

TOWARD A SEMIOTIC OF THE THEATER

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
ROBERT WILLIAM BETHUNE

1977



ABSTRACT

TOWARD A SEMIOTIC OF THE THEATER

by

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The study is concerned with the application of semi-otics, the study of signs and codes, to the theater. The question under investigation is, by what means does theatrical communication take place?

An introduction to the major ideas of the field of semiotics is presented, concentrating on the work of the two pioneers of the field, C. S. Peirce and F. de Saussure. A study is then made of the applications that have been made of semiotics to literature and cinema. Two works, Roland Barthes' S/Z and Christian Metz's Language and Cinema, are examined in detail.

An original semiotic theory of theater performance is then presented, followed by a description of six theatrical codes which seem to play an important part in many kinds of performance around the world.

The theory is then applied in a detailed analysis of a single production, a production of Shudraka's The Little Clay Cart, presented at Michigan State University in March, 1977. The data on this production consisted of over 800 35mm photographs in black-and-white, from which 67 were chosen for analysis.

The key concept of the theatrical theory presented is that the fundamental process in theatrical performance is

the enactment of an event in public such that the manner in which the event is performed follows patterns which are interpretable by the audience as a commentary on the event.

If sequences of event and commentary are used to tell stories of some kind, then the event and commentary communicate an action which is fictional in such a way as to also make a commentary on the fictional action. From this commentary on the action, the audience gathers information about the characters and themes involved in the action.

A hierarchical structure of performance is proposed, in which events belong to any of several orders. The first order event is the performance as a whole; successive orders are successively shorter subdivisions of the whole such that an event of each successive order takes less time in performance than does an event of the previous order.

In the analysis of The Little Clay Cart, 28 key events are isolated. By analyzing the pictorial data with respect to these events, we can see how the performance told an interconnected set of stories which cumulatively "tell" the overall action of the play--the story of an idealized transformation of the social, political, and religious life of the kingdom of Ujjain in mediaval India.

Finally, an evaluation of the study and some ideas of future research possibilities are presented.

TOWARD A SEMIOTIC OF THE THEATER

by

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A THESIS

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Theater

1977

6122011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to the members of my thesis committee, Mr. Frank Rutledge and Dr. Donald Treat, and to the chairman of that committee, Dr. Farley Richmond, who has given of himself with great generosity during the preparation of this thesis and during all my stay at Michigan State University. The greatest thanks are perhaps due to the cast and crew of The Infernal Machine and The Little Clay Cart, who put up with my endless tape-recording and camera-clicking with unfailing good humor and cooperation. Both these productions were produced in the Michigan State University Arena Theater by the Department of Theater under the direction of Dr. Richmond. A word of thanks is also due to Dr. Lowell Fiet, from whom I first heard the word semiotics--which started the whole ball rolling.

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Introduction

The problem which has been investigated in this study might be phrased as a question: how does the theater "say" what it has to say? In other words, how does the theater communicate? This communication is seen as being close to the essence of theater.

The framework of analysis chosen is that of semiotics, the study of signs and codes. What semiotics is and how it has developed is treated briefly in Chapter I; the application of semiotics to literature and film is presented in Chapter II. These two chapters give the reader a working idea of the approach taken by semiotics and of some of the major concepts in the field.

In Chapter III, an original semiotic theory of theater is presented. An effort is made to define a small vocabulary of terms suitable for dealing with the phenomena encountered in theatrical performances; a definition of theater is offered on the basis of these terms. A framework is then provided with which to deal with the content of the theatrical message, and the principle codes by which the message is sent are described.

In Chapter IV, an analysis of an actual production is made in accordance with the theory presented in Chapter IV. The technique employed is based on the idea of a

modellbuch. A fairly large number of photographs of particular moments are provided as the data base for a description of the message which was sent by the production. Further material was obtained through personal observation of rehearsal and performance. The production chosen for analysis is a production of The Little Clay Cart by Shudraka, a drama from the Sanskrit tradition of India, produced in the MSU Arena Theater under the direction of Dr. Farley Richmond.

Finally, in Chapter V, a final summary of the major points of the study will be made, as will an evaluation of the study with particular attention to the possibilities of further work.

The methodology employed in this study is a combination of library work and audio-visual recording. The theoretical material on semiotics has been studied through fairly extensive reading of the available literature. The production analysis material, as well as many theoretical ideas about theater semiotics, has been developed in the course of extensive observations of rehearsals and performances of The Infernal Machine and The Little Clay Cart, both productions done in the Arena Theater of Michigan State University under the direction of Dr. Farley Richmond. A first attempt at data-gathering was made during final rehearsals of The Infernal Machine; this attempt, employing Super Eight film, failed due to inadequate equipment and materials. The Clay Cart material was obtained on 35mm color and black-and-white still film. Complete tape recordings of both shows were made.

Chapter I

Semiotics: a historical introduction.

The field of semiotics dates from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, 1857-1913, and Charles S. Peirce, 1839-1914. Neither man left a complete statement of his ideas at the time of his death. In the case of Peirce, we have an edition of his collected writings, in which an attempt was made to give system to his thought by interleaving material from his various works and fragments published and unpublished. We are even worse off in the case of Saussure, who left scarcely a single written word behind him, so far as his ideas on semiotics are concerned. The book which appeared posthumously under his name, *Cours de Linguistique Generale*, is actually a reconstruction of his thought based upon the notes of certain of those who heard his lectures.

It is unlikely that the two knew of each other's work. Saussure, a French Swiss, taught at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* and later at the University of Geneva; Peirce, an American, was employed as a geophysicist by the United States Coast Survey. Saussure was a linguist, Peirce, a logician. Saussure published very little, preferring to disseminate his ideas in lectures; Peirce was unable to publish much of his work in semiotics, and taught regularly for only five years, holding a lectureship and Johns Hopkins University. The two were divided by geography, language, and field of

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study; nor are their ideas full compatible. As we shall see, there are differences between their concepts of what semiotics is, what signs are, and how they function. These differences are due to different goals: as a logician, the purpose of Peirce's effort was to reformulate the foundations of logic so as to place deduction, induction, and hypothesis formation--what he called abduction--on an equal footing. His theory of signs was a means to this end. On the other hand, for Saussure it was linguistics that stood in need of reform. He found the field to be stifled by a sterile historicism and comparativism that produced little truly to advance our understanding of the nature of language. By focusing on the nature of language as a sign-system, he was able to escape these errors of thought (as he conceived them), describing language as a system of socially determined rules which govern the speech behavior of speakers.

The field of semiotics thus springs from a dual tradition. On the one hand, there is the Peircian tendency to view signs as independent entities which can be classified and analyzed in their own right; on the other is the Saussurian tendency to view signs as the products of human behavior, and therefore only describable in terms of that behavior. The tension between these two traditions is one of the factors which contribute to the continuing vitality of the field.

The Saussurian tradition tends to dominate today's semiotics. The reason for this is to be found in the lives, the intellectual styles, and the intellectual environments of

the two men themselves. Circumstances were such that Saussure's thought was well known and widely respected before Peirce's ideas on semiotics had gained much of a hearing.

Peirce was ahead of his time in America. Although he is now gaining recognition as one of the most productive minds this country has produced, he was unable to obtain a proper hearing for his work in his lifetime. Most of his published work in logic was technical in nature; little of his work on signs saw print. Though he lectured occasionally for many years, his only regular teaching was during a five-year period at Johns Hopkins University. He quit the U.S. Coast Survey after thirty years due to controversies with his superiors, and spent the last twenty years of his life unemployed and often destitute, though he was at his most productive during this time.

By contrast, Saussure was in the right place at the right time. After a brilliant start, publishing his first and only book at age 22, he taught for ten years at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes and for thirteen years more at the University of Geneva. A spellbinding lecturer, unlike Peirce, he drew students from all across Europe and left a lasting impression on French thought.

The time of linguistics had come in the Europe of Saussure's day. The time of logic in America, the generation of Whitehead, was a generation away in Peirce's time. Peirce's principal contribution was to philosophical Pragmatism; when the study of logic came of age in America, it was not as

semiotics, as Peirce had envisioned. Due to Saussure's greater effectiveness as a communicator of ideas and as an inspiration to students, and due to the greater receptivity of his audience, his thought became and has remained the dominant tradition in semiotics.

With this background in mind, let us turn to an examination of the ideas of these two thinkers, and of certain of their followers as well. In the following, we will discuss the nature of the field of semiotics, the nature of signs, and certain ideas about codes. We shall deal in these areas with the major ideas that seem to have widespread acceptance among today's thinkers.

Peirce and Saussure both offer definitions of semiotics which are often quoted; let us here quote them again. First, Peirce's:

I hope to have shown that logic in its general acceptance is merely another word for semiotics, a quasi-necessary or formal doctrine of signs. In describing the doctrine as 'quasi-necessary', I have in mind that we observe signs as best we can, and, on the basis of fine observations, by a process which I do not hesitate to call Abstraction, we are led to eminently necessary judgements concerning what must be the nature of the signs used by the scientific intellect.¹

Secondly, Saussure's:

Language is a system of signs that expresses ideas, and is therefore comparable to writing, to the deaf-mute alphabet, to symbolic rites, to codes of good manners, to military signals, etc. It is simply the most important of these systems. A science that studies the life of signs in society is therefore conceivable; it would be part of general psychology; we shall call it semiology (from the Greek semion, 'sign'). Semiology would teach us what signs are

1. Peirce, C.S., Collected Papers. (Cambridge, Harvard University Press) 1931-1958.

made of and what laws govern their behavior. Since this science does not yet exist, no one can say quite what it would be like, but it has a right to exist and it has a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology: the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will find itself linked to a well-defined area within the totality of the human sciences.²

These definitions have intriguing similarities and differences. The difference in terminology ("semiotics" and "semiology") should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the two men are talking about the same thing: a study of the signs people use. Both words have remained current, Anglo-Saxon writers using the one, Europeans the other, though "semiotics" is gaining ground in Europe as well; since "semiology" also denotes the medical study of symptoms. In both cases, the subject-matter envisioned for the infant science is the same: that it would study human sign usage.

There is a difference of scope between the two definitions; Peirce speaks only of "the signs used by the scientific intellect", while Saussure speaks of "the life of signs in society." In fact, Peirce does not strictly limit himself to those signs used by scientists in their work; however, he is interested not in communication, as is Saussure, but in logical thought. While there is room in Saussure's definition for such study, Saussure's concept is much the broader of the two, since it embraces ultimately all that people do that has meaning to other people--a broad range.

2. Saussure, Ferdinand de, Course in General Linguistics. Wade Baskin, tr. (New York: McGraw-Hill) 1966 p. 16.

An important, though rather subtle difference between these two concepts of semiotics has been pointed out by Umberto Eco.³ Peirce refers to semiotics as a "doctrine;" Saussure as a "science". The difference is whether semiotics is to be a discipline, having its own rigorous system, or a subject matter on which a variety of disciplines shall work. Peirce's use of "doctrine" seems to imply the former, Saussure's use of "science" the latter.

Peirce divided the field of semiotics into three branches; syntactics, semantics and pragmatics. This division is emphasized in Charles Morris' Foundation of the Theory of Signs.⁴ The first of these, syntactics, is defined as the study of the relation of signs to each other; semantics is defined as the relation of signs to their meanings, and pragmatics is the study of the relation of signs to their users. For Morris, a complete account of semiotic phenomena can only be obtained after analysis from all three viewpoints.

Syntactics, as its name suggests, is largely the study of how signs are arranged in messages, or, as most recent writers would say, in "texts". Taking a theatrical performance as an example of a "text", one would try to determine what rules govern the spatial and temporal order of signs such as gestures, lighting effects, costumes, etc. Similarly, semantics would attempt to find what rules gov-

³. Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) 1976.

⁴. Charles Morris, Foundation of the Theory of Signs. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1938.

ern the meanings of theatrical signs. Pragmatics, then, would deal with signs in relation to both performers and audiences, in an attempt to discover what rules govern the passage of information from one group to the other.

In contrast to this view, Umberto Eco has recently offered a division of semiotics along more Saussurian lines. In his view, the field must be divided into the semiotics of signification and the semiotics of communication, emphasizing that different methods of analysis are required in each. Eco further attempts to do away with the persistent idea that a sign is a kind of object. He regards as a sign anything which can be taken as such. A sign is therefore regarded not as a particular kind of thing but as any kind of thing which is used in a certain way--what Eco calls the sign-function.⁵

Again taking a theatrical performance as text, one would try to describe the manner in which various objects and events placed on stage function as signs, and how these signs are made to convey meaning. For Eco, the first step would require a specification of the "code" of theater, i.e. the system relating the signs and their meanings; the second step would involve a description of how these signs are produced.

In Eco and Morris, we can see the Saussurian tradition vs. the Peircian; again, the distinction parallels that of European and American, linguist and logician. An interesting index of the length of time it took the two schools to become

5. Eco, op. cit.

aware of each other can be found in two significant facts: Morris' 1938 publication has a bibliography of works relevant to semiotics, but the Cours de Linguistique Generale does not appear, though it was published in 1916; conversely, Eco is at present somewhat unusual among European writers for the amount of attention he devotes to Peircean ideas.

An interesting development in the Saussurian tradition of the nature of semiotics is due to Roland Barthes, who questions the relation of linguistics and semiotics as set forth by Saussure. Barthes prefers to see semiotics as part of linguistics, not the other way round.⁶ He has therefore based his work on the notion that the proper method of semioticians is to apply outside of language concepts developed within it, as we shall see in detail in Chapter II. To regard linguistics as embracing semiotics, an idea we might call Barthe's Inversion, has several advantages, not least of which is that it recognizes that language appears to be both the most complex human semiotic system as well as the one which has been most successfully analyzed, and that the most fruitful work on other sign systems has employed concepts derived from linguistics.

However, it would seem that the relation of semiotics to the rest of social science is more complex than this. Work of importance to semiotics has also been done in the

6. Roland Barthes, "Elements de semiologie", Communications v. 4.

fields of information theory, zoosemiotics, non-verbal communication, and other fields as well. It would seem premature to be drawing the boundaries too firmly as yet.

The most striking definition of semiotics that has come to our attention is that of Umberto Eco.

Semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything that can be used in order to lie. If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth: it cannot in fact be used 'to tell' at all. I think that the definition of a 'theory of the lie' should be a pretty comprehensive program for a general semiotics.

While this may imply a negative, if not indeed cynical, view of the uses of communication, still it puts in a nutshell the idea the semiotics is the study of that with which people "tell"--or communicate.

Having thus gained some understanding of the various views as to the nature of semiotics, let us turn to the ideas offered as to the nature of the sign.

For Peirce,

a sign...is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign.

This definition is actually far less casual than its simplicity might seem to indicate. It relates four things: a sign, its referent, a person who interprets the relation between them, and a second sign that appears in the mind of the interpreter as a result of the encounter with the first sign. In

7. Eco, op. cit., v.2 p. 135.

8. Peirce, op. cit., v.2 p. 135.

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contrast, for example, our intuitive idea of a sign only takes the sign and the meaning, without including the idea that an interpreter reacts with a second sign.

The second sign is called the interpretant in Peirce's terminology. Since every sign functions by giving rise to a second sign, the interpretant of a sign gives rise to an interpretant of its own, and so forth ad infinitum, signs creating signs creating signs.

For Saussure, the sign is a two-part phenomenon, and does not exist without both parts. The two parts, for Saussure, are the "signifier" and the "signified"--that which calls something else to mind, and that which is called to mind by something else. The word "sign" is reserved for the sum of these: sign=signifier+signified. For Saussure, therefore, the sign is not an object but rather a relation. This relation, for Saussure, is always arbitrary in that there is no necessity that any particular signifier be linked to any particular signified. There is only the observable fact that certain people or cultures happen to link certain things up to make signs--they could just as easily have chosen otherwise.

Peirce divides signs into three types--icons, indices, and symbols. The simplest of these, the symbol, corresponds to the arbitrary concept of the sign employed by Saussure. For Peirce, as for Saussure, there is no necessary connection between the meaning of a symbol and the symbol itself. For

example, let us take an ordinary word: "tree". The sound of the word tree has no necessary connection with the concept which is customarily associated with it. The same idea is associated with totally different sounds in other languages, such as "Baum" in German, "arbre" in French, "ki" in Japanese, etc. When the relation between the sign and the meaning is arbitrary in this fashion, Peirces classes the signs as symbols.

An index, for Peirce, is a sign which merely directs one's attention to its referent. A pointing finger, a pronoun, a proper name--these are all indexes in Peirce's terminology. All signs have some indexing properties, and conversely all indexes still have some element of meaning, since at the very least they point out one thing and not another. In some ways, the term "index" refers in Peirce more to a function carried on by all signs that exist than to a specific type of sign.⁹

For Peirce, an "icon" is

a sign which refers to the Object which it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such object exists or not.¹⁰

Here we have a concept of a type of sign quite opposed to Saussure's principle that all signs are arbitrary, since it is asserted that the inherent nature of some signs suffices

9. Carotini, Enrico, and Paraya, D., *Le Projet Semiotique: elements de semiotique generale*. (Paris: Delarge) 1975 p. 33.

10. Peirce, op. cit., v. 2 p. 143

to make the sign a sign, all other considerations aside. In Peirce's thought, therefore, there are signs which are not arbitrary as well as those which are.

However, Peirce cannot simply let things rest at this point. In considering the nature of icons, he finds himself forced to admit that even icons have a high degree of arbitrariness about them.. Thus, for example, he admits that a portrait--one of his favorite examples of an icon--bears "only a slight and conventional relation to its subject."¹¹

One might suppose, then, that Saussure has the last word on the subject, since simply by saying that all signs are arbitrary he can evade the whole issue. However, he finds himself faced by the same problem, for he too has the impression that there are some signs which are more intimately related to their referents than others. He calls these signs "motivated" signs; a motivated sign being one which has been chosen as the signifier of a particular signified on the basis of inherent characteristics. Strictly speaking, this does not violate the principle of arbitrariness, since another sign could have been chosen instead; still, the idea does not rest easily in Saussure's theory, since an important role is given to the innate characteristics of some signs, but not all. The distinction is opposed to the spirit, though not the letter, of arbitrariness.

11. Peirce, op. cit., v.2 p. 51.

Whence come these difficulties? The simple fact is that many signs do appear to have a direct and intimate relationship to their referents. It is difficult to say that the relationship between a portrait and the sitter, for example, is purely arbitrary, since we would usually be able to recognize the person from the portrait though we had never met. Yet the portrait is clearly a sign; it communicates to us, by the use of certain pictorial conventions, what a certain person looks like. The opposing, yet complementary, stands taken by Peirce and Saussure arise from this duality. This problem goes by the name of the question of iconicity, and remains an unsettled issue today.

The key point, of course, is the role that is played by conventions in iconic signs. Since Saussure is insistent on the arbitrary nature of all signs, he would like very much to say that the motivated signs are actually conventional, rather than natural, but he cannot escape the impression that motivated signs are somehow different. Though "every means of expression used by society is based in principle on convention," there are still signs which have "the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified."¹² For Peirce, on the other hand, an icon can only be said to be conventional in that it establishes its own convention, since it conveys meaning through its own inherent properties. The problem, in turn, for Peirce is that icons are full of conventions; as we mentioned before, he admits to the pre-

12. Saussure, op. cit., p. 68

sence of conventions in portraits, though portraits for him are icons. On the other hand, for Saussure a portrait is actually a conventional sign, but one whose conventions are "motivated". Thus, Peirce and Saussure wind up with opposing, though also complementary stands.

To use Eco's terms, up to this point we have been dealing with the semiotics of signification primarily, especially with two issues: the nature and types of signs, and the problem of iconicity. There remains, then, the semiotics of communication, to which we now turn.

At this point, the theory becomes almost completely Saussurian. Peirce, being a logician, had little interest in communication itself; his semiotics is devoted to the ends of logic. Saussure, on the other hand, could not very well do linguistics without confronting the social use of language, i.e. communication--although it was his contention that the linguistics of his own day managed to avoid very nicely the fact that most people use language to talk with. Since Saussure, many prominent names in semiotics have been linguists by profession--Jakobsen, Prieto, Buyssens, Hjelmslev. It is natural, therefore, that much thought has been given to the semiotics of communication by workers with such a background, and it is also natural that their ideas should owe much to linguistic theory, especially Saussure's linguistics.

It is a fundamental point of modern semiotics that signs do not occur in isolation. Signs occur in connection

with other signs, not only in messages but in systems which govern the formation of messages. These systems are termed codes. In order to communicate, signs are selected from codes and arranged in messages; a message is both a subset of a code and a ruleful arrangement of that subset.

A code, of course, is used to communicate. A very well-known analysis of communication is due to Roman Jakobson. His analysis is based on a model of the communication process that can be diagrammed as shown in figure 1.

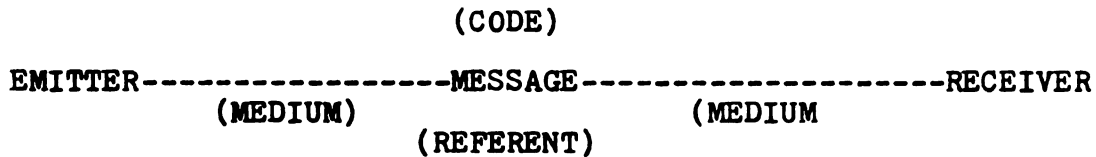


Figure 1. The Jakobson communication model.

Jakobson analyzes this model in terms of six functions of communication:

1. The referential function relates the message and the referent. Essentially, this is the same as the Saussurian concept of the sign as the relation between a signifier (message) and a signified (referent).

2. The emotive function relates the emitter and the referent, making known the attitude of the emitter toward the referent.

3. The conative function is the elicitation of a reaction in the receiver, a reaction to both message and referent.

4. The esthetic function calls attention to the message as a message. In connection with this, we ought to remember that if a work of art such as a theatrical performance communicates, it carries out all six functions, not merely this single function. To conclude, as does Pierre Guiraud, that

in the arts, the referent is the message, which thus ceases to be the instrument of communication and becomes its object...

is to forget this essential fact, and indeed, to forget that art has content as well as form.

5. The phatic function is the control of the communication process--starting it, stopping it, ensuring that the message gets through.

6. The metalinguistic function is the definition of elements of the code by means of other elements.

It is fairly easy to find theatrical examples of these six functions. The referential function corresponds to the telling of the story; the emotive function corresponds to what we shall refer to as commentary, or the interpretation of the story; the organization into one dramatic form or another corresponds to the esthetic function. We hope always to elicit a reaction from the audience--tears, laughter, etc. Phatic devices in theater include the use of the curtain, blackouts, entrances and exits, applause, and so forth. There are several playwrights such as Peter Handke and Pirandello who make a specialty of the metalinguistic function: writing plays about the theater.

Another important idea about codes is Hjelmslev's definition of connotation. For Hjelmslev, all codes have two levels, a plane of expression, denoted by the letter E, and a plane of content, denoted by C. The code is essentially the system of relations between the two--R. The simplest case of a sign, therefore, is what Hjelmslev calls a denotation, an Expression Related to a Content, expressed as ERC.

A simple system, ERC, can then become the expression plane of a second system. The result would be written as (erc)RC. This is what Hjelmslev calls a connotation. Such connotations can be complicated ad infinitum: ((erc)RC)RC and so forth.

An example of this can be drawn from Cocteau's The Infernal Machine. In this reworking of the Oedipus myth, Jocasta continually wears a long scarf about her neck. At the simplest level, the costume piece, more or less meaningless in itself, is the expression, E, of the content, C, Jocasta's scarf. This relation is made by the fact that the actress wears it; thus, it takes its place in what we could call a costume code; it forms a denotation ERC meaning "scarf of Jocasta". Shortly after her first entrance, Tiresias chokes her briefly by accidentally stepping on the trailing end of the scarf. Thus, we have a new expression of the form (erc)RC meaning "Jocasta's scarf is a choker." Finally, at the end of the play, she hangs herself by the scarf, and the scarf becomes a signifier of the form ((erc)RC)RC meaning The Scarf of Jocasta That Chokes Her To

Death. Because of our previous knowledge of the play, we have suspected this meaning all along, of course--assuming that we have been the least bit clever about such things. Thus, in accordance with Hjelmslev's model, the signifier acquires layer upon layer of meaning.

The above ideas about codes were developed with reference to language. Since World War II, important work has been done on non-verbal codes, particularly in the areas known as proxemics and kinesics. Kinesics is the study of the use of gesture and movement in communication; proxemics is the study of the meaning of interpersonal distance. Both fields share the same fundamental ideas: that "body language" is governed by socially determined codes. The major writers in this area have been two Americans, Ray L. Birdwhistell and Edward T. Hall. This work has considerable importance for the semiotics of theater, since it is largely through movement and gesture that performers communicate much of the theatrical message, as we shall see in Chapter IV.

Chapter II

Semiotics and criticism: methods from literary and cinematic criticism.

From the point of view of theater studies, the preceding material does not seem at first to have much to offer. Its connection with the realities of theatrical production cannot but seem tenuous, artificial and abstract. It is of course one purpose of this study to show that this is not the case; and so it is considered that a presentation of semiotic analysis of art forms usually considered to have a rather close kinship with theater might show that semiotics does indeed have valuable insights to offer. Such a presentation will also bring to our attention valuable ideas and techniques for the following analysis of theater from the point of view of semiotics.

To this end, then, we have chosen to examine the work of two semioticians who appear to have presented some of the most fruitful semiotic analyses to date: Roland Barthes and Christian Metz. From Barthes' work, we have selected his detailed study of "Sarrasine", a short story by Balzac. From Metz, we have chosen to discuss his book, Language and Cinema.

Barthes' study of "Sarrasine", entitled S/Z, is essentially a work of literary criticism, while Metz's Language and Cinema is an effort toward a theory of cinema. This difference,

the difference between theory and criticism, is of some importance to the semiotic study of theater, since under semiotics, both approaches lead to similar results. A brief analysis of Barthes and Metz will show how this comes to pass.

Barthes, of course, is the critic. His concern with literature generally is second to his concern with one text in particular, that of Balzac's "Sarrasine". His method, as we shall see, is a kind of reading in slow motion of the text, a process of

working back along the threads of meanings, of abandoning no site of the signifier without endeavoring to ascertain the code or codes of which this site is perhaps the starting point (or the goal).¹³

Such a conception is thoroughly semiotic. It involves seeing the text as an assemblage of codes, sets of relations between signifieds and signifiers. His goal is to unravel the web of codes of which the text is composed; his tool for the purpose is connotation, understood in a way fundamentally in agreement with the ideas of Hjelmslev outlined in the previous chapter. Barthes' method is to break the text down into units sufficiently small to permit assigning them to one or another code of connotation, and to show how these codes are used by Balzac, and also by the reader, to construct a system of meaning from the text, a system by which the text is understood.

13. Roland Barthes, S/Z. (New York: Hill and Wang 1974) p. 12.

We shall explore this approach in more detail later on. For now, let us contrast it, having identified it as a "critical" approach, to what we wish to identify as the "theoretical" approach to cinema taken by Metz.

Metz deals only briefly with specific films. This is both characteristic of a theoretical approach and a consequence of it, since the essence of a theoretical approach is to attempt to set up a system of categories or principles that can explain any random example drawn from the subject-matter of the theory. His central concern is to find a way of defining that which is peculiar to the cinema, that which is "specifically cinematic." He thus opens the way to the definition of the "cinematic language system", that system of codes which is found only in the cinema as an art form. Such an approach is also thoroughly semiotic; indeed, it has a longer tradition behind it than does Barthes' approach, since it is essentially the same approach as that taken in linguistics, where the concern until very recent times has always been with the system of language rather than with individual utterances.

Having made this distinction between two possible approaches to the study of books and films, it is now time to point out that ultimately both approaches arrive at the same point--a system inherent in the work of art, whether literary or cinematic. This common purpose finally undermines the distinction between theory and criticism, since

in both cases, we are ultimately left with an observation of the same phenomenon: the structure by which the work of art is endowed with meaning. Looking back on the seemingly opposed approaches of Barthes and Metz, we can now see that both must of necessity involve dealing in both the particular and the general. Barthes cannot succeed in demonstrating that Balzac's "Sarrasine" has a particular organization without treating it as an example of the kind of organization that typifies short stories generally, nor can Metz derive a "cinematic language system" without displaying particular examples in which some aspect of the system can be found. Thus, both approaches are ultimately both theoretical and critical, since both involve making broad statements that might apply to a whole range of works, and both also involve making particular statements that apply only to the particular work in question. The statements made, of course, are also debateable at either level.

In the semiotic study of art, then, we find ourselves betwixt and between our ordinary categories of intellectual endeavor. We are doing something rather less impressionistic and personal than when we do ordinary criticism, and rather less abstract and philosophical than when we do ordinary theory. We take a position somewhat between those of esthetics and criticism, and some might be so grand as to call it a science. The semiotic study of art, whether literature, film, theater or any other, is not of course a science; not yet, at any rate, though it can become one. It is wiser to be modest,

though perhaps technically inaccurate, and label our speculations in this area as criticism, since by this term we will at least be honest about the reliability of our findings. However, we should not allow such a label to deter us from making general remarks when called for.

Let us devote our attention for a while to literature, holding the cinema in abeyance, so as to return as we promised to Roland Barthes' S/Z. We shall present his method of operating on the text after a consideration of the ideas on which he bases his procedure.

The most important idea Barthes employs is a basically Hjelmslevian idea of connotation. For Barthes, as for Hjelmslev, connotation is an extra dimension of the signifier, over and above the direct relation of expression and content found in denotation.

An example of this can be provided from the title of Barthes' book: S/Z. This combination of enigmatic letters is drawn from Barthes' discussion of the name of the central character of the story, a sculptor named Sarrasine. In French, a final e connotes femininity; a specifically masculine version of this name, Sarrazin, exists. Therefore the name has a double connotation of femininity, based on the opposition in the French language between final e/no final e and between S/Z. The significance of this connotation is its ambiguity: Sarrasine is in fact a man, who is symbolically unmanned in the story through his falling in love with a castrato under

the impression that the castrato is actually a woman. Castration, psychologically the most important theme in the story, is symbolized by the unusual spelling of Sarrasine--unusual due to its treatment of the opposition S/Z.

The ambiguity of the opposition S/Z is an illustration also of one of Barthes' points about connotation:

Connotation, releasing the double meaning on principle, corrupts the purity of communication: it is a deliberate 'static', painstakingly elaborated, introduced into the fictive dialogue between author and¹⁴ reader, in short, a counter-communication.

Since on the basis of the name we expect Sarrasine to be a woman, we are set up for a surprise when he turns out to be masculine. In like manner we are set up for a surprise when the "woman" Sarrasine falls in love with turns out to be a castrato.

Finally, Barthes points out that in literature, the system of denotation is itself used deceptively, and is actually merely "the last of the connotations, the superior myth by which the text pretends to return ... to language as nature."¹⁵ For Barthes, a sentence in a literary text operates by having the appearance of an ordinary, everyday sentence, an appearance which gives it the air of truth, and thereby creates an illusion fundamental to literature--the effect of a representation of reality.

14. Roland Barthes, *ibid.*, p.9.

15. Roland Barthes, *ibid.*, p.9.

The second major idea Barthes employs is that of the plurality of meaning of the text. He describes a text which would represent the perfection of literature:

In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination, unless by throwing dice); the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language.¹⁶

Thus, there are not only multiple meanings in the ideal text, but no meaning can be asserted to be partial; each and every one of them is "the whole truth".

Actual texts are not ideal, of course; still Barthes insists that they are plural, even if incompletely so.

All of which comes down to saying that for the plural text, there cannot be a narrative structure, a grammar, or a logic; thus, if one or another of these are sometimes permitted to come forward, it is in proportion (giving this expression its full quantitative value) as we are dealing with incompletely plural texts, texts whose plural is more or less parsimonious.¹⁷

We therefore, interestingly enough, can only have structure at the price of imperfection, since the perfect work would have, simultaneously, every structure and no structure at all. It is at this level of imperfection, so to speak, that

16. Roland Barthes, *ibid.*, p. 5

17. Roland Barthes, *ibid.*, p. 6

it becomes possible to employ connotation as an analytical tool. It is only here that only certain connotations will exist, rather than an infinity of possible connotations. Since only a finite number of connotations will exist, it is possible to find a system in them. To find the system of connotations of a work of literature is of the essence of Barthes' method of analysis.

Barthes begins with an arbitrary division of the text into what he calls "lexias". These are units of variable length, the shortest being single words, the longest being on the order of a paragraph. Each lexia is examined in turn; a process which only a critic of Barthes' ability could save from utter aridity, since there are 561 lexias in all. The examination of each lexia explores the connoted and denoted meanings of the lexia in question, and assigns it to a place in the unfolding of the story according to five postulated codes. These codes are called the code of actions, the code of hermeneutics, the code of culture, the code of semes, and the code of symbols.¹⁸

Perhaps the most painless introduction to Barthes' set of five codes is to follow his own footsteps through the first three lexias of the story, since the concept of these codes is best seen and understood in action, in the organization and commentary that Barthes employs them to provide.

18. Roland Barthes, *ibid.*, p. 19.

The first three lexias of "Sarrasine" read:

I was deep in one of those daydreams^{#1} which
overtake even the shallowest of men, in the
midst of the most tumultuous parties.^{#2}

As for the first lexia, Barthes points out that it asks a question, since it raises the issue of who or what Sarrasine is, a question to which no answer will be given until quite a bit later in the story, lexia #153 to be exact, a matter of some 13 pages. This is an example of the hermeneutic code, defined as

all the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer, or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution.¹⁹

He then notes the androgynous properties of the spelling of the name Sarrasine, as we defined them earlier. Noting that the connotation of femininity is important in this story, and that many different means are used to connote it, he defines this lexia, #1, as also containing a seme, or unit of connoted meaning--the seme of femininity.

At this point, what information there is to glean from the first lexia, the title, has been collected--time to move on. In the next lexia, Barthes notes the first appearance of a pattern, a symbolic pattern which will be carried through the story: the contradiction expressed in the word

19. Roland Barthes, op. cit. The quotation from Sarrasine appears with Barthes' analysis inserted between lexias on p. 17 and p. 18 of S/Z, and in continuous form on p. 221, where the story is reprinted in continuous form with superscript lexia numbers. The analysis here is drawn from p. 17-18.

"daydream". A daydream represents an improper intrusion into the realm of the day of something appropriate to the night. A daydream is therefore, symbolically, a transgression of boundaries. The central theme of the story, castration, is also a transgression of boundaries in another way; many other samples of boundary-transgression are to be found. We thus have what might be called a formal or structural symbolism carrying the theme of castration throughout the story. The units which express this symbolism belong to the code of symbols.

The daydream, however, has another dimension as well. To be deep in a daydream is an action. It is not, of course, a very active sort of action, but it contrasts with other possible actions, such as mingling with the other guests or dancing or listening to the music. A lexia which contains such an indication of action, of someone doing something, belongs to the code of actions. It is this code, of course, which bears the burden of "advancing the plot".

Moving on to the third lexia, the fact that there is a party going on, in what will turn out to be a private home in Faubourg Saint-Honore, a very wealthy upperclass neighborhood in Balzac's Paris, forms a theme of wealth. The lexia as a whole, however, is something like a proverb to Barthes. It is a statement that makes its appeal to the collective experience of the readers as does a proverb; the writer (Balzac) obviously expects it to be something which will refer to the common cultural knowledge of readers.

Such references, for Barthes, are references to the code of culture. Thus, in the first three lexias of the story, we have examples of all five codes. One or two are perhaps rather forced, but they may serve as examples nonetheless.

Obviously, most of these meanings are what we should normally call connotative. Barthes seems to think of connotation in two senses: all meaning which is the result of a denotation while not part of the denoted meaning, and on the other hand, all meaning based on what is not, strictly speaking, verbally expressed. It is the first type of connotation that is expressed in the code of semes; the more general kind of connotation might better be called reference. Most such reference involves the use of codes existing in society that the writer adopts at his convenience: Faubourg=wealth.

In deference to the plurality of meaning of the text, Barthes refrains from discussing structure above the level of the lexias. Thus, though he arranges lexias into chains of related lexias, especially those dealing with questions and with actions, he does not build these chains into anything larger. On the other hand, he does point out that such analysis brings up the data required for any other kind of analysis: historical, psychoanalytic, thematic, imagistic, etc. His method of analysis would therefore be prior to any other method of whatever kind.²⁰

20. Roland Barthes, *ibid.*, p. 14.

In S/Z, then, Barthes creates a procedure for literary analysis that is both remarkably systematic and detailed while never losing sight of the whole. It seems clear that whether or not we accept in detail Barthes' divisions of the text or his reading of Balzac's story, we can still draw upon his method and concepts with profit in studies of other works in other media. Indeed, we will see some of these ideas in Metz's analysis of cinema, though formulated from another perspective.

In Christian Metz's Language and Cinema we find an attempt to develop a concept of just what it is that the semiotic study of film ought to be in search of--the cinematic language system. It is less an attempt to describe the cinematic language system than an effort to provide a conceptual framework that will allow us to recognize such a system when it is found, and to provide some idea of what it is we're looking for. In short, he asks if we had a cinematic language system in front of us, what would it look like?

Metz's procedure is based on an attempt to separate from the cinematic language system everything that is part of films without being part of the system. He begins with the entire world of facts that relate to film and films and proceeds to divide and subdivide the material until he arrives, by process of elimination, at something that must contain what he is looking for. This effort results in a definition of the object of study from which further work can flow.

The first distinction Metz makes, following Gilbert Cohen-Seat, is between the cinema as a social institution and the film itself as a work of art. Cohen-Seat referred to this distinction as that between "cinematic fact" and "filmic fact", and Metz follows this usage. The pertinent point is that

film is only a small part of the cinema, for the latter represents a vast ensemble of phenomena, some of which intervene before the film, ... others after the film, ... and finally others during the film but aside from and outside of it²¹

This distinction amounts to separating the film as a work of art from its social, economic, and technological context for the sake of analysis, and announcing that the semiotics of film, at least for the present, takes only this limited subject as its domain.

Metz then turns to the region within the film itself. It is here that he reintroduces the word "cinema", setting "the cinema" in opposition to "the film".

From a semiotic point of view, it is in one's own interest to deal with these two (both simple and manageable) terms in such a way as to differentiate those concrete units of discourse, each of which is a 'film' and a particular totality capable of being directly attested, from that which is the virtual sum of all films and as such, the place where different structures of signification ... are felt to flow together and to be organized in a coherent manner.²²

21. Christian Metz, Language and Cinema. (The Hague, Mouton, 1974) p. 12.

22. Christian Metz, *ibid.*, p. 22-23.

In this distinction, we can see Metz setting up the framework of the distinction between code and message which we have seen before.

However, Metz is at great pains to ensure that he is not misunderstood as saying that there is a cinematic code which is found only in the cinema as the sole means of expression in the cinema. This is his motivation for making the distinction between film and cinema; it is his opinion that there are a great many codes which can be found in films, and the individual character of the cinema is due to the unique way in which these codes are organized by the cinematic language system. The system therefore operates only at the level of codes, not at the level of individual signs.

Metz is thus insistent upon a plurality of codes in cinema just as is Barthes in literature. He points out that the viewer of a film makes use of at least seven semantic systems, at least some of which could be called codes: the knowledge of the significance of the objects shown in the image; the ability to make sense of the image; the knowledge of the connotations of the objects shown in the culture; the knowledge of the narrative structures used in the culture; knowledge of the language of the dialogue; the ability to follow the music accompanying the film, and the knowledge of specifically cinematic devices such as dissolves, zooms, etc.²³

23. Christian Metz, *ibid.*, p. 33-34.

This plurality of codes makes the problem of setting up a "grammar" of the system, as Metz points out, a very complex one. It is necessary to learn how each separate code is arranged syntactically, which would involve setting up a kind of subgrammar for each code, and also learning how the codes can interrelate such that a statement in one code may be influenced by a statement in another.²⁴ For example, in the beginning of Zefferelli's Romeo and Juliet, the soft lute theme and the misty shot from high above the city at dawn have a powerful effect on the opening lines: "Two households, both alike in dignity/In fair Verona, where we lay our scene..." The question is, what is the system that controls such juxtapositions? It is such questions that are at the heart of the search for the cinematic language system.

It may be noted, however, that one level of analysis seems to be missing. What about the cinematic sign, the minimal unit of cinema? For Metz, there cannot be such a minimal unit of the cinema, since there is no unique code of the cinema. He envisions rather a complex situation in which many different kinds of minimal units co-exist. If somewhere there is a minimal unit of the cinema, it could be found, in Metz's opinion, only after prolonged research on the basis of assuming the cinematic language system to be operating at the level of codes, not of signs.²⁵

24. Christian Metz, *ibid.*, p. 181-182

25. Christian Metz, *ibid.*, Chapter 9.

What has been gained by working through all this material? Barthes' thinking about literature and Metz's thinking about cinema have several points in common which may well prove to be of value for the semiotic study of the theater. These are:

1. Metz's method of isolating the object of study cannot be followed step by step for the theater, since in theater one does not produce an artifact--a long strip of celluloid with pictures on it--that can be securely identified as "the work of art". However, the need to so isolate the subject matter of theater semiotics is no less pressing, and Metz's procedure can be adapted to provide at least a starting point.

2. Metz's position on minimal units of cinema will probably be found to apply to theater also, mutatis mutandis.

3. The existence of several types of codes in both literature and cinema suggest very strongly that the same situation will hold true of theater.

4. The importance of connotation as a fundamental process in conveying meaning in literature and cinema would also lead one to expect the same in theater.

5. Barthes' technique of dividing the individual work into very small fragments will probably prove fruitful in the analysis of theater, since it enables one to isolate chains of denoted and connoted meaning. The isolation of such structures would then facilitate the description of the structure of the performance.

Chapter III.

Toward a semiotic of the theater.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer definitions of a few key terms, to offer a definition of the theater, to offer a formula for the content of theatrical messages, and finally to describe 6 basic code systems in the theater. The fundamental point of this chapter is to attempt to show, in a preliminary fashion, how the theater is used for communication of ideas. In brief, the position taken in this chapter is that the theater, a form of public action, is used for communication by means of a small group of codes, some of which are adapted from the culture, others of which are specific to the theater and not found in the surrounding culture. We shall attempt to use examples from a wide variety of Western and Asian theatrical traditions to illustrate the range of applicability of the concepts involved.

The first distinction to be made is between the performance and the fiction which may be a part of the content of the performance. We intend to define theater in such a way as to concern ourselves, at the most fundamental level, only with theater as a public activity--a thing which people do. As a preliminary step, we wish to make clear that when we use the word performance, we mean only the actual actions taken by the performers at the time and place of performance.

For example, if we applied our terms strictly, to say "a man stood up and told a story" is not limited to a description of his performance but includes a statement as to the content of his performance as well. A description of the performance and nothing but the performance would be, "a man stood up and spoke certain words, a transcription of which follows." This second statement consists only of an accurate record of the performance, with no statement as to content. The importance of this distinction will become apparent upon the discussion of the definition of theater which we will proffer; in brief, we must distinguish the performance from the content of the performance in order to be flexible enough to deal with the vast range of content, both fictional and non-fictional, to be found in theatrical performances the world over.

There is a distinction to be made as well between the events of the performance which tells a story and the events of the story itself. This distinction is very similar to that which was just made, but is not the same because the previous distinction was between the event of performance and any possible content, while the current distinction is between particular events which go to make up a performance and a particular kind of event which may be the content of that performance. It is necessary to make this distinction very clear because our ordinary way of talking regularly confuses the two. We say, for example, that "Hedda Gabler burns the manuscript", by this we often mean both an action a character in a story commits and an action which an actress

portrays during the course of a performance. A reviewer might write, for example, "As Hedda burned the letters, an exultant smile came across her face, a smile of indescribable malevolence." He is here describing a facial gesture made by the actress, but attributing the gesture to the character. We wish in this study to make clear the distinction: the facial gesture of the actress is a performance event; its content is the corresponding action in the story of Hedda Gabler, a fiction which is communicated by the actress by means of the facial gesture. We shall use the word "event" only to mean performance events; we shall use the word "action" only to mean those things which are part of stories. It should also be noted that we shall use these words to refer to things of widely differing durations in time. As we have done above, we may refer to specific actions of a character such as Hedda and to the specific events carried out by an actress which communicate those actions. We will also use these terms to designate, for example, the entire action of Hedda Gabler or to the event of an entire performance of this play.

We shall often have occasion to speak of "commentary" with respect to theatrical messages. We shall see, especially in the following chapter, that the bulk of the communication in theatrical messages is not required for the communication of events or actions per se but rather is spent in modifying or controlling our perception of these events or actions. That portion of the communication which influences

our perception of events or actions is here called commentary. For example, it is not necessary to the action of Hamlet that the leading actor be dressed in black, aside from a line or two. The presence on stage of Hamlet in his suit of sable in Act I scene 2 does, however, make a very important commentary on the action of that scene without which the scene might well convey a message quite different from that required. Hamlet's costume, therefore, is part of the commentary on the action of this scene.

As we are to eventually describe six theatrical code systems, it would be well to make clear just what we mean by a theatrical code. This definition can be made on the basis of Hjelmslev's conception of the sign as the relation ERC: we can associate the performance event with E and the action which the performance event communicates can be associated with C. The relation between these two, between E and C, always shows patterning in any kind of semiosis, the theater being no exception. Hjelmslev denotes the pattern or rule which relates E and C as R; it is these patterns or rules which we call codes. A code, therefore, is a pattern or rule to be found in theatrical performances by which a given event can be said to "mean" a given action or comment upon an action.

The concept of code just formulated will immediately be seen to be fairly close to the idea of a theatrical convention. A convention, however, is a condition which prescribes how the performance as a whole is to be done, while

the concept of a code is intended to apply to all events of whatever duration. A similiar objection applies to the idea of a theatrical device, since we think of devices as being moments of short duration. In both cases, however, there is a fundamental similiarity to the idea of a code; the idea of a rule linking an event of some kind with a meaning.

It will be convenient to identify codes by the medium which is manipulated to produce the events governed by the code. Thus, for example, a blackout is an event governed by the code of lighting; Hamlet's black garb is governed by the code of costume, and so forth.

A brief discussion of the blackout, a part of the code of lighting, will serve to illustrate this material about codes, and will also serve to illustrate a further concept concerning them: the idea which we will here call theatricality.

First of all, in any theater where lighting can be controlled, it is possible to use light to create an event; this evenet will be either the absence of light altogether or the presence of light of a given intensity, color, contrastiness--i.e., depth of shadow and distribution--etc. It is possible also to take advantage of naturally occuring phenomena of light in performance spaces where light cannot be controlled, and thus to incorporate these events into the performance, as Shakespeare is sometimes said to have done in the Globe. At any rate, we will assume the contrivance,

by one means or another, of some kind of lighting event which is intended to have communicational effect. In any theater where such a contrivance occurs, codes of lighting develop.

In the Western theater, the development of highly controllable lighting devices in enclosed theaters permitted the development of the blackout. A relatively small number of meanings are associated with the blackout; principal ones are end of performance or unit of performance, passage of time, change of locale. We therefore have an expression E related to a content C by a relatively simple set of rules which specify that in given contexts to withhold all light from the stage will be assigned one of a small group of meanings, the particular meaning to depend on the given context. These rules, corresponding to R in Hjelmslev's formulation, form the code of the blackout, a subcode of the code of lighting.

Controllable light might be called a theatrical convention, indeed, a convention characteristic of modern Western theater. The use of the blackout might be described as a theatrical device, a device made possible by the technological development of lighting in Western theater. The idea of a code encompasses both of these notions and makes the relation between them explicit, by seeing the use of the blackout as being governed by a subcode of the general code of lighting. We thereby can reduce the number of concepts we employ while replacing them with a concept more

flexible and powerful, since it can also be used with other media, conventions, and devices as well.

On a living room set, a blackout might mean the end of a play; in a living room, it means a power failure. The point of the comparison is that while blackouts might occur in real life, they are not deliberately arranged for the purpose of communication and have different meanings than they do on stage. On the other hand, if it is desired to show that a character waves good-bye to another, the same gesture may be used on stage as in reality. The difference is a matter of what we here wish to call theatricality. Theatricality, for our purposes, can be defined as the difference in frequency of use of a given code or sign between the stage and the ordinary life of the culture. Blackouts, according to this definition, are highly theatrical, occurring virtually only on stage; handwaving is not, occurring equally onstage as off. Theatricality is a continuum; a given code can have any degree of theatricality in our definition of the word. For convenience, and since codes tend toward one extreme or the other, we shall call codes of low theatricality "cultural", and those of high theatricality "theatrical". This does not mean that theatrical codes are not part of the culture, only that they occur in the culture only as part of theatrical performance, or tend to occur there for the most part.

At this point, we have offered the following ideas: the distinction between the performance and the content of

the performance, usually but not always fictional; the distinction between event and action, such that events are real and actions are fictional; the idea that a large portion of any theatrical communication consists of commentary on the events or actions presented; the idea of code as that which relates an event which is performed and the meaning of that event, and finally, the idea of theatricality, a measure according to which codes fall along a continuum from cultural codes to theatrical ones.

We are now ready to present a definition of the theater. Theater is a public act; to be precise, it is the presentation of an event in public, to a live audience, having a communicative effect. The presentation of the event is the performance; the enactment of this event is carried out in such a way that the actions of which it consists fall into patterns with which the culture (the culture within which and for whom the event is performed) associates meaning. Using the vocabulary established in the previous section, this can be expressed by defining theater as the public performance of an event interpretable according to the appropriate semiotic codes known to the culture for whom the event is performed. To put it baldly, theater is when somebody does something up in front of everybody in such a way that those who watch understand something by it.

This definition deliberately allows a very wide range of phenomena to be considered theater in addition to those performances which tell a fictional story of some sort.

Owing to the wide range of performance forms which are or have been considered as theater, it would be unwise to limit our definition in such a way as to exclude any form of performance which it might prove desirable to study. Also, it would seem that our understanding of theatrical communication can only be enriched if we study many forms of performance which may be disputably theatrical, but are undisputably communicative, such as the wide variety of religious and secular rituals known in many cultures.

This definition avoids the idea of communicative intent, since intentions often are difficult to verify, and employs instead the idea of communicative effect. Communicative effect might be defined as follows: let there be an event X. If we ask the spectators of X some question such as "What does this say to you? Anything at all?" and their reply is affirmative, we may assume that the event has had communicative effect of some kind.

Finally, this definition does not define which codes in what media are essential to theater. This definition has not been included because it appears to be ethnocentric to do so. Provided merely that performers enact some kind of event before an audience of some sort, we have theater if that event has communicative effect. Whether they use any given code, such as language or movement, is immaterial.

If we were to attempt to describe theater in terms of a fixed set of codes which would be present in any performance to be considered theater, it would be difficult to avoid the bias that would naturally arise toward our own theater's characteristic codes. The result, of course, would be a theory of a particular theater form, not a theory of the theater generally. Though we shall shortly describe six code systems that seem to be important in many theater forms, it is not our intention to make the list exhaustive or to convey that something that does not employ one or more or all of these codes cannot be theater. Hence, the definition we have offered is couched only in terms of the actual act of doing theater, not in terms of the manner of the doing.

It is obvious, however, that if the theater has communicative effect, it is because the theatrical message has some kind of content. It becomes our business, then, to say something in general of this content, which brings us to the problem mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: to offer a general formula for the content of theatrical messages.

The essence of theater is to enact an event. However, as indicated above, the bulk of the communication in theatrical messages is not required for the communication of events or actions per se but rather is spent in modifying or controlling our perception of these events or actions. We have defined that portion of the communication which in-

fluences our perception of actions or events as commentary. We here propose that the fundamental model of all theatrical messages of whatever extent in time and space is the enactment of an event in such a way the the enactment of the event also includes a commentary on the event. In other words, Content = Event + Commentary.

Before we consider theatrical messages having fictional material as content, let us consider the simpler, though less familiar case of a theatrical message which is simply an event and a commentary without an element of fiction. In the Kuttiyattam theater of Kerala State, south India, it is required of the actor at certain points in the performance to perform a dance having a certain prescribed order of movements. This dance is hidden, more or less, behind a curtain which is held by attendants. It is done in full costume and makeup, and uses a large number of the gestures which are part of the gesture-language used in this form; but so far as is known, has nothing to do with the story and cannot be translated into words, as can most gesture language messages. It is not, however, without content. It conventionally is in honor of the musicians; in addition, due to the religious associations of dance in Indian culture, it strongly connotes the sanctity of the performance as a whole. Thus, this dance, which has no part in the communication of the story with which the play concerns itself, nevertheless conveys meaning.

How is this meaning transmitted to the audience? The dance itself is of course the event. Several means are used to comment upon it: the dance is isolated in time; it is concealed from view, more or less; it is performed, as is the rest of the performance, in a holy place; the movements themselves belong to a long tradition of movement which is thought to go back to Lord Siva himself. All these devices serve as commentary, connoting that the performance of this dance, and by extension the rest of the performance as well, is very serious and sacred. We note that several different codes are used to "say" this to the audience: time, movement, location. The same message is thus given redundantly by being "sent" in several codes simultaneously. Thus we can see, in a simple event, how the event and the commentary form the content of the message.

In the case of a message having fictional material as content, the situation is more complex. The event and commentary communicate an action, a fictional occurrence; this action in turn has commentary of its own.

A famous example should make this clear. In many performances of Oedipus Rex by Sophocles, the leading actor appears on stage near the end of the play with stage blood on his face and costume and carrying a brooch in either hand. Event: actor, bloodied, enters carrying brooches. Commentary: the blood effect, the manner of movement (connoting pain); his lines, which contain an image of lostness and dark:

I am deserted, dark,
Yes, where is sorrow stumbling?
Whence flits that voice so near?
Where, Spirit, have you driven me?²⁶

Thus an actor comes on stage with a certain appearance and speaking certain lines; we know (not only from this, of course) that he is Oedipus, that he is blind, having stabbed out his eyes with the brooches which he carries.

Thus we are told of the fictional action "Oedipus enters, having blinded himself." There is then further commentary: we have seen the brooches before on the costume of Jocasta. We may recall that if Oedipus removed them from the gown on her hanging body, then Jocasta's clothing would have fallen away, and that the last sight Oedipus would have seen would have been the naked body of his wife/mother. A commentary is thus made on the fictional motivation of the character Oedipus: a factor in his self blinding is revulsion at the sight of the body of his wife/mother.

The point here is not to repeat a well-worn chestnut about Oedipus Rex; the point is to trace the relation of event--commentary--action--commentary.

Event--an actor comes on saying certain words. Commentary: use of certain codes of makeup and movement; language codes; imagery. Action communicated: Oedipus enters having blinded himself. Commentary on the action: the

26. Sophocles, Oedipus the King. Paul Roche, tr. The Oedipus Plays of Sophocles (New York: New American Library, 1958) p. 74

brooches imply, due to our prior information as to the character Jocasta's mode of dress, that the blinding was an act of near-suicidal desperation.

There is, of course, much more information which is sent to the audience in this scene that I have not included here; the information I have included in this analysis is also sent, redundantly, in ways other than those indicated. Nevertheless, it would seem that we have here a fairly clear example of the way in which event and commentary function in the case of fictional content.

In the two examples given in the preceding section, it will have been noted that a fair number of different codes were employed to convey information to the audience. We shall now turn to the description of six codes which are thought to be of considerable importance in many forms of theater throughout the world. This is not to say they are either indispensable or universal or even always simultaneously present--only that they are common. The six code systems discussed here are those of space, movement, lighting, sound, costume and language. Some of these are composite; movement and sound both have definite divisions into types of movement and sound according to the degree of theatricality involved.

Let us begin with space. Performance, by necessity, requires a bit of space of some kind. It is a commonplace in

theater that the architecture of the theater has a profound effect on any performance given in that theater. This idea makes excellent sense from a semiotic viewpoint.

Let us consider three theater spaces currently in use by the Department of Theater at Michigan State University. Fairchild Theater is a proscenium theater seating around 700; the Arena Theater seats approximately 215; the Summer Circle Free Festival stage, an outdoor theater hereafter referred to as SCFF uses three temporary bleachers plus the ground and standing room. No accurate count is available for it, but it would seem that when the place is jammed there are 400+ people there. Figures 2, 3, and 4 show productions of Hamlet in Fairchild, A Streetcar Named Desire in the Arena, and King Lear in the SCFF space.

From a semiotic viewpoint, the question is simple--or at least simple to ask. What do these various spaces say to the audience? What differences are there between the messages delivered? How are these messages delivered?

Firstly, there is a very different treatment of the control of the access to the theater in the SCFF stage as opposed to both the Arena and Fairchild. The access of the public to the SCFF space is not controlled, anybody can simply walk in. Access to the Arena and Fairchild, on the other hand, is controlled; these are theaters for which tickets are sold, while the SCFF is free of charge. Of course, one cannot sell tickets unless one can control the access to the theater. This difference in access pattern means that the



Figure 2. Hamlet, Fairchild Theater.



Figure 3. Streetcar Named Desire; MSU Arena Theater.



Figure 4. King Lear; Summer Circle Free Festival theater.



Figure 5. The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds. Fairchild Theater.

SCFF theater says to the audience, "you are welcome here", the other spaces tending to say, "you are welcome here--if you have bought your ticket.

This initial message has a strong effect on the audience response. It is a commonplace among theater personnel at MSU that the audience at the SCFF performances is friendlier, more relaxed, more open, more forgiving. This is no accident. The message delivered by the SCFF access pattern is rather like that delivered by a gift: "we appreciate you, we like having you here." The access pattern of the other two houses puts the performance in those spaces firmly into the cultural category of that which is bought and paid for. The Yankee element in the American character comes to the fore in such a situation; the message delivered by the access pattern of the theater is replied to with "I have paid--now you deliver." This attitude is precisely what one expects in any such monetary transaction. The access pattern of the Arena and Fairchild houses reinforces, semiotically, this very attitude, by placing the performances in these theaters firmly into this monetary-transaction category. The message is reinforced, of course, by the process of ticket-buying and so forth, be it ever so pleasantly handled, but it originates in a simple binary opposition: closed space vs. open space.

The decor of the three spaces also has significant effects on audience attitude, again tending to produce a more favorable attitude on the part of the SCFF audience. Both the Arena and Fairchild are in dark colors, and again,

are enclosed spaces. SCFF is open to the air, being merely a three-sided arrangement of bleachers, and has a surrounding of lovely large shade trees which form a backdrop for the stage. The open-air-and-greenery of the SCFF space sends a strong message: "coming here is coming to a very pleasant spot, a place like all the others you enjoy--parks, gardens, woods--places where you relax and have fun." It is not hard to see how such a message helps put the audience in a favorable frame of mind. No such message is sent to the audience by the Arena and Fairchild.

The difference in seating arrangements--the usual stall seating in Fairchild and the Arena, bleacher seating in SCFF--also has an effect. In SCFF, particularly when the theater is full, people are jammed together pretty tightly on the bleachers and in front of them in the area between the bleachers and the stage. The effect is that of a semi-circular mass, whereas in the Arena, the seating is in four quite distinct sections due to large structural pillars at the four corners of the stage. In Fairchild, of course, the usual proscenium arrangement prevails.

As might be expected, there is a much stronger feeling of community in the SCFF arrangement. It is pretty difficult not to feel a strong sense of community when you sit in a mass of people all within touching distance of each other. The circular arrangement also helps; the circle is an ancient symbol of wholeness and community occurring in many cultures. Each member of the SCFF audience receives the message of

community feeling through his nearness to others and his evident position in a large group. To a lesser extent, something of the same message is given by the Arena seating, though it is much weakened by the stall seats and the division into sections. In Fairchild, of course, little of this content is sent at all. Instead, the proscenium seating pretty well makes clear that one's relation to one's neighbor is unimportant; that each of you, separately, will watch what is set before you.

Such examples pretty clearly show the semiotic functioning of the architecture of the theater itself. The other side of the spatial coin is the shaping of the space which the performers use. Here we run into an area where a great deal more research is in order on the question of the semiotics of space in the theater.

It is, however, at least possible to assert that space does indeed have a strong connotative function. If we compare two different shapings of the Fairchild stage, that of Hamlet and of The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, we can see a pretty clear instance of this. The action of Hamlet is two-sided; on the one hand, the court intrigues of Elsinore; on the other, the fate of Denmark and the movement of kings and armies. A balance is struck in this set; the large masses seem to connote a weight, a massive force crushing down on the characters, yet their height and inhuman scale connote vast spaces in which armies can move and nations rise or fall. The action of Marigolds, on the

other hand, is enclosed; we spend almost the entire play in the one room of one house, concerned throughout with the dynamics of one family. There is no need for expansiveness in the Marigolds set.

In both these examples the set is mimetic. In both sets, the principal convention according to which we understand what the set stands for is the same. We are given a visual stimulus which simulates, within fairly narrow limits, the stimulus we would receive from the actual object itself. This convention is probably the single most characteristic convention of the modern Western theater. To dispense with it, or to attempt to, is the mark of the avant-garde; yet it is a rare production in which it cannot be found. In the case of Marigolds, many of the materials which are used are in fact those which are used in life; the others are skillfully made so as to simulate what they are not. The difference is actually quite unimportant; what is important is that the simulation, by whatever means, be accurate within certain limits. Those limits are tighter for the Marigolds set than for the set of Hamlet; in Hamlet, we have very convincing stone pillars, however, these pillars are rather distantly related to actual castle architecture. They are further conventionalized by remaining constant even when the locale changes, serving alike for indoor and outdoor scenes. The limits of accuracy to which the simulation is held is a major determinant of the style of a Western theater production. This convention of simulation of visual stimulus is virtually unknown in traditional Asian theater.

Several references have already been made to the code of lighting. The technology of lighting control is another of the highly characteristic features of Western theater. While lighting can be and often is highly mimetic in the same sense as defined for scenery, i.e. involving a simulation of visual stimulus, it is interesting that several uniquely theatrical uses of lighting are very common even in performances in which the lighting is otherwise mimetic, such as the blackout, single area lighting, raising the level on the area which is to draw focus, using colors of light somewhat different from the colors which appear in reality, and so forth.

One strongly conventionalized association in lighting is based on the contrast ratio, the ratio of the relative intensity of illumination on the highlighted and on the shadowed side of an object, especially on the face of the actor. The contrast ratio is a function of both distribution and intensity--light can be dim and contrasty, bright and flat, etc. A very high contrast ratio is nearly always associated in the Western theater with a high degree of seriousness, emotionality, "weight" in the performance. The more contrasty the light, the stronger the association. Even in a piece generally on a light tone, if some part of the performance gets "heavier", the lighting of those scenes will often be more contrasty in order to "set the mood".

One semiotic function, then, that lighting serves is to signal the level of seriousness at which the performance is to be taken, a signalling process often referred to as set-

ting the mood. We tend to consider that lighting functions subliminally, and we therefore do not think of it as an overt communication. This is something of a false distinction; it doesn't really matter very much whether or not the communication is at one level or another of awareness, so long as the effect of communication is achieved.

A highly interesting aspect of lighting from a semiotic point of view is color. Two contradictory facts are common knowledge about color: we know that it is one of the most powerful devices available, and we also know that color is not specific--we cannot say that, for example, cool colors are always sad and warm colors are always happy. In fact, what is causing the difficulty here is the operation of a semiotic principle: that the functioning of any code is always dependent on context, and is always provisional. A new combination of familiar elements from a familiar code will in all probability carry a significance which cannot be completely predicted. Every time we find a lighting effect that "works" when it should not work, we are faced with a new instance of this phenomenon. In the case of color in lighting, it is fairly easy to see why this happens: we do not, as a rule, distinguish very many colors out of the spectrum; yet all experiences of meaningful color make use of this relatively small number of available signs. Therefore, any given color which we encounter has a tremendously complex web of associations. Yellow, for example, calls to mind many such varied connotations as the sun, my pencils, my cat, Caution!,

money (gold), cowardice, Oriental skin, Kodak products (the firm is sometimes called The Great Yellow Father in Rochester), etc., etc., etc. Obviously, it would be possible for the use of bright yellow light on stage to call up a whole range of unpredictably varied associations.

Lighting offers a very fruitful field for semiotic research. It is precisely the kind of system semiotics is best equipped to deal with. The number of variables is small, traditionally identified as color, intensity, and distribution; we have here introduced contrast ratio. However, the number of messages that a given lighting effect can generate is large, as we have seen above.

The use of sound in the theater immediately divides into two categories: music and sound effect.

Music in theater is well known as a very potent medium. A full discussion of the theatrical use of music is far beyond the scope of this study; one would require first a book on music, then another on music and theater, both from the semiotic viewpoint, to do justice to the subject. We will have to content ourselves with a few limited observations.

The first of these is that there is nothing mimetic, in the physical sense of the term defined above, about music. Much as we might like to have an orchestral background when we are out in the woods with our true love, we normally have to do without. Music is a code marked by high theatricality.

We usually define the role of music in much the same way as we do the role of lighting: that it has to do with

"setting the mood". Once again, we can communicate the level of seriousness at which the performance is to be taken, as we do with the contrast ratio in lighting. Music is usually also thought to be able to give great precision to the communication of exact degrees and kinds of emotions, especially complex emotions difficult to describe in words. One empirically feels inclined to agree; however, the question is certainly susceptible to further research rather than theorizing, since it seems to be more a question of data than of theory. We can, however, take note of the fact that in music, we have a great many more possible combinations of elements than exist in lighting, and therefore the possibility of greater precision certainly exists. It is a question of whether or not the associations are in fact made by the audience at the level of precision we presuppose.

In contrast to music, sound effects are nearly always as mimetic as possible. Here we are once again dealing with the communication of an action by the simulation, within certain limits, of the physical stimulus associated with that action. Modern audio technology makes it possible to define the limits of accuracy very narrowly.

In the Oriental traditional theater, there are instances of a different sort of semiotic use of sound. In Kabuki, the entrance of the actor from the dressing room onto the hanamichi is announced by the raising of the dressing room curtain by attendants in such a way as to create a particular sound. There are apparently associations with this sound such as to produce a sudden rise in expectancy in the audience.

In the Noh theater, a sound effect that would be very interesting to research from a semiotic point of view is the famous stamping of the foot on the stage. Considerable lengths are gone to to ensure that this effect can be done with the "proper" resonance and impact. The question to ask would be the same as for all semiotic inquiry: what does it say, and how?

Such effects do not fit in comfortably with the kind of effect we usually term "sound effects", since they are not mimetic. It is in fact tempting to regard these as being closer to music, since they share the arbitrary, uniquely theatrical character of musical code, and have a similiarly indescribable, yet rather precise, communicative effect. At any rate, these examples help demonstrate the variety of uses made of theatrical sound codes.

The above examples deal almost exclusively with what might be called the stage machine: the physical theater as technological device, that which can take place in the absence of actors. These means, however, are secondary; a semiotician finds it easy to agree with Richard Southern's contention that the essence of theater is the actor--in particular, the costumed actor. However, we must distinguish the costume from the player; as we shall see below, they employ different codes.

If theater is physical action in space having communicative effect, we note that by and large it is the actor who performs the action. Since he is in space, not on a screen

of some sort, by definition we see that our definition of theater requires only a live actor. No further technology of any sort is required. One warm body up front does the trick.

And what does this warm body do? He walks and talks, that is, he performs movements and uses language. It is to these codes we now turn.

When we assert that the actor moves and uses language, we still have not reached the simplest case. It is, as we all know, perfectly possible to act without words; we need merely recall Marcel Marceau. However, in the strictest reduction to the simplest case, we would disallow Marceau's costume and makeup, leaving the physical movement of the body functioning communicatively as the essence of theater.

We cannot further reduce bodily movement and still have theater, but we can note that bodily movement in the theater is of two kinds: that which is uniquely theatrical, that which is not. We may refer to the first kind of movement as pantomimic, and the second kind as gestural.

The art of pantomime, such as Marceau's, is composed of both sorts of movement. It is based on the convention that the actor will show us the space which would be occupied by the objects whose fictional existence he wishes to convey, using his body to do so. His gestures are conventional because they are based on the shape of the objects, not on the way we actually hold them or touch them. A wall, for example, is pantomimed by holding the hand flat and vertical, palm out, fingers together and extended in the same plane as the hand,

the hand then being moved across the front of the body in a straight line. There is no purpose in touching a wall in this way off-stage; the purpose of the movement is purely theatrical. On the other hand, the facial expressions and other movements which he employs to show the reactions of the character to the persons and objects encountered communicate by virtue of the fact that they are slightly exaggerated versions of the same expressions used off-stage. In this usage, he merely adapts pre-existing codes to his purpose. In his famous pantomime "Dip flying a kite", for example, nearly every movement used to tell the story of how Dip is hauled into the air by his kite is nearly the same as the same movement performed in real life. It is by a novel combination of these movements that Marceau communicates his comic fable.

The actor which we have constructed above is actually only theoretical; he became so when we deprived him of his costume, since by doing so we did not leave him naked--nudity in itself is a costume, often used in the avant-garde theater and increasingly popular elsewhere. In actuality, Southern's formulation of the essence of theater as the costumed actor is a redundancy; the actor cannot help but be costumed; the moment he is "on", whatever he is wearing is a costume.

Furthermore, clothing is such an ubiquitous fact of human society that it is impossible to devise a costume which has no significance. Even such innocuous dress as a plain black leotard has semiotic content; it conveys unmistakably on stage that the one who wears a leotard is a performer;

we "read" almost any kind of clothing according to our associations with rank, status, profession, and so forth. In the theater we also read the costume for historical period and for the geographic location of the action portrayed.

Costume thus functions almost entirely as an adapted code, with the proviso that the code adapted may in fact be a code from the past history of costume and fashion no longer in use except in the theater.

The last item in our list of codes is language. As was the case with music, a full discussion of the use of language in theater would require an extensive foray into linguistics well beyond the scope of this study. Again, we shall have to content ourselves with a few fundamental observations.

Language is rarely if ever used as a uniquely theatrical code. About the only case which could be imagined would be to perform a play written in an invented language without providing a translation, as Peter Brook has done. Language is invariably adapted directly from the culture for which the performance is given. The adaptations made are such as to strengthen the role of connotative meaning in the choice of words and in the manner of speech, such as intonation, rate, pitch, stress, volume--all the elements present in the speaking voice as opposed to the words as they might appear in print.

Two important conventions occur in the syntax of language as used in the theater: public address and dialogue.

Language in the theater uses the syntactic patterns of public address in situations where they would not be used in real life. When dialogue is used, it is understood by convention that what is said is actually for the benefit of the spectators--a convention which becomes painfully obvious in bad expository speeches. The forms of public address are used in direct address to the audience, of course, and, interestingly enough, in soliloquy. Thus, the syntactic usages of dialogue are employed, but with more public address usages along with them than would normally be the case, and public address patterns are used in most other cases. Two patterns of syntax suffice to cover all cases, since anyone who talks can only be understood as talking to the audience, to another (as character) or to oneself (again as character). One can, of course, address the audience as oneself as well.

The use of public address forms in soliloquy may seem surprising, but a brief toying with a famous speech should make the point. Antony's "Friends, Romans, countrymen" is familiar enough as public address. Suppose we change the situation; Antony has only been allowed to bury Ceasar in private. With only minor rewriting, the speech can become a soliloquy:

I come to bury Ceasar; none shall praise him.
 The evil that men do lives after them,
 The good is oft interred with their bones;
 So let it be with Ceasar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told them Ceasar was ambitious
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
 And grievously hath Ceasar answered it.
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,
 Come I alone in Ceasar's funeral.

We leave the basic rhetorical and syntactic pattern of the speech alone, and by a judicious word change and a bit of cutting, we make this passage into acceptable soliloquy. The same sort of process can easily enough be applied to a soliloquy in reverse and turn it into a public address; the exercise is left to the reader's imagination.

Why should playwrights such as Shakespeare have found it appropriate to use linguistic forms suitable for public address in soliloquy? Because soliloquy is public address in actual fact. The character may be shown to be alone, but the actor has a theaterful of people to talk to. Whoever is to compose his words for him will naturally turn to the linguistic forms which signal, "listen to this, this is for you to hear." The controlling factor is the actual state of affairs for the actor, the level of event; not, as might be assumed, the fictional state of the character, the level of action.

In this section on theatrical codes, we have sought to describe six different important theatrical codes in such a way as to indicate the workings of the semiotic viewpoint in a general way prior to getting down to the brass tacks of a particular performance, a task to which we turn in the next chapter. We have discussed the code of space both from the point of view of theater architecture and from the point of view of the shaping of the performance space itself; we defined a convention of mimesis involving the simulation of the

physical stimulus which also applied to lighting and sound effects. We discussed lighting in terms of its relatively few variables: contrast ratio and color. Turning now to the actor, we dissected him into his costume, his movement, and his language, noting that in the case of language a principle exists which may well apply more widely: that the use of any given code is determined by the needs of the actor who must communicate with his public, not, as might be assumed, by the needs of a fictional character--who, after all, is only a content to be communicated.

In this chapter as a whole, we have defined a rather small set of terms to aid us in making necessary distinctions. These are: performance and content, event and action, commentary, codes, and theatricality. We then offered a definition of the theater: the public performance of an event interpretable according to the appropriate semiotic codes known to the culture for whom the work is performed. We then carried out an analysis of six codes which seem to have widespread importance in theatrical performance around the world. The focus throughout has been on a single question: what does the theater say and how is it said? In this chapter we have tried to give a general answer. In the next we shall try to give an answer with respect to an individual production.

Chapter V

Semiotic analysis in the theater.

In this chapter, we will carry out an analysis of a production of Shudraka's The Little Clay Cart presented in the Michigan State University Arena Theater under the direction of Dr. Farley Richmond. We will attempt to analyze the content of the communication "sent" by this production, and also the manner or means by which the communication was "sent".

It should be borne in mind that this analysis is primarily an analysis of what happened on the stage of the Arena Theater, not what happens in the text of the play written by Shudraka. Two kinds of occurrence are involved here: the actual event of performance, and the fictional action of the drama. The performance is the "telling" to the audience of the fictional action.

This distinction must be constantly kept in mind, since ordinary theatrical usage confuses the two. Thus, we say of a performance of a certain act of pantomime, "Charudatta plays the flute." In actual fact, however, an actor pantomimes the action of playing a flute according to an accepted code of pantomimic movement, and thereby "tells" us that Charudatta plays the flute. Our statement, as quoted above, refers to both pantomimic communication and the

fictional event which is the content of the communication. This causes no difficulty in ordinary practice, but in this analysis we constantly will need to separate the two. We should therefore keep in mind that this is an analysis of how the story is told, not of the story itself.

The events of a performance have a hierarchichal structure. At the first level is the event of the performance taken in its entirety. This is what we shall call the first order event; it would seem that in no case could there be more than one first order event in connection with any given performance.

The Little Clay Cart is a story having several interwoven plots. At the second level of performance events, we find several second-order events, corresponding to the telling of each of the interlocking subplots of The Little Clay Cart. Each second order event is part of the first-order event, but is of shorter duration.

At the third level, we find third-order performance events which tell the separate incidents of each second-level subplot. In The Little Clay Cart, the same incidents can figure in more than one subplot; hence, a single third-order performance event can be part of the telling of more than one second-level action. As before, third-order events are of shorter duration than second-order events.

Finally, third order events are composed of a fourth order of event--actual gestures, utterances, and so forth.

It is with this level that our analysis may begin, since it is at this level only that we can begin to actually record data, since there is no way to record "the performance" but to record the separate events of which it is composed. It is therefore the fourth-order events that form our data base.

At the fourth order of events, the distinction between events and actions disappears. We directly equate the performance event enacted by the actor at this level with the actions of the character which the events communicate. Thus, if Charudatta raises his hand, we know it because the actor raises his hand.

Fourth order performance events can be broken down into lower-order events of a psychoneurophysiological nature, but there are no actions below the fourth level.

Fourth order events can be shown as they are in this study by still photographs which attempt to capture the key moment, but such photographs represent an abstraction from a phenomenon which is actually a continuum of movement. The use of film or videotape would improve this situation but not eliminate it, since both of these forms are actually a rapid succession of stills.

In the following pages, then, we shall present first a breakdown of the production into first, second, and third order events, indicating how each order contains those below and fits into those above; secondly, we shall present an analysis of code and content (action) in each of the third order events basing our remarks where possible on photographs

of key fourth order events in each third order event. At the end of our analysis, it should be clear how the action of the story is told in this production, and how the meaning of this action is communicated through commentary upon it.

The first order performance event is, simply, the performance taken as a whole from beginning to end. In the broadest sense, this includes everything which the audience experiences with respect to the performance--publicity, ticket-buying, arrival at the theater, etc.

The first level action to be communicated by this performance is the description of a thorough-going transformation of the social, political, and spiritual life of the city of Ujjain in mediaval India. It is an idealized image of the coming of a kind of millenium in which the good are raised on high, the evil are cast down, love triumphs against odds, and a certain spiritual and religious growth takes place.

At the second level of action, we find five interwoven stories about individuals who play an important part in the transformation of the life of Ujjain.

1. Charudatta and Vasantasena fall in love and are to marry despite the opposition and machinations of Samsthanka, who lusts after Vasantasena. Charudatta rises from honorable poverty to power and wealth; the social status of Vasantasena changes from courtesan to wife-to-be, a change which the play presents as a considerable rise.

2. Aryaka, a cowherd, becomes the leader of a revolutionary faction which overthrows King Palaka, the ruler of the city. Aryaka becomes the new king--again, a considerable rise in status.

3. A masseur, in trouble due to gambling debts, undergoes a spiritual transformation, becoming a Buddhist monk and eventually the leader of the Buddhist monasteries in the kingdom. Again, there is a considerable rise in status.

4. A ne'er-do-well Brahmin, Sharvilaka, falls in love with the courtesan Madanika, owned by Vasantasena. They are to marry despite Sharvilaka's foolhardy theft of jewels with which to buy Madanika's freedom due to Vasantasena's generosity and Madanika's cleverness. Sharvilaka becomes a principle architect of the revolution.

5. A slave of Samsthanaka's Sthavaraka, displays considerable moral courage and is eventually granted his freedom. He refuses to carry out his master's unlawful command to murder Vasantasena.

These second level stories are told through the telling of 28 key third level actions. In the chronological order of the plot, they are as follows:

1. Charudatta and Vasantasena fall in love in the garden of the temple of Kama, the god of love.

Charudatta and his household aid Vasantasena against Samsthanaka.

3. The masseur tries to skip out on his gambling debts.

4. The masseur is caught and beaten by his creditors.

5. The masseur is aided by Darduraka.

6. Aryaka's rise to power is predicted.

7. The masseur is aided by Vasantasena.
8. The masseur becomes a Buddhist monk.
9. Sharvilaka steals jewels from Charudatta's house which Vasantasena had left there for safekeeping.
10. Charudatta receives a necklace from his wife with which to redeem the lost jewels.
11. Sharvilaka brings the jewels to Madanika, intending to buy her freedom from Vasantasena with them. Madanika saves him through a clever plan; Vasantasena gives Madanika to Sharvilaka; the jewels around which this all revolves are returned to Vasantasena.
12. Aryaka is arrested.
13. Sharvilaka abandons wedded bliss to join the revolt.
14. Charudatta delivers the necklace via Maitreya to Vasantasena, to redeem the "lost" jewels.
15. Vasantasena returns the jewels--not the necklace--to Charudatta.
16. Vasantasena takes the wrong carriage.
17. Aryaka escapes from prison.
18. Aryaka is aided by Chandanaka, a captain of the guard.
19. Aryaka is aided by Charudatta.
20. Vasantasena, having taken Samsthanaka's carriage by mistake, is brought to him against her will; he tries to kill her.
21. Vasantasena is aided by the monk (formerly the masseur).

22. Samsthanaka tries to railroad Charudatta for the murder of Vasantasena, whom Samsthanaka believes to be dead. Through coincidence, he gets Charudatta condemned to death.

23. Charudatta is led to the chopping block, but is saved at the last second by Vasantasena and the monk.

24. Aryaka overthrows King Palaka.

25. Aryaka bestows gifts upon Charudatta and Vasantasena via Sharvilaka.

26. Charudatta pardons Samsthanaka.

27. Charudatta bestows gifts.

28. Charudatta announces that Vasantasena will become his second wife.

We now proceed to the analysis of these third level actions, taking them in chronological order, and breaking them down into the key fourth order actions/events which are found in them.

The performance begins with a fairly long performance by the orchestra, improvising on a variety of Indian musical instruments, particularly tabla, flute, harmonium, tembura, and cymbals. The instrumentation, keys, melodic patterns and rhythm of the music is strongly connotative of India.

After the dimming of the houselights, two preliminary dances, both drawn from the Kuttiyattam drama of Kerala State, south India, were performed. The first of these is shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6. First preliminary dance.

The movements of this dance are drawn from codes of movement found in many kinds of Indian dance, sculpture and painting. Many of these movements have very specific meanings for an Indian audience; the hand-position, or mudra, shown in Figure 6 is a kind of ideogram for "flute", each hand being in a position that can mean "flower". The dance as a whole, in its original context in the Kuttiyattam performance, is both an expression of regard of the drummer and an indication of the sanctity of the performance, which takes place in the temple.

Unfortunately, most of this is lost on the Western audience. The dances, as a result, have little more semiotic function than does the music--to connote India, another world from our own, and thereby indicate that the cultural milieu of the story to follow is different from ours.

The second dance is performed by the "stage manager", a sort of emcee/character. It has a very similiar sort of ritual meaning and serves a similiar semiotic function as did the first dance. This dance is shown in Figure 7.

Finally, the stage manager delivers a benediction (Figure 8.) This pose and lighting, along with the basic idea of the language, are parallel to the closing moments of the performance, as we shall see in figure 72. The stage manager then plays a short scene with his wife, also a character, in the course of which he talks to Maitreya; we are thus led into the story proper of The Little Clay Cart.



Figure 7. Stage manager's dance.

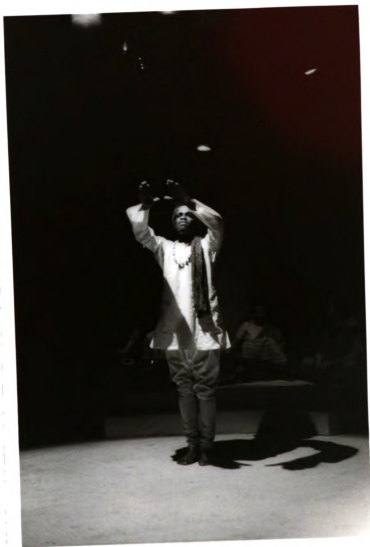


Figure 8. Stage manager's benediction.

1. Charudatta and Vasantasena fall in love.

This event is communicated simply by the use of language.

Samsthanaka remarks to the courtier,

The real trouble, sir, is that this slut is in love with a nobody, a wretch by the name of Charudatta, whom she met in the garden of Kama's temple. So she won't give me a second look.

Samsthanaka makes another, more elaborately contemptuous reference to this meeting later on. Maitreya and Vasantasena both refer to the meeting in later scenes. This piece of information is told, then, simply by more or less baldly expository language. There is some commentary made, however. We see that Samsthanaka is not a very pleasant character, since he speaks about their love in contemptuous terms and sees it merely as an obstacle in his own way. The actor slips us the information under the cover of an ostensible remark to the character of the courtier.



Figure 9. Vasantasena captured by Samsthanaka.

Event #2. The essence of this moment is a code of gesture: a weapon might be held this way in real life. The stylized scars on Samsthanaka's makeup are sufficient to establish his fierceness, and his use of this particular technique of persuasion also tells us much about his character. Samsthanaka's position and posture are gloating; the courtier seems less happy about the affair. The pleading gesture of Vasantasena's left hand reinforces the message of her line "I'm only a woman--a weak woman." This moment shows that Vasantasena is in need of aid; it is the first key event of event #2.



Figure 10. Vasantasena escapes.

Event #2. The second event of #2, this uses a movement pattern familiar to us from many sources: person A and person B close in on person C between them; person C ducks and runs away. The message is always that A and B lose track of C. The device is essentially pantomimic. Here, the A and B roles are done by Samsthanaka and the courtier and C is done by Vasantasena. The message is conveyed first through movement, then reinforced by language.



Figure 11. Search in the dark.

The scene is understood to take place in the dark primarily through language. Samsthanaka has several lines in the early moments which convey the required information. As in the shot above, pantomimic codes are also used. The movement above, taken from the pantomimic code of Peking Opera, shows groping in the dark. It is later used to comment on Samsthanaka's character; he and the courtier grab each other instead of Vasantasena after groping within inches of each other, which makes them both look stupid. This search in the dark is the third event in #2.



Figure 12. Vasantasena tries to get in.

An interesting combination of pantomimic and gestural codes. By the position of the hands and the posture, we can see that she wishes to enter the door which resists her; this information is conveyed pantomimically. Her facial expression shows us that the character is in rather a state of desperation--wide eyes, drawn mouth, compressed lips--facial

gestures which are to be found in reality. Therefore we have a combination of codes embodying an event and a commentary-- a door that won't open, an attitude of desperation.



Figure 13. Vasantasena slips in.

Here we have a rather subtle postural signal, probably pantomimic in character. She lowers her head, pulls in her arms, and tries to conceal her face, thus showing that she is in an unfamiliar, uncertain place, unsure of her welcome. She has moved up onto a platform that has been designated verbally and via movement as Charudatta's house. We

again have event and comment--a person enters a house, the person is fearful, hopes to remain unnoticed, is unsure of her welcome and unfamiliar with the place. The dialogue reinforces all this explicitly, thereby sending the same message redundantly.



Figure 14. Vasantasena is discovered.

She tries to conceal her face, continuing the message of the previous moment. However, Maitreya (right) has recognized her--his words, the position of his hand and body, and his facial expression along with the change in her facial expression, are standard pantomimic devices.

Vasantasena's evident apprehension in this and the previous moment relate to one of the themes of the play,

that of social status. She is fearful upon entering the house of a Brahmin; she is a courtesan. She is therefore unsure of her welcome even though she has previously encountered Charudatta at Kama's temple.



Figure 15. Vasantasena welcomed.

Event #2. Along with the lines, the message is sent via the standard Indian gesture of greeting, which would have to be classed as a pantomimic signal so far as an American audience is concerned, though it would be gestural for an Indian audience. Again, we have a combination of codes; the pantomimic hand gesture is accompanied by the facial gesture

that might actually occur in American culture in a context of greeting someone: a smile and tilt of the head, lowering the head so as to give the effect of looking up at someone. Thus, the pantomimic code is reinforced by the gestural code, as well as by the language used here.



Figure 16. Vasantasena escorted home.

Event #2. The movement here is again an interesting combination of pantomimic and gestural codes; the journey from one house to another is accomplished by walking an S-curved path from one platform to another diagonally across the stage, which is purely pantomimic; yet they walk in file and Charudatta gestures to point out the moonlight just as one might in reality. On the other hand, Charudatta's ges-

ture is modified, made more slowly and more gracefully so as to be more evocative of the quality of the moonlight as described in the language he speaks. The underscoring, played by the musicians behind, is soft and melodic, yet dissonant, adding to the romantic atmosphere. These atmospheric elements--the modified gesture, the language, the music, the rather slow pace of the walk, a slight dimming of the lights--actually give such weight to the commentary that the action becomes unimportant by comparison. All these devices are strongly connotative of idealized romantic love. The stage events, which ostensibly tell how Charudatta and Vasantasena walked over to her place with Maitreya, in fact are used for quite another purpose--to show their feelings for each other by connotatively modifying the atmosphere that surrounds them according to well known devices such as soft music, dim light, slow movement, and so forth.

Thus, we reach the end of event #2. The key information that has been given is the love of Charudatta and Vasantasena, the conflict between them and Samsthanaka, and the relations of social status obtaining among them.



Figure 17. Masseur enters, running.

Event #3. The masseur tries to skip out on his gambling debts. We are told by shouts offstage that someone is running away from the gambling house without paying up, and immediately the masseur enters. Such a conventional sequence is easily interpreted: here's the fellow who ran out. The masseur's lines immediately confirm this. He then continues to run in a stylized manner, stepping as shown

above so as to move at what is actually a medium walking pace in a circle around the stage. This serves as a pantomimic device to let us know that he travels some distance. His facial expression communicates his anxiety gesturally. His low status, socially and economically, is shown by the contrast between his costume and the other costumes which we have seen up to this point. The lighting is quite a bit brighter at this point in the performance than in the earlier scene with Vasantasena and there has also been a blackout in the meantime. Thus, we know by the code of lighting that it is now day--time has passed. His running is accompanied by rapid drum rhythms which connote his anxiety musically.



Figure 18. Masseur hides in a temple.

Event #3 continued. We see here that the masseur's strategy is to pretend to be a temple god. Semiotically, the situation is rather interesting: the actor tells us that he is a person pretending to be an idol by himself taking up the idol's pose. We thus have a clear instance of the one-to-one correspondence mentioned earlier: at the

fourth level, the actor's actions are a code for the character's actions by being in one-to-one correspondence with each other. Thus, if the actor runs, the character runs; if the actor talks, the character talks. If the movement is gestural, then the movement of the actor is a sign for itself as performed by the character.



Figure 19. Mathura and sidekick.

Event #3 continued. Those whom the masseur is trying to cheat enter in pursuit, Mathura right, sidekick left. We expected this from their offstage lines previously; they enter running and execute the circular maneuver shown here, which as before indicates traveling a distance through space. The musical underscore of drum and rattle provided a rapid

rhythm as before. Aside from the circular move, the movement is basically gestural, especially the facial expressions of anger and outrage.



Figure 20. "This temple has no idol."

Event #3, continued. Mathura's memory is good; as his line says, the temple has no idol and his gesture completes the implication: "here's the masseur." We know at this point that the masseur is in trouble; the sort these two are is neatly signified by their makeup, particularly that of Mathura's sidekick: teeth drawn on the upper lip giving him a permanent snarl. By comparison with the masseur, they are well-dressed; indeed, Mathura is as well-dressed as anyone in the play. In this scene, this takes on an

ominous significance: it tells us that Mathura usually gets his money, one way or another. Several of Mathura's lines explicitly convey the same point.

There is a code of physical types being employed here in the casting of the sidekick as a fellow bigger and heavier than Mathura: the two bad guys, Brains and Brawn. Given the context, we know what to expect from such a physical pairing.

Thus ends event #3. We have been informed as to the conflict between the masseur and the gamblers, a fair amount of commentary has been made on the characters of those involved, and we know that the gambler's first strategem has failed.



Figure 21. The masseur caught.

Event #4. Obvious movement codes are used to show the relation of the gambler to the masseur; they form a very neat set of oppositions: kneeling vs. standing, looking up vs. looking down, hands clenched vs. hands open, eyes closed vs. eyes open. All this is fully gestural; though exaggerated above any instance that occurs commonly in reality, gestures similiar to these might occur in extreme situations. A more theatrical device is employed in the positioning of the two gamblers: the sidekick maintains his threatening pose even though the masseur cannot see him, both to keep the audience tuned in on the threat to the gambler and to maintain the commentary on the two gambler's respective characters: the one has the brains and does the talking, the other has the beef and stands by ready to pound somebody into hamburger.

In the background, we see Vasantasena in her house. How do we know she is inside? Even if the doors and windows had not already been pantomimed, one might well get the message from the screen standing behind her, which connotes an indoor setting, and from the raised platform which denotes a change in locale from the street level. We shall later see how this convention can be altered so as to treat the stage level as being continuous with the platform, both for Vasantasena's house and for Charudatta's. The key point is contextual--the action of this scene has been placed outdoors, and the people in the house are not to react to what goes on outside. In later scenes the action is indoors, and those on the platform do respond to those on stage. Thus, the

distinction of platform vs. stage level changes considerably in meaning depending on the context.



Figure 22. The masseur is beaten.

Event #4 continued. The commentary made previously about the character type of the gamblers is now confirmed. There is a pantomimic character about their movement as they beat the masseur that is not evident from the photograph: the blows do not land nor is there an attempt to fake the appearance of their landing. A drumbeat signals each fictional impact, and the masseur displays the proper facial gestures.

While theatrical codes in general can fall anywhere along a continuum from the less theatrical to the more theatrical, movement codes seem to tend toward one extreme or the other. It seems appropriate to term the more theatrical movement signs and codes "pantomimic", and the less theatrical signs and codes "gestural".

The inspiration for these terms is obviously the art of pantomime. In pantomime, many movements are not carried out as they are in reality. To mime picking up a drinking glass, for example, one exaggerates the curve of the fingers and the hand so as to show the shape, size, and form of the glass. Hence, the glass is not "held" as it is in reality, but rather is "held" in a "pantomimic" way. On the other hand, to wave good-bye in pantomime is little different from waving good-bye offstage--the same gesture is employed. Hence, it seems appropriate to oppose the terms "gestural" and "pantomimic" to describe this difference in degree of theatricality between these two kinds of movement in the theater.



Figure 23. The masseur has an idea.

Event #4 continued. This pantomimic gesture has a long history in films, theater, cartoons, etc.; it really requires no comment. It is not immediately apparent in a still photograph, but the gamblers are in a temporary freeze while the masseur delivers his line. The freeze tells us that the passage of time in the story being told is temporarily suspended so that we can be given important information: that the masseur has managed to come up with another stratagem. Another pantomimic device can be recognized here in that the effect of the severe beating the character has just received is not shown by the actor. We have been told that

he was beaten, and further information about his physical condition as a result would be irrelevant to the story just at this point. At this point the focus is on how the masseur thinks: even under duress he can come up with a plan.



Figure 24. The masseur tries a trick.

Event #4 continued. The line here is, "I'll pay you half if you let me off half." We previously understood that he is carrying out a strategem; now we know that he is in

in mid-play as it were due to all the physical coding that tells us that an act of persuasion is in progress. The code here is basically gestural: the masseur puts his arm around the sidekick and puts his hand on his arm, looking up at him and speaking in a low, intense tone, softly but quickly--i.e., "persuasively". The same devices are used when he goes to put the question to Mathura.



Figure 25. The masseur's trick fails.

Event #4 continued. Here, the burden of the message falls to the directorial device relating three movements: the lunges of the two gamblers and the break for freedom of the masseur. Together, they add up to, "and he almost got away--but not quite." There is also a strong contrast be-

tween the facial gestures of the gamblers and that of the masseur; this contrast corresponds to the conflict--the gamblers express concern lest their pigeon escape; the masseur expresses the fear and frustration of his disappointed hope of escape.



Figure 26. The masseur tries to sell himself.

Event #4 continued. This hand gesture seems to be adapted from a common gesture that means either that the gesturer wants to draw attention to himself or wants someone to stop. In this case, the context of the sign is changed in a way impossible in our culture; the lines tell us that the masseur is trying to sell himself to pay off his debt. His gesture therefore takes on another connotation, that the

bidder at an auction makes. In this case, though, he is not the seller but the buyer; the final meaning comes out to "what am I bid?" The facial gestures of the two behind are part of the gestural code for contempt in our culture--the turned-up nose.



Figure 27. The masseur is beaten again.

Event #4, end. The three strategems of running away, conning the gamblers, and selling himself having failed, the

masseur is once more at the tender mercies of the gamblers. No sooner do they get to work, however, than they do a freeze, again to stop the passage of fictional time so that important information can be given. In this case, it is the beginning of the next event: Darduraka enters and delivers a comic disquisition on gambling.



Figure 28. Darduraka interrupts.

Event #5. Darduraka's tapping Mathura on the shoulder serves a double function: it tells us that the one character wishes to speak to the other, and it also serves to break the freeze, thereby setting the fictional time-flow moving again.

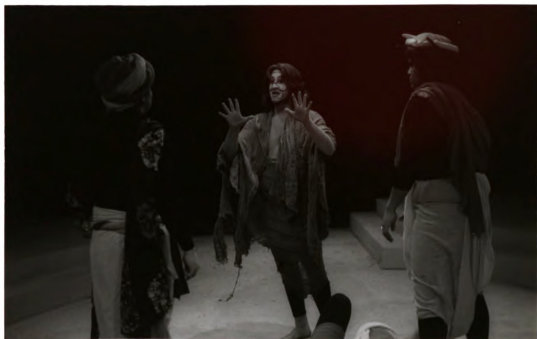


Figure 29. Darduraka tries persuasion.

Event #5 continued. This gesture was adopted as the second of two gestures for Darduraka's line "you're willing to knock out this fellow's five senses for ten pieces," the first gesture being just one hand with the fingers spread. The gesture does more than simply contrast the numbers; it also is strongly connotative of pleading or persuasion-- "stop, think of what you are doing!"--which indeed is what the character of Darduraka has to say to that of Mathura.



Figure 30. Darduraka intervenes.

Event #5 continued. A great deal is being said in a short time during this moment. We have two messages coming from the actor playing Darduraka: one is a threat to the character of Mathura, one is a signal to the character of the masseur to sneak away under Mathura's diversion. In addition, there is a third message which the actors playing the gamblers

assist in communicating, namely that the gamblers do not see Darduraka's signal to the masseur. The masseur is now showing the physical effect of the beating by crawling rather than walking, and slowly at that. Mathura grips his shawl like a strangling rope; from the connotations of strangling we grasp his intentions toward Darduraka. In his slow way, the sidekick is getting up steam at Darduraka also; he shows us this mostly by facial gesture.



Figure 31. Mathura threatens Darduraka

Event #5 continued. Mathura need not say anything at this point in order to clearly convey the intentions of his character toward that of Darduraka; his stare, the way he holds his scarf, and the erectness and muscular tension of

his stance all make his murderous threat perfectly clear, as does Darduraka's physical reaction.



Figure 32. The masseur gets away.

Event #5, continued. We are told that the masseur has reached the relative safety of Vasantasena's door by the combination of previously established signs: repetition of the two-handed pantomime for the door (see Figure 12), the difference in level between "inside" and "outside", and the non-response of the characters "inside" the house. All is not yet well, however, as the masseur's face plainly shows. He is still worried about being out in the street where the gamblers are, no matter how busy they may be at the moment with Darduraka's diversion.



Figure 33. Darduraka throws dust.

Event #5, conclusion. A pantomimic device: dust is thrown so as to be well away from everyone. The actor reacts as if it had been thrown in his face by displaying well-recognized signs--grasping at the eyes, crying out, straightening up suddenly, etc. We understand, of course, that the character played by the actor has had dust thrown in his eyes. The convention here is analyzable in terms of event and comment: event: dust is thrown. Comment: crying out, grabbing of eyes, etc. Content: the dust is causing pain to the character. In actuality, everyone can plainly see that the dust is safely away from the actor.

The presence of the attendant involves an interesting communication phenomenon: we are told not to pay attention to this person. Movement plays an important role here, since the performer moves "unobtrusively": head down, entering only when needed, standing quietly in position. However, even more obviously, the attendant is denoted by her costume in a negative way: she is the one who does not wear any Indian garb, only the basic black leotard common to all the performers. Thus, due to the leotard, we know she is a performer; due to the lack of anything else, we know not to pay undue attention to her. In a very literal sense, we know that she is a performer, not an actor; she merely performs the function of holding the bowl of dust-powder.

By means of the dust-throwing, Darduraka escapes from Mathura; thus ends event #5. Before he exits, however, he performs the action which communicates event #6 to us: the prophecy of Aryaka's rise. He merely pauses before making his exit and says,

This fellow has a lot of influence around here; I'd better scoot too. My friend Sharvilaka tells me he heard a prophecy that a cowherd named Aryaka is going to be king. He'd be the best leader for such as us. I'll hunt him up.

Action: there's been a prophecy. Commentary the prophecy is probable; certain classes of people are in need of a better ruler; the character takes action--he joins the budding revolt, thereby throwing the weight of his opinion behind the idea that the prophecy will come true. Thus ends event #6.



Figure 34. The masseur asks for sanctuary.

Event #7. We have another gesture here which is pantomimic for modern American culture, yet gestural for the culture for which the play was written--to kneel with the head to the floor. In this case, having gained admittance to the house of Vasantasena, the gambler uses it to beg help of her.



Figure 35. The masseur explains his plight.

Event #7. Here the masseur is getting into deep water again--Vasantasena does not seem sympathetic to debtors. He is shown to be in an uncomfortable spot by being in a physical relationship to Vasantasena which is socially uncomfortable, especially by contrast to the next photo.

There is an ambiguity here: having closed the door behind the masseur, Vasantasena's first reaction on hearing the masseur's trouble is the line, "Madanika, open the door." Since the gamblers are right outside, the masseur of course thinks she isn't going to help him. In fact, it is simply that she is unafraid of creditors and doesn't think it worth-

while to bar the door against them, as her later actions show. However, at the moment, the audience shares the gambler's uncertainty.



Figure 36. The masseur takes his ease.

Obviously, much has changed since the previous shot. All that has really happened is that he has identified himself as a former member of Charudatta's household. The change in the way he is treated is therefore a comment on Vasantasena's feelings toward Charudatta: nothing is too good for anyone connected with him in any way.



Figure 37. The gamblers are paid off.

Event #7 conclusion. Jewelry is given to the gamblers instead of money; jewelry is of course a form of wealth. In this play, it is the primary symbol of wealth; whenever the theme comes up, it is connected with the use, exchange, and value of jewelry. The attitudes expressed as a comment on any act involving jewelry are therefore the attitudes expressed by the performance on the theme of wealth. Here, wealth is seen as a means to an end; it is casually given away in order to help the friend of a friend out of trouble.



Figure 38. The masseur becomes a Buddhist monk.

Event #8. A theatrical device, sending the same message by two different means. On the one hand, the masseur states, "I am going to become a Buddhist monk." On the other, he lifts his hat, revealing that his head is already shaved, which of course connotes monasticism. He is dressed as a monk by attendants, and exits.



Figure 39. Sharvilaka breaks through the wall.

Event #9. This moment is achieved through the use of pantomime and language, primarily language--the actor accompanies his actions with statements as to what he's doing, such as "here we have baked bricks--so pull them out." He then pantomimes the pulling out of the bricks, as shown above.



Figure 40. Sharvilaka checks out the sleepers.

Event #9. The action here is to determine if Maitreya is asleep or merely faking. The use of the knife shows that Sharvilaka is in deadly earnest about what he is doing, despite the light-hearted tone of many of his lines. The actor playing Maitreya shows sleep negatively, by lack of reaction: were he awake, he would have reacted to Sharvi-

laka's presence by this time.



Figure 41. Sharvilaka takes the box.

Event #9. Maitreya holds up the box in his sleep. His lines are all addressed to Charudatta, thus making it clear that he thinks he has given the box to Charudatta. Sharvilaka makes off with it as Radanika rouses the house. End of event #9.

Event #9 has a place in two subplots--that of Vasantasena and Charudatta, and of course that of Sharvilaka and Madanika. As we shall see, the theft places Charudatta under obligation to Vasantasena; it also provides the mechanism by which Madanika can be freed to marry Sharvilaka.



Figure 42. The neckalce given to Maitreya.

Event #10. Charudatta's redemption of the "lost" jewelry takes place in two separate events: #10 and #14. In #10, the wealth necessary to serve as a substitute for the wealth that has been lost comes from Charudatta's wife. Her lines inform us that this is all she has left, but it must go to save her husband's honor. To save face for Charudatta, she employs a go-between: Maitreya. The gesture with

which the necklace is given is not unusual in any way, but in context it acquires interesting connotations.

As has been indicated, one of the themes of The Little Clay Cart is wealth, expressed as jewelry. A corollary theme that becomes important at this point is that of gifts and obligations.

A gift, in this context, is not necessarily a transfer of ownership, but can be a mere transfer of custody as well. In this case, Charudatta was given custody of the jewels, though not ownership of them; when they are lost, he is under obligation to replace them with wealth of equal or greater value.

However, transfers of wealth are not made directly. In the scene where Charudatta is given the jewels in the first place, they are not placed in his hands but in Maitreya's; Charudatta delegates the safeguard of them to Maitreya and Vardhamanaka, his man-servant. Here in this scene his wife does not give him the necklace directly, but gives it instead to Maitreya to take to him.

An important pattern of action which arises in the course of the performance, then, is that transfers of wealth create obligations that are discharged through go-betweens. In the next two events, this pattern itself acquires connotations relevant to the theme of wealth.



Figure 43. The necklace given to Charudatta

Event #10 continued. Having stood where Charudatta now stands at the time when the wife gave him the necklace, Maitreya now stands in the giver's spot to give the necklace to Charudatta. Each act of giving, in turn, is expressed through the repetition of the movement of the necklace across the platform. The equivalence of the two acts of giving is thereby underlined, which emphasizes Maitreya's role as an intermediary.



Figure 44. The necklace entrusted to Maitreya.

Event #10 concluded. Maitreya, having served as go-between for Charudatta and his wife, now is to serve as go-between for Charudatta and Vasantasena. The necklace crosses the platform for the fourth time, winding up again with Maitreya, thus re-emphasizing his role as intermediary. It is necessary that this point be driven home firmly, since

we shall not see him again until events #11 and #12 have been performed.



Figure 45. Sharvilaka confesses the theft to Madanika.

Event #11. The important point of this scene is a false transfer of wealth. Sharvilaka returns the jewels to Vasantasena, and in return is given Madanika as his wife. Though this is actually an act of pure generosity on the part of Vasantasena, the fiction of an exchange is maintained. The important information conveyed in this scene is the attitude of Sharvilaka--he has a secret, the secret of the theft which he thinks will enable him to buy Madanika's freedom. This is important preliminary information, since it ensures that we will remember that Sharvilaka is only returning Va-

santasena's own property to her.



Figure 46. Sharvilaka returns her jewels to Vasantasena.

Here Sharvilaka's previous posture which indicated his having a secret is gone, since he has told Madanika about the theft and has learned the foolish mistake he has made. It is replaced by the attitude proper to a go-between, which he pretends to be. His lines are also proper for a go-between; his statement takes the form of a message from Charudatta. Since we have previously been informed of this stratagem, he need not do anything to show his pretence.



Figure 47. "Would you accept...Madanika?"

Here the false transaction is completed. Vasantasena has received nothing but what was her own, and has given Madanika for it. The message is of course abundantly clear: generosity and love are valued above wealth; it is appropriate to be generous where love is concerned. This represents as well a commentary on Vasantasena to the effect that she has grown somewhat. We have been told by Madanika that she has talked of freeing her girls before; now she actually does it. This behavior is unexpected from a courtesan; the whole idea of a courtesan is of one who values wealth above love.



Figure 48. Madanika kneels in gratitude.

Event #11 concluded. This gesture is pantomimic for our culture, but carries strong connotations nonetheless, since it is an image associated with mediaval ideas of fealty. We read it here as an expression of extreme gratitude. At this point, the false transaction is complete.

Event #12, Aryaka's arrest, is a matter of spoken dialogue: a speech delivered by one of the musicians as if by a herald for the king. It is preceded by the sound of a small hand drum, which serves as an equivalent of "Your attention please! The more or less bald statement of Aryaka's arrest also conveys a propagandistic message: that the government has acted in the best interests of all. It is perfectly self-evident, of course, that the regime is actually acting in the best interests of the regime. Event #13, Sharvilaka's going off to join the revolt, is a direct commentary on Event #12; there is no question in Sharvilaka's mind that the right side is that of Aryaka, and he promptly leaves his new bride for the service of the rebellion. The action, of course, is a commentary on Sharvilaka; it points out his qualities as a man of action.

In event #14, we are again dealing the language as the primary means of communication. Basically, two actions are performed: Maitreya enters the house, and then he delivers the necklace. The bulk of the scene is taken up with Maitreya's elaborate description of the house and with the dance which follows Maitreya's description, done by Vasantasena's girls.

The images of the long speech describing the house are all of wealth in every imaginable form: housing, jewelry, food, animals, servants, art works, courtesans, hangers-on, etc. The implication is obvious--this is all the fruit of Vasantasena's business, which is selling love. It is in

It is in fact the fullest and most attractive exposition of the idea that wealth is of greater value in the scheme of things than is love.

The dance serves this theme as well, but also comments upon Maitreya's foolishness when he makes an egregious ass of himself by joining the dance despite his absolute ineptitude as a dancer. In Figure 49, the girls have all handed him their sticks at once; of course he can't hang on and they scatter to the floor. He then proceeds to scurry after them, much to the amusement of the girls and Vasantasena.



Figure 49. Maitreya and the dancers.

Event #15. Vasantasena goes to Charudatta's home to return the jewels to him. As in the previous scene, this one is largely given over to commentary. The basic action is very simple; she arrives, she gives him back the jewels which were stolen from his house, and they spend the night together. Interestingly, the matter of the necklace seems to be forgotten at the time; it is the jewels which she originally gave him for safe-keeping which now she gives him. There is nor further mention of the necklace until event #22.

The action is simple, but the commentary is elaborate. We are given much information, primarily through language and pantomime, about Charudatta's household and in particular the character of Maitreya, beset by the rain, Khumbilaka's mud-pellets and riddles, and finally by his suspicions of Vasantasena.

Maitreya is shown as both a fool and the voice of common sense. The particular piece of common sense that he gives voice to is that courtesans are selfish, grasping, and money-grubbing, without faith and untrustworthy. We thus gain an idea of the current state of things with respect to the theme of wealth and love: one can't expect love from courtesans, who are concerned only with wealth. In the remainder of the play, however, Vasantasena will disprove this idea; hence, the idea is ridiculed here by ridiculing Maitreya, its spokesman.

Charudatta is also given a good deal of highly evocative language with which to describe his feeling for Vasant-

asena. His love is expressed in images of nature: the rain, the lotus, the moon, the wind, the lightning. The lighting effect accompanying this speech is shown in Figure 38; a strong, rather warm light with strong backlight quite connotative of romantic moods.



Figure 50. "The rain, and the music of the rain."



Figure 51. Vasantasena takes Samsthanaka's carriage.

Event #16. The carriage driver, Sthavaraka, has previously announced that the carriage belongs to Samsthana-ka; we have also previously seen Charudatta's carriage and his driver Vardhamanaka. We also know that the carriage is going to the Pushpakaranda flower garden to meet Samsthanaka. We therefore have no doubt that Vasantasena is headed for trouble here.



Figure 52. Aryaka having escaped from prison.

Event #17. Even without the dialogue which announces the situation, it seems clear: the chain, part of the code of costume; the stance and gestures, part of the movement code, make clear that here we have a hunted man running from prison. As usual, the message is given redundantly in several codes.



Figure 53. Aryaka takes refuge in Charudatta's home.

Event #17 continued. The movement here is a variation of the door pantomime we have seen previously. The actor maintains a crouched, hunted pose to continue the message of a man in flight. The lines accompanying this move contain an interesting comment on Charudatta: "some kind man doesn't believe in locks." Just as love should be more important than wealth, so here we have the corollary statement that generosity should be more important than property. Further statements of the same theme occur during the performance of later events.



Figure 54. Aryaka takes Charudatta's carriage.

The same device as previously established is used. We know who the driver is, and where he is going, because he has announced the information verbally. Thus, when Aryaka enters the carriage, maintaining his stooping posture, we can predict the course of events: he will meet Charudatta at Pushpakaranda.



Figure 55. Chandanaka drives Viraka away.

Event #18. Chandanaka discovers Aryaka in the carriage, and promises aid. Having tired various verbal strategies on Viraka, he resorts as shown above to force. As in the earlier scene where Mathura kicks the masseur, a drum-beat is used to denote the blow that never actually lands.



Figure 56. Chandanaka gives Aryaka his sword.

Event #18 concluded. This action has important consequences for the story of the political rebellion--the group of those who betray Palaka now includes people rather close to the regime, since Chandanaka is a captain of the guard. Chandanaka's line is interesting from the connotations it evokes: "A passport for you." I.e., "that which will get you through the gates." The image is that of civil order connoted by documents such as passports giving way to the violence of revolution, symbolized by the sword.



Figure 57. Charudatta finds Aryaka in his carriage.

Aryaka here adopts the kneeling position of a request for mercy, and of course Charudatta grants it. This gesture is doubly required by Aryaka's status as an outlaw, symbolized by the sword (code of costume) and by his obligation to Charudatta for the use of the carriage (code of gifts and obligations). Charudatta then orders his servant to drive Aryaka on, thus legitimizing Aryaka's use of the carriage and putting Charudatta in a dangerous position vis-a-vis the regime. This sequence completes event #19.



Figure 58. Samsthanaka tries to persuade Vasantasena.

Event #20. Our prediction comes to pass, Vasantasena is brought to Samsthanaka. The courtier does what he can, and at first Samsthanaka attempts a verbal strategy supplemented by the posture we see here.

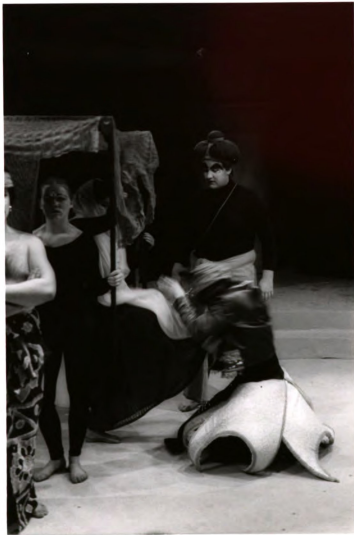


Figure 59. Vasantasena rejects Samsthanaka's plea.

Event #20 continued. If there are movement codes of universal significance, this would have to be an example. In context, especially: to kick a person in the head while they kneel has an unequivocal significance beyond the usually negative connotations of kicking people that apply generally.



Figure 60. Samsthanaka tries to persuade Sthavaraka.

Event #20 continued. Samsthanaka's goal has already been announced when he asked the courtier to kill Vasantasena. Here he uses his wiles on his slave, using many of the same gestural devices shown by the masseur when trying to persuade the gamblers to let him off. Sthavaraka, however, shows more reaction; even if we had no dialogue, we can read the relatively conventional signs of greed and manipulation in the postures and gestures of Sthavaraka and Samsthanaka.

The fact that Samsthanaka goes to the trouble to persuade Sthavaraka shows the illegality of the action he will request, since a slave must obey any legal order.



Figure 61. Sthavaraka refuses.

Event #20 continued. When Sthavaraka refuses, he does so in the only manner possible for a slave--the attitude of complete submission which would normally offset the lack of submission understood in disobeying and order. Samsthana-ka is the only character in the play who rejects this gesture; the courtier and Vasantasena must intervene when he starts

to beat his slave. A very clear commentary on Samsthanaka's character is thus made; one could even take this as evidence of mental disturbance in the character, since it shows him to be lacking in at least one feature of basic socialization: an understanding of the obligations one owes to those of lower rank.



Figure 62. Samsthanaka murders Vasantasena.

Event #20 concluded. Having tricked the courtier away and having dismissed his slave, Samsthanaka strangles Vasantasena. The movement is basically pantomimic, since in reality Vasantasena could do considerable violence to him in the position shown. The actress shows the death of Vasantasena according to a well-established movement code: a step-

by-step descent to the floor followed by general muscular relaxation and shallow breathing.



Figure 63. The monk in meditation, Vasantasena "dead".

Event #21. This image is connotative of a funeral. A man stands dressed in religious robes and says profound things; others sit and look at a concealed corpse. The lighting effect is a standard theatrical device--the pool of light on the body. The lines spoken here do not contain this suggestion; the information is conveyed through visual codes.



Figure 64. Vasantasena revived.

Event #22. To kneel beside someone lying or sitting: to offer aid. Such is the simple gestural code employed here.

The language accompanying this line is also of interest: Vasantasena's line in reply to the monk's "What has happened?" is "Only what is befitting to a courtesan." This line sums up a good deal of the themes of wealth and love, and of generosity vs. property. Because she is a courtesan, from the viewpoint of the play she has been on the wrong side of both of these issues. Samsthanaka murdered her because she would not sell her love to him, though he had the cash. She realizes here that the values which Samsthanaka has acted

on are not so very far removed from those on which she herself has been operating. If love is less important than wealth, and generosity (which also connotes kindness, mercy) is less important than property (wealth in a different form) why should mercy (kindness, generosity) be extended to those who will not sell their love? The attempted murder of Vasantasena is therefore of great thematic importance, since it vividly demonstrates the warped value system of the old regime, the old regime being represented by Samsthanaka, since Samsthanaka is the king's brother-in-law.

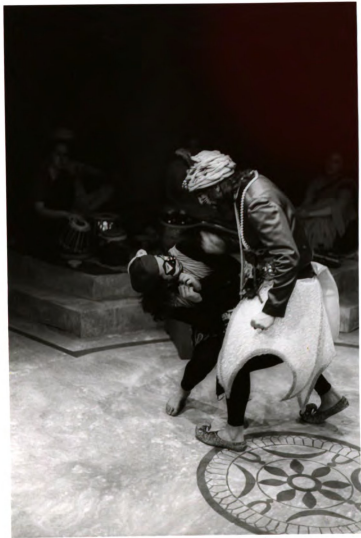


Figure 65. Samsthanaka intimidates the clerk.

Event #22. The first step in Samsthanaka's attempt to railroad Charudatta for the murder of Vasantasena is to intimidate the court, beginning with the clerk. The pantomimic code here is an extreme exaggeration of the same code seen in Figure 31: the aggressor makes himself bigger and taller than the aggressee, who shrinks his body together and makes himself shorter.

The remainder of the scene is largely conveyed through language. Charudatta's fate is against him; evidence accumulates by coincidence. Finally, Samsthanaka is able to use the jewels as evidence against Charudatta.

An interesting point is provided by the finding of the body, Figure 66.



Figure 66. Viraka finds a body in Pushpakaranda.

Viraka travels from the courtroom to Pushpakaranda by using the same walk-in-a-circle maneuver previously established. In Figure 66, we see his reaction to a body which he finds there. He then repeats the walk-in-a-circle move in the opposite direction and reports his finding verbally to the court. It is not, of course, Vasantasena whom he

finds, nor is it ever revealed whose body it was. The only conclusion is that it must have been some other woman whom Samsthanka murdered. Thus, a further commentary is made on Samsthanaka's character.

The next event, event #23, is the saving of Charudatta from the axe. It is important to both the story of Vasantasena and Charudatta and the story of Sthavaraka. The basic actions are: Charudatta is led to the place of execution; Sthavaraka tries to save him, but is thwarted by Samsthanaka; Vasantasena and the monk arrive in the nick of time.



Figure 67. Charudatta at the place of execution.

Charudatta's back is turned to the populace which we infer from the direction in which the chief executioner directs his words. He is thereby marked out as the man about to die; the executioners are distinguished by their costume and makeup. The hiding of the face of the condemned is an old custom; it therefore conveys the proper overtones in this context.



Figure 68. Sthavaraka pleads for Charudatta.

His gesture here is precisely like certain gestures used by the masseur. The burden of the message at this point is carried, however, by language. His status is shown by the attitude of the executioners: they listen, but skeptically. He is, after all, a slave; a social fact of the old regime

which Samsthanaka will shortly exploit.



Figure 69. Sthavaraka discredited by Samsthanaka.

The scars upon Sthavaraka's back discredit his testimony, since it is only common sense about slaves that they will try to get revenge on masters who beat them. The existence of the scars is communicated very simply: first Samsthanaka claims they are there, then he points them out, then the other actors also react as if they were there. The audience then knows the scars are there by what might be called the-Emperor's-new-clothes effect: what all the actors agree to is so. The scars only discredit the character of Sthavaraka because of the prevailing attitude towards slaves. The benefit of the doubt goes to Samsthanaka automatically, since

he is the master; if this attitude were reversed, the natural question would be, "Is it really true that Sthavaraka stole gold as Samsthanaka says? And if he didn't, why was he beaten?" These questions would shortly unmask Samsthanaka, but the burden of proof lies with the slave. Such are the social inequities of the old regime. The scars, therefore, have a double meaning: on the surface, they indict Sthavaraka; at a deeper level, they indict the society that uses them to indict Sthavaraka.



Figure 70. Charudatta saved.

Event #23. Finally, the obligatory moment arrives. This event does not really require commentary; however, it is interesting that the last man to realize that he should stop is the axeman; even his cohort is helping to forestall the blow. Event #23 is thus concluded.

Event #24 is signalled by language from offstage: "Aryaka has won! Glory to Aryaka!" We shortly here more details from Sharvilaka upon his entrance: "I killed Palaka at the place of sacrifice."

The death of the old king thereby acquires an interesting connotation which helps tie together the theme of transformation. The monk's religious transformation was heavily influenced by bad experiences with the world of everyday social and material reality; conversely, the death of the old king, which accomplishes the political transformation of Ujjain, takes place in a religious context. The two transformations, religious and political, are thereby related to each other, each including elements of the other.

Event #25 then occurs: via Sharvilaka, Aryaka bestows a kingdom on Charudatta and a title on Vasantasena. He thereby discharges his obligations to Charudatta for the gift of the carriage, under the code of gifts and obligations.

Event #26: Samsthanaka is dragged in to face the music. As shown in Figure 71 on the following page, he uses the pose of supplication to beg mercy from Charudatta--thereby taking on the position formerly occupied by his slave Sthavaraka when he beat him. He beat his slave for doing right; now he kneels for doing wrong, and Charudatta forgives him. The difference in moral stature between the two could hardly be made clearer--compare Figure 71 to Figure 61. Charudatta grants him mercy, though he deserves it least of anyone.



Figure 71. Samsthanaka is granted mercy.

Event #27 then follows: like many of those at the end of the play, it is conveyed through language. Charudatta announces boons for several people, especially the monk, who is made spiritual head of the Buddhist monasteries in the kingdom, and Sthavaraka, who is set free. He then announces that he will marry Vasantasena; end of event #28.



Figure 72. Charudatta's benediction.

The lighting on this, the closing moment of the show, is highly reminiscent of that on the stage manager's benediction at the beginning. It isolates him in time and space and removes him from all the locales associated, by now, with the various areas of the stage, finally, it stops the flow of fictional time for good. The speaking of Charudatta's

last lines outside of fictional time and space but before the houselights come up to restore the everyday world of our reality gives his words a connotation of eternal verity befitting to their philosophical and moral character.

This completes our analysis of the third level actions communicated by the performance of The Little Clay Cart produced in the Michigan State University Arena Theater under the direction of Dr. Farley Richmond in the spring of 1977. We have seen how the events of performance were carried out in such a way as to provide material interpretable according to codes provided by the theater and general culture of the performance and audience. The content of the material provided consists of the actions of the story of The Little Clay Cart and a commentary upon that action, centering on themes of love, wealth, property, generosity, gifts and obligations. The story is of a society transformed in such a way that the values of love and generosity as it were come to power--a transformation of social, political, and religious life.

Chapter V

Summary, limitations of the study, and research opportunities.

This study began with the founders of semiotics: C. S. Peirce and F. de Saussure. The dominant tradition in semiotics has been that of Saussure, though the constant tension between the two traditions has been an important factor in the continuing vitality of the field. We may recall the key phrase of Saussure's definition of semiotics: a science that studies the life of signs in society.

There are differences between the concepts of the sign offered by Peirce and Saussure; for Saussure, a sign is a signifier in relation to a signified; for Peirce "a sign ... is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity."²⁶ The two thinkers, we saw, take opposing stands on the problem of iconicity, stands which are also complementary.

We then considered the semiotics of communication, particularly with respect to the communication model of Roman Jakobson, and his analysis of the six functions of communication: referential, emotive, conative, esthetic,

26. Peirce, C. S. Collected Papers. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958) v. 2 p. 135

phatic, and metalinguistic, giving theatrical examples of each. Reference was made to several concepts due to various semiotic thinkers, especially to Hjelmslev's definition of connotation. Finally, we made passing reference to the field of "body language"--proxemics and kinesics.

Moving on to the worlds of literature and film, the work of Roland Barthes and Christian Metz was reviewed. A distinction can be made between a theoretical approach (Metz) and a critical approach (Barthes), yet both these approaches lead to what is fundamentally the same point: the communication system functioning in the work of art.

Both Barthes and Metz employ the idea that the work of art employs several codes, not just one. Barthes presents a technique of dividing up the text into many very small fragments; the modellbuch approach to theater employs the same idea. Both Metz and Barthes find connotation to be of central importance in the respective media dealt with in their studies; connotation is also given a central place in the communication process of theater by this study.

A theory of theater is presented which we shall summarize shortly. We then describe six codes which seem to have widespread use in the theaters and performances of the world. They are space, light, sound, costume, movement, and language. Finally, we analyzed the interplay of event and commentary in the communication of the action and thematic content of

The Little Clay Cart by the performance of that drama given at Michigan State University in March, 1977.

In the author's view, the most important part of this study is contained in Chapters III and IV, in which a semiotic theory of the theater is set forth in somewhat elementary form and then applied to a specific production. The key concept in this theory is that of event and commentary.

An event is, very simply, anything which happens in the performance space. An event in the theater, however, is never simple; the manner in which it is performed follows patterns which are interpretable by members of the culture for whom the performance is given. That which is communicated by the manner of performance is the commentary. The performance of such acts before a live audience is the essence of theater and defines theater. It happens very frequently that sequences of events and commentaries are used to tell stories; in such cases a second level, that of action, is added. The events tell of fictional actions; the actions themselves are "said" to occur in such a way as to convey a second commentary, a commentary on the action. From this commentary, information about the theme and the characters can be gathered. Six codes are widely used in the theaters of the world; they are space, light, sound costume, movement, and language.

In the analysis of The Little Clay Cart, we dealt with the problem of the various levels of event in performance. A hierarchical structure was proposed, in which it is possible to isolate several orders of events, the first-

order event being the entire performance taken as a whole, and successive orders of events comprising successive subdivisions of this whole such that the members of each successive order are shorter than those contained in the previous order. Eventually a point is reached at which meaningful data-gathering can take place, by means of photography and audio recording. By analyzing this data with respect to 28 key events, we can see how the performance told an interconnected set of stories which cumulatively "tell" the action of the play--the story of an idealized transformation of the social, political, and religious life of the kingdom of Ujjain.

The limitations of the present study are several. First of all, the completeness of the analysis of The Little Clay Cart production is limited due to lack of adequate photographic equipment and funds for reproduction. A truly complete job of such an analysis would involve a thoroughgoing study of both commentary and action throughout the entire performance, rather than in isolated segments, and preferably obtained through sound color video-tape or 16mm sound film.

Secondly, the work at hand treats only the high points of semiotic theory--those ideas which have had widespread acceptance for a period of time. There is much detail in semiotic theory which is beyond the scope of the present study. Hence, there is a certain lack of refinement in the theory presented, with considerable room for elaboration and enrichment.

Thirdly, semiotics in general is a rapidly growing and developing field, both in the number of workers and the amount of publication. The ideas which we have presented in this study are therefore constantly subject to revision in the light of further findings in the field of semiotics.

Last but not least, the theater itself continues to develop, albeit slowly, and some of this development, such as Michael Kirby's Structuralist Workshop, is in response to ideas drawn from or having a close relationship with semiotics. Hence, the object of study is being changed by the act of study.

The semiotic study of theater carries with it several opportunities. It may well prove to be effective in actor, director, and designer training to foster a viewpoint, ultimately based on semiotics, of the theater as being first and foremost a communication medium. The thrust of such work would be to teach the student to evaluate his work in terms of semiotic function: What was the work supposed to say? How effectively did it say it? Most theater workers have no difficulty in approaching problems of the theater in this way, and an elaborate background of semiotics is not necessary. Such an approach encourages clarity of work and discourages romantic idealism about the mysteries of artistic genius, since anyone can use theatrical methods to communicate more or less skillfully. Quality, in this viewpoint, becomes a question of effectiveness and content: how well was it said, and how worth saying was it? The student is

thus enabled to critique his own work more objectively than before.

Semiotic performance analysis is not limited to the overtly story-telling theater. Many forms of performance can be studied semiotically, including many forms of dance, ritual, music, story-telling, mime, and ceremony in our own and other cultures across the globe. Many of the familiar elements of theater codes are present also in these other forms, and the process of event and commentary, based on connotation, can be analyzed.

By the same token, of course, semiotics provides a framework for comparison of widely different performance forms. The same question can be asked of any form: how does it say what it has to say? What codes are used, and what cultural patterns do they relate to? Performance can thus serve as a compact, delineable source of anthropological data on any culture in which it is found.

Such are the opportunities available to the semiotic worker in the theater. As further material is provided by workers in semiotics, theatrical analysis and understanding will benefit. If the theater becomes more aware of itself, of what it has to say and how it can say it, through semiotics, the theater as a social institution may become a more sensitive and responsive instrument of social communication than it has been heretofore. Such is the opportunity provided by a performance theory capable, for the first time, of dealing comprehensively yet flexibly, and in a constructive, en-

lightening manner, with the performance of any culture anywhere.

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