



Fig. 1. Unknown. Last photograph taken of George Gurdjieff. 1948.

THE SHOCK OF PRESENCE

**Peter Brook & Jerzy Grotowski -
The Reinvention of Australian Theatre**

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the social, political, and cultural climate which facilitated the emergence of Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski as the most influential theatre directors in the second half of the Twentieth Century.

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November 2017

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

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Prologue

Even at a superficial level, looking at Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, one cannot help but see two sides of the same coin: Brook re-evaluating theatre as an empty space for ritual practice, Grotowski re-evaluating the empty soul of ritual practice and making it theatre. My argument is that Brook and Grotowski's shared Eastern European providence is key to their intimacy with, and attraction to, the teachings of Gurdjieff. In effect, I interpret them as modern adepts of a mystical traditional order: while the techniques of acting they developed were built upon the groundwork of Stanislavsky and later, Brecht and Artaud, their respective establishing of institute and research centres were directed at more than just acting techniques for performers, but as protean hives of enquiry into the deeper and truer nature of man himself.

Peter Brook remains a central figure in Anglophone and Francophone theatre, both through his published texts and his artistic work which continues to this day; he is still directing work from his base at *La Theatre Bouffes De Nord* in Paris, even as he enters his 90s. With the passing of time, however, the focus and vocation of the work undertaken by Grotowski – and indeed that of Gurdjieff – risks being diluted and withering. Followers of these teachers struggle to keep the flame of purpose alive in the absence of its pilot light: “There is a culturally conditioned ‘wall’ that keeps us from experiencing the world directly. ‘We think we see,’ says Grotowski, ‘but we don’t see’” (Osinski, 1986: 172). Our understanding of their practice becomes confused; in Jean-Claude Carrière's words from his essay on Gurdjieff, “... for the mind admires the mind, and where self-development is concerned, self-satisfaction blocks the way” (Needleman, 1998: 149). This problem perhaps attends all. The conundrum is that, with the passing of time, the grasp we have of the work of these key figures risks becoming diffuse and withers, as has been the case with both Gurdjieff and Grotowski. Thus, grasping their practices requires a negotiation of decades of confusions,

appropriations and misunderstandings. This is perhaps a problem for all methods that seek understanding the complete human in relation to both the visible world, and that which is incorporeal: investigations can be rendered simply as ‘actorly technique’ stripped of metaphysical calling.

Grotowski has been promoted by some to the status of a post-modern sage, an avatar of raw social brutality, transfigured as it were into the godfather of nihilism, as if carrying the mantle of Artaud in confronting the savagery that for contemporary audiences classifies cutting edge drama.¹ On the other hand, the concept of ‘Poor Theatre’ has for others become a cypher for budget deficiencies (to excuse shortfalls in conception and rigorous intellectual inquiry), more than it has to do with purifying the dynamic between actor and spectator unencumbered by accessories of ‘Total Theatre’.

Indeed, Grotowski’s conception of ‘poverty’ has little to do with the exigencies of budget. Sydney based theatre company Kinetic Energy’s founding member Jepke Goudsmit worked with Grotowski at his Teatr Laboratorium in Wroclaw, as well as in Jean-Pierre Voos’s Brook/Grotowski based research centre in Rotterdam; she explains how she understands what poverty means for Grotowski:

Poor theatre is to use what is only absolutely necessary. If the work requires the floor to be a particular type of wood for the resonance required in the movement of the performers, and that floor will cost \$60,000, then it’s necessary and falls within the parameters of poor theatre.²

However, it is from Thomas Richards’ book *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, in which he quotes Grotowski from his essay “Riposta a Stanislavskij” (“Answer to Stanislavski”) that my investigation into the practices of both these directors begins.

The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience
(Brook, 1996: 127).

... Our productions are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship
(Grotowski, 1968: 15).

Introduction

This thesis examines the social, political, and cultural climate that enabled and facilitated the emergence of Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski as arguably the most influential theatre directors in the second half of the Twentieth Century.

The thesis is divided into three parts: first, an investigation into the cultural and social conditions into and through which Brook and Grotowski emerged; second, an account of the taking up of their ideas in Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s; and third, a consideration of the longer-term effects of their influence in Australia. In this introduction, I will briefly outline the argument of each section.

Part One

The first part of this thesis offers an investigation into the cultural and social conditions which informed the development both as theatre practitioners and innovators, and as seekers of what they understood as being deeper spiritual truths. In particular, I will consider the resonance, in the lives, work and practices of Brook and Grotowski, of the teachings of the Armenian mystic George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866-1949), whose methodologies for awakening the human from sleep had a profound influence on both men (see Ouspensky 1949).

The constraints of a Masters by Research thesis will mean that my major focus will be on Brook, with an ancillary emphasis on Grotowski. While the taking up of Grotowski in Australia has been partial and uneven, the aforementioned constraints of this thesis means that I will, necessarily, focus on areas where there was a relatively sustained commitment.

My account will set out from a consideration of the ethnic, political and cultural backgrounds of Brook and Grotowski, specifically their Slavic/Russian Eastern European roots and the manner in which these backgrounds framed their subsequent ideas. The thesis will argue that while both men themselves wrote about Gurdjieff, his influence on them has not been taken up sufficiently in the scholarship about their work. Neither *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* by Grotowski's "essential collaborator" Thomas Richards nor Grotowski scholar Zbigniew Osinski's works *Jerzy Grotowski's Journey's to the East* and *Grotowski and His Laboratory*, for example, make mention of Gurdjieff. The same is also true of Jennifer Kumiega's widely referenced text *The Theatre of Grotowski*. This aporia has been readdressed to some degree by the very recent work of Catherine Christof in her paper "Gurdjieff in the Theatre: The Fourth Way of Jerzy Grotowski" (2017) and book *Rethinking Religion in the Theatre of Grotowski* (2017). These works explore the spiritual dimension and shamanistic practices within Grotowski's work, with emphasis on his resonance with Gurdjieff and his Fourth Way teachings.

The fundamental principal of the The Fourth Way system, as described by Piotr Ouspensky, Gurdjieff's foremost transmitter of these teachings has its origin in the *The Emerald Tablets* of Hermes Trismegistus: 'As above so below'.

[a]n analogy between the microcosm—man, and the macrocosm — the universe. The fundamental laws of triads and octaves that penetrate everything should be studied simultaneously both in the world and in man (Ouspensky, 2001: 278).

My argument is that Gurdjieff is not one influence among many, but seminal to both Brook and Grotowski, and key to our understanding of their work. This involves not only the place of Gurdjieff's Eastern Orthodox heritage in their thinking and work practices, but also the lines of influence between that heritage and the theories and practices of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth century Russian School: the work of Stanislavski.

In the case of Peter Brook, the influence of Gurdjieff and his chief pupils was not

limited to his views on performance, but, as Brook himself made clear, to how he explored what he understood as, the human condition in general. “In all esoteric traditions,” Brook observes, “there is a division between a higher level and a lower level, between a body and a spirit” (Needleman, 1998:33). These relationships reveal Brook’s core principals, mirroring in their significance those of the Twentieth Century’s most celebrated theatre innovator, Constantin Stanislavski, who was also among the inspirations for the performance practices which emerged from Jerzy Grotowski’s Wroclaw Laboratorium in Poland during the 1960s.

I will argue that Gurdjieff’s ideas had their most pronounced impact upon Western European theatre practice during two distinct periods, each marked by similar patterns of disruption and upheaval. There are, I will show, a number of cultural, political and social parallels between the Western Europe of the 1920s, when Gurdjieff appeared in Paris, and the Western Europe of the 1960s, when Brook and Grotowski emerged as the leaders of a theatrical groundswell. These decades were the lynchpins in the development of the Twentieth Century theatre, each bearing a debt to turn of the century Russian performance practitioners.

The argument as broken down for this thesis is as follows:

1.1 Stanislavski and the Russian Soul

My argument begins with Stanislavski as a central figure in Twentieth Century theatre history, and an analysis of how his spiritual understandings were shaped by the ancestral understanding of the Eastern Orthodoxy of the Russian faith, shared by other theatre makers at the time, such as Vera Komissarzhevskaja. This was also reflected in the work of contemporaneous Russian theologians and philosophers, notably Nicholai Berdyaev and Pavel Florensky. Consequently, Stanislavski’s understanding of an Actor’s spirit and soul was misinterpreted as the discovery and evacuation of sense-based emotions as a result of the

primary translation into English by Elizabeth Hapgood, and affecting the American models of Stanislavski's work practices as revealed by theatre arts scholar Patrick C. Carriere. Similarly to Stanislavski, Brook and Grotowski (both of Eastern European provenance) sought to reawaken the soul of the actor in seeking deeper spiritual truths akin to what was being rediscovered during the *fin de siècle* of the Russian Silver Age (1890–1917).

1.2 A Challenge to Prevailing Ideologies: How the Cultural Landscape was shaped to receive the Ideas of Gurdjieff in the 1920s and Brook and Grotowski in the 1960s.

The broad diaspora of Russian cultural influences in Western Europe, and their effect leading up to and following the First World War, is examined through the work of Stanislavski, George Gurdjieff and his band of exiled Russian aristocrats including Peter Ouspensky, Alexander De Salzmann and Thomas De Hartmann, as well as the impresario Serge Diaghilev, the Ballets Russe, and painters such as Wassily Kandinsky. The impact of Gurdjieff and his Institute for Harmonious Development of Man (outside Paris in the 1920s) is analysed through their influence on American writers and intellectuals, Gurdjieff's effect on Lincoln Kirstein, a seminal figure within the Harvard Moderns, and Gurdjieff's group of women writers including Margaret Anderson, Janet Flanner, Djuna Barnes, and Jane Heap. Importantly, Heap would later become Peter Brook's mentor until her death in 1964, whereupon he became part of Jeanne De Salzmann's Gurdjieff group in Paris. How the liberatory spirit of the 1920s resurfaced in the 1960s, and caused a cultural and social paradigm shift where Brook and Grotowski were key figures and acolytes of Gurdjieff's teaching is explored, as is evidence of these influential directors' impact on theatre, in both Europe and Australia, since the publication of Brook's *The Empty Space* and Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* in 1968.

1.3 Jerzy Grotowski : *hic et nunc*. The Sacred Aim

Beginning with Grotowski's early life in Poland, Stanislavski's crucial influence on Grotowski during his time studying under Yuri Zavedsky at the State Institute for Theatre Arts (GITIS) in Moscow, I will explore Grotowski's response to pivotal ideas and experiences. These include the influences of Indian and Eastern Mysticism and Catholicism, and again, the seminal presence of Gurdjieff in Grotowski's methodical application of these techniques, the evolving octaves of Grotowski's practice, and its teachings. I will further consider his incorporation of ritual and the demand upon the body for discipline and endurance, producing a higher degree of presence in the here and now (*hic et nunc*) through Grotowski's unearthing of traditional and ancestral understandings.

1.4 Peter Brook: An Orthodoxy within the Mysticism

Brook's ancestral providence and formative years are examined, and how the influences of his parents, and schooling between wars, laid the groundwork for his directorial work in the late 1940s and 1950s. I will observe how Brook's work with the Royal Shakespeare Company in the 1950s revitalized the Edwardian concepts of Shakespeare through, what were at the time unexpected, modernizing productions, and how his controversial 'Theatre of Cruelty' work in the 1960s, responded to the global social changes taking place around him. I will argue that, despite Brook's denial of consciously proselytizing Gurdjieff's teachings in his stage work, that there is ample evidence of Gurdjieff's influence throughout his work from the 1960s onwards.

Part Two

The thesis will then turn to how the ideas of both Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski affected the renaissance in Australian theatre and performance in the early 1970s, illuminating how their respective ideas and practices inspired performance practitioners through the circulation

of their seminal books *The Empty Space* and *Towards a Poor Theatre*. This part of the thesis will set out from a background view of the cultural changes brewing in Australia in the 1960s, and from there the radical conceptual and social shifts of the 1970s. The impact of the two key revisionist texts was cemented by the Australian tour of Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1973, and Grotowski's acting workshops and presentation of *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris* in 1974. Local theatre-makers' experience of these events further invigorated a revolution that was already underway in Australian performance culture.

2.1 1960: The Time is Not Yet Ripe

Australia's early years of vaudeville, travelling tent shows, and the actors versatility performing a variety of genres and how these readily laid the foundations for the artistic performance explosion in the 1970s is observed. Specifically, I will consider how the inauguration of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and Ensemble Studio's training of actors facilitated this new era, as well as the alumni from University of Sydney Dramatic Society (SUDS) in the early 1960s, and how these were instrumental in the unravelling of parochial deferment to Anglo-American cultural dictates is investigated.

2.2 1970: Australia and the Shock of Identity in an Overdue Cultural Revolution

Here, I turn to an examination of the influence of *The Empty Space* and *Towards a Poor Theatre* upon this generation of theatre practitioners' views, and the impact and emergence of Australian Performance Group (APG) and La Mama in Melbourne, and the Nimrod Theatre in Sydney, an influence which ignited an unprecedented renaissance in Australian theatre. Culturally, the significance of the Oz trial scandal in the UK is introduced as galvanizing anti-imperialist sentiments amongst the Baby Boomers emerging from the universities, so too the landmark production in 1970 of *The Legend of King O'Malley* bearing upon what would become a recurring characteristic motif in Australian performance.

2.3 Larrikins, Ockers and the Empty Space

This chapter contends that Brook's idea of 'Rough Theatre' as presented in *The Empty Space* validated the celebration of the 'larrikin' and 'ocker' characters which ran rife throughout the APG and Nimrod the 1970s and 1980s, much due to the plays of Alex Buzo, John Romeril, Ron Blair, Jack Hibberd, David Williamson and company. I argue that the most enduring of these works have been Ron Blair's *The Christian Brothers*, and Nick Enright and Terence Clarke's *Venetian Twins*. I argue that the opening of the Opera House in 1973, the purchase of Jackson Pollock's Blue Poles, the Australian tour of Brook's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Grotowski's lecture at the Opera House and subsequent production in Sydney of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* in 1974 provided inspiration for performance culture throughout the rest of the decade, and onwards into the 1980s.

2.4 Freestyle Upstream to Jerzy Shore

The second part of this thesis concludes with a chapter demonstrating the impact of Jerzy Grotowski on Australian performance, particularly through the work of Sydney-based director Rex Cramphorn and the Performance Syndicate, as well as Melbourne artists such as Kerry Dwyer, who trained with Grotowski in France and was one of the founders of the APG.

Part Three

The final part of this thesis will examine the impact of Women's Theatre in the 1970s, from its genesis, primarily in Melbourne, to its evolution towards being instrumental in fostering a dynamic new generation of performers, and in creating iconic characters who dominated the popular mainstream culture, particularly television, for several decades. The conclusion of this part focuses on the performers, and companies whose work decades later directly links to the theories of Brook, and influence of Grotowski, which now, has all but dissipated. I argue this is due, in part, to the impact of technological innovations on performance aesthetics, the

reception of ‘poor’ and ‘rough’ theatre ideas as dated, met by funding policies discouraging experimental avenues in performance research.

3.1 Poor Theatre, Women’s Theatre, and Take No Prisoners

This chapter frames how the ideas of Grotowski were instrumental in the development of Women’s Theatre notably beginning with the APG’s *Betty Can Jump*, through to Canberra based group *Women on a Shoestring* and Adelaide’s *Vitalstatistix*. I also illustrate the apparent connections to the first generation of feminists in the 1920s and 1930s, many of them belonging to Gurdjieff’s ‘Ladies of the Rope’ group, and how these women served as inspiration for the second wave of the feminist movement which emerged in the 1970s. I argue that the emergence of women’s theatre at this time was fundamental to the explosion of female characters on Australian television, where both the actor and character became household names.

3.2 Conclusion: The Socio-Political and Spiritual Legacy

The thesis concludes with an examination of the artists and companies which trace their significant influences back to Grotowski and Brook. These include amongst others: Mike Mullins *Entr’acte Theatre* at the Performance Space in Sydney, Jepke Goudsmit and Graham Jones *Kinetic Energy*, and Jean-Pierre Voos’ theatre company *Kiss* in residence at James Cook University in Townsville. This chapter also looks at how Brook and Grotowski were perhaps surprisingly, and, deeply, traditionalist, sourcing the very meaning of the word to find commonality within the distinct and diverse cultures they explored. This also includes an examination of their detractors such as Indian director Rustom Bharucha who castigated both directors for cultural appropriation, and for what he claimed to be their misreading of Eastern cultures in service of their personal ambitions. The ideas of Brook’s appropriative sensibilities are also explored by John Russell Brown and Craig Latrell. The final part of the

thesis examines how in the last few decades Brook and Grotowski's influence has waned as Australia as economic imperatives became ever more an exclusive concern, as argued by scholar and director Julian Meyrick. The argument of the thesis concludes that even though Brook and Grotowski, and their texts, no longer dominate the performing arts ideology, still, no text or methodology for rendering performance since has impacted so widely and profoundly in the narrative of Australia's performance history in the last half century.

PART ONE

1.1 Stanislavski and the Russian Soul

When I was a student in the school of dramatic arts, in the faculty for actors, I founded the entire base of my theatrical knowledge on the principals of Stanislavski ... it was the key which opened all the doors of creativity (Richards, 1995: 6).

The Eastern European ancestry of Brook and Grotowski contextualises their work both socially and culturally. Most acutely, perhaps, the insights and writings of Constantin Stanislavski and the culture pervading Russian intellectualism and the arts at the end of the Nineteenth Century, helps us to understand their innovative approach to theatre in the 1960s. That culture, however, did not emerge out of a vacuum. At the turn of Nineteenth Century, Russia experienced a cultural ‘big bang’ as it were, in a confluence of ideologies during its Silver Age (1890–1917), igniting one of the greatest eras of artistic output since the Fifteenth Century Florentine and Sixteenth Century Elizabethan Renaissances. The collapsing power base of Russian Orthodoxy, and the denouement of Tsarist aristocratic rule which supported the church (which had served the Russian people for close to a millennium) meant that reactionary forces were exerting an ever-diminishing influence; a successful overthrow by Bolshevism was all but inevitable. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and the fall of the Romanovs ushered in seventy years of Soviet rule which, in the crassest terms, orientated itself towards the egalitarian promise of a proletariat utopia.

Stanislavski wrote that “I was born in Moscow in 1863, a time that may well be taken as a dividing point between two great epochs” (Stanislavski, 1967: 11). Though born into the affluent merchant class, Stanislavski was sympathetic to the ideas being propagated by the socialist movement, particularly those concerning the oppressed state of the proletariat class: serfdom and the Orthodox church had been the massive economic, cultural and societal backbone of the Russian people. The Church, once subjected to great injustice by what had

become a decadent ruling class, no longer held to many foundational principals of its beliefs, and remained financially dependent upon the state and the largesse of the Tsar. (see Berdyaev 1937).

In his 2000 doctoral thesis *Reading for the soul in Stanislavski's 'The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself': Orthodox Mysticism, Mainstream Occultism, Psychology and the System in the Russian Silver Age*, Patrick C. Carriere argues for a re-evaluation of Stanislavski. His introduction begins with a quote from the Russian master: “[i]n art, external form is less important than spiritual content” (Carriere, 2010: 1), setting the scene for Carriere’s contention that much inaccuracy and misinterpretation of Stanislavski’s ‘system’ occurred in the English translation of his seminal work *An Actor Prepares* by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood in 1936. This claim previously made by Carnicke (1998), is that through this translation, the English-speaking world has effectively come to comprehend and revere Stanislavski’s ideas through the lens of the thespian law firm: Strasberg/Adler and Meissner.

Carriere makes clear that the titles of Stanislavski’s texts as rendered by Hapgood, let alone their substantive content, mislead in the interpretation and reception of those texts by practitioners. Carriere proposes that a more accurate translation of the full Russian title of what Hapgood rendered as *An Actor Prepares* is *The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part I: The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Experiencing* (from *Rabota actera nad soboi, Chast’ I: Rabota actera nad soboi v tvorcheskom protsesse perezhivaniia*; (Carriere 2010: 291). He then cites Joseph Roach in *The Player’s Passion* as, having arrived at a wrong conclusion with Stanislavski’s second volume, *Building a Character* (Roach, 1995: 205). Roach writes of the title being an “architectural metaphor” defining the “objective technique”; the title more accurately translated, according to Carriere, would read: “The Work of the Actor on Him/Herself, Part II: The Work on Oneself in the Creative Process of Incarnation” (Carriere, 2010: 36). “The fact is”, Carriere observes,

that there is no such architectural metaphor in the original title, but the empirical scientific tenor of Roach's analysis combined with the missed translation that erases 'tvorchestvo' encourages a mischaracterization of the content of the book itself (Carriere, 2010: 37).

Stanislavski's primary concern was the purification and enrichment of the soul (*dusha*) within the creative process (*tvorchestvo*) for the actor to inhabit in essence his/her true being, or the deeper reality of human experience having comprehensive knowledge within a system to access transcendent possibilities. *Tvorchestvo* has a range of connotations which do not translate easily into English, but might broadly be rendered as creation/the creative process/creativity, and which consists in a continuous act undertaken/committed to in/informing every step of the Russian interpretation of Stanislavski's system.

The actor therefore empties "those elements noxious to creativity" and renounces the self to "dress the soul" enabling complete immersion in the presence of character (Stanislavski.150-51).

This is work in which Brook and Grotowski and the actors with whom they worked, respectively, in their institute and Laboratory, would embark: a sustained, systematic inquiry into methods for rendering the physicality of a spiritually integrated 'presence': that is, seeking a bridge between the realms of the physical and spiritual. As Brook explained in his essay on Gurdjieff, "The Secret Dimension": "...in all esoteric traditions, there is a division between a higher level and a lower level, between a body and a spirit ..." (Brook, 1998: 33). In *The Empty Space* Brook wrote:

The theatre he [Grotowski] believes in, cannot be an end in itself; like dancing or music in certain dervish orders, the theatre is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self-exploration; a possibility of salvation (Brook, 1968: 59).

Carriere observes that "... both Brook and Grotowski look back to the system as one of the foundations of their work and recognized how spirituality is incorporated into the

system” (Carriere, 2010: 12). Their work might be understood as a more direct development of the Stanislavskian system (itself incomplete, and evolving) that had been obscured by the American Method’s interpretation, which emphasised a Freudian perspective on the invocation of internal motivation, and the dredging up of personal memories to unearth subconscious feelings of objectified desires. In other words, “a training pedagogy and sense of aesthetic that hinge on naturalistic believability and emotional truth” (ibid, 2010: 22), in which the ‘spiritual’ is sublimated into, or replaced by, the foundational idea of ‘the subconscious’. Between 1988 and 1999 nine volumes of Stanislavski’s writings were published in Russian reinserting passages previously omitted during the Soviet era. In her 2015 essay ‘Repenser Stanislavski en Explorant la Totalité de son Héritage’ theatre historian Marie-Christine Autant-Mathieu argues that “[w]e must reread and rethink his legacy in its entirety and with the correct translations in order to draw lessons for the art of performance and for the training of the actor today (Autant-Mathieu/Moringa 2015). The wide circulation of reading Stanislavski’s system through incorrect translations might be understood as constituting a deviation from Stanislavski’s intention, a deviation which strays into aberrance, wilful or otherwise. “Creation must be slow and deep because it requires sensitivity, emotions, will. The form must be justified by an inner spiritual necessity, as in Kandinsky” (ibid, 2015). It is this dimension of Stanislavski’s work from where Brook and Grotowski found common ground for striving to develop within their actors a similar integrated totality of being and presence.

The thoughts of renowned actor Vera Komissarzhevskaja, herself from a prestigious Moscow theatrical family, offer a perspective on sensibility informing Stanislavski in the early years of his work. She and Stanislavski performed together early in his career in a two-hand one act play *Burning Letter* (Stanislavski, 1967: 197). Following the disastrous first

production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, where Komissarzhevskaja debuted the role of 'Nina', she told the Review of Theatre's correspondent:

The human mind, the human soul should strive to find in art the key to the knowledge of "the eternal," to the solution of the profound mysteries of the world, the key which will open up the world of spirit. The actor should touch on the still unexplored depths of the human in the divine and of the divine in the human' (Borovsky, 2001:167).

Komissarzhevskaja would later go on to run her own theatre in St Petersburg employing Stanislavski's collaborator, Vsevolod Meyerhold, as her chief producer (1906-07). Both were devotees of the Symbolist aesthetic, rather than the naturalistic approach taken by Stanislavski in his early years, drawing substantially from the ideas of Polish dramatist Stanisław Przybyszewski, as M.D. Johnson shows (2008). Russian Orthodox symbolism firmly encompasses *all concepts as realities* within its theology, thus, art and folklore are synthesized without contradiction (see Solovyov 2009). As the early Twentieth Century theologian and philosopher, Pavel Florensky explains: "A being that is greater than itself – this is the basic definition of the symbol" (Antonova, 2010: 96).

My argument, then, is that to understand the work of Brook and Grotowski, we first need to appreciate their debt to Stanislavski, and in particular to a version of Stanislavski unadulterated by the adoption of his purported 'system' as 'the Method'. This, in turn, requires that we understand Stanislavski as being, himself, profoundly influenced by, if not entirely determined by, a specifically Russian spirituality.

Writing from exile in France in the 1930s, philosopher and theologian, Nicholai Berdyaev claimed that "Russians—whether orthodox, heretics or schismatics—are always apocalyptic or nihilists" and has been since the Christian baptism of the Rus in 988 (Berdyaev, 1937: 8). This messianic fire within the soul (*dusha*) of the Russian people, Berdyaev argues, has never been extinguished. He was convinced that the essence of the Russian character is marked by eschatological dissatisfaction for the existent circumstances

and the calamities wrought from endless anguish in despair of the present moment; that the Russians spiritually thirst for a time when ultimate truths will be revealed. In contradistinction to the materialist socialist project, for Berdyaev, this Russian essence is characterised by a belief in a utopian future with unbreakable fraternal bonds that would someday arise, uniting human kind in spiritual and political harmony.

Russian *fin du siècle* literature assiduously investigated this concept of inner freedom through their literary output, and in their approach to performance explorations in the semiotics of gesture and ‘substance of being.’ Benefits of progress brought about by adopting the European Enlightenment under Czar Peter and Catherine the Great were by in large not so readily accepted by the people themselves. Berdyaev clarified this new epoch:

The Slavophile saw in the Western influence brought to Russia by Peter the Great a betrayal of the national basis of Russian life, a violation and interruption of its organic development. The Westernizers saw nothing original and distinctive whatever in Russian history; they considered Russia as only a backwater in enlightenment and civilization ... They denied any original distinctive character to the Russian people and Russian history, they clung to the naively simple views of the progress of enlightenment and civilization... (Berdyaev, 1937: 8).

Not content to simply describe Peter the Great as ‘the first Bolshevik,’ Berdyaev contends that, as a result of the Tsar’s modernizing of Russia,

[a]ll the old religious sanctions for the power which held great masses in organic order have vanished: no one believes in them anymore. Every bit of the ancient prestige of authority has been finally annihilated in our modern world (Berdyaev, 2013: 17).

Stanislavsky, and later Brook and Grotowski, would find common ground here for reclaiming the traditional sciences to access in Stanislavski’s reactivation of the ancestral Slavic soul, in what Ian Maxwell calls “the language of the spirit” (2008: 100). They all sought ways to recover the soul of wider humanity lost in automatized acquisitiveness,

digging for contemporary meaning and purpose in the generic, aided by tradition and its religious providence. Brook writes:

Since the renaissance, our own science has accurately pinpointed the detailed processes and mechanisms of the universe, from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, but has failed disastrously to introduce into its equations the dimension of living experience. It omits consciousness; it cannot capture the meaning of perception, nor the specific taste of thought. The highly abstract and purely mental system of mathematical symbols has no way of evoking the humanity of artistic experience nor the spirituality of religion (Needleman, 1998: 30-31).

We see echoes of this belief in the theatrical practices of Brook and Grotowski, inspiring them to create with their actors a presence of human concordance allowing for profound individual expression when emancipated from unconscious habit; a central tenet of Gurdjieff's teaching as well. In *Great Directors at Work* David Richard Jones draws a comparison between Peter Brook and Antonin Artaud: "[I]ike Brook', he observed, "Artaud was intrigued by the Orient, inclined to see theatre as ritual, and inclined to make apocalyptic-pessimistic conclusions about human nature and history" (Jones, 1986: 212-213). Brook wrote of Gurdjieff who, he claimed,

... often uses the image of the actor as a metaphor for the fully developed human being. He speaks of playing a role in life, fulfilling all the demands that changing situations present, entering into them completely while retaining inner freedom. This is exactly what a good actor is required to do (Brook, 1998: 34).

It is precisely this concept of the 'fully developed human being' which links the respective performance methods of Brook and Grotowski to Stanislavski.

1.2. A Challenge to Prevailing Ideologies: How the Cultural Landscape was shaped to receive the Ideas of Gurdjieff in the 1920s and Brook and Grotowski in the 1960s.

Humans, in Gurdjieff's system are essentially machines who pass through life asleep
(Cusack, 2011: 76).

Gurdjieff's writings, and the reception of those writings, did not take place in a historical vacuum. In this section I will argue that the years following the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution were characterised by conditions which provided fertile ground for appropriation of his ideas. I will then argue that similarly, and for comparable reasons, the 1960s offered circumstances that allowed the ideas and practices offered by Brook and Grotowski to flourish.

The conditions for Gurdjieff to engage with the European culture of the 1920s, as well as the conditions forty years later, allowed for a receptive audience to connect with the performance ideas of Brook and Grotowski, and require closer examination. The Twentieth Century's most significant decades of cultural revolt, the 1920s and 1960s, shared an atmosphere of re-evaluation of human purpose as the direct result of war. It was a call for the vital recalibration of ideologies, which involved the collapse of three empires after the First World War and the threatened extinction of all life on earth in the atomic finale of the Second. In 1922, the same year that Gurdjieff arrived in Paris from Constantinople (having fled Russia following the fall of the Romanovs in 1917), the abolition of the Turkish Sultanate officially ended the Ottoman Empire, the defeat of which spelled the end of Islam as a global threat - at least for the next 90 years. At the same time, the catastrophic loss of life, and the demise of Tsarist Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire struck a blow to Christianity. Formal religious structures had served European man since Byzantine Christendom and the Holy Roman Empire, fulfilling the need for order and meaning innate in human psychology. As Albert Schweitzer later noted, "[i]n the war religion lost its purity,

and lost its authority. It joined forces with the spirit of the world. The one victim of defeat was religion” (Schweitzer, 1956: 217).

Gurdjieff figured prominently amongst the dominant *chic* of ‘American-exile’ inhabiting Paris in the 1920s. Gurdjieff’s Institute for Harmonious Development of Man (located at the Prieuré Chateau in Fontainebleau) soon earned a formidable reputation amongst the Parisian *beau monde*, both native and expatriated, for making audacious claims about awakening man and activating his “unformed” soul. T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Thornton Wilder, Ernest Hemmingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Gertrude Stein had direct or vicarious contact with Gurdjieff during their time in ‘The City of Light’. Among those who studied at the Institute were Jane Heap, publisher, with Margaret Anderson of *The Little Review* (1914-1929) the first to publish, in serial form between 1918 and 1920, James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Both women were members of Gurdjieff’s ‘Ladies of the Rope’, a group of women, mainly writers of note, formed around him after his car accident in 1924 to initiate a new octave within his teachings, with the explicit goal of rousing humanity from slumber (See Patterson 1999).³ Heap later became Peter Brook’s first mentor in the teachings of Gurdjieff till her death in 1964.

Echoed in Grotowski’s later aspiration to link the individual process to the essence, Gurdjieff’s work was continued after the disbandment of the Prieuré, resuming at his apartment at 6 Rue des Colonels-Renard in Paris right up until his death in 1949 (Schechner/Wolford, 2013: 8). After meeting Gurdjieff for the first time, Anderson described him as,

a messenger between worlds, a dark man with an oriental face, whose life seemed to reside in his eyes. He had a presence impossible to describe because I had never encountered another with which to compare it. In other words, as one would immediately recognize Einstein as a 'great man,' we immediately recognized Gurdjieff as the kind of man we had never seen—a seer, a prophet, a messiah?...What philosophers have taught as 'wisdom,' what scholars have taught in texts and tracts,

what mystics have taught through ecstatic revelation, Gurdjieff would teach as a science—an exact science of man and human behaviour—a supreme science of God, world, man—based on sources outside the scope, reach, knowledge or conception of modern scientists and psychologists (Anderson, 1991: 111).

In the decades since his death, many of Gurdjieff's techniques have been appropriated by a veritable cavalcade of both the sincere and the sham in the instruction of Eastern mysticism. This includes the teachings of Osho, tenets within Scientology, studies of the Enneagram, and the various Fourth Way schools and teachers who appeared in the decades after Gurdjieff's death in 1949. Gurdjieff himself during his time had plenty of detractors. D. H. Lawrence wrote "I have heard enough about that place in Fontainebleau where Katherine Mansfield died to know it is a rotten, false, and self-conscious place of people playing a sickly stunt" (Beekman-Taylor, 2001: 39). Wyndham Lewis described Gurdjieff as a 'psychic shock'. Vivian Eliot's 1922 letter replied to Ezra Pound's query on the whereabouts of Lady Rothermere (one of Gurdjieff's principal benefactors): "She is now in that asylum for the insane called La [sic] Prieuré where she does religious dances naked with Katherine Mansfield" (ibid, 2001: 26).

Like many writers at the time, including Aldous Huxley and Ezra Pound, Katherine Mansfield was intrigued by Gurdjieff. In a letter to her husband John Middleton Murry less than a month before her death at the Prieuré she wrote that, "I have found my people at last." And in another a few weeks earlier concerning a conversation on 'spiritual poverty' she said: - "[t]o be poor in ideas, in imagination, in impulses, in desires—in short, to be simple" (Pauwels, 1972: 295).

Another key Russian influence upon Western Europe at the same time was that of the Ballets Russe. The arrival of the troupe from Moscow in Europe prior to the Great War reset the standard of dance due to the commanding figure of Serge Diaghilev, the prototypical impresario whose reputation for exacting autonomous rule became legendary as did that of his great protégé and lover, Vladimir Nijinsky. How strong the influence of the Gurdjieff

‘Movements’ had on the Ballets Russe is a matter of speculation, though Gurdjieff certainly knew Diaghilev, one of the many prominent artists and literary figures in his wide circle of contacts. There were certainly other teachers of dance and movement at the same time who were sourcing their practices from traditional and ancient cultures for similar reasons. These included the Eurhythmics of Rudolph Steiner, Peter Deunov and Paneurhythmy and the work of Rudolph von Laban (see Cusack 2017). Playwright Thornton Wilder befriended Gurdjieff in the 1920s and visited the Prieuré (Wilder 1992). His explanation of the effect of Gurdjieff’s teachings is summarised in an exchange recounted by Margaret Anderson from her book *The Unknowable Gurdjieff*:

When people ask, ‘Do I have to read an incomprehensible book like Gurdjieff’s *All and Everything*?’ I am reminded of Thornton Wilder’s answer to a woman who asked him whether she ought to read Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Wake*.

‘I’m just a housewife,’ she said. ‘I have three children. I belong to the P.T.A. Do I have to read books like these?’

Wilder said: ‘Did you ever read Rousseau’s *Emile* or *La Nouvelle Heloise*? I never did — but I can pretty well believe that all of us, whether we know it or not, have been in large part formed by them. Every century has its underground books which have permeated thought. Often they have been transmitted through relatively few readers. I believe those two great books of Rousseau are shaping us still — though many of us will never read them’ (Anderson, 1991: 19-20).

Philosophical and practical, the influence on performance techniques by Gurdjieff, though not as obvious as it would later be with Brook, can be found in his profound imprint on one of the seminal figures of a group known as the Harvard Moderns. Lincoln Kirstein spent time in Paris in the 1920s, as was the rite of passage for many a well-heeled East Coast Ivy League collegiate, a Twentieth Century equivalent to the European ‘Grand Tour’ undertaken by upper class English youth following the example of Lord Byron. Kirstein was introduced to Gurdjieff by Peyton Loomis, an American Yale graduate living at the Prieuré who helped translate and edit Gurdjieff’s magnum opus *All and Everything*. Kirstein later earned a

reputation for bringing George Balanchine to the USA, serving not only as his principal benefactor but as the impresario who established the New York City Ballet. Kirstein observed of his encounters with Gurdjieff that “[H]e exerted more influence on my behaviour than anyone, including my parents” (Kirstein, 1994: 151). Although Gurdjieff’s books left little subsequent impression on him, Kirstein was to recount later the power and presence of the man: “Gurdjieff was ‘a true magician’” and “a personage of who, all those I have ever met, defied licensing” (Duberman, 2007: 70). Kirstein was captivated by the general strategy that was to be applied forty years later at the Institute and Laboratory of Brook and Grotowski: the attempt to revive – what was diagnosed as the somnambulist state of man as performer by means of “systematic assaults on habitual response” (op. cit.).

Gurdjieff’s influence extended directly to the Broadway stage in the 1930s. The Harvard Moderns included architect Phillip Johnson, future MOMA president Alfred Barr, Julien Levy (amongst the first modern gallery owners to showcase Surrealists and Modern Art in the 1930s in New York), and Chick Austin, Director of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum for Modern Arts in Hartford. These men were the principal sources in bringing to the stage the opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* by fellow Harvard Modern, composer Virgil Thompson with libretto by Gertrude Stein, directed by John Houseman and choreographed by Fredrick Ashton. *Four Saints in Three Acts* premiered in New York in 1934 in the middle of the Great Depression with an all-black cast from Harlem. This was as much a revelation as it was a revolution in the mainstreaming of the avant-garde in performance and opera. *Four Saints in Three Acts* successfully ran on Broadway for several years, and in doing so it was amongst the first works to initiate the modern aesthetic in America (Watson 2000).

Following his death in 1949, as is the case with regard to so many seers proclaiming awakened spiritual and mental development, there was a ‘dilution’ of Gurdjieff’s teachings, not least through the loss of his ability to transfer this knowledge to others. In the decades

that followed, the continuation of Gurdjieff's 'Fourth Way' work became splintered into many groups and study centres all over the world, each laying claim to 'real' knowledge both exoteric and esoteric. Grotowski noted in his essay on Gurdjieff "A Kind of Volcano":

I think Gurdjieff's successors have come up against an enormous difficulty. It's a terrible business, because there is, on one hand, the danger of freezing the thing, of putting it in a refrigerator in order to keep it impeccable; and, on the other hand, if one does not freeze it there is the danger of dilution caused by facility (Needleman, 1998: 101).

The most authoritative groups claiming legitimate inheritance of Gurdjieff's legacy included the American Gurdjieff Group led by Henry (Lord Pentland) Sinclair, who had been studying Gurdjieff's system with Ouspensky in London before intensively working with Gurdjieff in 1948 till his death a year later; John Godolphin Bennett's group in the UK; and a group in Paris centred on Mme De Salzmann, widow of painter and theatre designer Alexandre de Salzmann (who were part of Gurdjieff's white Russian émigré entourage) and designated leader of the Gurdjieff Study Centre. Piotr Ouspensky was Gurdjieff's right-hand man since the early days in St. Petersburg until his split with Gurdjieff in 1923, whereupon he travelled to London where he formed his own study centre until his death in 1947. Bennett, a diplomat and mathematician, initiated a 'Fourth Way' school based on but not exclusively beholden to the Gurdjieff system at Coombs Springs in Surrey, and later in the early 70s at Sherbourne House in Gloucestershire.⁴ By dint of longevity in his company and possessing a comprehensive knowledge of the 'Movements,' Mme De Salzmann's group would become the official headquarters of the Gurdjieff system.

Peter Brook became a collaborative disciple of Mme De Salzmann in 1964, following the death of Jane Heap who up until that time had been the conduit for Brook's understanding of 'Fourth Way' teachings. One can see in the immediacy and presence of actors with whom he worked what Brook learnt from a 30-year association with Mme De Salzmann till her

death in 1994. For Brook this means discovering tools which reveal within the human being what is 'remarkable'.

[f]or Gurdjieff the essential quality of a remarkable man or woman was the capacity to watch equally over "the lamb and the wolf" in his or her care. To cherish the tenderness of the one and the ferocity of the other, to give to each its place, is only possible if there is a special kind of presence that reconciles, unites, and holds them both in balance. (Brook, 1998:109)

When plagued by a sense of meaninglessness within his own work and the world he inhabited, Brook writes in his autobiography *Threads of Time* how Mme De Salzmann clarified for him the importance of 'direct experience':

[i]t became clear that it is the quality of silent wakefulness, informing and uniting the organism from moment to moment, that gives meaning to each choice and to every action. (Ibid, 1998: 110).

It is no small irony that the most significant contribution towards the craft of acting and performance techniques in the Twentieth Century came from the learned class of white Russian Aristocrats: the Moscow school of Arts under Stanislavsky, and the St Petersburg group of Russian intellectuals and artists who gathered around Gurdjieff, travelling with him as penniless exiles in Eastern Europe to end up in Paris. These included Ouspensky, the De Hartmanns, and the De Saltzmanns who met up with Gurdjieff whilst living in Tiflis. The Stanislavskian model centred round the emotional body in the uncovering of truth, initiating action and response penetrating through buried layers in search of deep emotional realities. Gurdjieff's acolytes (many from theatre, painting and literature backgrounds) viewed the body as that which needed to be brought alive. Attention was paid to the repetition of physical labour, in tandem with precise dance movements based on ancient religious rituals and folkloric ancestral memory, in a focussed effort to clothe the body with full consciousness of both itself and the reality of human potential. As Mme, De Salzmann describes the 'Movements':

[t]hrough these movements, which Gurdjieff again and again renewed over the years, dance became a language, where each gesture, each attitude, each sequence had its specific role and meaning (Salzmann 2014 at 1'16").

One can see how Brook and Grotowski, in their seeking out of richer performance techniques, would be attracted to exploration of such physical and mental disciplines. The Irish American writer A.R. Orage related to fellow writer Jean Toomer his first year at the Priuré:

... to be free of attachment to results ... work done after desire ends produces internal results, for at these times 'automatic activity slows down' and opportunity for voluntary non-habitual action' increases (Beekman-Taylor, 2001: 28).

Peter Brook wrote on Gurdjieff in his essay "The Secret Dimension":

[a] change of quality does not occur by accident; a change of quality of being is a result of an exact process. It is this knowledge bridging the schism between science and humanity which Gurdjieff worked so determinedly to bring to contemporary man. It can lead us out of the icy worlds of mechanics and behaviourism into a universe where everything finds its place, once it is illuminated by the clarity of understanding. This understanding is not a theory; it is vision, and vision is alive. It shows us the unending and inevitable movements toward and away from quality. There is a joy in quality found and a suffering in quality betrayed, and these two experiences become the motors that constantly renew our search (Needleman, 1998: 35-36).

Something of the liberatory spirit of the loose-limbed Jazz Age 'lost generation' of the 1920s resurfaced yet again in the 'turn on tune in and drop out' 1960s: a further shedding of Victorian/Edwardian constructs, and a deepening burial of class barriers. The countercultural revolution, instigated by the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, shifting discourses on sexuality, partly introduced by the introduction of the pill in 1962 and the writings of Margaret Mead, among others, alongside the widespread use of drugs, and the burgeoning of mass pop culture further challenged established behavioural patterns, not only politically, but socially and artistically. In Europe, *La Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave) French cinema (Goddard. Truffaut/Chabrol) and Italy (Fellini/Antonioni) impacted the social

landscape particularly amongst the youth of the post war generation whose growing opposition to both capitalism and American Imperialism gave rise to the Paris Riots of May 1968.

It was in this context that experimental performance found a receptive audience in Western Europe. Jerzy Grotowski's cult-like stature drew acolytes from all over the world to Wroclaw to participate in his Teatr Laboratorium (1959). His reputation was earned from the sheer physical toughness of his actors, and the idealistic appeal of his vision of a theatre of absolute presence, stripped of all inhibitions between performer and spectator. Indeed, both Grotowski's Laboratorium and Brook's International Centre for Theatre Research (1971) were set up to explore the inner truths of man's purpose and identity when communicating with an audience.⁵ The ideas set in motion by Gurdjieff, and taken up by Brook and Grotowski, confronted cultures in transition to address what art historian Wilhelm Worringer wrote in 1927:

[i]n the sphere of Western culture Classical man, with his well-balanced state of mind, represents a culminating point. In him is embodied the ideal standard of Western possibilities. But we must not confound Europe with the whole world: we must not, in our European awareness, allow our eyes to be blind to the phenomenon of Oriental culture, which almost surpasses our limited powers of imagination. For in contemplating Oriental man, this third great typical specimen of the development of mankind, there is forced upon us an entirely fresh standard of values in human development, which corrects our hasty European judgement (Worringer 1957: 35).

Brook himself echoed Worringer's statement in *Between Two Silences – Talking with Peter Brook* in which he writes:

People from one culture have bodies that from childhood and from tradition are better developed than anything we can develop. There are cultures where perhaps a thousand years has led to a different relationship to what goes on in the mind and what goes on in the feelings. There's a whole Western culture dominated by its capacity to reason, analyse and argue. When there are a lot of us together it is the worst possible thing, but for people who have not had this particular formation in the twentieth century, this is of great value (Brook, 1999: 145).

Stanislavsky, Gurdjieff, Brecht and later Brook and Grotowski were, to all intents and purposes, refugees from deceased empires who, after the Wars, looked to the New World as the great hope for their methodologies and ideas to be accepted and flourish. The Western European and Anglophone world of the 1960s could not have offered a more fertile ground into which to introduce systems or philosophies engaging physical challenges for actors to master. The sexual revolution opened doors of perception that had hitherto, it was claimed (*pace* Foucault) been suppressed by bodily inhibitions and formal strictures of clothing and behaviour. In the wake of the free love movement, experimentation with drugs, and repositioning issues of conservatism and family values these ideologies prepared conditions that would attract people to seek an alternative life function. This seismic shift within the youth demographic attracted participants willing to explore the rigorous physical and mental demands pushed by both Grotowski and Brook, culminating in 1968 with the publication of their seminal works, *The Empty Space* and *Towards a Poor Theatre*. For several decades afterwards, these works served as the manifestos by which performers and directors dedicated their lives to theatre and the transformative possibilities in the human condition.

Absent in the romanticisation of the 1960s counterculture (now subject to academic scrutiny with a view to how those ideals can be revived and applied within a contemporary context) is the extreme danger and hostility people faced when choosing to lead an alternative lifestyle at that time.⁶ Hippies or the radically individuated were shunned by mainstream society, frequently excluded from (indeed excluding themselves from) conventional jobs, or access to cultural resources. Where Andy Warhol served as counterculture avatar of the art and movie world for the misfits and the marginalized (Bockris, 1999), Brook and Grotowski came to figure as the gurus of counter culture performance for a similar, albeit less sexually ambiguous, demography.

In a very real sense both the 1920s and 1960s profoundly changed – and very quickly the landscape of western culture which bled into the subsequent decades. The exuberance and joy exhibited by the ‘Bright Young Things’ during the 1920s in the aftermath of the Great War repeated itself with a more defiant and political edge in the 1960s, reverberating across a much wider cultural spectrum and in a more globalized context. In both decades one can locate the figure of Gurdjieff as a central influence in these seismic shifts of perceptions and awareness.

1.3 Jerzy Grotowski: *hic et nunc*. The Sacred Aim.

In his essay on Grotowski in his book *The Theater of Essence*, Polish scholar and critic Jan Kott noted that

Grotowski, in his brilliant study of Artaud in which he compares him to the prophet Isaiah predicting the birth of Emmanuel, quotes only two sentences from *The Theatre and its Double ... Cruelty is Rigour ... Actors should be like Martyrs burnt alive, still signalling to us from their stakes* (Kott, 1984: 156).

Artaud's words here are central to understanding Grotowski's overarching objective in disseminating his entire performative pedagogy (Grotowski, 1968: 125). Though unrelated specifically to Grotowski, Jane Goodall writes in *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama*

If Gnosticism involves living with the most acute suspicion of one's own body and all its impulses, and even of the workings of one's own mind, the simplest response to this awareness is to wish the condition away and to meditate upon the state of grace that precedes and may succeed it. (Goodall, 1994: 187).

As I will argue is also the case with Brook in the next chapter, it is essential to understand the ethnic and cultural background of these men, especially their shared Eastern European providence, and ancestral influence that has informed and shaped the spiritual and investigative practices running throughout their respective careers. Like Brook, Grotowski also was the younger in a family of two brothers, but unlike Brook the dominant parent in the Grotowski family was his mother Emilia, a grade school teacher, and later a district law clerk when the Grotowski family moved to Krakow from their home town of Rzeszow in 1950. His father Marian, a painter and forest ranger, served in the Polish army during World War Two, first in Poland and then in the UK, before emigrating to Paraguay where he lived until his death in 1968 (Osiński, 1978: 13).

While the timeline and contents of Grotowski's career are well documented, as are the biographical details of his formative years in Poland, I contend it necessary to briefly outline his development of ideas and practices through the evolution of his spiritual journey which accompanied his continual search for truth and purity in both the craft of acting itself, and in his later decades when using theatre as:

... an ancient and basic instrument that helps us with one drama only, the drama of our existence, and helps us find our way towards the source of what we are (Osiński, 2014: 24)⁷

In her 1972 study of Grotowski and his laboratory Raymonde Temkine writes of traits shared by both sides of the Grotowski lineage. These included "... great affinities for science, literature, and music; few religious beliefs, despite religious practices and a distant cousin who is an Orthodox priest" (Temkine, 1972: 47). Grotowski's maternal grandfather also attended a seminary with intention of joining the priesthood, only to renounce his orders upon travelling to Rome and seeing the Pope, receiving then a revelation that the church is not a religion.

Carrying the notion even further, and acknowledging that in his younger years he was influenced by his maternal relatives, Jerzy owes to his grandfather the conviction that what is sacred is not religion (op cit, 1972: 47).

In 1939, with Poland under German occupation, the Grotowski family moved to the small village of Nienadówka in the southeast of the country. It was here that Grotowski was exposed to the traditions, songs, and folkloric rituals of the rural peasantry. Grotowski later observed that "... a song of tradition is a living being" (Richards, 1995: 127). Moreover, the evidently precocious intellect of his preteen years was nurtured by a voracious absorption of mystical literature and texts, including those of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, "who believed that one's relationship with God could be a direct, personal dialogue" (Słowiak/Cuesta, 2007: 4). Grotowski later included in the text of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* the parable of The Grand Inquisitor, which appears in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Around the same time, the young Grotowski was secretly given a copy of the gospels to read by the village priest, a risky gesture, as at the time, the Polish Catholic church "required the presence and interpretation of a priest to read the gospels" (op. cit, 2007: 4).

The most profoundly affecting book during these years, however, was given to him by his mother: Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*. By Grotowski's own admission this work was the touchstone of a lifelong fascination with the Orient and Eastern shamanic practices (Osiński, 2014: 13). Brunton's book referred to the teachings of Hindu mystic Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), who when asked by pilgrims about the meaning of life would throw the question back, demanding that they first ask of themselves '*who am I?*' This particular question was henceforth never absent in any – indeed on any - stage of Grotowski's performative investigations. Grotowski was to refer to Maharshi by the Russian word '*yurodiviy*' (Divine Madman) which, Osiński notes "... so powerfully reappears in many disguises throughout his [Grotowski's] life and in the performances of the Laboratory Theatre (ibid, 2014: 14).

Grotowski's further cultivation of Oriental aesthetics and rituals were embellished by the lectures he attended when enrolled at the Theatre School in Krakow in 1951. He studied Sanskrit and consulted specialists such as Professor Helena Willman-Grobowska and Dr Franciszek Tokarz, respected authorities on Indian philosophy, and in Willman-Grobowska's case, Iranian culture (Osiński, 1978: 14).

Yet Grotowski's reverence for Stanislavski, notably the work of his later years in developing a system of physical actions was so devotional that, upon graduating from theatre school in 1955 and being assigned to work at the established Stry Theatre in Krakow, he instead accepted a scholarship to study directing at the State Institute of Theatre Arts (GITIS) in Moscow. Here, he not only studied and worked closely with Yuri Zavadsky, an actor who had performed under Stanislavski, but served as his assistant as he directed productions following the dictates of a strict socialist-realist style. Despite a paradoxical difference in the formal approach to directing, Grotowski credited Zavadsky as one of his great and true masters; returning the compliment "Zavadsky observed that Grotowski instinctively worked

with actors in a manner similar to Stanislavsky himself” (Słowiak and Cuesta, 2007: 6). It was during this time in Moscow between August 1955 and June 1956 that Grotowski experienced one of the seminal realizations of his performative education, one that would inform his uncompromising approach to performance research for the rest of his life. Eugenio Barba writes that Grotowski once visited the apartment of Zavadsky where he was shown his teacher’s awards and distinctions, and was told of the limousines and chauffeurs he, Zavadsky, had at his disposal.

Zavadsky whispered, “I have lived through dreadful times and they have broken me. Remember Jerzy: *nie warto*, it is not worth it. This is the harvest of compromise” (cited in Barba, 1999: 24).

Słowiak and Cuesta explain that

[y]ears later Grotowski revealed that this episode touched him deeply and gave him the strength to resist the pressures of compromise during the years of working under an oppressive political system (op cit. 2007: 6).

It could be argued that if there was one persistent denominator throughout Grotowski’s evolving system over his nearly five-decade practice it was his resistance to ‘the harvest of compromise’. Whether in his ‘Production’ era (1957-1969), his ‘Paratheatrical’ work (1970-1978); the ‘Theatre of Sources’ (1976-1982), Objective Drama (1983-1986), or his Art as a Theatre of Ritual (1985-1999), it would be difficult for anyone to make a case that Grotowski aimed to please. This commitment to uncovering the/an essential human is where Grotowski finds commonality with the uncompromising methods employed by Gurdjieff. Even in his travels abroad to India, Japan and Asia Minor sourcing from the arcana of Eastern traditions, rituals and songs to utilize in the training of actors, Grotowski’s aim always led back to his concept of *via negativa* by means of which his actors were to arrive at an objective performance truth, amassing “not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks” (Grotowski, 1968: 17). These ‘blocks’ are the vestigial remnants of what Gurdjieff

called the long-gone “great organ Kundabuffer” which was located (according to Gurdjieff) at the base of the spine (see Gurdjieff, 1974).

Gurdjieff understood that the residue of ‘Kundabuffer’ has turned our perception of reality inside out. Only through the effort of physical actions, shocks, and diligent attention towards conscious behaviour can they be removed and thus humans awaken. Catherine Christof quotes Gurdjieff’s confidante and American representative A.R Orage: “... [i]n Gurdjieff’s understanding: the performers in the [ancient] school[s] of objective drama had to learn to act consciously in one, two, or three centres” (Christof, 2017: 211).⁸ Christof continues

Orage speaks of Gurdjieff’s interest in the Pythagorean school of drama and of Gurdjieff’s lament regarding the loss of the old mystery plays, noting that modern theatre only exists for propaganda and amusement. These ideas provide the exact springboard for Grotowski’s ideas of *via negativa*” (Christof, 2017: 212).

The phases of Grotowski’s experiments in theatre are clearly marked, albeit with some overlaps. It can be argued that Grotowski’s search for deeper truths in the actor’s evolution necessitated an ascending trajectory as new concepts grew from previous work, reflecting what Gurdjieff referred to as the ‘Law of Octaves’. It is not unreasonable to think of this law as something Grotowski used, if not explicitly, then at least tacitly, as his ideas evolved. Christof writes of how something like the law of octaves was applied particularly during the ‘Objective Drama’ phase, in the course of which Grotowski was

... [n]o longer interested in working to affect a change in the spectator, he was interested in the performer’s experience and potential spiritual growth. Accordingly the work was undertaken in private, with no expectations of performing for an audience (Christof, 2017: 217).

One can find parallel ideas in Stanislavski's notion of "'prana' rays of communication into the space and to each other" (Carriere, 2010: 5); ideas which directly reflect Gurdjieff's concept of what an actor should be as expressed in his book, *Views From the Real World*.

A man can be called an actor only if he is able, so to speak, to produce a white light. A real actor is one who creates, one who can produce all the seven colours of the spectrum. There have been and even today are such artists (ibid, 2017: 212).

In other words, for Stanislavski, Gurdjieff, Grotowski, and as I will argue in the next chapter for Brook as well, a real actor has to be capable of expressing more than a horizontally motivated objective characterized by base desires and actions. Rather, the actor is a vertically integrated presence capable of accessing and transmitting both corporeal and incorporeal realities.

1.4. Peter Brook: An Orthodoxy Within the Mysticism

Bedford Park Chiswick, the fashionable London suburb into which Peter Brook was born in 1925, was once the residential borough of choice for Victorian era playwright Arthur Wing Pinero and poet W.B Yeats.⁹ Yeats was a close friend of A.R. Orage. It was Orage who introduced literary editor and publisher, Jane Heap to Gurdjieff in the 1920s. As I explained previously, Heap taught Brook Gurdjieff's Fourth Way system until her death in 1964, at which time Brook became a devoted student of Jeanne De Salzman with whom he co-authored, in 1979, a film adaptation of Gurdjieff's book *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (Cusack, 2010: 72). Like De Salzman, Brook's parents were also Russian émigrés, the latter fleeing Brussels to the United Kingdom just prior to the Great War. All were progressively minded and well-educated intellectuals. Brook's father Simon read physics and mathematics, and graduated in electrical engineering at the University of Liege in Belgium. Brook's mother Ida, an accomplished linguist, graduated as a Doctor of Science from the University of St Petersburg (Trewin, 1971:13). The Brook (Broyk) lineage on his father's side came from Dvinsk, also the birth place of American Abstract Expressionist painter Mark Rothko (1903). Dvinsk (Daugavpils), close to the borders of Belarus and Lithuania was predominantly a Jewish city until the German occupation put an end to that during the Second World War. Peter Brook's revolutionary zeal, evident in such landmark productions as *US* and *Marat Sade* in the 1960s, can be well interpreted as an inherited, or at least learnt, trait from his father. The elder Brook, who upon leaving school joined the Menshevik revolutionaries opposing the Tsar, was detained for two months as a political prisoner before bail was granted thanks to family influences.¹⁰ Following his release Simon escaped to Belgium (Trewin, 1971: 13), and subsequently to England.

This orientation towards conscientious activism, detailed in a number of extensive biographies including his own personal accounts, seems to speak to an apprehension of a certain exceptionalism: Brook stood out within the British establishment in undergraduate and theatrical circles. When he became the youngest director ever to work at the Stratford-upon-Avon Festival the impresario Sir Barry Jackson described him as “the youngest earthquake I’ve known” (Kustow, 2005: 43). Earlier, and again when very young, Brook was sent up to Magdalene College Oxford where his contemporary Kenneth Tynan said of him: “It was if he had come up by public request, like a high-pressure executive arriving to take over a dying business” (ibid 2005: 24).

Brook’s early development in Britain between the wars should not be underestimated in light of a changing global context. The transitionary weight exerted domestically upon Britain in the decades following the Great War of 1914-1918, and again in post-war England after 1945 were profound. Unlike previous wars, where significant casualties were greatest amongst the infantry and peasant classes, it was the British Officer Class and the ‘flower of English youth’ that were decimated in the trenches of the Somme and the fields of Flanders. Given a nation stoically hesitant to address this tragedy, other than committing verses to memory from the poetic lamentations of Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, there could not have been a more fortuitous time for an educated Russian couple to arrive in England, and, in the face of such a devastating loss, to start a family, and gift their progeny with a counter-revolutionary reawakening of identity.

Brook makes no apologies for his aversion to the dishonest renderings of Imperial pride and superiority as factors in the British public school and class system. “It took him nearly twenty years”, observes one of his biographers,

... with his film *Lord of the Flies* to settle his scores with the English school system – and even longer with his dislike of the English class system, and the negative and

disparaging attitudes it planted in the English psyche through its schools, played their part in his decision to quit the country (Kustow, 2005: 12).

His experiences at these academies were dismal lessons in the methodical assimilation to a hierarchical system, within which there was no place for a bright and inventive mind of Slavic inheritance to find expression. This was further exacerbated by the specific qualities of Westminster School, the heart of the English establishment, which Brook recalls in terms of “the smell of latrines, sweat, unkindness and boredom” (ibid, 2005: 11).

While at Westminster, Brook was diagnosed with a glandular condition, requiring time abroad in Switzerland for recuperation. During this time he developed a lifelong love of travel, reinforced by his father, who believed that “... travel was as educational as any university” (ibid, 2005: 13). Brook was partaking of a very English tradition as Kustow writes:

... the sense that England was a place from which you travelled. The fleet, the navy, colonization across the world was not only to throw the bad elements out of the country – Australia, for example – but a sign that every Englishman was potentially, at least, a sailor, a globetrotter (Ibid., 2005: 13).

This idea of travel no doubt helped form Peter Brook’s aspirations for an internationality of actors and techniques upon which he would base his practice, and the works he would later source for his far-flung investigative journeys into performance.

Brook is unstinting in the acknowledgment given his father in fostering ‘self-belief’ within his son’s personal development. Brook’s older brother Alexis, a psychiatrist, noted that “Peter identified with Simon’s drive and mastery. Simon saw some of his unacted hopes and achievements fulfilled through Peter” (ibid, 2005: 9).

Such a father/son relationship was indeed rare in the English establishment of that time. The custom, for the most part, was of patrician remoteness: the expectation of the first

son to live up to, but not to exceed. The dreaded ‘second son’ tradition held that little in the way of inheritance would be forthcoming; such offspring were expected to make their own way in life. After the Great War, the Old World was gone; Britain had, after all, involuntarily become a nation of second sons.

The one figure, though, in the Brook family who escapes detailed discussion in Brook biographies is his mother Ida, who, in *Threads of Time* Peter describes as “stubborn and afraid” (Brook, 1998: 17). Arriving in England with a science doctorate in hand she worked at a facility helping to produce neutralizing antidotes to the gasses deployed on the battlefields of Flanders. Ida eventually gave up any long-term prospects of building a career, and with it, a deep desire to become a medical doctor. Brook points out this led her to become withdrawn socially as “... she never lost a sense of deep disappointment with herself in a life which gave no outlet to the special talents she had begun to develop” (Kustow, 2005: 9). One can only speculate on the difficulties Ida Brook faced being a multi-lingual Jewish Russian woman with a science degree emigrating to live in a culture where working women were, at best, an anomaly outside of nurse or nanny. As a foreign-born wife and mother navigating mobility within the social tiers of middle class home making in interwar England, assimilation would not have been easy.

Full voting rights were only extended to British women in 1928, following the successful campaign of the Suffragette Movement. It is perhaps tempting to reflect on this domestic context as we consider how Brook, throughout his long career, promoted to his inner circle women with formidable talents and personality: the likes of Helen Mirren, Glenda Jackson, his late wife and actress, Natasha Parry, and his current collaborator Marie-Helene Estienne. This aspect of Brook’s character is one of the seismic differences between himself and Grotowski, whose inner circle of trusted collaborators and amanuenses was seemingly a bastion of patriarchal exclusivity.¹¹

Russians and Germans were not viewed with great favour in the England of the 1920s and 1930s. Attitudes on matters of race, class, school and behaviour were drilled with overt imperial and xenophobic bias even into the middle-class pre-teen demographic. Take, for instance, the children's comic strip and annual 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' (*The Simpsons of 1920s and 30s Britain*) in which Pip the dog (father), Squeak the penguin (mother), and Wilfred the rabbit (child) were pitched against their arch-nemeses: an old ragged, wispy-bearded Russian man and his 'bolshie hound' (Popski), who spent most of their time, when not fossicking for food in bins, carrying around smoking bombs with plans to blow something up. They were always foiled. If these books did not make it into the Brook household, they certainly did to many of the homes of Peter and his brother's classmates; no doubt the Brooks would have been very familiar with these popular English characters.

The uninspiring formative experience of Westminster Prep School forced upon an otherwise extroverted young Brook a taste for the benefits of introspection and contemplative reserve, prompting the nascent yearnings in his search for spiritual truths and purpose. It was on summer holidays in Biarritz in 1939 that the Brooks visited Lourdes. Peter wrote to a school friend: "Lourdes left me more confused than ever. I cannot find anything to contradict my agnosticism (I go no further than that)" (Kustow, 2005:18). He did, however, go on to cite a sense of "credulity" in the listed miracles having taken place but, the commercialism and "devious" knock on effects (a fourteen year old girl claiming a beatific vision and announcing "I am the immaculate conception") left him cold and perplexed. (Kustow, 2013:18).

The most telling 'initiatory' turn in the spiritual journey that Peter Brook took in his life and career is found in the choice of play he first directed, at the age of seventeen, in his second term at Oxford in 1942: an undergraduate production of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*.¹² Marlowe and Brook share more than a few similarities. Their precocious genius was recognized early and facilitated a quick rise into the circles of influential and powerful

people. One sees from the perspective of a young man such as Brook the soundness in selecting *Dr Faustus* as an introductory vehicle with which to announce a fresh arrival, eager to wear the *enfant terrible* crown of his age. Not one to do anything by half measures, in directing a play about a man who sells his soul to the devil, Brook sought advice on staging the magical incantations within *Faustus* from none other than Aleister “the wickedest man in the world” Crowley, a notorious practitioner of black magic and fearsome ogre in the minds of polite Christian society.¹³ When asked to consider how to stage the ritual as outlined in the play, Crowley replied simply to the young Brook, “My dear boy, this would raise the devil even at a matinee” (Trewin, 1971: 15).

The following spring, Brook (echoing another such Marlovian comparison intentionally or not) entertained romantic ambitions to join the secret service, and was interviewed by a colonel in the headquarters somewhere in Whitehall. Though asked ‘to keep in touch’ Brook was given no contact for such purpose, and thus “British Intelligence lost a recruit” (op cit, 1971: 15).

If there was a phrase to encapsulate the effect Peter Brook has had on theatre over the last 70 years, it would probably be ‘the shock of presence.’ Brook articulated this very clearly in his essay on Gurdjieff, ‘The Secret Dimension,’

Transformation of a human being is only possible when the ‘centres’ which activate movement, thought, and feeling cease to produce spasmodic or erratic bursts of energy and begin to function harmoniously together. This is where a new quality appears which Gurdjieff calls ‘presence.’ – This produces an elasticity and a transparency with the matrix of our reactions and desires. There is a recalibration within the automation of our behavioural structure from which a true individuality can arise (Needleman, 1998: 31).

This could equally be applied to Grotowski and his methodology. *Presence* is the elusive Holy Grail, not only of actors but of the human condition itself, at least in the Western tradition, as we recall Shakespeare’s most famous line “To be or not to be”?

Both Gurdjieff's understanding of the nature of actors in ancient drama and Grotowski's vision for the immediacy of impulse and action are rooted in an awareness of the immediacy of presence (Christof, 2017: 172).

Brook recalls of his meetings with teacher Jeanne De Salzman in his biography *Threads of Time*:

I would meet her often and was always fascinated by the same observation. Wherever she went, she seemed always in the same place, her stability unaffected by outer change (Brook, 1998: 125).

Presence, however, in this thinking, has little to do with subjective action but rather figures as an objective quality.

In a confused way today we tend to explain all artistic and religious experiences in terms of psychological and cultural conditioning ... not all of our impulses stem from this subjective conditioning. True quality has objective reality, and it is governed by exact laws (Needleman, 1998: 32).

One of the central points in the Gurdjieffian practice is the requirement for a 'shock' to unify body, mind, and feeling as a presence. In the case of Grotowski, techniques of shock became subsumed within evolving methodologies for working with actors. As Ludwik Flaszen surmises: "For Grotowski, the body was the Holy Grail, the sacred vessel where Energies sublimate and from where the Mystery emanates" (Christof, 2017: 103). The vitality of their presence when transformed by shock became the *prima facie raison d'être* in their substance of being.

In later decades when exploring rituals and increasingly para-shamanistic work with his actors the audience became of dwindling significance for Grotowski. Brook, conversely, has never forgotten the pre-eminence of an audience. The 'shocking aspect' redolent in Brook's earlier work (the gallons of blood in '*Marat-Sade*', burning butterflies in *US*) gradually diminished once he became established at his research centre in Paris. The work

took on a new shape: shock was replaced by an expanding quality of ‘presence’, and what he referred to as the “the slowness of boredom” (Brook, 1995: 45): as he matured professionally, even the silences in the plays developed a fluidity of exchange between actors of cultural diversity.

This again can be attributed to his familiarity with the Gurdjieff system, and in his relationship with Mme De Salzmann:

One day, I asked Madame de Salzmann a question that gnawed at me constantly, for it was connected to all my major decisions in life. On the surface, all seemed balanced and harmonious, and I certainly had no right to complain. But, deep down, nothing could quench a sense of meaninglessness, both in my own activities and in the world around me—yet to solve this by breaking away or dropping out seemed arrogant and futile ... It was the answer of direct experience. It became clear that it is the quality of silent wakefulness, informing and uniting the organism from moment to moment, that gives meaning to each choice and to every action (Brook, 1998: 125).

However, the matter of how this ‘familiarity’ played out in Brook’s thinking and practice is no simple thing. When asked by Margaret Croyden how an affiliation with the Gurdjieff teaching influenced his art, Brook answered:

I rigorously, 100 percent, avoid ever using anything of the work [Gurdjieff’s teaching]. ... I would never use a method, a principal, an idea from the work as a structure or a formula for the theatre.

But the Gurdjieff work is in you. Doesn’t something have to come through?

What comes through comes through. There is nothing deliberately conscious that I do to make it so (Croyden, 2001: 18).

Nevertheless, as Ashley Wain noted of this conversation in his 2005 thesis *Acting & Essence: Experiencing Essence, Presence, and Archetype in the Acting Traditions of Stanislavski and Copeau*, notwithstanding Brook’s own denials, “[a] very great deal evidently [does] come through”:

Brook’s constant personal practice and the ensuing transformation of his character, world view and presence undoubtedly influenced his productions and his whole way of working. Recognizing this is important to understanding Brook. Even the concepts of the empty space and openness – so central to Brook’s philosophy and now so much

a part of theatre lore – attain their full resonance only in relation to Gurdjieff’s cosmology (Wain, 2005: 73-74).

Sally Mackey and Simon Cooper in *Drama and Theatre Studies* also likewise mention Brook’s ‘vague’ allusions in specifying the exact nature of Gurdjieff’s influence upon his work.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Gurdjieff’s teaching was his insistence on the oral tradition, that is, passing knowledge on by word of mouth. Brook’s favoured method of working has always been through the practical before the theoretical (Mackey & Cooper, 2000: 369).

In the productions of his career’s first two decades this concern with ‘presence’ marked and established Brook as a director of note; the ‘shock’ would become the productions themselves. His reputation was earned from his Shakespearean work, beginning in the 1940s at the Birmingham Rep with *King John* and culminating with the triumphant *King Lear* for the RSC in 1962 starring Paul Schofield.¹⁴ The acclaim was not based on any exteriorized brash showmanship; Brook was not fêted simply for having applied a youthful colour signature to these beloved Elizabethan warhorses: rather, the work was recognized for its rigour, depth, and coherence. To understand the impact of his early work on, critics and the English theatre establishment, we need to consider the context into which it entered.

Years later in his introduction to *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, Brook acknowledged his debt to Jan Kott’s observation that “England, in becoming Victorian, lost almost all its Elizabethan characteristics” (Grady, 1974: 158). Vladimir Solovyov, the Russian theologian and philosopher who inaugurated the Sophiological movement, a synthesis of Gnosticism, Hellenistic philosophy, Buddhism and the *Kabbala* explained that

A Jew expects every idea and ideal to have a visible and tangible embodiment and produces beneficent results; he will not recognize an ideal that cannot subdue reality and be incarnate in it; he is capable of accepting the highest spiritual truth and is ready to do so, but only on condition that he can see and feel its actual affect. He believes in the unseen (for all faith is faith in the unseen), but he wants it to become visible and manifest its power; he believes in the spirit, but only in the spirit that penetrates

everything material and uses matter as its veil and its tool.’ Vladimir Solovyov: 1853-1900 (in Vinokur, 2008: 43)

Brook’s outsider’s eye, his Russian Jewish background, and studies in medieval French whilst at Oxford, coupled with the linguistic gifts inherited from his parents (particularly his mother) yielded a nearly hermeneutical investigation in his approach to any text. Brook put his mind to inveigling fresh nuances from the meaning of words, guiding the most accomplished actors of the day to reimagine the parameters of thought and action in ways that had been lost or overlooked within the recent and probably distance past. Gielgud, the Oliviers, Michael Redgrave, Donald Wolfit, honoured veterans of the stage were impressed by Brook’s preparedness and insight which aided in guidance to lifting their level of performance.

Titus Andronicus had been written off so completely by modern standards that even T.S Eliot called it “... one of the stupidest and uninspiring plays ever written” (Trewin, 1971: 81). Brook, however, directed a revelatory production with an ensemble of actors including Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, and Anthony Quayle. Critics and audience were unanimous in their praise for the production’s realisation of qualities hitherto unearthed in the text. Critic Ivor Brown wrote of both the play and Olivier’s performance as Titus in his survey of three Stratford Festivals: “...it now became, under the persuasion of our strongest actor, a sounding board of terrible, yet authentic passions and of agonies monstrous but not beyond bearing by mankind” (ibid, 1971: 86). Two years later when the play toured Warsaw, Jan Kott praised its visuals, comparing the colour palette on stage to the paintings of Rubens, Titian and El Greco; Brook’s Romans, he observed, were “as the Renaissance had seen and painted them...” (ibid, 1971: 125).

The ‘shock’ of realization that the most immature play of the Shakespearean canon was not so bad after all was little more than a glimpse of what was to come. Brook set about taking Antonin Artaud’s ideas for a Theatre of Cruelty as proposed in his seminal work

Theatre and its Double as a blueprint, determined to test the concepts out on stage. Glenda Jackson, in conversation with another long-time Brook collaborator, Charles Marowitz, recalled her engagement with the Theatre of Cruelty season at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1964

like coming across an oasis in a desert ... It made me see that the ideal is possible. That it's possible to release twelve people from the prison of their individuality without losing their individuality – and actually create something which is greater than the sum of its parts (in Marowitz, 1986: 169).

Weiss's *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the*

Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade

(*Marat/Sade*), presented as part of the Season of Cruelty, remains to this day a signature event in post-war British theatre. In his introduction to the published text Brook writes that Peter Weiss's text was a powerful combination of Brecht's 'alienation', placing the action at a distance so it can be judged objectively, and "Artaud's conception of theatre as immediate and violent subjective experience" (Weiss, 1965: vi). Nearly a half century later, Michael Coveney wrote for *The Independent* about the upcoming RSC revival of the play: "Marat/Sade is particularly important: in effect, it launched the fringe and alternative theatre in this country, representing an intersection between European theory and new British radicalism" (Coveney, 2011).

Whatever rapture erupted in the reception to the boldness and raw bloody passion which shocked audiences with *Marat/Sade* in 1964 and 1965, it was but a curtain-raiser to the epic four-hour *US* in 1966: a full-throttled attack on the British establishment, their toadying in support to America for the war in Vietnam, and the indifference generated by a complicit public to this horror. *US* gestated through workshops that included an arduous two weeks in the course of which Brook's actors were challenged by Grotowski, whom Brook had invited to instil in the actors "a fiery commitment": as Brook explained, "the shock of seeing that

somewhere in the world acting is an art of absolute dedication, monastic and total” (Trewin, 1971: 155).

The covenant of confidentiality surrounding what transpired in the Grotowski intensive, with his lead actor Ryszard Cieslak at the helm, has remained respected, although when asked what work was done, Michael Kustow in his narrative in the published playscript of *US* replied “[i]t gave each actor a series of *shocks*”.

The shock of confronting himself in the face of simple irrefutable challenges.
 The shock of catching sight of his own evasions, tricks and clichés.
 The shock of sensing something of his own vast and untapped resources (in Brook, 1968: 133).

Two weeks before opening at the Aldwych Theatre, London in which the RSC were tenanted, Peter Brook informed his actors that Lord Cobbold, the Lord Chamberlain (without whose permission no play at that time could be performed in England) had called George Farmer, one of the Governors of the RSC to tell him that the play was “bestial, anti-American, and communist”, urging him to prevent it from being performed (Brook, 1968: 143). Although not invited to the meeting at St James Palace, Brook, and fellow director Peter Hall accompanied George Farmer to the Lord Chamberlain’s office anyway. When asked by the Lord Chamberlain if the play was ‘anti-American’ George Farmer explained that *US* was just as critical of Britain. Taking another tack, the Lord Chamberlain wondered whether, should the American Ambassador attend the first night of play would he likely walk out, to which Farmer famously replied “No. Not if he stayed until the end” (Trewin, 1971: 146).

With the proviso that the more inflammatory and offensive parts would be cut, a licence was approved for *US* to open. Brook strongly objected to the imposition of censorship; performing an unlicensed play at that time, however, would have exposed the

company to severe fines and the suspension of any other play being performed at the Aldwych. If the play was moved to the theatre at Stratford where the RSC was both licensee and landlord, the company's license would have been revoked, and the entire season for the year cancelled. There was no choice but to obey the Crown. Brook addressed his actors several days later observing that "[t]he crisis with the Lord Chamberlain is an image of the whole war itself" (Brook, 1968: 146).

US opened on October 13 1966. In a narrative detailing the process in bringing *US* to the stage Michael Kustow wrote: "[t]he first night performance got an electric silence from a hostile audience" (ibid, 1968: 149). This pleased Brook tremendously. Instead of the actors leaving the stage at the end of the play after the infamous 'burning butterflies' scene, they simply remained on stage looking at the audience, which, for the most part, sat in silence, uneasy, and unsure of what to do or how to respond. The stasis was broken by critic Kenneth Tynan, shattering the silence by calling out "Are you waiting for us or are we waiting for you?"

According to the former head of NIDA's voice department, Bill Pepper, who attended the first two performances of *US*, "[i]n the foyer afterwards a huge verbal fight erupted between Ken Tynan and Peter Brook." What the argument was about Pepper was unable to ascertain, but everyone in the foyer, he recollects, could hear the yelling.¹⁵ Liz Jones, Artistic Director of Melbourne's La Mama Theatre also attended the opening night, recalling that "Peter Brook and Kenneth Tynan had a (verbal) punch-up in the foyer of the Aldwych Theatre up on the first floor. Kenneth Tynan objected strongly to *US* as did a lot of people in a very vigorous way".¹⁶

Less than a decade later in 1975, performing the role of 'Hedda Gabler' in Sydney prior to opening in London, Glenda Jackson was interviewed by four senior students from Sydney Grammar (Alastair Cumming, John Grinston, Martin Gorrick, and Tony Knight) for

the *Sydneian* 1975 school annual.¹⁷ They asked her what she would rate as “the most memorable thing that has happened to you on stage?” The following is Ms Jackson’s response:

The most exciting thing that ever happened to me on stage was when we did a play at the Aldwych in ’66 or ’67 called U.S., which was about the Vietnam War. The second half of the play had been a longish dialogue between myself and a boy, with various other characters popping in and out. This boy was supposedly going to set fire to himself – the way the Buddhist monks had been doing, as a protest against Vietnam. My job was to stop him from doing it, and I had an incredibly long speech at the end which went on and on. The final moment of the play had this boy stepping forward with this box of butterflies and setting fire to them with a lighter. One particular night, a lady in the very front row of the stalls got up out of her seat, stepped on to the stage, took the butterflies out of the actor’s hands, and turned to the audience with tears streaming down her cheeks. She then said, “I am not a fool, I am not mad, and I just want you to know there is something we can do.” She released the butterflies and stepped back into her seat. And that was the most riveting moment of my life – to think that a member of the audience could actually break down that invisible barrier and step up on to the stage and do that was just incredible (*Sydneian*, 1975: 54).

As a serendipitous conclusion to Part One and lead-in to examining Brook and Grotowski’s influence on Australian theatre in the 1970s and 80s, it should be noted that in the same annual of the *Sydneian* (on the facing page at the end of the Glenda Jackson interview) there is an interview with Lex Marinos, a DJ for the then new music radio station 2JJ. Marinos, a young and well-known actor in 1975 had been amongst the participants in the workshops conducted by Jerzy Grotowski when he came to Australia in 1974.

PART TWO

2.1 1960: The Time is Not Yet Ripe

“Australia in the early nineteen sixties was a backwater and nothing could be done about that”. So charged art critic Robert Hughes in his memoir *Things I Didn't Know* (Hughes, 2006: 293). What Hughes probably did not know, and, like many others had neither the concern nor inclination to wait and find out, was that from the seeds sown and tended to for at least the prior hundred years upon the stages of the larger cities and smaller rural towns, a globally-recognized repository of acting magnificence would soon emerge.

Unlike our British counterparts, Australians did not distinguish between legitimate, classically trained actors on one hand, and the illegitimate variety performers of music hall/vaudeville on the other. Australia had neither the population nor theatre venues to accommodate the different genres of entertainment. At the turn of the century the Palace and Criterion theatres in Sydney, and the Princess and Theatre Royal in Melbourne, provided a range of entertainments from staging the classics to vaudeville. These attractions played to the same audiences with often the same actors treading the boards, thus requiring the performers demonstrate a broader range of disciplines in the cross-genre repertoire. This did not apply as such to Doris Fitton who founded the Independent Theatre in North Sydney in 1930. The Independent became the post-Edwardian bastion of brown furniture British theatre, which would have the last word in pro/am proscenium arch staging of the ‘well-made play’ for the next forty years. It was this very citadel of provincial performance-making that the boomer-generation had in their cross hairs to lay siege.

Ironically, the knock-about versatility drilled into actors from the traveling tent shows which toured the rural areas of the country for months on end, especially in the great depression and war years, lay at the heart of rough theatre shenanigans (see Sharman 2008).

Nick Enright and Terence Clarke's 1983 musical *Summer Rain* paid homage to the traveling tent show when a troupe of these characters arrives broke and worn out in a drought-stricken rural town circa 1945. This same knock-about energy was what the Boomers would later bring into their inner-city performance spaces. Actor/director, Lex Marinis said of Australian performance history:

[i]n England, you were either a classical actor or a music hall star and there was very little cross over. We didn't have those constraints. We didn't have the critical mass to support different types of theatre. We shared the same building: Shakespeare one night, vaudeville the next. Often with the same actors and the same audience.¹⁸

Notwithstanding Robert Hughes's claims of Australia's "backwater" status, green shoots from these seeds were beginning to emerge through the parochial topsoil even in the 1960s. From within Hughes' own circles of association at the dramatic society on campus at the University of Sydney (SUDS), the future mavens of cultural and social punditry, as well as stars of stage and screen, gathered in collaborative assembly (See Blake 2010). These included Clive James, John Bell, Bruce Beresford, John Gaden, Richard Wherrett, Leo Schofield, Les Murray, Bob Ellis, and Ken Horler who directed a student production of Brecht's *Mother Courage* starring Germaine Greer. Of Greer's performance one critic wrote: "[h]er manifest intelligence and sophistication ran counter to the peasant cunning and raw and leathery obduracy of Brecht's character" (Thoms 2013).¹⁹ Such a review serves to confirm more than it refutes Hughes' designation of early 1960s Australia as 'backwater'. In fact, it highlights Greer's obviously riveting portrayal of Brecht's prototype feminist profiteering from war in the battle-scarred bogs of Palatinate Bohemia, as film maker, Albie Thom's attests in his book *My Generation*.²⁰

The two other heirloom seeds being sown, and which would herald a rich harvest in the decades to follow, were the founding of two landmark actor training facilities in Sydney. Opening around the same time were Hayes Gordon's Meisner-based ensemble studio in

Kirribilli, and the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Kensington, the latter organised on the model of the Royal Academy for Dramatic Art in London.²¹ The days when “there was an elocution teacher in every suburb” were now numbered (Brisbane, 2015: 12). The Ensemble offered training in Sanford Meisner’s Stanislavski-based actor training style, while NIDA carefully selected young talent from across the nation. In the old totaliser board sheds on the campus of the University of NSW, across the road from Randwick racecourse, students dedicated themselves to three years learning the disciplines of classical British pedagogy in acting, technical production, and design.

The advent of these two schools, especially NIDA, meant that new generations of young actors no longer had to cut their teeth learning the ropes of stage craft in the academies, and repertory companies of the Old Dart, only to return and share of their experiences back home (if they came home) or else, in Alan Vietch’s memorable turn of phrase, “hump their bluey” to Hollywood (Vietch 1982).²²

The other significant foundation stone being laid upon the cultural landscape at that time was the inaugural Adelaide Festival of the Arts in 1960, a biennial event which would later earn South Australia the appellation of the ‘Festival State’. It would be almost 25 years later that Adelaide would consummate, in totality, its original vision of a great international festival, when in 1988 Peter Brook was invited to present his landmark nine-hour *Mahabharata* in a quarry. The same festival presented the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Twyla Tharp Dance Company and legendary chanteuse, Sarah Vaughn.

For all the readiness on the part of Adelaide’s performance cognoscenti to gentrify the nation’s ‘backwater’ position with a more erudite vision of cultural progression, the decision of the Festival’s governing board to reject Patrick White’s play *The Ham Funeral* in 1961, and again, in 1964, his *Night on Bald Mountain*, did not bode well. Alison Croggon, in her

review of the 2014 Malthouse revival of *Night on Bald Mountain* in Melbourne writes of the play being: "...a gothic parable of the sadism of spiritual asceticism, a scathing satire of literary pretension and failure, a tragedy of innocence betrayed, a story of human insignificance in the natural world" (Croggon 2014). The fact that the play opens with old Miss Quodling having a twenty-minute monologue with a goat may have been an ambitious sell in 1964, even for Adelaide patrons eager to lose the "Birmingham on the Bight" tag.²³

The award of Nobel Laureate bestowed on Patrick White in 1973 certainly did not hurt any subsequent acceptance of his dramatic output. *The Ham Funeral*, *Night on Bald Mountain*, *A Cheery Soul*, and *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, and to a lesser degree his later plays, have since become a popular staple of the home-grown avant-garde mainstream. Much of White's success as a playwright can be attributed to his professional relationship with Jim Sharman and later Neil Armfield (Maxwell, 2005: 212-236). White publicly defended Sharman's incendiary Jane Street production of *Terror Australis* in 1968. Based on a script by *Oz* magazine writers Richard Walsh and Dean Letcher, with additional material by Rick Billinghurst and Clem Gorman, *Terror Australis* opened new vistas for improvised experimental theatre, and proved a provocative critique of Australia's whited and blighted. Adrian Guthrie writes:

As a production, *Terror Australis* questioned Australia's violent past, and showed aspects of the national identity that are racist and deeply problematic. It challenged the predominant mythology of pastoral tranquillity and growth, so cherished then as the self-image of much of conservative Australia (Guthrie 2009).

The initiative by government funding bodies to set up NIDA, and to nurture Australian work under the guidance and direction of Robert Quentin, John Clark, and Robin Lovejoy, would also spell the end of Hollywood's tendency to minstralise the Australian story in film. A case in point was the American production of *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* (1959) starring Ernest Borgnine, Anne Baxter, Angela Lansbury, and John Mills as the leads. The following

year another imported ensemble of Anglo/Americans were cast as Australians in the big screen epic *The Sundowners* (1960) where the only Australian with any sizable role in the supporting cast was Chips Rafferty.²⁴ Actors were yet to be branded for the international film market. NIDA, Jane Street, Nimrod and the Performance Syndicate in Sydney, and the socially progressive denizens of Carlton in Melbourne were soon to change all that.

2.2 1970: Australia and the Shock of Identity in an Overdue Cultural Revolution

The year following the shock Federal election defeat of Whitlam's Labor Party by the incumbent Liberal coalition government of John Gorton, an event also serving as the premise for David Williamson's *Don's Party*, Australia celebrated the bicentenary of Captain James Cook's 1770 arrival in Botany Bay. While Britain's arrival in Australia was being celebrated with fireworks on Sydney Harbour, fireworks of quite a different nature were being set off by young Australians who had uprooted and arrived in London. The quest to give a little bit of larrikin stick to the mother country was nowhere more evident than in the radical underground magazine, *Oz*. Founded by Australians Richard Neville, Martin Sharp, and Richard Walsh in 1964, its UK edition first went to print in 1967 with Neville, Jim Anderson, and later Englishman Felix Dennis as editors. Martin Sharp, who had travelled to London with Neville, continued his psychedelic illustrative offerings for the UK editions. Many articles turned out to be early works by what would become some of Australia's leading cultural figures (Albie Thoms, Bob Ellis, Michael Leunig, Phillippe Mora), including the occasional polemic from the already well known, Germaine Greer.²⁵

Oz set about provoking the British establishment with remorseless undergraduate zeal. This came to a head in the May 1970 edition with the publication of the "schoolkid's issue" which contained the usual bevy of naked 'sheilas' on the cover, and inside, a cartoon featuring the head of beloved children's character Rupert the Bear pasted onto the bodies of X-rated Robert Crumb drawings.²⁶ The subsequent visit by London's Vice Squad and Old Bailey trial saw Neville, Felix Dennis, and Jim Anderson convicted to serve three to six months hard labour (later overturned on appeal) on charges of "Obscenity, and conspiring to corrupt public morals by implanting 'lustful and perverted desires' in the minds of young

people” (*The Week*: 2016,46). It became the longest trial of its kind in British history, Robert Hughes describing it

... as emblematic an event as the Lady Chatterley case had been a few years earlier. The Crown prosecutors did more to bring salutary ridicule and damage to English Puritanism by the conviction of Richard Neville, Felix Dennis, and Jim Anderson than could ever have brought by their acquittal (Hughes, 2006: 293-94).

The English court system’s moral condemnation of these young people was a catalysing moment in British/Colonial relations, fuelling in intensification the cultural break, already underway back home from our hitherto obsequious deference to British culture, which had dominated our stages since the landing of the First Fleet.²⁷ Fergus Byrne wrote in *More Lives Than One: The Extraordinary Life of Felix Dennis* that “in retrospect the *Oz* magazine trial was seen by many as a case that was the pinnacle of a revolution which saw personal freedom at its core”, quoting the trial’s defence barrister, John Mortimer, who viewed the case as “standing at the crossroads of our liberty, at the boundaries of our freedom to think and say and draw and write what we please” (Byrne, 2015: 33). Given the notorious precedent set a few years earlier with censorship over the inflammatory and offensive nature of Peter Brook’s *US*, a much-publicized event of which the younger generation of Australian actors and performers at that time were keenly aware, the *Oz* magazine trial pretty much plugged in the Hammond organ ready to sound the intro of “It’s Time”, the TV jingle sung by a chorus of Australia’s stage and media personalities which helped sweep the Whitlam government into power in 1972.

There remains even today a patronizing element in the English regard towards the ex-colonial cultural offerings, often supported by expats such as Barry Humphries, whose satirizing of the low brow aspirations and bigoted oikery of the Australian middle class were but mirth-inducing confirmation of an established assumption.²⁸ As recently as 2013 the

British television series *Downton Abbey* deliberately chose to misrepresent the legendary Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba as a wine-swilling lush who is treated by the butler as a tradesperson when visiting the home of the Aristocratic Grantham family to give a private concert.²⁹ The popularity of Barry McKenzie certainly helped greenlight a defiantly working class ‘ocker’ culture in the 1970s, which fronted much of the performance work generated by the playwrights and actors in the early days of La Mama and the Australian Performing Group (APG) at the Pram Factory in Melbourne.

1970 also brought to the Sydney stage a significant event, one which impacted the performance style narrative for a generation. Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis’s *The Legend of King O’Malley* defined the national mood and character of Australian identity more than any other of that era. Commissioned by the head of NIDA, John Clark, and directed by John Bell at NIDA’s Jane St Theatre, its cast included key figures from the Grotowski-based Performance Syndicate, including Rex Cramphorne himself: performers who were, at the same time, rehearsing the explicitly Grotowskian *10,000 Miles Away* for the same season at Jane St.³⁰ To quote Derek Nicholson, a young director involved in the preparation of a third play in the season, the ill-fated *Stockade*, “[i]t was the intensity of that group of actors’ work on ‘Ten Thousand Miles’ that really made ‘O’Malley’ work” (in Guthrie, 1996: 114).³¹ *O’Malley* was, in the very real sense of the word, radical (in Latin *radix* means ‘root’), Donald Horne, in his forward to *The Legend of King O’Malley* observing that “nationalism was not a bush culture but a belief in Australia’s inevitable progress toward a liberal-radical excellence” (Boddy/Ellis, 1974: x).

Based on the true story of a Texas evangelical huckster coming to Australia, and challenging the nation’s Anglo-centric policies, *The Legend of King O’Malley* hit at the heart of a generation still governed by the war mongering doctrine of conscription and blue ribbon obedience to sentiments of imperial vassalage.³² The similarity between late Nineteenth

Century Texas and Australia in their shared pioneering spirit of self-determination and liberty was lost on no one: the themes of this cartoon satire lampooning politicians as compliant clowns resonated deeply with audiences.³³

O'Malley answered the question posed by actor Donald Sinden who was touring Australia that same year with the RSC productions of *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter's Tale*, and who expressed surprise at the public's attitude to actors, "Where" he asked, "in Australia is the soul today?" (Brisbane, 2015: 43). The play was, indeed, received as a revelation from and of the inner sanctum of the Australian soul, embodying the very *dusha* and process within *tvorchestvo* I have characterised above as being at the core of the 'original' Stanislavskian project. Moreover, *The Legend of King O'Malley* achieved, in a non-decorous manner of production, an almost perfect confluence of the Brechtian, Brookian, and Grotowskian methodologies as a means for the expression of these themes. The production demonstrated the first ripples of influence that *The Empty Space* and *Towards a Poor Theatre* would have upon the new wave of performance makers in Australia.

As directed by John Bell, *O'Malley* combined elements of Brook's 'Rough', 'Immediate', and 'Holy' theatre models, banishing 'Deadly' theatre which, for this new generation of early NIDA graduates, could not be consigned along with the other cultural relics of post-colonial subjugation, quickly enough to the tomb, Bell writes

I acknowledge Peter Brook as my chief mentor and frequently re-visit his books, but primarily [*The*] *Empty Space*. He follows Brecht's lead in chucking out representational scenery and inspires Grotowski to put on stage nothing that is unnecessary ... I asked Michael Bogdanov (Brook's assistant on the 'Dream') the most useful thing Brook had ever said and the answer was "Put on a good show" ... And that's the most the best of us can hope to do.³⁴

Adrian Kiernander counters the modesty of Bell's words observing that "...his [Bell's] production of King O'Malley not only dealt with Australian history, it became Australian

history” (Kiernander, 2015: 95). *O’Malley* reinterpreted a ‘rough’ vaudeville theatre in the tradition of the Tivoli and George Wallace, exhibiting the immediacy of relevant political discord. It was ‘Holy’ “in which the play, the event itself, stands in place of a text” (Brook, 1968: 49). *O’Malley* heralded for Australian stage practitioners what *Marat/Sade* had done in the UK six years beforehand: “... it launched the fringe and alternative theatre in this country” (Coveney 2011). In doing so *O’Malley* ignited a vision of theatre which Brook, in *The Empty Space*, aligns with the work of Grotowski being “... theatre is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self-exploration; a possibility of salvation” (Brook, 1968: 59).

Looking back at *The Legend of King O’Malley* over four decades later one can appreciate more fully, from a post-secular perspective, how it accords even more intimately with Brook’s vision of ‘Holy’ theatre and ‘salvation’, notably in the depiction of O’Malley himself. No one was less Australian than a foreign, teetotaler evangelist, at the time of Federation, waving the Bible in one hand and *Das Kapital* in the other. Yet it was a quixotic fervour of a piece with O’Malley’s belief which brought into existence both the capital Canberra and the Commonwealth Bank. Australia’s formative history with ‘the flogging parsons’ left an indelible mark of religious scepticism upon the population. It is an irony of serendipitous worth that the chief protagonist would be a King from the Republic of Texas who has sold his soul to the devil, and who becomes the catalyst for later generations to brazenly mock the church and its moral authority.³⁵

Indeed, Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis, *O’Malley*’s writers, were born into families with strong faith based beliefs: Boddy, the son of a Yorkshire vicar, and Ellis from a family of North Coast Seventh Day Adventists. The power of their play connected with audiences precisely because of the radical convictions of these freshly-trained young actors, and their beliefs in a moral universe outside of religious confines: a position which had exploded in the global culture of ‘free love’ in the swinging 1960s. For all that, Australia’s governing bodies

and a large swathe of the nation's constituency seemed to be immune to the effects of this revolution until the advent of this *force majeure*:

The success of *King O'Malley* created the environment where a new, alternative company with its own venue could be imagined in Sydney, with the aim of performing something that could be recognised as Australian theatre (Guthrie 2009).

2.3 Larrikins, Ockers & the Empty Space.

If one can look at Brook and Grotowski as two sides of the same coin, one can also view the respective performance groups of La Mama and the APG in Melbourne and Sydney's Nimrod theatre in the early 1970s the same way. These second wave performance makers and first wave Baby Boomers in Sydney and Melbourne shared, in their respective agendas, a utopian vision of the Australian character, distinctive in its own right, and capable of writing the narrative of national experience without either deference to Mother England, nor playing Stepin Fetchit to the American war and entertainment franchises. There was no trait too serious in the Australian character which could not be mined for comedy gold, and no individual dead or alive too important to elude ridicule.

The major differences within the cultural fruits ripening in the Sydney and Melbourne of the early 1970s are those between the predominantly working class protestant 'Ocker' flavour of Melbourne's performers and writers, and the more larrikinesque Irish Catholicism permeating the alternative performance work of Sydney throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, perhaps most emphatically in the case of the playwrights Ron Blair, Peter Kenna, Steve J Spears, and later, Nick Enright who, like John Bell (the father of 'larrikin drama') grew up in the rural central coast township of Maitland (Blundell, 1997: 185).³⁶ Because these identities of the 'ocker' and the 'larrikin' are so thickly woven into the Australian social and performance milieu, further elaboration is necessary to demonstrate how they found a natural home for their *patois* in the "Rough Theatre" manifesto outlined in Brook's *The Empty Space* (65-97).

Manning Clark famously describes the larrikin as someone "mocking pomposity and smugness, taking the piss out of people, cutting down tall poppies" (Rickard, 2009: 81). The word's alleged origins are in mid-Nineteenth Century England from the Yorkshire dialect "to larrack about" describing "youthful mischief."³⁷ The larrikin, however, extends beyond the

parameters of youth, and could just as well (as the Oxford dictionary suggests) derive from ‘Larry’, a diminutive form of the name Lawrence. Given the ecclesiastical pedigree for names it is not far-fetched to trace the origins of the Larrikin to St Lawrence of Rome (c. 225-258.), who was martyred for distributing all the chattels of the church to the poor rather than handing them over to the imperial treasury of the Emperor. St Lawrence was roasted alive on a gridiron for his insolence and, so legend goes, reportedly cried out cheerfully while on the hot coals, “I’m done on this side. Now turn me over” (Miller 2016).³⁸ Thus the patron saint of mavericks, cooks, and comedians alike entered the ledger book of legends. Those that followed suit, with various incarnations of a humorous whack to the authoritarian cheek in the days of Australia’s colonial inception, became kin to (Saint) Larry: ergo, larrikins.

Unlike the suburban Ocker, to whom I will return below, the larrikin very much has his roots in the bush and outback, its spirit rife through the doggerel verse of Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson. But it was C. J. Dennis’s *Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* that iconized the larrikin identity in the early Twentieth Century for Australian literary posterity.³⁹ This was the identity resurrected for the alternative performance genre buzzing within the Stables theatre of the early Nimrod days, as John Bell explained: “We were just reacting to a certain stuffy conservatism that pervaded Australian culture from top to bottom ...” (in Blundell, 1997: 186). From 1970 onwards, Nimrod (at the Stables and its new premises in Surry Hills) flavoured its productions with a ‘rough’ house vaudeville aesthetic; a signature voice of new wave culture for the next decade or more.

The larrikin was as much at home in productions of classic and contemporary European plays as it was in Buzo, Romeril, Williamson, and McNeil.⁴⁰ The benchmarks of Nimrod’s larrikin aesthetic in the Australian voice were Ron Blair’s *The Christian Brothers* (1975), and Nick Enright and Terrence Clarke’s *Venetian Twins* (1979), their musical adaptation of Carlo Goldoni’s 1747 *commedia dell’arte* play, *I due gemelli veneziani*. Of the

130 plays produced by Nimrod over a 15-year period (1970-1985) both *Venetian Twins* and *The Christian Brothers* are still regularly revived around the country forty years later. The unique quality of *Venetian Twins* is its ingenious synthesis of Enright's literary word play, Clarke's clever musical pastiche, and the Australian vernacular transposed into the mouths of Nineteenth Century Venetian *commedia* characters. Thus, a high point in the renaissance of Australian performance culture was born from the embers of the Italian Renaissance at the time of Goldoni. The larrikin essence of Blair's monodrama *The Christian Brothers* is not the 'Brother' himself, threatening and thrashing an unruly student in his classroom, but that the student is in the guise of an empty solitary wooden chair. These unspoken yet disruptive antics engaged the imagination of the audience, spoke to the post-war generational soul through the old Brother's underwhelming pedagogical abilities, and his shaky foundations of a wounded faith. The 'Christian Brother' in the modern world presents the toothless ghost of an Irish immigrant emulating the 'flogging parsons' from our corporal inception.

Ron Blair's play however, like the work of Brook, Grotowski and Stanislavski, was not a polemic against tradition in and of itself. It was in the empty classroom on stage that unmasked the empty shell that tradition had become; a tradition played out in the primary and secondary education for many participating in this revolution of theatre practice. Blair and John Bell came as close to Brook's vision of 'Immediate' theatre with *The Christian Brothers* as Enright, Clarke, and Bell's *Venetian Twins* production was to the 'rough' concept:

This is our only possibility – to look at the affirmations of Artaud, Meyerhold, Stanislavsky, Grotowski, Brecht, then compare them with the life of the particular place in which we work. What is our purpose, now, in relation to the people we meet every day? (Brook, 1968: 85)

The ‘Ocker’ landed with a thong-slap upon Australia’s social patio of the early 1970s. This slang name for Oscar was also a popular character played by Ronnie Frazer on the Mavis Bramston show (1964-68).⁴¹ This element set the tone for the APG with Jack Hibberd, and John Romeril’s 1970 *Marvellous Melbourne*, as defining a moment for theatre in Melbourne as *The Legend of King O’Malley* was for Sydney. Kerry Dwyer recalls:

I think the Ocker thing is what I find really difficult. It excludes women. Or you can behave like an ocker bloke. There’s a very narrow range of behaviours which is acceptable in that larrikin Australian stream.⁴²

While perhaps a spawn of the larrikin, the Ocker became a ubiquitous character within the working-class demographic from 1970 onwards, as much an issue of class warfare against the blue blood establishment and Melbourne Club drinkie-poos as the collapse of a 2000 tonne section of the West Gate bridge into the Yarra River in October 1970. Killing 35 workers, this was the worst industrial accident in Australia’s history, resulting in a strengthened labour union movement which emphasised the division between governing elites and the blue-collar demographic. Student activism intensified from the already-committed Socialist factions emerging within the universities “... dedicated to the overthrow of the Capitalist system and to the end of the Vietnam War” (Milne, 2004: 223), none more so than the Maoists from Monash University in the late 1960s and early 1970s. From Monash emerged Jon Hawkes, Lindzee Smith and John Romeril whose work in the second stream of the APG repertoire revolved around agitprop street theatre. Their marches and anti-Vietnam protests included didactic political sketches penned by Romeril. Within their ‘pram factory space’ in Carlton and their presence on the Melbourne streets, the APG were an overtly radical collective which Geoffrey Milne wrote “broadened the base of Australian theatre and ‘Australianised’ it to an extent not previously known” (Milne, 2004: 217).

In fact, this new wave of practitioners was preserving a tradition of Australian character. Playwright John Romeril writes:

I suppose one of the interesting contradictions of our early days at the APG was that we were fighting for almost a disappearing Australia. We were living in a town that was becoming, although we didn't fully appreciate this, fast becoming a multi-cultural capital and yet we took as our project the retrieval and reconstruction and revival really of an Australian theatre that was fairly nationalistic, jingoistic ... In fact what we were trying to breathe life into was a disappearing Australia probably. We were really a kind of contemporary theatre group with a historic mission (Blundell, 1997: 184).

Whatever appeared lost rebounded when Paul Hogan, Graeme Blundell's 'Alvin Purple,' Barry Humphries' 'Barry McKenzie,' advertising maverick John Singleton, and Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Chairman and future Prime Minister Bob Hawke, amplified the golden days for Ockerism. Their presence affected all parts of the Australian cultural demography.

A militant ensemble of first generation Baby Boomers rode the *zeitgeist* to storm the citadel of established theatre traditions the way Abstract Expressionists had challenged the New York art scene in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴³ The movement was spearheaded by Graeme Blundell, Kerry Dwyer, Bill Garner, and Betty Burstall, the last of whom fronted the Melbourne franchise of New York's La Mama Theatre in 1967. These and other politically-engaged bohemians from all over Victoria established Carlton as the ground zero bee hive for creative experimentation. Australia's own Greenwich Village. Tim Robertson, in his recollections of the Pram Factory, explained that "[b]oth clubs [warring factions within the APG collective] shared the belief that you learnt about performance by doing it. Praxis was the go. Classes in institutes and academies were discredited" (Robertson, 2001: 53).

While Marxism may have been the most forceful political ideology at the APG during those days, there was no theatrical guru-binding codes of practice in the approach to the APG productions, although the ideas of open space and Brook's tenets of "Deadly Theatre" were

known, respected, and generally upheld by the APG members. Margaret Williams, then the unofficial APG literary historian, goes as far as to explain that

[i]n London in 1966 I'd seen Peter Brook's production of *US*, which crystallised for me the impotence of protesting about the Vietnam War in a Britain that wasn't part of it. Australia was part of it, and I left the theatre feeling that was where I should be. And when I came home I found a group which combined a passion about exploring new theatrical forms, a commitment to political action, and a sense of Australia's theatrical past and future, in the Melbourne I'd always wanted to escape from.⁴⁴

Brook and Grotowski, however, were deemed too religious for the earthy and very blokey directness of Pram Factory aesthetics.⁴⁵ Graeme Blundell writes as much of Grotowski in an interview published in the journal *Double Dialogues*:

... it got very complex when people got into the kind of mysticism as far as people could ever understand it and I certainly couldn't. Kerry [Dwyer] was Welsh and she worked on Grotowski in the middle sixties and came back with many ideas and was always quite angry when her ideas were misinterpreted (Blundell 2009: np).

Kerry Dwyer adds to this, acknowledging both the youthful naiveté and the limitations inherent in the Australian cultural experience at that time, a milieu that could not fully grasp the mantra that she heard so often repeated by Grotowski throughout her month-long residency in Nancy: "*Rien c'est impossible!*". "When I came back to Australia", Dwyer recalls,

I taught a lot of people those [Grotowski] exercises at La Mama, physically. We had a tremendous physical basis to the work at the Pram Factory, but at that time I didn't understand the spiritual dimension of the work ... There was a political dynamic at the Pram Factory. I had to put aside a very unformed nascent spiritual urge in order to go with the political.⁴⁶

Indeed, Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* was absolutely required reading and applied at La Mama, albeit utilizing only the obvious physical components of the manifesto. According to playwright Jack Hibberd,

I think Grotowski was terribly important and he was certainly being read in 1968-69 round La Mama and I read it myself. It was *the* book for the actors and it was perfectly wedded to the space. The kind of acting that was compulsory at La Mama was lean and mean and direct and the (Grotowski) philosophy of *Towards a Poor Theatre* just fitted perfectly with La Mama (Hibberd 2009: np).

Another key distinction between the models of theatre practice being formed in the early 1970s at, respectively, the APG in Melbourne and Sydney's Nimrod, turned on the question of leadership and direction. The APG was first and foremost a politically-driven artistic unit without an authority figure to direct policy. As Tim Robertson writes, “[d]ecisions were made by Planning, Programming and Executive committees and ratified by the vote of the collective meeting” (Robertson, 2001: 58). This was quite different from Nimrod and the Performance Syndicate in Sydney. Nimrod had a solid leadership team of John Bell, Ken Horler, and Richard Wherrett to direct the vision of the company. Rex Cramphorne, notwithstanding the collectivist aspirations of the group, assumed the director's chair, steering the Grotowski-inspired Performance Syndicate productions. John Bell freely admits of those early Nimrod days that

[a]mbience took precedence over content ... The shows content was broadly popular, smutty and lefty – noisy, irreverent, and provocative, but strictly for laughs. The steam soon ran out of that and we started looking around for some good writers, a lot of whom were working in Melbourne in those days” (in Blundell, 1997: 195).

Indeed, as Bell recognised, the collective decision by Pram Factory members to develop new work no matter what, yielded, over time, a discernible Australian dramatic identity, nurtured in an environment of experimentation in which writers could see their work performed and so transform and refine the substance and structure of their words. Denise Varney writes of the APG as: “... a significant new cultural formation whose aim was to wrest control of history, language and theatre from a conservative anglophile elite ...” (Varney 2009: np) This observation appeared in an essay Varney wrote on John Romeril's classic play of 1974, *The Floating World*, one of the handful of plays of that time that delved

deeper into the Australian psyche of the ocker/larrikin than, for example, Hibberd's popular *Dimboola* (1969) or Bob Daley's *Our Dick* (1972).

The Floating World, Hibberd's *A Stretch of the Imagination* (1972), and David Williamson's *Don's Party* (1971) are perhaps the three strongest and most enduring plays to come out of APG at that time. Romeril and Hibberd in their respective plays dig beneath the surface of larrikinism going the distance to uncover the soul of national identity, confront the wounds behind the ockerish jingoism, and expose the psychomachy and aetiology of our Imperialist origins. *A Stretch of the Imagination* (1972), a monodrama like Ron Blair's *The Christian Brothers*, celebrates the pathos of a working-class recluse, Monk O'Neill, whose solipsistic philosophies on life and death include reliving a myriad of pivotal moments from his youth. The play is as much a stretch for the actor's performance skills as it is of Monk's imagination, and runs two hours requiring multiple physical transformations from the actor conveying Monk's younger self.⁴⁷

Romeril's *The Floating World* (1974) centres on an obnoxious lout, Les Harding, and his wife Irene, on a cruise liner en route to Japan. In the course of the play Les descends into madness when faced with the buried horrors of his war time experiences at the hands of the Japs. *The Floating World* broke new ground not only in plumbing the deeper psychological depths of the Aussie male character, but in the way the Pram Factory space was configured and designed by architect Peter Corrigan. Corrigan had just returned from the US where he had received a Master of Environmental Design at Yale, and went on to work in Connecticut for major architects including Paul Rudolph of the Brutalist movement, and Philip Johnson, a Harvard Modern of the 30s (See Part One). With *The Floating World*, Corrigan contextualized a geometric spatial sophistication which had thus far been absent from APG productions. Director Lindzee Smith worked with Corrigan taking "Romeril's fragmented scenes and translated them into separate performance spaces" (Varney, 2009: np). By

creating a suggestion of the ship's sun deck with fake grass, then ringing the stage with chicken wire, Corrigan "mirrored and extended the increasingly claustrophobic world in which Les was caught between his past and his present" (ibid). Over the decades Peter Corrigan established strong working relationships with many Melbourne-based directors, principally, the visionary third wave director Peter King, and his protégé Barrie Kosky.⁴⁸ Corrigan described his principal objective in theatre design to Graeme Blundell as being "a constructed landscape in which actors experienced life" (Blundell/McCaughey 2009).

1973 was a watershed year for the arts in Australia. Three events took place that would impact the arts right up until today. The first two were the opening of the Sydney Opera House, and the government's three-million-dollar purchase of Jackson Pollock's painting No. 11 (Blue Poles), which is now considered one of the centrepiece canvas works of the American Abstract Expressionist genre (see Abstract Expressionism, London's Royal Academy. 24th September 2016 – 2nd January 2017). The third event of significance in 1973 was the international tour of Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. While the first two events courted much controversy in their respective planning, relevance and expense, the tour of Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* lived up to its hype and was received with momentous acclaim. The innovative whimsy and aerial theatrics of the production imprinted upon both national audiences and stage practitioners alike with new possibilities in Shakespearean interpretation. Such was its reception that actors in the RSC company, Ralph Cotterill and Hugh Keays Byrne, both of whom who played fairies, remained after the tour and went on to establish for themselves successful stage and screen careers in Australia. In *On Shakespeare* John Bell writes:

Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had a huge impact on the theatre of the 1970s and beyond ... at the end of the first half Bottom was borne aloft by the fairies making a triumphant entry in fairyland. Mendelssohn's Wedding March blazed out over the speakers while the fairies skimmed paper plates over the stage like a shower

of confetti. Brook's theatrical acumen and daring were always underscored by a wicked sense of humour (Bell, 2012: 102).

Lex Marinós observed of the production that when the audience walked into the theatre all that was on stage was an empty white box:

... and you thought, where's the set? – Where's the scenery? – How are they going to do a forest? And Brook just said, fuck it – unless you are going to use your imagination you are just going to have to go home. And from the moment it started it just seemed to go very quickly. Before then I had apprehended that Shakespeare was a long night in the theatre and then I saw Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and it was like – what – it's over already? It just seemed to just fly.⁴⁹

In *The Making of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* David Selbourne, who witnessed the rehearsal process from beginning to end, noted to Brook his view:

... that theatrical innovation in general had not yet reached the iconoclastic point Stravinsky had reached in 1913. Could he, and would he want to, contrive the *éclat* of that creation, and induce a frightened and angry audience to break up the theatre? He (Brook) replied that if in this production he succeeded in 'forcing on the audience a realization that the present set-up of the theatre [with its formal institutional apparatus] provided the wrong arena for communication, ceremony and involvement,' then he would have achieved what he wanted (Selbourne, 1982: 39-41).

Selbourne then questioned Brook as to whether the actors involved could "share in and sympathise with what he was attempting in the present production?" Brook's concern at this juncture was that the traditional training pedagogy he saw instilled in the actors was an obstacle, producing a "certain style of speaking and acting," and that there were "cultural factors" and degrees of "emotional inhibition" (ibid, 1982: 41). For actor Ralph Cotterill *The Midsummer Night's Dream* experience was characterised by extended rehearsal exploration: "My recollection of the remarkable Peter Brook and his long rehearsal methods...the like of which (as far as I know) do not happen in Australia".⁵⁰

The effects of the RSC tour of Brook's production in 1973 were felt immediately, especially in the subsequent Shakespearean and Jacobean work in the Nimrod repertoire. Brook's *Midsummer Night's Dream* served as confirmation to the ideas he had illuminated in *The Empty Space*. Conventions in staging were tossed aside, like 'neck to knees' swimming costumes at the invention of Speedo's and the bikini. As Julian Meyrick observed in his account of the emergence of the Nimrod Theatre,

[t]he view of professionalism held by artists arising in the wake of the achievements of the Anglo generation is exemplified in the undisputed bible of post war alternative theatre, Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* (1968). (Meyrick, 2002: 7)

Productions were infused with contemporary references to celebrity as well as in the costuming, song, and prop choices. Neil Armfield's 1980 Nimrod staging of Ben Jonson's *Volpone* featured John Bell in the title role; John McTernan as his servant 'Mosco' frequently exited the stage singing to himself the popular song 'Moscow' the theme of that year's Olympics. That same year Brook's Centre for International Theatre Creations returned to perform *The Ik*, *Ubu Roi* and *The Conference of the Birds* as part of Nimrod's season in the York theatre at the Seymour Centre. This tour presented an artistic triumph of pared-back simplicity and presence from Brook's international company of actors, but was financially disappointing for Nimrod, not in any small part due to the fact that *Ubu Roi* was performed in French. In the conclusion to his book *See How It Runs: Nimrod and the New Wave*, Julian Meyrick notes that

[a]ll the features of the Rough Theatre Brook discussed in *The Empty Space* can be found in force in Australia in the 1970s: the free play of high and low forms; the power of 'uneducated' audience taste; and the aggressive popularizing tendencies of artists themselves (Meyrick, 2002: 260).

This type of staging aesthetic also served as a signature for much of the work which would develop later with the Bell Shakespeare Company.

2.4 Freestyle Upstream to Jerzy Shore.

Grotowski had given a much-publicized lecture at the Sydney Opera House in 1973, and the reverence already accorded *Towards a Poor Theatre* more than prepared the new generation of performance practitioners for what was to follow, a year later: the opportunity to finally experience a famous work from the legendary master. In 1974, the year following Brook's tour of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Grotowski's production of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was performed in the crypt of St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. This event also reverberated on a dramatic level, albeit on a more contained and less direct scale than Brook's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Of the 3600 people who attended the performances 86% were under the age of twenty-five. (Osinski, 1986: 145) In his review of *Apocalypsis cum figuris* for *The Bulletin* Brian Hoad wrote:

It is a reflection of reality that many Australians may be unfamiliar with, may not wish to accept. It is dark and pessimistic and often violent, very much a product of its own Polish environment, a post-Auschwitz world in which a strong Catholic tradition has collapsed in a welter of half-remembered horrors, a loss of faith and spiritual guilt (Osinski, 1986: 146).

Katharine Brisbane in *The Australian* credited Grotowski as

[t]he greatest dramatic innovator of the second half of the twentieth century, [who] has been enormously influential in facing the theatre with elemental impulses (ibid, 1986: 145).

Experiencing such disciplined physicality and authoritative presence by the Laboratory theatre actors offered a depth of performance truth, alien to Australian sensibilities. We did not have the inheritance of centuries old traditions built upon the battle-scarred landscapes of Eastern Europe, both ancestral and recent, to draw upon for experiential exploration. Ludwik Flaszen sagely noted, albeit in a slightly patronizing tone, of the effect the production had upon audiences in Australia:

You saw people who did not leave the auditorium until late into the night, how they sat quietly in deep reflection, and how they spoke to each other in whispers. [Of the Australians] ... they cannot live the events of the wide world. They are far away, and

they have an entire continent at their disposal, the four elements, and each in an unusually beautiful form. ... But when something important came to them from distant Poland, they naturally began to ask about it. They wanted to know what kind of tradition and experience stood behind us (Osinski, 1986: 146-47).

Indeed, Hoad's "reflection of reality", and the Polish tradition and experience Flaszen speaks of in regards to Grotowski's *Apocalypsis* was, for some key acolytes of the Poor Theatre, less convincing in impact than had been expected. Kerry Dwyer cited Grotowski as a singular influence when spending the six months devising the physically demanding *Betty Can Jump* (1972), a feminist counterpunch to the Ocker shenanigans of APG's *Marvellous Melbourne*. *Betty Can Jump* is a landmark event in Australian women's theatre.⁵¹ Two years later Dwyer travelled to Sydney with fellow performer, Sue Ingleton, both pregnant, to see Grotowski and *Apocalypsis cum figuris*. She commented on the very different outer appearance of Grotowski in Sydney than when she worked with him in Nancy seven years earlier:

He was rather portly – wore a black coat with coat and tie sat behind a huge desk and wore blue lens dark glasses and had a shock of black hair. But when he came to Australia he was completely different ... lighter hair – much thinner, jeans and totally approachable." [And of *Apocalypsis cum figuris*] it was great but so what – I couldn't grasp what they were going for. It was very intense but didn't engage me. Rex's shows did engage me.⁵²

The concluding five words refer to the Grotowski-inspired work of the Performance Syndicate, a collective formed at NIDA in the summer of 1969-1970. The great irony of Grotowski's visit was that the Performance Syndicate predicated its very existence on Nick Lathouris's Xeroxed copy of *Towards a Poor Theatre*. For this group of actors, it became their 'Declaration of Independence' drawing them out from the thespian dark ages. In his essay "Rise and Fall of the Grotowski Ideal 1969-1974" Ian Maxwell writes:

[f]or Lathouris, Cameron, Cramphorn and their friend and yoga teacher Bob Millican, the text was galvanizing. Lathouris likened his introduction to Grotowski to being 'struck by religion' ... (Maxwell, 2008: 20).

The actors drew up a manifesto and committed themselves to a training program based on the exercises in *Towards a Poor Theatre*. The first two points clarify the objective of the Performance Syndicate: “We have nothing to show, sell, prove [and] We find theatre in Australia a cold, dead vacuum” (op. cit.). They went on to produce some of the most inspired and original work put on stage in Australia in the last half century both in interpretation of the classics: *Revenger’s Tragedy* (1970), *The Tempest* (1971), *Orestes* (1972), and particularly, their devised avant-garde master work *10,000 Miles Away* (1970) which overlapped its gestation with their involvement in *The Legend of King O’Malley* at the Old Tote.

When their guru finally arrived in Australia with his troupe, expectations of a shared camaraderie between the Australian Performance Syndicate and the Polish Teatr Laboratorium failed to materialize. The enthusiasm and hunger for fraternal bonds were reciprocated with cold Slavic indifference. Grotowski had already moved on from his concepts in the 1960s and was more focused on his para-theatrical work in which the Poor Theatre practices held but vestigial interest.⁵³ How much this played into the subsequent dissipation of the Performance Syndicate is a matter of conjecture. Certainly, the disaster of the “half-baked” *Ballad of Angel’s Alley* (1973) while in residency at St Martin’s theatre in Melbourne did not help. Its unsatisfactory outcome due to the administrative failure “to make good on a promise to organize and support specialist tutors for the company” (Maxwell, 2008: 34-35). Nor did the Performance Syndicate production of the classic Sanskrit text *Shakuntala* an important early work directed by Grotowski at the Opole Theatre in 1960 for the Adelaide Festival in 1974 give the company the traction needed to continue its operations. Ironically, *Shakuntala* is a part of the *Mahabharata*, a more sizable proportion of which Brook would make famous more than a decade later. *Shakuntala* was also the beginning of Grotowski’s collaboration with architect, Jerzy Gurowski (Grotowski’s Corrigan). “Their cooperation on a new organization of theatrical space ultimately lead to the

abolishment of the division between stage and auditorium” (Mokrzycka-Pokora, 2016).

By the time Cramphorn took to producing *Shakuntala*, which Grotowski had described as “... an image of Oriental theatre ... to discover and reveal a system of signs that would be appropriate to our theatre and appropriate to our civilization” (ibid 2016) the Syndicate’s actors had lost focus. Splintering into different groups, the original core tenets and ideals for rigorous systems for physical training and penetrative analysis of text were now compromised by excessive usage of mind-altering substances. Furthermore, explorations by the actors of an avant-garde music soundscape did little more than hasten “the collapse of a Grotowskian asceticism in the face of hallucinogen-fuelled jam sessions” (Maxwell, 2008: 37). The Performance Syndicate folded shortly thereafter, with Cramphorn moving on to freelance directing work, mainly through NIDA.

To a large degree the Performance Syndicate experiment exemplified Edward Said’s observations on what happens to ideas and theories when transplanted elsewhere from their point of origin.

First, there is the point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse. Second, there is a distance traversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence. Third, there is a set of conditions ... acceptances ... resistances – which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now fully (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place (Said, 1983: 226-227).

Whilst Said’s observations almost certainly can be applied also to the Stanislavski model when in its migration to the United States, and is indeed worthy of more comprehensive investigation under less constrained circumstances than a Master’s by Research thesis, the attempt by the Performance Syndicate at rendering an authentic duplication of the Grotowskian framework could have only led to an incendiary demise, given the essential social, historical and political differences that separated the disciplined

Eastern European temperament from that of the intrinsically lackadaisical “she’ll be right” attitude of urban Australia in the 1970s.

In 1978 Cramphorn and Jim Sharman teamed up to initiate the Paris Theatre Company from the carcass of the Old Tote. This short-lived burst of promethean exuberance opened with Dorothy Hewitt’s *Pandora’s Cross*, followed by Louis Nowra’s *Visions*. For all the critical drubbing and lack of audience support for this venture, the Paris Theatre Company project is still discussed and remembered with immense respect many decades later. Its lasting legacy was Jim Sharman’s revelatory production of Patrick White’s *A Cheery Soul* starring Robyn Nevin. Although it was one of the early productions mounted at the newly formed Sydney Theatre Company in 1979 it was, as Geoffrey Milne observes, ostensibly a Paris Theatre Company production (Milne, 2004: 139).

At around the same time the Paris Theatre Company opened, Doris Fitton’s Independent Theatre in North Sydney closed doors on its forty-plus year history with a final production of *Hamlet*. As much as Grotowski offered for Cramphorn a new and vibrant theatre language, Fitton’s universe represented “the remarkable survival of all that is worst in my memories of amateur Shakespeare for schools in the fifties”, as Cramphorn wrote in his review of their swansong production, citing the “extraordinarily prolonged death-throes of the Independent” (Milne, 2004: 139). It is not unreasonable to read between the lines a deep disappointment with Australia’s cultural malaise (ibid, 2004: 139), expressed through a readiness to forgive and tolerate tepid mediocrity, while at the same time being quick off the mark to dispatch to the scrap heap his (or anyone’s) attempts of visionary performance experimentation.

In the early 1970s New Wave practitioners at Melbourne’s La Mama and APG were infused with an unsustainable strain of left wing ideologies, while in Sydney a battle for methodological supremacy took place, between Bell and Horler’s Nimrod favouring *The*

Empty Space, and Cramphorn's Performance Syndicate beholden to *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Nimrod and Brook won. Brook's theories suited the 'rough' and tumble irreverence of the Australian temperament. Ultimately, productions at the Stables and Nimrod confirmed what Michael Bogdanov (Brook's assistant on the *Dream*) answered when John Bell asked him the most useful thing Brook had ever said:

"Put on a good show!"

Part Three

3.1: Poor Theatre, Women's Theatre, and Take No Prisoners.

Cicely Berry has based her work on the conviction that while all is present in nature our natural instincts have been crippled from birth by many processes – by the conditioning, in fact, of a warped society. So an actor needs precise exercise and clear understanding to liberate his hidden possibilities and to learn the hard task of being true to 'the instinct of the moment.' - Peter Brook (Berry, 1973: 7).

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, Brook's influence was felt strongly both at Nimrod, and at La Mama in Melbourne. Liz Jones, who assumed the artistic directorship role from La Mama's founder Betty Burstall in 1976, credits Peter Brook as a primary influence in her vision of La Mama and its purpose.⁵⁴ *The Empty Space* and Brook's approach to engagement with text were also an integral part of NIDA's classical training pedagogy throughout the 70s and into the 1990s. Brook's articulation of an actor's craft was particularly active in the Voice Studies department through teachers Betty Williams, Doreen Hogan, Rowena Balos, and Bill Pepper. During those decades at NIDA the principal source texts used in the praxis of vocal training being Cicely Berry's *Voice and the Actor* (1973) and Kristen Linklater's *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976). Balos had trained with Linklater before coming to Australia from the US and working with the performers from APG. Berry and Linklater were significant collaborators in complimenting Brook's vision of theatre as a 'living presence,' their techniques for developing an actor's vocal flexibility added an important aural dimension to his work at the International Centre for Theatre Research.

In the decades following his 1974 visit Grotowski's impact upon Australian performance makers was no less profound than Brook's, yet evolved from a more intensely personal approach to his methodologies, developed by people who had studied with him. This manifested across a diverse spectrum of genres driven by an equally diverse range of personalities. Four notable expressions of Grotowski's legacy, following the demise of the

Performance Syndicate, were the Women in Theatre Group out of Melbourne, Mike Mullins and the work of Entr'Acte at the Performance Space in Sydney, Jepke Goudsmit and Graham Jones Kinetic Energy Dance Company, and Jean Pierre Voos and his Dutch theatre group KISS, who were appointed to oversee Performance Studies at Townsville's James Cook University in 1987. Goudsmit also worked with KISS following her years at Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium in Poland. Taking as a cue the words of Australia's most eminent sociologists, Dr Hugh Mackay, "The Gender Revolution is the greatest revolution of the Twentieth Century",⁵⁵ this chapter will take up the story of the APG's Women's Theatre Group and what transpired in its wake.

The Women's Theatre Group (1974-77) evolved from APG's *Betty Can Jump* in 1972. Clair Dobbin recounts for *Meanjin* (1984) the reaction by women to this genre-defining production: "It so obviously tapped a response in the community and we were packed out for six weeks" (in Blundell, 1997: 191). The ripple effect across Australia's performance platforms from what was then initiated by the APG female collective cannot be understated. The Women's Theatre Group included amongst others Kerry Dwyer, Clair Dobbin, Jude Kuring, Yvonne Marini, Jane Clifton, Evelyn Krape, and Helen Garner.⁵⁶ Yvonne Marini, like Kerry Dwyer and Sue Neville (from earlier work at APG), had also worked with and been inspired by Grotowski (see Laurie 2011). The WTG performance works were confrontational and physical, and not shy at all about antagonizing the audience. Betty Burstall said of the Women's Group work performed at La Mama: "I'm sure they were quite threatening. But they were doing things no one else had done here" (Jones, Burstall, and Garner, 1988: 12).

In the schema of gender politics in performance, what erupted within the APG effectively launched women's theatre in Australia, and in doing so became a primary force in the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Crediting the successful merging of the Joe

Chaikin-influenced experimental theatre troupe The Tribe (led by Doug Anders) with the “boiler-suited” APG collective, and the popular work generated by Romeril, Oakley, Williamson, Hibberd and Barry Dickens, Robertson observed that “female parts were hard to come by [...] [t]alent alone could not shine through the bushel of group and sexual politics” (Robertson, 2001: 69).⁵⁷ All said, there was a fluid exchange of talent between the ensembles at APG and The Tribe at La Mama. Performers included: Jan Cornell, Fay Mokotow, Carol Porter, Bill Garner, Mic Conway, and Red Symonds. The sub-groups followed on directly, and tangentially reflected a tide turning against Ockerism and the male-centric perspective. These women offered a reappraisal of their gender’s contribution to the Australian social and cultural narrative, both contemporary and historical, which hitherto had been sidelined by legends of ANZAC heroics, mateship, stockmen, Banjo and the bushranger, with the token nod to women by way of *The Drover’s Wife*.⁵⁸

At the same time the APG were performing their most triumphant production *The Hills Family Show*, several members of the cast were already engaged in formulating a new group of experimental work. *Stasis*, as it became known, comprised a core quintet of Rob Meldrum, Roz De Winter, Sue Ingleton, Suzie Potter and Yvonne Marini.⁵⁹ Ingleton writes of this strain of work that evolved at the APG as a liberation of body and spirit, that again, in echo of Betty Burstall: “[n]othing like this had been done before”.

What my voice was, what my body was, how to connect it all to my breath which of course was my Spirit although at the time that was not a word that was known to me ... In the space of a few fast years I’d found my voice, discovered feminism, severed my marriage and become a truth seeker practising my art in poor theatre. It was poor theatre ... We were making history they say ... Remember it, for it was unique. It is a time that will not come again (Ingleton, 2011).

Other Melbourne based groups which took up the full frontal raw nerve theatrics of the APG female collective included Andrea Lemon and Meredith Roger’s *Home Cooking Company* and Lois Ellis and Kerry Eccle’s *Flash Rat*, the publicity slogan for which read ‘a

tight company of loose women.’ Later Ellis formed another company, *Radclyffe Theatre Productions*, named in honour of Radclyffe Hall whose 1920s novel about lesbians, *The Well of Loneliness*, was banned in England. In 1979 Robyn Alewood and Camilla Blunden set up the long running Canberra based women-only co-operative, *Women on a Shoestring*, and in Port Adelaide by the mid-80s *Vitalstatistix* emerged as one of the nation’s most progressive thinking and well-funded professional theatre groups promoting a broad range of feminist orientated works (Milne, 2004: 284-85). All these companies gave voice to the second generation Feminist Movement, not only in contextualizing ideology through performance, but in producing biographical works about their historical icons, Sarah Bernhardt, Vita Sackville-West, and Virginia Woolf.⁶⁰

Within this approximately ten-year period (1974-1984) Australia’s cultural configuration changed as never before. The dismissal of the Whitlam government resulted in the return to office of the Coalition helmed by Malcolm Fraser. Having the nation’s leader be a gentleman belonging to the impeccable rural Victorian squattocracy only added petrol to the fire of the radical left in their project of patriarchal immolation. Ironically, Fraser’s government threw even more money at the Arts than his predecessor (Giuffre, 2015).⁶¹

One of the significant recipients of Australia Council largesse was the limited life ‘project grant’ given to set up a Women’s Theatre Project in Sydney (Milne, 2004: 281-82). The two major participants who had lobbied for this grant were Chris Westward, newly appointed to ‘Special Projects’ at Nimrod, and former APG stalwart Jude Kuring. Kuring embodied, more than any other actor of that time, a hybrid of the Brook/Grotowskian ideal. Fearless and lacking formal inhibition, Kuring has been an underrated figure in the codification of this era. An artist who hid nothing, she cut an uncompromising swathe even by standards of Carlton’s extremist factions, and later too when becoming “the terror of the chattering, drinking class in Sydney” (Robertson, 2001: 165). Awarded a Penguin Award for

best actress in Alex Buzo's *Coralie Lansdowne Says No*, NIDA Director John Clark described Kuring's performance as the best he had ever seen by an untrained actor.⁶² What brought her to the attention of the larger national, and even global, audience was when Kuring's greasy-haired bogan 'Noeline Burke' loped into the Wentworth Detention Centre to join the largely female cast of the television series *Prisoner* (1979-1986). With a hunch-shouldered swagger and permanent sneer, Kuring's sympathetic characterisation of oppressed poor white trash caught in a generational cycle of criminality was a first for Australian television; decades before *Bogan Hunters* and other poverty porn reality shows became cringe worthy fodder for the commercial networks. Four decades later, one can see the connection between the emergence of a powerful women's voice in theatre beginning at the APG and the ensuing popularity of strong female characters, which appeared on Australian television, particularly on shows coming out of Melbourne. Many of these characters became as much household names as the actresses portraying them.⁶³

Indeed, the number of male television characters who achieved a commensurate level of fame is considerably dwarfed when compared with their female counterparts. As iconic Pram Factory director Peter King noted of the seven-season run of *Prisoner*: "[w]hat other time were so many good actresses given the opportunity for regular well-paid work" (King, 2017).

There is a distinct difference between the first wave Feminist Movement of the 1920s and 30s, and the second wave group of the 1970s. The first wave pioneer feminists from America included Amelia Earhart, Margaret Burke-White, Dorothy Parker, Claire Booth-Luce and Katherine Hepburn, and across the Atlantic in the literary salons of Paris: Sylvia Beach, Janet Flanner, Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, Solita Solano, *The Little Review's* Margaret Anderson, and Jane Heap who, with the exception of Stein, were all heavily involved with Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way as outlined in Part One of this thesis. In her talk

on Feminism at the 2016 *Battle of Ideas* conference in London, Camille Paglia says of this first generation Feminist Movement: "... they admired what men had done. There was no male bashing as became systemic in the second-generation feminism of the 1970s" (Paglia, 2016). Paglia's remark needs to be contextualized within a historic perspective to counter misunderstandings of hyperbole or self-aggrandizement on Paglia's part.

The shock of epic-scale casualties amongst men, and the accompanying battle fatigue which followed the First World War gave birth (from the death of three empires) to a modernity in which women, by necessity and a desire to contribute, were at the forefront. It had yet to transfigure into the collective gender bias and kinaesthesia resulting from the sexual revolution, which informed the ontology of the second-generation feminist doctrine in the 1970s. In Australia, the resentment, and even disappointment, with perceived male privilege was not without justification. Though Brook's methodology for awakening new possibilities in performance, as outlined in *The Empty Space*, influenced the 'Boomer' generation, its inherent accommodation of the larrikin and even ocker sensibilities appeal to the decidedly masculinist, if not patriarchal Australian instinct for whimsical rough house. Grotowski's ideologies in *Towards a Poor Theatre* allowed for no such evasion, which is perhaps why his ideas appealed to feminists and avant-garde theatre makers. Those whose aim was in addressing more rigorously the political and social issues of the age and to a lesser extent the seeking of deeper spiritual truths.

An ironic connection between the first and second generation of the Twentieth Century's women's movement in Australia was, arguably, Gurdjieff, in terms of his direct influence through his association with the literary figures of Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, and his indirect influence as the spiritual avatar of choice for Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, who were instrumental in the performance practices of Australian theatre makers in the 1970s and 1980s. Kerry Dwyer speaks of our cultural conundrum in this way:

In Australia, we don't want to go very deep. We have a fear of ritual, a fear of losing control. The economic rationalist concept is a way of avoiding any discussion about anything of any value, because you can only talk about these things from the point of view of the dollar value. The point of Pram Factory was to make theatre because there was none.⁶⁴

2.5 Conclusion: The Socio-Political and Spiritual Legacy

The actor searches vainly for the sound of the vanished tradition, and critic and audience follow suit. We have lost all sense of ritual and ceremony (Brook, 1996: 45).

A common link between Stanislavsky, Brook, Grotowski, and even Brecht, are practices built on foundations of tradition used to free the soul from subjugation to the ephemeral and the decadent. For them, a ‘living performance’ communicates ideas in the universal language of presence. Presence being their Holy Grail; not merely in reversing the atrophy of theatre itself but awakening humanity from what they saw as its own self destruction. Peter Brook wrote in his autobiography *Threads of Time*: “[t]he enigma of tradition and the mystery of transmission cannot change, but the great set of keys is always there” (Brook, 1998: 206). The very word ‘tradition’ as noted by Basarab Nicolescu in his essay “Peter Brook and Traditional Thought” derives from the Latin ‘*tradere*’: ‘to restore’ ‘to transmit’ (Nicolescu, 1985):

Throughout its short colonial history, and notwithstanding the more recent effects of multi-culturalism, the Australian national identity bears the legacy of larrikin non-conformity and sometimes abrasive anti-authoritarianism. As Manning Clark puts it “the one bad festering sore in the social body of Melbourne and Sydney was the larrikin” (Clark, 1978: 360). This identity has a definable relationship with the Russian Jewish heritage of British born Brook, but only rudimentarily so with the Slavic Catholicism of Grotowski, and even less so with the Russian Orthodox influences of Grotowski’s theoretical progenitor, Stanislavski. Their respective theatre manifestos, *The Empty Space* and *Towards a Poor Theatre*, were master keys used to unlock expression for the new wave practitioners of Australian performance. No texts in the half century since their publication have had as major an impact in shifting our performance narrative. Both are still quoted and referenced with regularity and sometimes approaching reverence.⁶⁵ Touring productions of Brook’s and his

collaborator Marie-Helene Estienne still regularly appear on the Australian stage, as do revivals of *Marat Sade*.⁶⁶ Director Richard Eyre in *Changing Stages* writes of Brook's self-exile to Paris: "His work became an explicit search for meaning, a spiritual quest" (Eyre, 2000: 358). This perhaps explains the marginalization of Brook's methodologies once the 'rough theatre' concepts were absorbed into the Australian performance vernacular.

One might hypothesise that Brook's restless search for ritual and ceremony diminished his influence in the increasingly rational and secular Australian performance culture. This was even truer for Grotowski and his "new metaphysical theatre" sourced from "a country drenched in communism and Catholicism" (Brook, 1996: 84). The groups and individuals keeping Grotowski's flame alight became sidelined to the alternate fringes from the 1980s onward in the under-funded sphere of avant-garde expressionism. The most notable of these in Sydney being Mike Mullins at the Performance Space, which housed the works of hundreds of artists, including Suzuki-trained, Nigel Kellaway (*Sydney Front*), and Tess De Quincy (*Body Weather*). Artists there focussed on developing movement-based works, heavily promoting political and social justice. Mike Mullins' creation of 'No-One', a silent figure rendered featureless and genderless with head wrapped in cheesecloth, was a seminal Grotowski inspired performance work of art. Mullins took No-One from the stage into the streets appearing in populated public places all over the country, leading sometimes to arrest.⁶⁷ In 1982 John Clark invited Mullins to develop *Nervous System*, a No-One centred production with the third-year actors. It remains one of the most political works performed in NIDA's history. Not least of which because all the actors in their graduating year were supposed to be demonstrating their individuality and talent for prospective agents and future industry employers. Instead, they were all wrapped up as featureless No-Ones performing a wordless Dada-esque piece about the deadliness of Marketing and Consumer Culture. This experiment was not replicated with any subsequent graduating year.

The other significant company based on Grotowskian principles is Kinetic Energy. For over forty years Kinetic Energy has been a consistent force in staging socio-political theatre. Based in Sydney, the company tours their shows extensively, both to schools and to venues throughout regional Australia. The core of Kinetic Energy is dancer/choreographer Graham Jones, and his Dutch actress and director wife, Jepke Goudsmit, who worked with Grotowski at his laboratory during the 70s in Wroclaw and later performed for eight years with Jean-Pierre Voos's Brook and Grotowski-based theatre research centre (KISS) in the Netherlands.⁶⁸ Over the last two decades Kinetic Energy moved on from its roots in contemporary dance to exclusively social justice theatre, often including sourced verbatim transcripts in the texts. Their projects include Indigenous rights (*Freedom Ride*), mistreatment of asylum seekers and refugees (*Refuge*), and homelessness (*Home*). In 1990 after their funding had been cut, the ABC's Richard Glover spoke on Kinetic Energy: "Jones and Goudsmit are among the very few in Sydney who are still burning the flame of experimental theatre in this increasingly inclement climate."⁶⁹ In 2004 using only dialogue culled from the works of Shakespeare Goudsmit and Jones performed *Shake-Speare* (Parts 1 & 2) weaving a linear narrative from an assemblage of textual clues building a case for the Earl of Oxford being the true author of the Bards works.

My own textual and interview-based research, including several conversations with Australian artists who had worked with Grotowski uncovered no awareness of Grotowski's affiliation with Gurdjieff; if there was vague knowledge it held but nugatory value in defining his essential impact on performance both personally and within the wider picture. Gurdjieff's connection with Brook has been addressed academically in Australia through an essay on *Meetings With Remarkable Men* by Carol Cusack, who affirms Gurdjieff's influence on Brook's spiritual themes. "In the Gurdjieffian universe" she writes, "everything is alive and

seeks to feed itself to achieve a higher level of being.”⁷⁰ I also recall Ashley Wain’s doctoral thesis, *Acting and Essence*, referred to in an earlier chapter.⁷¹

Dramatically Gurdjieff appeared as a character in Alma de Groen’s biographical play on Katherine Mansfield, *Rivers of China* (1983). Any further research penetrating into Brook, and especially Grotowski’s spiritual dimensionality in performance, and its connection to Gurdjieff, can now proceed on the basis of Catherine Christof’s recent publications (Christof, 2017: 1-238). Despite Brook’s effulgent acknowledgement of Grotowski’s contribution to a shared vision of theatre’s transcendent possibilities, there is little from Grotowski’s own writings in returning the compliment to Brook.

Without speculating on any personal schism in terms of their respective methodologies that may have developed, Mike Mullins tells of a lunch with Brook in Paris in the mid-1970s, following his (Mullins’) year in Wroclaw working as an amanuensis to Grotowski.

When I left Poland, I went to Paris to hang around his company (Brook’s CITC at the Bouffe’s Du Nord) I actually had a lunch with him. He was very cynical about the whole Grotowski thing, very dismissive, and it was more about the para-theatrical work. “If you were an alien and you came down to earth and landed in San Francisco in 1969 and then took off and landed in Wroclaw this year, you wouldn’t see much difference”.⁷²

The forays into Eastern culture and mysticism undertaken by both Brook and Grotowski have no doubt impacted on the burgeoning interculturalism globalizing performance. Brook’s work, in particular, was profoundly influential in shaping the awareness of non-European performance traditions and practices: witness the Australian leg of the CITC tour in 1980 and again with *The Mahabharata*, at the Adelaide Festival in 1988. These departures from a Eurocentric focus of inquiry also brought withering criticism from

non-European scholars. The most conspicuous of these disparaging missives came from Indian director Rustom Bharucha, levelled at both directors in his 1990 book *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture*. With a generous serve of post-colonial ire, Bharucha castigates Brook for imperialist hubris in the staging of the *Mahabharata*, and for having no internal understanding of the holy book and traditions of a ten-thousand-year old culture while adapting it under the auspices of the text's universal message.⁷³ Bharucha goes on to call the production a "cultural salad" with Brook as "... the unacknowledged chef ... The materials of this salad have come from all parts of the world, but it is Brook's house dressing which gives the salad its distinct taste" (Bharucha, 1993: 81). He describes Brook's adaptation of Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* as "an oriental version of Jonathon Livingston's *Seagull*", and *The Mahabharata* as "The Ten Commandments of contemporary Western theatre" (Bharucha, 1993: 69).

Bharucha is even more brutal to Grotowski, who arrived in India with his Theatre of Sources to conduct classes in Khardar. Bharucha eviscerates him for his mystification of what, to the Indian people and Indian actors, was commonplace and ordinary: like sitting for hours in complete silence, listening to the leaves, and telling them that grass is holy. "If you had not been Grotowski," he writes, "you would have been treated like a madman and probably asked to leave" (ibid, 1993: 50).

Bharucha's barbs about Brook and Grotowski are again echoed by Shakespeare scholar John Russell Brown in his 1998 essay "Theatrical Pillage in Asia: redirecting the Intercultural Traffic", predominately aimed at Mnouchkine and Brook:

Exchange, borrowing, trade, or looting across major frontiers diminishes any theatre because it transgresses its inherent reliance on the society from which the drama takes its life and for which it was intended to be performed ... However worthily it is intentioned, intercultural theatrical exchange is, in fact, a form of pillage, and the result is fancy-dress pretence or, at best, the creation of a small zoo in which no creature has its full life (Brown, 1998).

Brook, however, protests the term ‘intercultural’ as applied to his work saying, “[t]here is something too racial and too cultural in even talking about being interracial and intercultural. That is not what it’s about” (Brook, 1999: 143).

In a paper titled “After Appropriation” published in *The Drama Review (TDR)* in 2000, Craig Latrell argues that “artistic borrowing” from Eastern cultures is not merely a one-way street, citing his observations in 1992 when serving on the faculty at Institut Kesenian Jakarta:

Young actors study the principals of Stanislavskian acting technique and perform a wide variety of Western plays in translation, while at the same time studying indigenous Indonesian theatrical genres from throughout the archipelago. When Indonesian actors perform a work of realism, they believe they are acting realistically, and indeed, audiences seem to accept the acting as “real.” Yet to the outsider, their acting barely resembles the realistic acting style to which we as Westerners are accustomed. Realism in the context of contemporary Indonesian acting clearly means something different than it does in Western context (Latrell, 2000: 50).

One of the central features of Brook’s work is the claim to sharing of knowledge towards a richer understanding of the human condition and purpose. This has been evident since the 1970s when he worked on the *Orghast* project with Ted Hughes in Persepolis, and later his troupe touring the villages in Africa with *The Conference of the Birds*, a decade or more before embarking on *The Mahabharata*.

Against Bharucha’s critique, Jean Claude Carrière understands *The Mahabharata* as a digestible narrative for audiences unfamiliar with the ancient Indian sprawl of non-linear Sanskrit, and to “clarify the notion of *dharma*, the understanding of which is crucial to the understanding of *The Mahabharata*” (O’Connor, 1989: 56). In his introduction to the printed edition of the play Carrière wrote, “Dharma is the law on which rests the order of the world” (ibid, 1989: 58).

During Brook’s 1980 Australian visit his CITC Company performed *The Ik* for the remote indigenous communities of the Northern Territory. *The Ik* deals with an African tribe

deprived of its own land who are starving to death. Brook was amongst the first theatre directors to actually engage with the Aborigines and experience the disparity of two cultures (traditional and colonizer) living on the same land. He writes in *The Shifting Point*: “To understand the Aborigines’ passion for their soil, we must understand it is their book” (Brook, 1989: 140). It is worth noting that this performance predated the engagement of mainstage theatre with Aboriginal Australians in the 1990s.⁷⁴ Whether this was overtly influenced by Brook is a matter of conjecture; it nevertheless demonstrates the prescient qualities of Brook’s inquiries into the nature of a people oppressed, and their relationship with the land.

The framework defining Brook’s theatrical universe at the CITC is contained in 16 X 16 feet of empty space. No such perimeters contain the enigmatic Grotowski’s protean explorations paring away constraints to reveal the human. Upon Grotowski’s death in 1999, James Waites was no longer bound by his covenant with Grotowski not to divulge any details of his time in Armidale (1974) with the one other participant doing Grotowski’s workshop:

We were nearly always naked, and the work was done in silence. We might walk into a room and it glowed with heat and warmth, or climb into wine kegs full of cold water, lined at the bottom with bristling pineapple heads... A journey of discovery into the self via the senses had begun, activated by what were essentially ‘dramatic’ devices.⁷⁵

In a *Drama Review* interview, “Notes from the Temple: A Grotowski Seminar”, the American actor Margaret Croyden states:

Grotowski says he has no “system” because “system” implies rigidity, schema, imitation and corruption. He urged actors not to imitate him, but to confront their own work, investigate their own roots and cultures, test their own methods and find their own organic responses, both on a specific technical level, and on philosophic and aesthetic levels as well.⁷⁶

A problem arises as a result of eclecticism in sourcing Eastern practices. Grotowski's application of yoga 'asanas' as described in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, were then repealed by Grotowski as noted in *The Grotowski Sourcebook* by Richard Schechner:

... we began by doing yoga directed toward absolute concentration. Is it true, we asked, that yoga can give actors the power of concentration? We observed that despite all our hopes the opposite happened. There was a certain concentration, but it was introverted.⁷⁷

Yoga is a complete system unto itself with its own centre. Common to our concept of multiculturalism and dangerous in the hands of the ill prepared, this selective and partial appropriation is particular to remarkable individuals like Grotowski, Cieslak, Mirecka, and Jaholkowski. Grotowski drew ideas and techniques from a vast ocean of resources for his system lived in a perpetual flow of change.⁷⁸ Were anyone a living example of 'In Search of the Miraculous' it was Grotowski. His work with actors was in a constant state of evolution like a climbing scale, when one octave was completed he commenced the next phase. First came his Laboratory work, then the Para-theatrical, then his so-called bee hives. Actual productions served as monuments to what was already finished. Yet, as with so many innovators, it is the power of their presence as much as their practices, which drives the chariot of a particular *zeitgeist*. For those who follow there is a treasure chest of discoveries to dissect and methodologies to analyse, while remaining in search of their shifting point of centre. This is where disagreement and discord between old and new acolytes begins, and often overlooks foundational traditions within the practices of the revolutionary or avant-garde. The urgent question therefore arises: How can people (who have not lived with traditions other than their own, in whatever state of ripeness or decay) understand these methods except on a superficial level? The physical and mental conditions which existed in 1960s Wroclaw [the contextual realities of Polish history compromised by the horrors of WW2 and further eradicated by Communist rule] produced a body of actors like Ryszard

Cieslak that we cannot expect students of Performance Studies in the Twenty-First Century to replicate.

Nearly fifty years after Brook and Grotowski recalibrated Australia's performance culture the dominant ideology pervading the present schema of theatre is one of aesthetics based in the fundamentals of economics. Whatever vestige of their influence remains, it is subsumed by the dictates of a monetary based imperative. Homogenization and doleful dependency on ebbing resources has been chronicled by a slew of industry professionals, none more so vehemently than Julian Meyrick, the self-designated 'undertaker' of a performance culture, who sources its flat-lining in his Platform Papers essay of 2005:

... as the New Wave moved away from its historic identification with 'alternative' theatre, that sector declined, both in resource and rhetorical terms, and this disadvantaged not only successor generations but Australian theatre overall, by putting the squeeze on its most developmentally-minded artists (Meyrick, 2005: 51).⁷⁹

Meyrick's concluding remarks on why theatre is facing paralysis, notes the government subsidies bestowed upon the Arts sector: "[n]o doubt much of this money disappears in useless compliance costs designed to offset the anxiety of governments in giving it in the first place" (Meyrick, 2005: 61). This helps account for why it is impossible for Grotowski-based work to exist, in any real form, in the rehearsal rooms or on the stages of twenty first century venues: The associated liabilities are counter to the current Workplace Safety regulatory model. Grotowski's extreme physical work which infused much of the training in the early days of the APG and La Mama, would violate today's ethics of compliance. There is no doubt it was this very work built upon Grotowski's practices that inspired APG's Women's Group, Soapbox Circus and later Circus Oz, who have been performing and touring consistently since 1978. It is not without reason to speculate that the early acclaim and world tours of Circus Oz gave rise to the phenomenon of Cirque Du Soleil, which is perhaps the

vicarious global legacy of what was birthed at the Pram Factory in Carlton all those decades ago.

Since Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, and Brecht in the first half of the twentieth century, and Brook and Grotowski leading the charge in the second half, the Director has become the fundamental force of performance discourse in theatre and remains so (at least in the first quarter) of the twenty first century. 1970s artists the calibre of Robert Wilson, Anne Bogart, Robert Lepage, and Arianne Mnouchkine have developed signature styles and aesthetics in their respective practices which have afforded both imitation and world-wide recognition.⁸⁰ In every respect these artists embody the words of Stanislavsky in his speech to celebrate the thirtieth birthday of the Moscow Arts Theatre:

Art creates the life of the human soul. We are called to convey the life of the modern man, his ideas, on the stage. Theatre should not imitate its spectators, no, it must lead its audience step by step up a grand staircase. Art must open the eye to the ideal (Carriere, 2010: 23).

Whatever transpires in their aftermath globally, Peter Brook and Jerzy Grotowski, through their methodologies, both text-based and performance-driven, opened the eyes of a generation of theatre practitioners in Australia to an ideal. An ideal by inception which created a secure landing upon this Stanislavkian staircase providing future generations an empty space of rich possibilities, and to build higher octaves in the presence of societal and cultural change.

Endnotes

Prologue

¹ Here I am specifically using ‘nihilism’ as defined by Russian theologian Nicholai Berdyaev: “a revolt against the injustices of history, against the false civilization; it is a demand that history shall come to an end, and a new life, outside or above history, begin.” In Callan 1965: 47.

² Jepke Goudsmit, Kinetic Energy, interview about her participation in the Grotowski laboratory in Poland in the early 1970s.

1.1 A Challenge to Prevailing Ideologies: How the Cultural Landscape was shaped to receive the Ideas of Gurdjieff in the 1920s and Brook and Grotowski in the 1960s.

³ The Ladies of the Rope included Solita Solano, Katherine Hulme, Margaret Anderson, Djuna Barnes, Nancy Cunard, and Janet Flanner.

⁴ Actress Diane Cilento was a student of J. G Bennett in the early 70s at his ‘Sherbourne’ school. Several years later following Bennett’s death in 1973 Cilento moved back to Australia and continued promoting both Bennett and Gurdjieff’s work running courses in the Fourth way from her 200-acre property called ‘Karnak’ in Far North Queensland. See Cilento, 2006.

⁵ New York’s Living Theatre’s Julian Beck and Janet Malina attest to the global nature of theatrical counter revolutionary forces at play. See Goodman, L. and Jane de Gay 2002.

⁶ <http://ussc.edu.au/events/Sydney-Ideas-The-centre-cannot-hold-rethinking-the-1960s-in-America-and-beyond> April 21st 2016. Speakers: Dr Thomas Adams, Dr Rebecca Sheehan, Professor Andrew Diamond, Associate Professor Caroline Rolland-Diamond.

1.3 Jerzy Grotowski: *hic et nunc*. The Sacred Aim.

⁷ Osiński quotes Peter Brook *With Grotowski: Theatre is Just a Form*, ed. by George Banu and Grzegorz Ziółkowski with Paul Allain (Wrocław: Grotowski Institute, 2009), p. 27.

⁸ A.R Orage was editor of “The New Age” magazine.

1.4 Peter Brook: An Orthodoxy Within the Mysticism

⁹ Poet, W.B Yeats was also a member of the Occult fraternity ‘The Golden Dawn’ to which the most famous magician of the Twentieth Century, Aleister Crowley also belonged.

¹⁰ The Mensheviks were a breakaway faction from the Bolsheviks led by Julius Martov who were less radically minded than the Bolsheviks, willing to concede it necessary for a leadership role within the democratic bourgeois base than simply blanketing a sovereignty of power alone to the proletariat.

¹¹ Another observation of note is Brook’s close and trusted relationships with women in adult life, coming from an upbringing where the father is the dominant figure of influence contrasts to Grotowski’s trusted circle of formidable men throughout adult life having been raised in a home with a distinctly maternal influence.

¹² Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) was born the same year as Shakespeare and has become a subject of much speculation, not only regarding his alleged authorship of Shakespeare’s plays, but also his connection within Philip Sidney’s ‘School of the Night’ and Sir Francis Walsingham’s espionage ring which had spies and operatives over much of Europe. Controversy also surrounds Marlowe’s death in a pub in Deptford in 1594. Just how much influence Marlowe had on Shakespeare has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Nevertheless, the output in dramatics works by Marlowe at the time of his death greatly overshadows in maturity those of Shakespeare whose works by that time comprised of *Titus Andronicus*, *Comedy of Errors* and the melodramatic, *Richard III*.

¹³ Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was an occultist who claimed to have been given a book of law by a supernatural entity whilst in Cairo. From this known as the ‘*Aeon of Horus*’ Crowley wrote his own manifesto, *Themenos*, which opens with the code upon which magical arts are invoked ‘Do what thou will shall be the whole of the law.’ Over the decades since his death Crowley’s reputation has grown substantially. In 1970 Jimmy Page, guitarist from ‘Led Zeppelin’ bought Crowley’s home ‘Boleskine House’ in Scotland and filmed the video of ‘The Song Remains the Same’ there. Much post-modern recalibration of moral behaviour skewed towards individualism and the lifting of behavioural and sexual taboos can be traced to the teachings and of Crowley whose influence surfaced substantially in the counter revolutionary 1960s. See “BBC4 Masters of Darkness Aleister Crowley”. BBC, 2002. TV program.

¹⁴ Shakespeare plays directed by Brook (1946-1962) *King John*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*.

¹⁵ Bill Pepper from interview transcript 3/5/16

¹⁶ Liz Jones from interview transcript 7/11/15

¹⁷ Tony Knight trained at the Drama Centre in London under Yat Malmgren, a principal disseminator of Rudolph Laban's work. Knight went on to be Head of Acting at NIDA (1988-2009).

¹⁸ Lex Marinos Interview 15/6/16

¹⁹ The critic's quote here is taken from Albee Thoms' unpublished memoir, a selection from which was published in the *Australian Financial Review* in 2013. The critique is unattributed in Thoms' writing. Thoms died in 2012.

²⁰ Many of this group in the early 60s who were involved in University theatrics were also part of an intellectual libertarian group known as The Sydney Push. Their headquarters being a pub in Sussex Street. Denizens of the Push included journalists, P.P McGuinness, Mungo MacCallum, Robert Hughes and film makers, Bruce Beresford and Phil Noyce.

²¹ Hayes Gordon (1920-1999) came to Australia in a touring production of "Kiss me Kate" in 1952 and stayed. He began teaching at the Independent Theatre in North Sydney before moving with his dedicated group of performers to the Ensemble Theatre space in Kirribilli in 1960 where it remains to day. NIDA was founded by British director, Robert Quentin and later stewarded for decades by the partnership of Tasmanian born director, John Clark and Gundagai born General Manager, Elizabeth Butcher who are chiefly responsible for the school's subsequent international reputation.

²² Alan Veitch, a former writer for Grahame Kennedy, is a fictional comic account of a boozy larrikin Australian bad boy who makes it big in Hollywood: A reputation Australian actors garnered earlier in the century thanks to exploits from the likes of Errol Flynn and later Peter Finch.

²³ When the acclaimed and controversial director, Peter Sellars was appointed Artistic Director of the 2002 Adelaide Festival he was forced to resign 4 -months prior to the Festival when Telstra, one of the sponsors, pulled out because of the festival poster with Hitler superimposed over the image of great painters with the suggestion that if Hitler hadn't been knocked back by the prestigious Vienna School of Arts and instead been creatively nurtured, World War II and the Holocaust could have been avoided. Clements, A (2001) *The Guardian* 'What Went Wrong with Peter Sellars?' <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/nov/17/books>

²⁴ *The Sundowners* (1960) was a Hollywood blockbuster directed by Fred Zinnerman about an impoverished family living in early Twentieth Century Australian outback. It starred Robert Mitcham, Deborah Kerr, Peter Ustinov, Glynis Johns, and Dina Merrill.

2.2 1970: Australia and the Shock of Identity in an Overdue Cultural Revolution

²⁵ One of Dr Greer's more infamous contributions was not an article but a close-up photo of her vagina in all its hirsute glory with knees behind her ears as an advertisement for an upcoming "Suck" festival in Amsterdam. 1970 was also the year her seminal feminist manifesto *The Female Eunuch* was published.

²⁶ In the 1994 documentary film *Crumb*, art critic Robert Hughes in his commentary of Robert Crumb mused that he was "the Brueghel of second half of the Twentieth Century, not that there was a Brueghel of the first half."

²⁷ The editors of the original Australian edition of *Oz* were also convicted and later overturned on appeal under the Australian judicial system on charges of 'Obscenity' in 1964.

²⁸ Barry Humphries (1936 -) and cartoonist Nicholas Garland (1935 -) made a name for themselves in the 1960s through the "Barry McKenzie" cartoon strip which appeared in *Private Eye* magazine, satirizing the beer guzzling expat denizens from Down Under holed up in Earls Court area of London, affectionately known as 'Kangaroo Valley'.

²⁹ Christiansen, R. (2013, 7th Oct). How Downton Abbey got Nellie Melba All Wrong. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/downton-abbey/10360164/How-Downton-Abbey-got-Nellie-Melba-all-wrong.html>

³⁰ Rex Cramphorn, Nick Lathouris, Robyn Nevin, Gillian Jones, David Cameron, Terry O'Brien, William Yang. Cramphorn dropped the 'e' from his name around 1974 (see Maxwell 2009)

³¹ Derek Nicholson was a designer and production manager at Old Tote Theatre, and later the Director of the University of Sydney's Theatre Studies Services Unit at the Seymour Centre.

³² It is an irony worth mentioning that this same year (1970) the bohemian younger son of one of the blue ribbon catholic families of Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, Robert Hughes, was appointed art critic for *Time* magazine at the same time his older brother, Tom, was Attorney General in the Gorton government, champion of the conscription bill which was sending Australians to fight in Vietnam.

³³ The slogan "*All the Way with LBJ*" (appositely another Texan) had been the policy of the Holt and Gorton Liberal governments since the draft was introduced in 1964 for conscripted service to fight in Vietnam.

³⁴ Bell, J. Email correspondence (27/11/16).

³⁵ In the early days of Australia's colonial history, the clergy were given corporal powers to inflict punishment. The most notable amongst them being Rev Samuel Marsden who earned the name, 'the flogging parson'

2.3 Larrikins, Ockers & the Empty Space

³⁶ John Bell and Nick Enright were both raised Catholic. Bell was educated at Marist Brothers and Enright at St Ignatius College (Riverview).

³⁷ The word "Larrack" can be traced even further back to the Fourteenth Century Yorkshire meaning "careless" A dictionary of archaic and provincial words, obsolete phrases, proverbs, and ancient customs, from the fourteenth century. Retrieved from

https://archive.org/stream/dictionaryofarcha02hallrich/dictionaryofarcha02hallrich_djvu.txt

³⁸ As Deacon in charge of all material goods, St Lawrence was asked by the prefect of Rome to hand over the entire church's chattels after the Emperor Valerian had put to death all Bishops and priests including Pope Sixtus II. Lawrence asked for three days to gather the church holdings, whereupon he distributed the lot of them to the sick and destitute to avoid their confiscation by the Imperial treasury.

³⁹ *Songs of a Sentimental Bloke* by C. J. Dennis (1876-1938)

⁴⁰ Jim McNeil (1935-1982) *How Does Your Garden Grow, The Chocolate Frog, Jack.*

⁴¹ In the film, *The Sundowners*, British actor, Ronald Frazer, played a character called 'Ocker'

⁴² Kerry Dwyer Interview on Grotowski 8th April 2015

Larrikins were not exclusively male (Tilly Devine, Bea Miles) The closest to a cultural female representative of Ocker culture was perhaps Maureen Elkner with song, *Rak off Normie*, the answer to Bob Hudson's "Newcastle Song 1975. Which was as much a celebration of westie and early bogan culture as it was the Ocker.

⁴³ Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, Clifford Still, Franz Kline, Willem De Kooning

⁴⁴ Margaret Williams. <http://www.pramfactory.com/family.html> 16/12/16

⁴⁵ Any idea of a spiritual essence manifested under the subjective influences of opiates and narcotic consumption by the youth tribes of the time. Castaneda and the *Teachings of Don Juan* were not unfamiliar texts to the denizens of Carlton or Surry Hills, but as such these ethereal concepts were too ephemeral to have substantial impact on the stage.

⁴⁶ Kerry Dwyer Interview on Grotowski 8th April 2015

⁴⁷ *A Stretch of the Imagination* has been memorably performed by Peter Cummins who originated the role, Bruce Spence, and Max Gillies, both when in his 30s and again in his 50s.

⁴⁸ Peter King (1956 -) Australian theatre director who worked at Pram factory. Co-artistic director with Keith Gallasch at SATC (1985-86), Going Through Stages 1990's (Lines in the Desert, Dazzle of Shadows, Mahoney Masks) Barrie Kosky (1967 -) Australian theatre and opera director from Melbourne. Works predominantly in Europe.

⁴⁹ Lex Marinos Interview 15th June 2016

⁵⁰ Ralph Cotterill email 27th April 2016

2.4 Freestyle Upstream to Jerzy Shore.

⁵¹ Grahame Blundell told his wife at the time (Kerry Dwyer) that he was envious of the spiritual dimension elicited by the women's faction at the APG. (Kerry Dwyer in interview 19/1/17).

⁵² Kerry Dwyer Interview on Grotowski 8th April 2015.

⁵³ Following Grotowski's death, theatre critic, James Waites (1955-2014) wrote an article on his experience attending the 1974 Grotowski workshop on a farm near Armidale. See Waites, J. (1999). Potato Country. *Real Time* (30).

3.1 Poor Theatre, Women's Theatre and Take No Prisoners.

⁵⁴ Liz Jones Interview 26th November 2015

⁵⁵ Dr Hugh Mackay AO, *The Gandhi Oration*, UNSW 30th January 2017

⁵⁶ Helen Garner has become one of the leading contemporary Australian novelists and screenwriters, notably her 1977 first novel *Monkey Grip* from which she adapted a screenplay for the highly successful film starring Noni Hazlehurst.

⁵⁷ Joseph Chaikin (1935-2003) was involved with Julian Beck and Judith Malina's *Living Theatre* in New York before starting his own experimental theatre company, *The Open Theatre* (1963-1973) which had similarities in approach to theatre as Grotowski.

⁵⁸ A short story by Henry Lawson (1896) and a painting by Russell Drysdale (1945)

⁵⁹ Works that were developed from the *Stasis* ensemble include: *The Young Peer Gynt*, *The Sylvia Plath Show*, *The Earth Air Fire Water Show*, *Antony and Cleopatra*.

⁶⁰ Both APG's Sue Ingleton and Evelyn Krape performed in *Flash Rat* productions. The latter as Sarah Bernhardt in her declining years in Ronald Harwood's play *After the Lions*. Radclyffe Theatre 1989 production: *Vita! A Fantasy* by Sara Hardy about Woolf and her lover Sackville-West.

⁶¹ "Instead cultural institutions established by Whitlam continued and more were developed." Giuffre, L. (2015). Malcolm Fraser life and legacy: The experts respond. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/malcolm-frasers-life-and-legacy-experts-respond-39111>

⁶² Jude Kuring in conversation 1985.

⁶³ Abigail (Bev Houghton) Elaine Lee (Vera Collins) Lorraine Bayley (Grace Sullivan) Carol Burns (Frankie Doyle) Val Lehman (Bea Smith) Sheila Florence (Lizzie Birdsworth) Maggie Kirkpatrick (The Freak) Rowena Wallace (Pat the Rat)

⁶⁴ Kerry Dwyer Interview on Grotowski 8th April 2015

3.2 Conclusion: The Socio-Political and Spiritual Legacy

⁶⁵ Brook and The Empty Space were referenced in two separate articles by Bree Hadley and Paul Davies in the ADS annual journal, *Transported* Oct 2016. *Australian Drama Studies* 69. (2016). (Vol. October 2016). Melbourne: La Trobe University.

⁶⁶ *Siswe Banze is Dead* (2006) *Eleven and Twelve* (2010) *The Suit* (2014) *Marat/Sade* New Theatre Sydney 2016.

⁶⁷ Mullins No-One character's first public appearance was in 1976.

⁶⁸ <http://www.kineticenergytheatre.org/history/>

⁶⁹ Goudsmit, J. Personal correspondence. 2017.

⁷⁰ Cusack, C. 'An Enlightened Life in Text and Image: G. I. Gurdjieff's Meetings with Remarkable Men (1963) and Peter Brook's Meetings With Remarkable Men' (1979)

⁷¹ Wain, A. (2005). *Acting & Essence: Experiencing Essence, Presence and Archetype in the Acting Traditions of Stanislavski and Copeau*.

⁷² Mike Mullins in interview on Grotowski 24/11/15 – recorded at 55:52.

⁷³ The Mahabharata was adapted by long term Brook collaborator Jean-Claude Carrière

⁷⁴ *The Cake Man*, Robert Merritt (1975) *No Sugar*, Jack Davis (1985) *Up the Road*, John Harding (1997) *Stolen*, Jane Harrison (1998) *Box the Pony*, Leah Purcell (1998) *Aliwa!* Dallas Winmar (2002) *The Sapphires*, Tony Briggs (2004) *The Story of the Miracles at Cookie's Table*, Wesley Enoch (2007) *Jack Charles V the Crown*, Jack Charles (2011) *Black Medea*, Wesley Enoch (2013) Bangarra Dance Theatre (1989-)

⁷⁵ Waites, J. (1999). Potato Country. *Real Time* (30).

⁷⁶ Croyden, M. Notes from the Temple: A Grotowski Seminar. Retrieved 19/1/17, from MIT Press <http://mikemullins.com.au/archives>

⁷⁷ Lisa Wolford and Richard Schechner, *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1997) *Google Books*. Web. 10 Feb. 2016.

⁷⁸ Kerry Dwyer Interview on Grotowski 8th April 2015

⁷⁹ Meyrick used the term "undertaker" for himself when delivering his 'Alternative Theatre' paper at the University of Sydney symposium *10 Questions About the Australian Theatrical Avant Garde* 3rd-4th Nov 2016. In this he echoes in sentiment the final sentence in the Grotowski chapter of Jan Kott's collection of essays *The Theater of Essence* (1984) "The last two decades in literature and poetry, in painting, music, and theatre are more and more generally defined by the term *post-modern*. For me it sounds like *post mortem*".

⁸⁰ Playwright, Edward Albee, during a playwriting course at University of Houston in 1996 when asked by a student for his thoughts on Robert Wilson's work, replied: "He changed my perception of time." Bogart's concept of 'viewpoints' in the training of actors was a key methodology employed by Jeff Jankowski during his three-year tenure as Head of Acting at NIDA. Arienne Mnouchkine has been at the helm of Le Théâtre du Soleil since the 1970s. The theatre is based in Paris in the grounds of The Cartoucherie, a former munitions factory.

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Figure

Fig. 1. Unknown. Last photograph taken of George Gurdjieff. 1948.

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