrote: "The correspondent remained in the grip of this strange new enemy, a current. The shore, with its white slope of sand and its green bluff topped with little silent cottages, was spread like a picture before him. It was very near to him then and yet he is at this moment in danger of ceasing to exist, and the close shore with its cottages loses nearly all of its normal meaning for him; nearly but not quite, for the shore comes to seem to be a picture of itself." Thinking of a thing can therefore be one way of becoming within a certain time conscious of the visible features of the thing.

In theatre, more than any other art, the transformation of a spectator through distancing is paramount. The process of producing the finished production illustrates the cleavage between the concrete, normal person and the distanced personality. In order to satisfy Bullough's definition of psychical distance, therefore, we would have to argue that both the actor and his spectator are in a special state of mind. This state of mind is a fine controlling of alternating spatial and temporal contexts. "Psychical distance" seems to be a useful term to describe this mental state.

Instead of attacking the doctrine of our 'distance theorists', I tend to believe that its importance in our contemporary theatre is one that could be reinforced. I therefore argue that, but for the indiscriminate use of the terms, "Estrangement, Attention, Non-attention, Emotional, Psychical", which has been, and still is, responsible for all this ambiguity, psychical distance in the true, original sense is that remarkable interpretation of a theatre art, designed in order to realize the perceptible dividing line between the sphere of art and the realm of practical experience. This concept of distance has rather been problematic and ambiguous. And being a universal subject, full of contradictions, its positive contributions to contemporary theatre are paramount enough to justify further research.

NOTES

1. Moreland Perkin, "The Picturing in Seeing," Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 17, No. 10, p. 332.
2. Amal Banerlee, "Rousseau's Concept of Theatre," British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 176.
3. Roger Fry. Vision and Design (London: Chatto & Windes 1920), p. 96.
4. Gavin Bolton, "Psychical Distance in Acting," British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 17, No. 1, p. 63.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
6. Edward Bullough, Psychical Distance in George Dickie and Richard J. Schlafnis Aesthetics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), p. 760.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 787.
8. Peter Demetz, Brecht, A Collection of Critical Essays (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1963), p. 40.
9. Martin Esslin, Brecht, The Man and His Work (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Co., Inc., 1960), p. 79.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
11. Frank A. Tillman & Steven M. Chaw, Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), p. 310.
12. Martin Esslin, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
16. Peter Demetz, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
17. Margaret Cryoden, The Lunatics, Lovers and Poets (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1974), p. 19.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

20. Ibid., p. 62.
21. Ibid., p. 59.
22. Ibid., p. 66.
23. Elizabeth Nitchie, The Criticism of Literature (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 159.
24. Louise Rosenbalt, Literature as Exploration (New York: D. Appleton Century Co., Inc., 1938), p. 202.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Banerjee, Amal. "Rousseau's Concept of Theatre," British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1977.
- Berthold, Margot. World Theatre (New York: Fredrick Ungar Pub. Co., 1972).
- Blocker, Gene. "The Oil Can Theory of Criticism," The Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol, 1976.
- _____. "A new Look at Aesthetic Distance," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1977.
- Bolton, Gavin. "Psychical Distance in Acting," British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol 17, No. 1, 1977.
- Brecht, A Collection of Critical Essays (New Jersey: Peter Demetz, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963).
- Bullough, Edward. Psychical Distance in George and Richard Scalafani (New York: St. Martins Press, 1977).
- Croyden, Margaret. The Lunatics, Lovers and Poets (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1974).
- Demetz, Peter (ed.). Brecht, A Collection of Critical Essays, New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1963).
- Dickie, George. Art and the Aesthetic (New York: York Composition Co., Inc., 1947).
- Esslin, Martin. Brecht, The Man and His Work (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1960).
- Fry, Robert. Vision and Design (London: Chatto and Windes, 1920).
- Gassner, John. Direction in Modern Theatre and Drama (New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1966).
- Gorelik, Mordecai. New Theatre for Old (Binghamton, N.Y.: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., 1955).
- Nitchie, Elizabeth. The Criticism of Literature (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928).
- Pandits, Sneh. "In Defense of Psychical Distance," British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1976).

Perkin, Moreland. "The Picturing in Seeing," Journal of Philosophy, Vol 17, No. 10, 1970.

Price, Kingsley. "The Truth About Psychological Distance," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol 35, No. 4, 1977.

Rosenbalt, Louise. Literature as Exploration (New York: D. Appleton Century Co., Inc., 1938).

Tillman, Frank and Cahn, Steven. Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969).