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Jerzy Grotowski's influence on British theatre

1966 – 1980

(histories, perspectives, recollections)

Research Phd
July 2011

Pablo Pakula

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates Jerzy Grotowski's influence on British theatre from a historical point of view. It examines a series of telling case studies between 1966 and 1980 which represent instances of both direct and indirect connections with the Teatr Laboratorium, and which exemplify how Grotowski's practice/ideas have been adapted, borrowed, misunderstood, and used as a catalyst by different British theatre artists. These case studies include: Peter Brook's production of *US* with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the work of 'fringe' groups Freehold and Triple Action Theatre, and a number of individuals who participated in paratheatrical activities (Anna Furse, Jennifer Kumiega, etc.). In order to better assess the UK's relationship with Grotowski, this thesis also analyses the British response to his company's performances in 1968 and 1969, as well as discussing *Towards a Poor Theatre* as the primary channel for the dissemination of his ideas.

This thesis concludes by proposing an alternative way of mapping Grotowski's influence, not in a linear or hierarchical manner, but using a model which foregrounds diversity and simultaneity. In doing so it emphasises the multiplicity of Grotowski's legacies and embraces the complex processes by which they have spread.

The connections between Grotowski and the UK and the British relationship to his practice have not previously been scrutinised. Therefore the methodology adopted by the thesis is based on archival research, field work, and extensive interviews with key individuals.

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PREFACE

This thesis has been undertaken under the auspices of the British Grotowski Project. Its topic was initially conceived by Paul Allain as an integral part to this three-year research venture – my task has been to focus and realise it.

In 2006, Allain was awarded £203,000 from the U.K.'s Arts and Humanities Research Council to carry out a re-evaluation of the theories and practices of Jerzy Grotowski. My contribution to this project has been to research his influence on and reception in Britain from the 1960s to the recent past. Carrying out my work under the British Grotowski Project has enabled me to make a number of important and useful connections (i.e. with the Grotowski Institute in Wroclaw). Moreover, thanks to this and my association to Allain's project, I have also been able to attend a series of practical workshops, work demonstrations, screenings, and symposia in Canterbury, London, and Wroclaw. All these events, and the informal conversations I had with various individuals – their sheer number prevent me from giving further details – have inevitably informed my thinking about Grotowski's practice and his influence.

Nonetheless, I would like to highlight two main events which particularly helped me to develop my arguments. The British Grotowski Project culminated in June 2009 with an international conference held at the University of Kent. This provided me with yet another opportunity to talk to key scholars and practitioners in the field, and position my work in relation to them. Furthermore, I conceived a post-conference symposium which served as a platform for young academics and less established practitioners. Duncan Jamieson, Adela Karsznia, and Ben Spatz helped me structure and organise this two-day event. This open forum gave me the opportunity to discuss my research, as well as finding out about similar work – for instance the study of Grotowski's impact in the USA carried out by Kermit Dunkleberg. These events were documented by Peter Hulton (Arts Archives) and are now part of the British Grotowski Archive at the University of Kent's Templeman Library.

Chapter I

INFLUENCE, IMPACT AND INSPIRATION

1. INTRODUCTION

As is suggested by its title, this thesis seeks to map and assess Jerzy Grotowski's impact and influence upon British theatre. Throughout this introduction I will outline my understanding of how the process of influence operates and the methodologies I have used to identify, describe, and assess it. On a conceptual level, this thesis also seeks to demonstrate that influence in theatre and performance is measurable and can be substantiated with evidence.

By the early 1970s Grotowski was already regarded as one of the most important practitioners and theoreticians in the post World War II cultural landscape. Since then, his stature and the appreciation of his work have grown exponentially; so much so that today he is often listed amongst the great figures of 20th century theatrical innovation: Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Brecht, and then, Grotowski (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvi). Having joined this canon it is not surprising that Grotowski is now 'taught' at universities and conservatoires across the world[1]. His ideas and his work have spread widely through a number of different channels, becoming reference point and source of inspiration for many companies and practitioners. The fact that Grotowski has had a strong impact and influence upon theatre is difficult to deny; however, it is almost equally difficult to support this statement with hard evidence. First and foremost this is because to talk about artistic influence, impact and inspiration is to enter a murky and treacherous terrain. Although these words are within our everyday vocabulary and they do not seem at first to have complex definitions, their meanings are unstable, depending on particular usages and interpretations. One could bluntly state "*X* influenced *Y*", but such unspecific claims raise a number of theoretical and methodological problems. Consequentially, before discussing how Grotowski's legacy spread and became manifest within the British context, I will begin by addressing some questions about what is meant by 'influence',

[1] In Britain, Grotowski is even part of the secondary education curriculum.

'impact' and 'inspiration', as well as what measure might be used to asses these phenomena. My aim is to avoid confusion and to establish, as far as possible, a certain methodological rigour.

2.TOWARDS A DEFINITION

'Influence', 'impact' and 'inspiration' are terms that are often used by both artists and academics to describe the relationship between a work of art and circumstances around its creation. However, little or no time is usually dedicated to defining what these three words mean in themselves. Therefore, and considering that they refer to somewhat intangible concepts, it is not surprising that 'influence', 'impact' and 'inspiration' have become somewhat vague. My preoccupation with this issue is that lacking a thorough understanding of these terms might lead to methodological complications and skewed analysis. Although I do not have any presumptions to formulate ultimate definitions for them, I have to move towards a deeper understanding of their meaning within the field of live performance, and Grotowski's practice in particular. That said, I will begin by stepping back from this specific emphasis and consider the above mentioned terms' more general use in order to explore the semantic overtones they carry. Aiming to go beyond generalisations, I will start by tracing the etymological origins of each term[2]. This is not merely a gratuitous linguistic exercise, but will shed some light on what is implied by these concepts and thus serve as a basis for my later investigations.

2.1 Influence

'Influence' has reached us, via Old French and Middle English, from the Latin *influere* (present participle[3]). The lexeme, *fluere* means 'to flow', and the morpheme *in-* means 'in' or 'into'. This preposition-verb combination, 'to flow into', already

[2] I have mainly used *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. Ed. T. F. Hoad. Oxford University Press, 1996; and online sources such as www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=influence

[3] Present Participle is the form of a verb that can be a verb, an adverb, and even a noun (gerund), and which denotes action which is ongoing.

suggest a relationship between three separate entities which are ontologically different: firstly there is a 'container/receptacle', secondly there is a 'content' which is held by this first 'container/receptacle', and thirdly there is a second 'container/receptacle' which primarily differs from the former because it does not yet hold the 'content'. A simple illustration of this would be a jug, containing milk, and an empty glass. Therefore it must be deduced that there exists a unilateral relationship between both 'containers/receptacles' whereby one entity gives, passes on, or pours its 'content' into the other, the receiving entity. This process of transmission between two such entities lies at the very core of the Latin *influere*. However, this root has morphed over time, and as it has been laden with new connotations and uses, its basic meaning has gained complexity. By exploring some of these layers of signification I intend to gain a more specific understanding of what we mean by 'influence'.

In Medieval times, around the 13th century, 'influence' or *influentia*, became an astrological term describing the emanation of ethereal fluid from the heavens affecting mankind. This new usage resulted in a number of semantic developments which still resonate in our modern comprehension of the word. Firstly, this medieval definition introduced the notion of 'power' for the first time, inferring that the relationship between the two different entities was a power-relationship. They no longer shared the same status – like the jug and the glass I previously used as examples – but belonged to different categories: whilst one was powerful and 'influential', the other was weak and unable to avoid being 'influenced'. Secondly, as a consequence of this inequality, the relationship between the two entities is necessarily a causal one. The actions exerted by one entity have an inevitable effect on the other, which causes a change or number of changes in the latter. In Medieval times this amounted to the belief that the position and movement of heavenly bodies such as the stars and planets determined someone's destiny and character. Moreover, the invisible and occult nature of the process by which the stars 'influenced' mankind may already provide a hint of the relative intangibility and slipperiness of influence in art[4]. The sense of power over one's character and destiny was not transferred from the astrological to the purely human realm until later, between the 15th and 16th centuries, when the word came to mean the exercise of personal power of one individual upon another.

[4] This is something that might be interesting to bear in mind during my later discussions, when I come to analyse the ways in which 'influence' takes place.

This initial etymological investigation into the meaning and connotations of 'influence' has unearthed some basic concepts, stretching from the word's origin to its later developments. In doing so it has raised a number of questions, such as the power-relationships inferred by influence. I will address such issues at a later stage because they need to be considered in more detail, with both particular reference to existing scholarship about artistic influence and Grotowski's practice.

2.2 A slight detour, influence as a virus

I am aware that due to the very character of this current discussion it is relatively easy to digress; and whilst I do not intend to meander, I believe that it is pertinent to investigate a word which derives from 'influence'. The medieval *influentia* had, after approximately four centuries, mutated into the Italian *influenza*. Since at least 1504 the new word was used to describe the diseases, for example as a shortening of *influenza di febbre scarlattina* (scarlet fever), which were still ascribed to unfavourable astral or occult entities. Although with scientific advances the term finally lost its supernatural connotation and the process was explained in purely medical terms, at its most basic level the idea remained the same. Instead of being influenced by the power of heavenly bodies, mankind was affected by the power of germs and viruses. In 1743, influenza entered the English language as an epidemic of the disease broke out in Italy and spread throughout Europe. Since the mid 19th century it has often been applied to refer to severe colds, and since then the term has remained within our everyday language. Today it is more commonly known by its shortened and familiar mutation: flu.

It may seem strange at first that I would want to discuss influenza as part of my exploration of what is meant by 'influence', especially because it is somewhat unusual to juxtapose virology with artistic studies[5]. Nonetheless, since it shares an etymological root with 'influence', I believe that a closer look will shed further light upon our understanding of how influence takes place. In particular I would like to

[5] Of course it is worth remembering that I am not the first one to use viruses as a metaphor in the artistic terrain. I say this in relation to Antonin Artaud, who in the opening chapter of *The Theatre and its Double*, talked about theatre and the plague (Artaud, 1999:7-22). At the same time, in an interview with Dijana Milosevic about the work of Odin Teatret, Eugenio Barba talked about the need to create 'space for viruses' within the routine of his company in order to allow change, and thus evolution, to occur (Milosevic, 2006:292).

compare influenza with artistic influence and, focusing on their similarities, propose that artistic influence operates like a virus.

Influenza is not caused by just any kind of virus, but is specifically caused by viruses of the Orthomyxoviridae family. Similarly artistic influence, which is a relatively vague and difficult to define term, always relates to something specific. That is to say, that when we state that artistic influence has taken place, it is not in general terms but always in relation to a particular aspect or element of a work of art.

Influenza is infectious and spreads from individual to individual through physical contact, but may also become airborne. The virulence of the disease may depend upon this factor. Similarly, artistic influence requires that some relationship between two individuals exists, one who influences the other. The process of influence takes place through the transmission of ideas, methodologies, or techniques. This may happen by direct, personal contact between two individuals or, like the virus that has become airborne, through other more indirect ways[6]. The channels through which influence takes place may determine the way in which it becomes manifest and expressed.

On a most basic level, influenza spreads by inserting itself into the infected organism's cells and copying its genetic information to duplicate itself. When artistic influence relates to the implementation of a certain methodology or the acquisition of a certain skill, the processes of transmission or dissemination by which the influence takes place often begin with mimicry. It is thus not uncommon for artists to emulate others in order to develop their own practice.

Although usually influenza generally has a short incubation period, it may lie latent in the carrier, not manifesting until later, and may even not develop at all in everybody who has been exposed to it. These three variables depend upon the individual's initial resistance to the virus. Similarly, the degree or timing of artistic influence is not the same in all individuals. Whilst some artists demonstrate that their own work has been influenced due to the contact with another artist shortly after this contact has happened, other artists' work will only manifest such influences at a later stage, or maybe not at all. These three variables depend upon that individual's predisposition to adopt new ideas, techniques or methodologies.

[6] I discuss indirect processes and channels for influence in subsection 3.2 in this chapter.

When it attacks the organism, the infection caused by the virus makes the body physically react, resulting in significant changes such as inflammation and tissue damage. Similarly, artistic influence is a notable process because it leads to changes in the individuals who have been influenced. These alterations might be in conduct, thinking, or be expressed in the artists' own work. Whether they may be immediately visible or not, they will be relatively traceable back to the entity that influenced them.

The virus' presence is detected by a close study of the symptoms it produces in the carrier, and only after each one has been explained and positioned in relation to the others can a diagnosis be successfully given. What complicates the analysis of artistic influence is the difficulty in establishing the nature of its symptoms, or the changes which have taken place, and more importantly, determining a coherent method to measure and assess them.

Finally, although viruses do not regularly mutate, influenza is one of the more notable exceptions. The process by which the 'original' virus duplicates itself in the carrier's organism can sometimes lead to small errors in the copying. These errors are replicated in subsequent copies. If these changes are not fatal to the virus and cause it to stop replicating, it is quite likely that the mutation will leave the carrier's organism and spread to other individuals in this new form. Such mutations make the virus evolve, enabling it to infect or replicate itself more efficiently, thus becoming more infectious. Similarly, an artist may influence another in respect to a specific aspect of their work. In turn, this second artist who has been influenced then may influence a third artist in regards to the same aspect. In this process of transmission between the first and the third artist mistakes and misunderstandings may take place, because influence is necessarily an interpretative process. These errors are sometimes extremely rich in creative terms.

My exploration of the ways in which artistic influence could be compared to a virus has revealed a number of important issues: that the influence must be related to a specific aspect of the work; that there are direct and indirect channels through which it can take place, and that the nature of these will to an extent determine the way in which the influence becomes manifest; that influence can sometimes be related to mimicry; that the time it takes to take hold and become outwardly expressed may

vary; that it produces traceable changes; and that indirect means of transmission may lead to mutations and misunderstandings. However, I would like to emphasise two aspects of artistic influence which are not covered by this viral metaphor. On the one hand influence does not necessarily imply a process of evolution. When viruses are passed on they become more resistant, however artistic influence does not always have to become stronger or indeed take place in a linear and progressive manner. On the other hand, and this is crucial, artistic influence does not have to be a passive process; that is to say, whilst viruses may infect us against our will, artists can actively and consciously seek to be influenced.

2.3 Impact

Although 'influence' and 'impact' seem to define similar concepts, an etymological investigation of the latter will reveal the nuances between both terms. 'Impact' stems from the Latin *impactus*, the past participle of *impingere*, a word that has itself entered the English language as the verb 'impinge'. The root, or lexeme, *pingere* (from the verb *pango*) means to drive, to fasten or to fix; and the morpheme *im-* (a variant of *in-*) means 'in' or 'into'. As is the case with 'influence', 'impact' can be used both as a verb and as a noun. However, as is the case with several other bi-syllabic words such as 'extract' and 'produce', 'impact' forms its meaning according to pronunciation[7]. Moreover, whilst 'influence' always had this double usage, this was not the case with 'impact'. Following the etymological root of the word, 'impact' was first a verb which, in line with its Latin origins, refers to a physical collision whereby an object pushed, pressed into or dashed against another. This original meaning as a verb is still current today, and according to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* 'to impact' can mean to come into forcible contact with another object. From this first usage the word began to be used as a noun to describe the physical action of 'impact'. Nonetheless, the matter was further complicated when the noun was given the non-literal or figurative meaning of strong effect. This usage dates back to 1817, when Coleridge employed 'impact' as a noun in his *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions* to define the "effect of coming into contact

[7] If used as a verb, the emphasis is on the last syllable (/im-'pakt/) but if it is used as a noun, the first syllable will be stressed (/'im-ˌpakt/).

with a thing or a person"[8]. In the 20th century, this secondary meaning has been transferred from the noun to the verb. Consequentially, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* now lists the original physical phenomenon as well as a marked effect or influence as possible meanings for 'impact' in both its nounal and verbal forms. Although I am aware of the debates around the correct usage of 'impact', I deliberately choose to regard this as an unresolved issue because my concern here is not so much grammatical correctness but the word's semantic associations.

This etymological excavation has indirectly revealed some of the usages and connotations buried within the concept of 'impact'. Taking these findings as a starting point I will now explore them in more detail whilst at the same time comparing 'impact' and 'influence'. If both terms seem relatively similar on the surface it is because the literal meaning of 'impact' as a physical phenomenon has expanded to include a figurative meaning which correlates with the meaning of 'influence' as a strong effect. However, these words are not synonymous in all respects, and there are subtle nuances between them. Whilst the etymological origin of 'influence' (*influere*: 'to flow into') suggests the relationship between three separate entities, the Latin root of 'impact' (*impingere*: 'to drive into') denotes the relationship between only two bodies. That is to say, 'impact' defines a two-part relation whereby one body directly pushes, or strikes against another body. The relationship between these two bodies, as with 'influence', is unilateral because one strikes against the other and not vice versa. However, unlike with 'influence' – where one entity is perceived to exert power over the other – there is no suggestion of this in the case of 'impact'. In this instance, the two bodies involved do not have to be ontologically different, belong to different categories, or have different statuses. More importantly, a crucial distinction has to be made in reference to both terms' definitions as physical phenomena. On the one hand 'influence' alludes to a movement of flowing, and on the other 'impact' suggests a collision. As a result, whilst 'influence' connotes a process that takes place over a period of time, 'impact' has connotations of a specific and instantaneous moment in time. These key distinctions between both terms will determine their usage in my later analysis.

[8] See http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=impact

2.4 Inspiration

As I will explain in due course, the concept of 'inspiration' stretches back to Ancient Greece but the word's current form comes from Late Latin, approximately the 3rd century AD. As Zambrini notes in her etymological analysis, "before that Latin used words such as *inflatus* or *instinctus* in their metaphorical meanings to express the concept of inspiration" [9]. The origins of the word as we know it today are to be found in the noun *inspiratio*, which in turn derives from the past participle (*inspiratus*) of the verb *inspirare*. It is composed of a similar preposition-verb combination like that forming 'influence' and 'impact'. The lexeme *spirare* means 'to breathe', and the morpheme *in-*, as already explained, means 'in' or 'into'. Therefore 'inspiration' literally means 'to breathe into'. Taking this as a starting point I can deduce that 'inspiration', like 'influence', is a three-part relation whereby one entity breathes or infuses another entity with a certain element, whether this be air, life, or a creative idea. As with 'influence' and 'impact', the physical basis of the term suggests that this is a unilateral relationship because one entity acts upon the other and not vice versa. Although the semantic root of *inspirare* does not yield any clues as to the nature or status of the entities involved, the word's conceptual origins in Ancient Greece and its early usage will reveal that there exists a distinction between them by connotation.

Several philosophers, including Plato and Aristotle, proposed that poets could momentarily break into the realm of divine truth and that this would compel them to create. Although they did not directly talk of 'inspiration' – the term had not yet been coined – they were describing the nature of artistic creation as a gift bestowed by the gods. Supernatural beings, typically the muses or Apollo, would 'breathe into' the artist and so impel their creation. Therefore, as hinted earlier, the early usage of the term connotes that the active entity involved in the process is superior to, or belongs to a higher realm than the passive entity which is 'inspired'. This belief in the divine nature of 'inspiration' was later upheld by Roman poets such as Cicero and Ovid, who began to use the term *inspiratio* and its earlier formations of *inflatus* or *afflatus*. The concept of 'inspiration' of a divine nature also appears in Judaism, and from there was passed to Christianity[10]. Therefore, it is clear that the concept of 'inspiration' had been

[9] See http://humanityquest.com/themes/inspiration/Etymology/

[10] In time, the idea of 'inspiration' became one of the main axioms of Christian thought. Crucially, Saint Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, wrote that the whole Bible was 'inspired' by God through the Holy Spirit (II Tim. 3.16-17). Writing in Greek he used the expression *θεοπνευστος* (theopneustos), which literally means 'God-breathed'. For a more detailed analysis of the notion of divine inspiration in

consistently and intrinsically linked to divine guidance for centuries. This theological understanding of the term continues to be valid today. *The Oxford Dictionary of English* lists amongst the possible meanings of 'inspiration' a divine influence, especially that supposed to have led to the writing of the Bible.

Nonetheless, in the early 14th century, the word 'inspiration' began to evolve as further meanings were attached to it. According to Zambrini, in 1308 Dante used the variant *inspirazione* to refer to 'suggestion' or 'prompting', and by 1560 the word had gained the meaning of general creative power[11]. Although these are not radical departures, they would pave the way for a later understanding of 'inspiration' which would focus almost entirely on the artist who was being 'inspired'. This new individualist notion was crystallised in the Romantic period by writers such as Edward Young, who suggested that it was genius, 'the god within the poet', who provides the inspiration. This repositioning of 'inspiration' from the divine to the human realm was precursor to the theories of early psychologists who located creativity within the individual artist's psyche.

Towards the 19th century the word experienced a significant semantic shift in relation to agency. 'Inspiration' was slowly associated with inbreath, highlighting it as an active process in opposition to the initial meaning, which clearly referred to a passive process of divine origin. This could be the result of the Romantic notion of 'inspiration' which centred on the artist's self, and conceived it as the sole agent. Even though 'inspired by' is still in use, the emergence of the expressions 'to draw inspiration from' or 'to seek inspiration from' illustrate how the term has come to be associated with the action of 'breathing in'. A further explanation for this corruption of the original meaning could be due to a misunderstanding in folk etymology of the Latin morpheme *in-* as meaning literally 'in' instead of 'into'. Consequentially the word's original meaning has become somewhat confused, to the extent that *The Oxford Dictionary of English* now accepts 'inspiration' as a synonym to inhalation or breathing in.

The main repercussion of the rather troubled development of the word 'inspiration' that I have just discussed, is that it has become an unstable concept which is interpreted slightly differently by each individual. As belief in the divine nature of 'inspiration' waned, so did the presumption that the artist was a mere conduit for

Judaism and Christianity, see Nadir Ansari's *An Examination of the Doctrine of Inerrancy of Biblical Scriptures* (See www.renaissance.com.pk/octrefl96.html)

[11] See http://humanityquest.com/themes/inspiration/Etymology/

higher entities and was just giving form to what was being 'breathed into' him. Whilst our modern understanding of 'inspiration' emphasises active agency, the sense remains that something prompts someone into action. However, the effects of 'inspiration' are today usually only associated with this initial stimulation. Therefore the action or creation resulting from 'inspiration' does not have to bear any resemblance to the action or the creation that sparked it in the first place. One thing might 'inspire' another, and yet there may be no directly traceable relationship between them. This is the main and crucial difference between 'inspiration' and 'influence'.

2.5 Concluding remarks

At first glance 'influence', 'impact' and 'inspiration' could be considered to be synonymous terms defining one and the same idea: that one entity (person, action or thing) has the power to affect or the ability to instigate changes in another. In general terms these words do roughly describe this concept; and they do indeed share some common characteristics such as the need for some kind of contact between two entities, or the specific nature of the effects and changes produced as a result of this contact. However, to focus on these vague similarities would be to remain at the surface, and any argument built upon an assumption of equivalence between these words would be equally superficial. Although similar in some respects, 'influence', 'impact' and 'inspiration' do not merely refer to varying degrees of the same process. As my research of their etymology has come to demonstrate, there are sufficiently significant nuances, if not differences, between them which mean that they should be regarded as altogether distinct concepts and processes.

Out of the three words which I have addressed in this section, my inquiry into *influere* and its derivate influenza has been the most fruitful because it has revealed more information about the nature of the processes involved. Furthermore, my discussion has revealed that 'influence' is the most stable concept of the three. Since it has undergone less semantic changes than 'impact' or 'inspiration', its boundaries are relatively clear to define. Therefore, throughout my subsequent investigations I will focus almost entirely on the process of 'influence'. Even though I will continue to

make reference to 'impact' and 'inspiration' where suitable, I will do so with caution, attempting to relate them as specifically as possible to particular examples.

3. NARROWING THE FIELD

So far I have only discussed influence in rather general terms and the research used has been peripheral, drawing on topics as disparate as linguistics, virology and philosophy. Now I will concentrate on a deeper investigation of artistic influence in order to advance my methodological exploration towards a more explicit system of analysis. In attempting to do so I have been faced with a shortage of scholarship which tackles this subject directly. There is of course an abundance of articles and books that address influence but since they tend to evaluate specific artistic forms or particular case studies, they do not resolve broader questions about artistic influence[12]. In fact, whatever methods are applied to measure influence in each instance are rarely laid out in a comprehensive manner. Therefore I have found that such studies have been of little help in the shaping of my own methodological approaches.

Nevertheless, there is one particular academic work which does directly engage with artistic influence in a wider, theoretical sense. In his *Influence in Art and Literature*, Göran Hermerén tries to clarify the assumptions on which the concept of influence is based, and to make explicit what is often only suggested or implied by academic texts that address artistic influence. As he states, his aim is "to provide a systematic survey of the conceptual framework used by critics and scholars when they discuss problems of influence." (Hermerén, 1975:xiv) Hermerén approaches this task with rigour and applies the principles of logic, both deductive and inductive, to construct his discourse. Throughout the book, he shapes his propositions in abstract terms to the point where they seem scientific formulae. At the same time he employs a number of quotations from scholarly writing on specific studies of influence in art and literature to illustrate and relate his abstract thinking to tangible examples. In both instances, when discussing influence abstractly and when analysing a particular quote, Hermerén constantly pushes his arguments towards clarity and precision,

[12] A good example of this would be Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), which focuses exclusively on poetry.

acknowledging possible alternatives and variables along the way. Despite such high aspirations, throughout his study Hermerén remains aware of the dangers of "doing quasimathematics" (Hermerén, 1975:207) and recognises that "it would be foolish to ask for more precision than the subject allows." (Hermerén, 1975:99)

As will become clear, some of the conclusions from my etymological study resonate with Hermerén's work. Nonetheless I have to acknowledge that the nature of my research so far, in being purely introductory, has resulted in a somewhat limited understanding of influence. Hermerén is significantly more rigorous and goes deeper. Therefore, throughout this section I will use his *Influence in Art and Literature* as a means to build upon my findings so far and advance my investigation.

3.1 Some distinctions

Before delving into a more detailed analysis of artistic influence based on Hermerén's writing, it is necessary that I draw some important distinctions between his work and mine.

As is suggested by the title of his book, *Influence in Art and Literature*, he focuses his efforts on the fine arts and literature; whilst I will address the subject of influence within the territory of theatre and performance. There are, of course, various possible reasons why Hermerén excludes the performing arts from his study altogether. Firstly, he is writing for and within a longstanding tradition of comparative studies in literature and the fine arts. At the time his book was published, in 1975, such comparative inquiries about theatre and performance were only in their infancy and thus not as widespread as in the fine arts and literature. Secondly, it has to be noted that up to that point academic circles tended to regard theatre as a branch of dramatic writing, and that the emphasis was on literature as opposed to live and/or devised performance. Finally, Hermerén's determination to focus on the fine arts and literature may have been a deliberate choice resulting from the relative difficulties inherent to the analysis of influence in the performing arts. As I will now go on to explain, there do exist certain distinctions between the fine arts and literature on the one hand and theatre and performance on the other, which inevitably make the process of

determining and measuring whether influence has taken place significantly more complex.

Although these challenges are somewhat obvious, I need to acknowledge them here briefly since I have encountered them myself, and have had to negotiate them throughout my work. The nature of the complications in evaluating cases of influence in theatre and performance pertain mainly to the nature of the creative process. For example, there is an issue of authorship. Whilst it can be said that works of fine art and literary texts are generally produced by a single individual, this is seldom the case in theatre. Since the creation of the latter is almost always a joint venture, with a number of individuals collaborating on the work, it may be difficult to establish exactly how a given influence has taken place. Therefore, in order to mitigate this problem, I will establish the relationship amongst the group members who have created a piece of theatre, with specific reference to their artistic roles and organisational structures. Similarly, the experiential nature of performed work means that I have had to accommodate a multiplicity of viewpoints, reconciling the sometimes contradictory experiences of a number of individuals. Finally, there is the problem posed by the ephemerality of performance work, which means that the object of study is not as readily accessible[13].

The issues I have just mentioned, to name only a few, make it impossible for me to apply Hermerén's methodologies and taxonomy in an exhaustive manner. Moreover, even though he suggests that he does not formulate a rigid system[14], I have found that his rigorous pseudo-scientific approach is too formulaic to encompass the idiosyncrasies inherent in theatre practice. Nonetheless his propositions have stimulated my own thinking process. Therefore, throughout the following subsections I will discuss the particular ideas in Hermerén's *Influence in Art and Literature* which have clarified and deepened my understanding of artistic influence, as well as helped me define my own methodological approaches.

[13] For example, paintings or literary texts can be placed side by side in order to study their similarities and thus evaluate whether influence has taken place. This, of course, cannot be done when analysing performances or training techniques. I will touch upon the challenges of reconstituting these ephemeral events later on. See subsection 4.2 in this chapter.

[14] "Guillén formulates a norm, addressed to critics, telling them to make evaluations of certain kinds on certain occasions. But this is entirely different from what I have tried to do. I have asked: what are the normative effects of these statements? What is the author saying, or intending to say, when he argues that one artist was influenced by another?" (Hermerén, 1975:318)

3.2 Hermerén, reconsidering artistic influence

One of Hermerén's first and most basic statements is that influence always refers to something specific. "An artist is not influenced by the works of another artist in general but in a particular respect, such as technique, style, expression, symbolism, and so forth." (Hermerén, 1975:11)[15] Since Hermerén describes artistic influence as the relation between two entities in regards to a specific aspect, he too talks about influence as a three-part relation, where "'*X* influenced *Y*' is an abbreviation of '*X* influenced *Y* with regards to *a*'". (Hermerén, 1975:11)[16] Therefore, Hermerén goes on to state that artistic influence is necessarily a causal relation (Hermerén, 1975:154), whereby one entity is directly or indirectly responsible for the changes in the other. So far my findings correlate with the thoughts expressed in *Influence in Art and Literature*. However, since Hermerén's work relates particularly to the field of artistic practice, he is able to make more detailed observations about the phenomenon of influence. Thus I would like to briefly outline some of the distinctions he makes between various types of influence.

On a first level Hermerén differentiates between 'nonartistic influence' and 'artistic influence'. Whilst the latter is limited to influences which belong exclusively to the artistic field, the former defines influences which originate in the socio-political circumstances, the intellectual and moral milieu surrounding the creation of a piece of art, as well as the artist's own life experiences (Hermerén, 1975:30)[17]. On a second level Hermerén distinguishes between 'positive influence' – whereby the contact with a certain work of art or artist has been an 'attracting factor', leading the influenced individual to follow in a similar direction – and 'negative influence' – whereby the contact has been a 'repelling factor', making the influenced individual react against the work and reject its direction. On a third level, Hermerén separates 'direct

[15] Even though somewhat obtusely, I arrived at the same conclusion when discussing the parallels between artistic influence and the *influenza* virus. See subsection 2.2 in this chapter.

[16] That is to say that the relation between the two entities, the influence of one (*X*) upon the other (*Y*), incites a change or series of changes in one of the entities (*Y*) concerning that specific aspect (*a*).

[17] Although he later talks about 'psychologic influence', which he uses to describe the effects on an artist's thinking and lifestyle, I have not found it to be useful to my work because it creates what I believe is an unnecessary complication. For instance, as Hermerén goes on to suggest, though 'psychologic influence' would clearly fall within the category of 'nonartistic influence' because it may not necessarily be reflected in the work, Hermerén notes that "artistic influence obviously implies that some kind of pyschologic influence has occurred" (Hermerén, 1975:281).

influence' from 'indirect influence'. Whilst the former refers to instances where an artist has directly influenced another and the contact is limited to these two entities, the latter refers to instances where "there are one or more entities which connect these two entities with each other in a chain of causal relations." (Hermerén, 1975:35) That is to say, in cases of indirect influence an artist influenced another in a particular aspect, who in turn influenced a further one still[18]. Finally, Hermerén talks of 'influence in the narrow sense' or 'genuine influence', and 'influence in the extended sense'. On the one hand, Hermerén uses the first expression to refer to instances where the influence is traceable in subtle similarities which concern the work as a whole and are not confined to details which have been merely borrowed or copied. Moreover he states that to talk about 'genuine influence', its effects must be felt in more than one work and over a period of time. On the other hand, 'influence in the extended sense' refers to instances where an artist has simply borrowed a particular element from another artist, or used his work as a model or source, without fully assimilating it into his own practice (Hermerén, 1975:92-98)[19].

Even though I will not be overtly concerned with applying such rigid taxonomy to the cases I will analyse throughout this thesis, before I continue, it is pertinent that I briefly outline how I will appropriate some of Hermerén's terminology for my own purposes. Firstly, I will primarily focus on occurrences of 'positive influence' throughout my study because it is only these instances which display measurable traces of influence[20]. I will also primarily focus on 'artistic influence'. Nonetheless, I have to emphasise that in my approach this does include other materials by or about Grotowski, in particular *Towards a Poor Theatre*[21]. Since such texts are intrinsically tied up with artistic practice, I will regard them as 'artistic influence'. That said, Hermerén's arguments have led me to clearly state when influence has taken place through such documents as opposed to 'artistic influence' based on practice itself.

[18] Interestingly, Hermerén goes on to note that an artist can be influenced both directly and indirectly by the same artist (Hermerén, 1975:40-41). This is particularly relevant to Grotowski because his work could influence artists directly, through personal contact, and at the same time indirectly through contact with his associates, for instance Barba. More importantly, Hermerén also suggests that with indirect contact, the more links that exist between the original source and the influenced artists, the weaker the influence will become "at least in principle" (Hermerén, 1975:35). Of course this issue has direct implications in regards to my study, but I will discuss them at a later point.

[19] When referring to cases of influence which include both the 'narrow' and the extended' sense, Hermerén talks about 'influence in a wide sense' (Hermerén, 1975:92).

[20] The only exception to this can be found in chapter VI. The reasons for this will become apparent later when I discuss this particular case. See chapter VI, subsection 3.3.

[21] Technically speaking, if I were to strictly follow Hermerén's propositions this would mean that any influence exerted texts by or about Grotowski should be defined as 'nonartistic influence'.

Moreover, since by its very nature this kind of influence does not require direct, human contact I have differentiated between the two main processes through which Grotowski's influence has take place: 'transmission' and 'dissemination'. I will use 'transmission' to define the process of skill or knowledge transferral which takes place vertically[22], from one person to another, or from one person to a group of people. As Paul Allain points out in relation to the work of Thomas Richards and Mario Biagini, Grotowski's official heirs, "transmission denotes the human contact that carries ideas and practices forward, in this case through the performer's embodied knowledge, as in Asian performance traditions." (Allain, 2005:50) [23] In contrast, I will use 'dissemination' to define the divulgence of skills or knowledge which takes place horizontally, through the publication of documents and other materials which are accessible to a wider public.

As well as 'transmission' and 'dissemination', which are essentially processes, I have taken into account the two types of channels of influence because Grotowski's practice and theories have also spread through other people. I say this in relation to two kinds of contact: 'direct' and 'indirect'. In this instance, my use of these terms has remained close to Hermerén's. I will define as 'direct contact', and thus 'direct influence', those cases where a practitioner or company has been influenced directly by Grotowski through personal contact with him. Where possible I will outline the length and the nature of this contact. That is to say, I will specify whether the 'direct contact' occurred over a period of time or on a sporadic basis. Even though further qualities of this kind of contact could be stipulated, for now it should suffice to say that I will consider as 'direct contact' events which unequivocally involve the presentation or practice of performance craft (i.e. attendance at the Teatr Laboratorium's performances, observation of its rehearsals, participation in workshops, daily collaboration), as well as events where Grotowski himself reflected upon their activities verbally (i.e. attendance at talks and lectures, personal meetings where theatre and performance were discussed). I will define as 'indirect contact', and thus 'indirect influence', those instances where a practitioner or company have been

[22] My use of 'verticality' should not be confused with Grotowski's and Thomas Richards'. They talk about 'verticality' as a core aspect of Art as Vehicle, in relation to the process of ascending from heavy but organic energies to more subtle ones (Grotowski, 1999:11). Instead I will use 'verticality' purely in a practical sense that only refers to the directional flow of influence, and is unconnected to the transformation of bodily energies in practice.

[23] Nevertheless, my use of this word should not be confused with Grotowski's and Thomas Richards'. Since they refer to "the process of transmission in the ancient, traditional sense of the word" (Workcenter, 1999:13), this has implications regarding the master-disciple relationship which are discussed at several points throughout Richards' *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (1995). Instead, my use of 'transmission' is not limited to such intimate and exclusive relationships.

influenced by Grotowski's ideas and techniques, not by Grotowski himself, but through another party (i.e. Grotowski's collaborators or someone further removed from his circle). Where possible I will specify the length of contact with this third party, as well as the duration and nature of the relationship between Grotowski and the particular person that served as the connecting link.

Finally, although I will not apply Hermerén's terms of 'influence in the narrow sense', 'influence in the extended sense', or 'influence in a wide sense', they have helped me realise the importance of acknowledging whether that influence was a mere borrowing or was pervasive throughout the whole work.

To end this section I would like to briefly discuss two complications mentioned by Hermerén which relate to influence and will, indirectly, have certain implications on my study. The main issue pertains to the normative implications of influence, that is to say the evaluative judgements which could be made about a work of art that has been influenced by another. Hermerén discusses this in reference to an attitude which emphasises originality and praises it as one of the main artistic values (Hermerén, 1975:130). As he goes on to say, this is often indicated "by the very words sometimes used in formulating these hypotheses, in particular 'owes', 'debt', 'indebted, and 'debtor'." (Hermerén, 1975:133) Therefore he suggests that such words should be used with caution[24]. Moreover, stating that a general emphasis on originality should not rule our evaluation of influence, he points out that "it need not be a fault or a sign of weakness to be influenced by others" (Hermerén, 1975:130). This is particularly relevant because although it may not always be the case, influence sometimes begins with outright imitation. This in itself is a treacherous word, not only because imitation is an important part of any learning process, but because the word 'imitator' is laden with negative connotations or can sometimes be used in an offensive sense. At any rate, what is more important than what an artist might have imitated or borrowed from another, is the way in which he or she applies it. As Hermerén states, "if he has used the details in an ingenious way, then he and his work will be positively valued for this" (Hermerén, 1975:144). What is important to note about this is that, in relation to influence, the crucial issue is whether it has led the influenced artist to "create a style or mode of expression of his own." (Hermerén, 1975:145) This leads me to the following issue because the process described above necessarily implies a process of

[24] As he suggests, the misconceptions which originate in this use of language may be one of the explanations for "why research into influences has sometimes been strongly resented by artists and writers themselves, and occasionally led them to deny rather obvious influences." (Hermerén, 1975:33)

internalisation or assimilation, which in turn amounts to interpretation. If one artist has been influenced by another, he always transforms the latter's work or practice to some extent (Hermerén, 1975:308). This of course raises the question as to whether there might be erroneous interpretations. Nevertheless, as I will discuss later, I will not be making such value judgements. Although I will not be applying Hermerén's formulations in a strict sense, all this exemplifies how his work has contributed to my thinking as a springboard from which I have gone on to deepen my understanding of artistic influence.

3.3 Hermerén, requirements for artistic influence

In *Influence in Art and Literature*, Hermerén goes on to establish a series of requirements which he suggests have to be met if influence is to take place. It is important that I acknowledge these before continuing because they have been crucial in helping me to develop my own methodological approaches.

To begin with, I would like to draw attention to one of the first observations Hermerén makes about the process of influence, which will serve as an introduction to some of the methodological issues discussed in this subsection. Early on in his writing he determines that the variable *a*, the specific element of one piece of art (*Y*) which has been influenced by another (*X*), should be restricted to "names or descriptions of features relevant to the understanding of *X* and *Y*" (Hermerén, 1975:14). This formulation, which he denominates 'Ontological Requirement 1'[25], suggests that in evaluating claims of influence one should only consider aspects which are somehow intrinsic to the particular works studied, and not unimportant characteristics such as "the size of the pages in a novel, the weight of a painting, the color of the cover of a book, and so forth." (Hermerén, 1975:14) Therefore in my study I have chosen to focus on aspects which are essential to the appreciation and understanding of theatre:

[25] Hermerén's 'Ontological Requirement 2' states that, "if *X* influenced *Y* with respect to *a*, then the values of the variables *X* and *Y* are limited to names or descriptions of literary or visual works of art." (Hermerén, 1975:18) This second requirement does not directly apply to my field of research because I am not concerned with those genres. Nonetheless, because I have already established that the focus of this thesis will be on theatre and performance, it is not necessary for me to discuss this 'ontological requirement' further.

movement, text, costume, voice and sound, lighting, and scenography[26]. At the same time, I will also take into account aspects which might not necessarily be explicit in the final work but are part of the process of its creation, such as training techniques and rehearsal approaches. In line with Hermerén's constant return to a precise example, I propose that it is important to take Grotowski's own practice as a point of departure and, asking what is essential to it, arrive at a set of criteria which might guide my later analysis. This however, is not the place to do so, and I will touch upon this issue in the final section of this chapter.

Having predicated influence's ontological requirements as the basis of his argument, Hermerén goes on to establish more detailed conditions which are necessary for influence to take place. He divides them roughly into two main categories, 'external conditions' and 'internal conditions'. As is suggested by the term itself, the first category encompasses characteristics which are external to the works of art, and so "if they are satisfied or not in a particular case will have to be decided by historical or biographical investigations." (Hermerén, 1975:157) The second category then, consequentially, refers to characteristics which are internal to the works of art studied, and so "if they are satisfied or not in a particular case will have to be decided primarily by analysis of and comparisons between different works of art." (Hermerén, 1975:157)

Falling within the 'external conditions', Hermerén specifies the 'temporal requirement' and the 'requirement of contact'. He defines the first with the following formula: "if *X* influenced the creation of *Y* with respect to *a*, then *Y* was made after *X* in respect to *a*." (Hermerén, 1975:157) This 'temporal requirement' should be met by all the cases which are addressed in this thesis because, chronologically speaking, they have all been created after Grotowski began his various activities and established his practice. Nonetheless, there is a complication since Hermerén's formula only seems to account for finished pieces of art and does not account for the process of creation which I will do. Moreover, there may be instances where a practitioner has not directly taken one of Grotowski's techniques, but has devised his or her own exercises according to Grotowskian principles. Therefore I have chosen to stretch

[26] In doing so I have rejected other elements which could possibly be deemed as less important or even irrelevant in relation to my study; for instance, the duration of the event or the materials used to market it. This, as I will discuss shortly, overlaps with some of the issues arising from Hermerén's 'requirement of similarity' which I will discuss in a moment.

Hermerén's 'temporal requirement' to include such process-orientated aspects. As a result, I will need to specify whether the guiding principles of the newly devised techniques are truly based upon Grotowski's practice. This, as I will later discuss, requires some judgements and distinctions to be made in order to define what is meant by Grotowskian methodologies.

The second 'external condition', denominated 'requirement of contact', suggests that "if *X* influenced the creation of *Y* with respect to *a*, then the person who created *Y* was familiar with *X*, at least in the respect *a*." (Hermerén, 1975:164) In more simple terms, unless some sort of contact has taken place between one artist and another, or one artist and the work of another, it cannot be stated that influence has taken place. This is naturally a more complex issue. As I have already discussed in the previous subsection, there are two main types of contact, direct and indirect. But, as Hermerén is quick to point out, the variables in the intensity and frequency of the contact[27] mean that even these terms do not "refer to a clear concept with sharp boundaries." (Hermerén, 1975:166) The cases I will use as examples of Grotowski's influence upon British theatre have all been selected because there is hard evidence that some kind of contact, whether direct or indirect, through transmission or dissemination, has taken place between Grotowski and a particular individual or company. Even though I might not be able to determine some of the more intangible variables outlined by Hermerén which dictate the intensity and depth of the contact[28], I will always attempt to give specific, factual and contextual details about the contact.

Falling within the 'internal conditions', Hermerén specifies the 'requirement of similarity' and the 'requirement of change'. The first of these could be defined by the following formula: "if *X* influenced *Y* with respect to *a*, then *X* and *Y* are (noticeably) similar with respect to *a*." (Hermerén, 1975: 177) Hermerén is quick to identify that, to avoid methodological problems, this issue has to be specified further, primarily because similarity may not always be a sign of influence as there may be "influence without similarity and similarity without influence" (Hermerén, 1975:277). For instance, there may be a number of likenesses between any two pieces of art which might have to be classified as 'irrelevant similarities' because they do not have the

[27] For a detailed list of some of these variables see Hermerén, 1975:167.

[28] Such as "the attention and concentration of this person at the moment of contact [or] the aesthetic sensitivity, analytical powers" to name a few (Hermerén, 1975:167).

same importance[29]. To resolve the matter, and as a means to discriminate between similarity and influence, Hermerén sets out to formulate a conceptual framework which might be used to thoroughly examine the nature of the resemblance between two works. He bases it on the "need to distinguish not only between the respects and levels of similarity, but also between the extensiveness, precision, and exclusivity of the similarity." (Hermerén, 1975:201)[30] Even though I will not be applying these terms in my analysis because such taxonomical specificity is too restrictive for my subject, they have led me to appreciate the importance of clarity, particularly when summarising the ways in which influence has taken place. That is to say in my analysis I will aim to explicitly state in regards to what aspects of the work influence has taken place, and how they relate to it as a whole. This will become evident in my concluding remarks about each particular case.

The implications of Hermerén's conception of similarity in relation to influence could be defined in the following manner. If the similarities between two works of art are remarkable or striking, meaning they are both 'extensive' and 'exclusive', then it can be assumed these two works cannot be causally independent of each other, at least not in a particular 'respect' (Hermerén, 1975:209)[31]. If, on the contrary, the similarities are not striking or there is no remarkable resemblance, the works may not be in any relation to each other and thus we might not be able to talk about this as an

[29] For instance, Hermerén lists the number of 'irrelevant similarities' between a marble sculpture of Julius Caesar and a marble sculpture of Winston Churchill (i.e. their weight, their three-dimensionality). For a detailed account of what Hermerén classifies as 'irrelevant similarities' see Hermerén, 1975:190. Even though these belong to the fine arts it would be relatively easy to find equivalents in theatre and performance, and any of the following might be considered as 'irrelevant similarities' within this genre: the irrefutable liveness of the event, the number of cast members, etc. Clearly not all similarities carry the same weight.

[30] Since these concepts cannot be applied strictly but serve as rough guidelines to separate 'irrelevant similarities' from those which demonstrate true influence, I will only define them here in general terms. Hermerén defines 'respect' as a particular property which characterises the qualities of a specific 'level' in which the similarity is found. Clarifying this with an example which is relevant to my own research it could be said that two performances are similar in 'respect' to their sparseness and that this property is found on the 'level' of their scenographic design. Other levels might include "structure, choice of motif, composition, expression, symbolism, and so forth." (Hermerén, 1975:206) Consequentially, 'respect' is the specific characteristic of a given 'level' or element of the work. The 'extensiveness' of the similarities in two works is therefore related to the two previous concepts, and "is decided by the number of respects and levels in which the two works of art are similar to each other." (Hermerén, 1975:207) If the 'extensiveness' of such resemblances is specific to these two works and is only found in them, that is to say no other piece has an identical 'extensiveness', then we can say that the similarities between the two works studied is 'exclusive'. Finally, by introducing the term 'precision' Hermerén suggests that in their writing scholars differentiate between various degrees of similarity. Nonetheless he acknowledges that this is an elusive concept and, recognising that it is not possible to establish a ranking system applicable to all eventualities, he resigns himself to accepting the vagueness of 'precision' as a term (Hermerén, 1975:208).

[31] He defines this as "the assumption of noncoincidence" (Hermerén, 1975:212).

instance of influence[32]. At the same time there is a further issue related to the similarities between works of art which has a particular importance in relation to the methodology employed in evaluating influence. As I have already mentioned, Hermerén states that "similarities of different kinds do not have the same weight" (Hermerén, 1975:201). The difficulty in this case lies in specifying how or why certain resemblances are more relevant than others, because this would require a "reliable method of deciding questions about the relative aesthetic importance of features of works of art." (Hermerén, 1975:230) This matter is particularly difficult to resolve for Hermerén because he is writing about influence in the arts in general terms and aiming to arrive at a certain system which might be applicable to a variety of works across artistic genres. Nonetheless, since I am evaluating Grotowski's influence upon British theatre in particular, I might be able to find a rationale to order the aesthetic importance of a work's features. I will attempt to do so in this chapter's last section.

Finally there is one more issue relating to Hermerén's understanding of similarity which I must address. Since he focuses on fine art and literature, it is understandable that he focuses on similarities which are somehow evident in the works of art themselves. Whilst, earlier in the book, Hermerén states that influence does not always have to be visible but that at least traces of it should be manifested (Hermerén, 1975:95), he also rejects nonvisible features such as "philosophical ideas expressed in the work" (Hermerén, 1975:95) as evidence for influence. Nevertheless, due to the nature of my study[33], I will have to take into account process-orientated and methodological aspects which might not necessarily have a visible or explicit effect on the finished work but were implicit in the process of its creation (i.e. techniques, exercises, rehearsal approaches). In order to accurately determine if these similarities are coincidental or are indeed evidence of influence, I will have to pay special attention to the 'requirement of contact'. I will thus build my arguments by firstly indicating as clearly as possible whether these resemblances are the product of some sort of contact with Grotowski or his ideas, or whether they were arrived at independently.

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[32] For a more detailed exploration of how the absence of exclusive similarities might be used as evidence against influence, see Hermerén, 1975:218.

[33] I say this because the importance of certain intangible dimensions (i.e. work ethic, or 'inner work') in Grotowski's theories and practice cannot be underestimated or overlooked. Moreover, the evidence for such nonvisible features can be drawn from sources discussing the artistic processes involved in the creation of the work, as well as from personal statements and other materials by the practitioners implicated (i.e. rehearsal notes, company statements or artistic policies).

The second 'internal condition' identified by Hermerén is denominated 'requirement of change'. This is possibly the most complex of all requirements due to the difficulties inherent in its verification, yet is considered by Hermerén to be the most crucial one (Hermerén, 1975:239). He differentiates between two main categories. On the one hand he describes instances where the contact between two artists has led to changes in the whole artistic output of the influenced artist, and on the other hand he identifies instances where an artist's work could be said to be different from what it would have otherwise been if the contact had not taken place (Hermerén, 1975:246). In either of these two possibilities, what is necessary for verification is a detailed exploration of the influenced artist's early works, previous to his or her contact with the influencing artist. The difficulty for me to proceed in such a way lies in the scope of this thesis. My emphasis is partly to establish a partial history for Grotowski's influence on British theatre, and will focus on a representative sample which will serve as an overview of this phenomenon. Therefore, even though I will not completely disregard it, I have to downplay Hermerén's 'requirement of change'. On the one hand, I am unable to make an in-depth analysis of the artistic achievements throughout the entire working lives of the practitioners I will use as examples[34]. In some cases this is due to a lack of available sources, and in others because some of these individuals had not had long and homogeneous careers prior to their contact with Grotowski. In other words, I do not propose to compare all the works by the same individual to Grotowski's work. Instead, I will generally choose a few examples, whether a particular piece or an aspect of their practice. Nonetheless, where pertinent, I will briefly outline the careers of the artists discussed as a means to contextualise their work before or after their contact with Grotowski.

As was the case with his general understanding of influence, I will not be slavishly applying Hermerén's formulae to my subject. However, this discussion of the requirements for influence set out by him illustrates how his work has stimulated my thinking process. Moreover, it has served as a bridge to the following two sections which will address my own methodologies to investigate Grotowski's influence upon British theatre in more specific terms.

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[34] In relation to this issue it might be worth me skipping forwards momentarily to the following section, where I will addresses some of the larger methodological issues of my approach. In his writing about ethnographic case studies, Mitchell states that the analyst must decide "at what point to enter the ongoing flow of events and at what point to withdraw from it. For the purposes of exposition, a set of events must be lifted from the ongoing stream and presented, as it were, isolated from antecedent and subsequent events." (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984:237) This serves as a clear illustration for one of my reasons to focus on individual instances rather than an artist's whole career.

4. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In outlining my methodological approaches throughout the following subsections I will follow a similar rationale as I did at the beginning of this chapter when etymologically exploring influence, going from the general to the particular. I will thus begin by examining the broader ramifications of this thesis' use of case studies by discussing scholarship on case study research methods. In doing so I will explain the reasons for the scope of this thesis, as well as why I have chosen the particular examples I will focus on. I will then go on to outline some issues that pertain to the construction of theatre history which I considered to be particularly relevant to my work. Finally, drawing upon my discussion thus far, I will summarise my methodological approaches.

4.1 Implications of case study research

In order to investigate Grotowski's influence on British theatre I cannot talk in general terms, but have to build my arguments on particular examples. Therefore this thesis will chronologically follow a series of case studies. My historical concerns, in establishing a timeline of his relationship and contact with Britain, are implicitly addressed by these case studies. In their introduction to *Case Study Method: Key issues, Key texts*, Gomm and Hammersley begin by mentioning the 'resurrection' of the case study as a methodological approach which, since its demise in the early 1980s, has again become increasingly popular in disciplines such as sociology, political science, psychology and anthropology. Consequently, it is not surprising that there is no one single standard use of the term 'case study'. Whilst it could be described as "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon" (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991:2), Gomm and Hammersley define it more precisely by comparing it to the two other alternative means for scientific investigation: artificially constructed experiments and wide

ranging surveys (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:2). These three approaches[35] differ in relation to the number of cases studied, the amount of features investigated, the nature of the cases themselves, the kind of data gathered, and the overall purpose of the research. According to these categories, case study methods could be summarised as being concerned with the investigation of a limited number of 'naturally occurring' cases and the analysis of a large number of their features through the gathering of mainly qualitative data, for the purposes of understanding the cases in themselves, with little or no interest in theoretical inference or generalisation. Therefore the examples of Grotowski's influence which I will analyse could certainly be labelled 'case studies'. Nonetheless, since I am operating outside the scientific disciplines in which case studies are traditionally used, I prefer to use the term rather loosely. If I continue this exploration of case study methods, it is because an understanding of them will contribute to my own methodologies and systems of evaluation. Firstly, I will expose the reasons behind my selection of these particular cases. Secondly, I will address some issues implied by case study-based research as well as clarifying the purpose behind my study.

Lieberson suggests that "the choice of cases for study is itself critical, requiring great thought about the appropriate procedure for choosing them" (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:217). In their practical guidelines, Dufour, Fortin and Hamel go one step further, emphasising the actual need to "explain the various methodological tactics in the strategic selection of a case" (Dufour, Fortin & Hamel, 1993:44). Hence it is indispensable that I explicitly state the standards I have used in selecting the case studies for this thesis. Before I do this, I would also like to explain why I have chosen to focus on this particular time frame: 1966 - 1980. Grotowski's professional practice spanned from 1959 to his death in 1999, and could be divided into five stages. Although there are some inconsistencies over the names, dates and number of these phases, I will use the classification set out in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*[36]. Therefore I will refer to them as follows: Theatre of Productions (1957-69), Paratheatre (1969-78), Theatre of Sources (1976-82), Objective Drama (1983-86), and Art as Vehicle (1986-1999)[37]. If I have chosen to focus entirely on the first two stages of Grotowski's

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[35] I have taken these differences from a table which clearly illustrates the nuances between them (Gomm, Foster and Hammersley, 2000:4).

[36] More importantly perhaps, this book had been authorised by Grotowski himself.

[37] However, this does not mean that we should understand this categorisation as an exponential progression. Grotowski's move into a new period of work does not negate his achievements in the previous ones, nor does it mean that he was building directly upon them. For example, we cannot

work, it is because after this point his practice became exclusively research-orientated, was always conducted in closed environments, and was no longer concerned with the presentation of publicly open productions or events. At the same time I have to point out that, although Schechner and Wolford mark the end of Paratheatre as 1978, the fact is that paratheatrical projects continued to be presented until the early 1980s; I have thus extended the chronological scope of my thesis accordingly.

I would now like to explain the standards I have used in choosing the particular case studies I will be focusing on. The first requirement has been geographical: that the particular case studies are relevant to British theatre practice either in a historical or a current sense. This means that my investigation will be limited to individuals and companies of British origin, as well as foreign ones who were or are now based in the UK[38]. That said, clarification of this point will be needed for each particular case study. Thus, in order to avoid confusion, I will contextualise each company or individual by discussing their background. My second requirement has been temporal: that the selected cases have taken place within the time frame discussed earlier. My third requirement has been practical: that a number of sufficient sources were available about each case. Since my investigations had to be based on tangible evidence, I have chosen cases where published documents were readily accessible (photographs, film footage, reviews, articles or scholarly works), or instances where it would be feasible for me to gather alternative materials held in archives (personal notes, unpublished pictures, etc.). At the same time, I have complemented this research by conducting a series of interviews with key individuals involved in each case. My fourth requirement, in line with Mitchell's work, has not been to search for 'typical' cases but to find 'telling' cases (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984:239). In doing so, I have acknowledged the impossibility of establishing a unique type of example within the field, due to the idiosyncrasies and uniqueness of each individual or company and their relation to Grotowski's practice. Since the variables are countless, there is not such a thing as a 'typical' case. By using Mitchell's model of the 'telling' case, I have deliberately embraced this multiplicity and chosen cases with varying characteristics and different circumstances which might exemplify or be 'telling' about possible

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conceive Art as Vehicle as more important or final than the Theatre of Productions. Moreover, as I will explore in more detail in the final section of this chapter, these stages should not be understood as clear breaks in Grotowski's practice, but as slight mutations and developments of his ongoing investigations. This, for instance, is evidenced by the overlap between Paratheatre and Theatre of Sources.

[38] Of course I will also discuss certain events which took place outside the UK but which had or have a relation to the British context. In these instances I will provide all the relevant geographical and temporal information.

kinds of influence and processes of influence. My fifth requirement, as already mentioned, has been that some contact – direct or indirect – had taken place between Grotowski and each of the individuals or companies used as case studies. Finally I have chosen cases which up to now have not been discussed by scholars, either extensively or in detail.

I would now like to address some issues implied by the overall purposes of case study-based research. As mentioned earlier, there is no single definition of this approach, but there are several possible interpretations. One of the more widespread understandings, particularly amongst the social sciences, is that case studies are the detailed presentation of data "relating to some sequence of events from which the analyst seeks to make some theoretical inference." (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984:237) This means that through analytical induction, the outcomes of case studies may "show how general principles deriving from some theoretical orientation manifest themselves in some given set of particular circumstances." (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984:239) What Mitchell suggests is that case studies may function as a means to arrive at universal promulgations which are transferable and applicable to a larger number of other cases. Nonetheless, some theorists are quick to point out the relative singularity of each and every event, and how the conclusions about one context may not always hold in another set of circumstances. Quite naturally, the transferability or generalisability of any study will depend on a series of variables. On a basic level, "the greater the heterogeneity of a population the more problematic are empirical generalizations based on a single case, or a handful of cases." (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:105) Contrary to the totalising conception of case studies I have just mentioned, "it is sometimes argued that the aim of case study research should be to capture cases in their uniqueness, rather than to use them as a basis for wider generalization or for theoretical inference of some kind." (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:3) As Gomm, Foster & Hammersley go on to suggest, the importance lies in distinguishing "between case study work that is designed to describe the features of a particular set of cases, or to explain what occurred in those cases, on the one hand, and research that is concerned with developing and testing theories, on the other." (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:205)

My thesis rests between these two polar extremes of abstract generalisation and knowledge of the particular. On the one hand my aim is to explain Grotowski's influence on British theatre through the analysis of a particular set of case studies. On

the other hand I intend to outline certain general issues arising from that influence, and the processes through which it took place. To resolve the delicate position of my work between these two points I have followed Shofield's suggestion of a harmonious balance. "While she rejects the idea that generalisability consists of the production of laws, she insists that this does not rule out case study researchers putting forward general conclusions." (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:9) If I shy away from axiomatic pronouncements it is because to presume the complete transferability of my conclusions would be to assume that influence always occurs in the same way, and that it affects all artists equally. Interestingly, according to some theorists, "readers of case study reports must themselves determine whether the findings are applicable to other cases than those which the researcher has studied." (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:100) This notion attracts me because it is particularly relevant to my study. Since no research of this scope and degree has been carried out before from my specific angle, it could be said that I am merely mapping uncharted territory. Therefore the responsibility of assessing the transferability of my findings rests with the reader of this thesis. Moreover, it will be others who may follow with their contributions, who will expand upon what I have set out to achieve.

Following on from my discussion about case study research, it is appropriate that I repeat the core arguments of this thesis outlined in the introduction of this chapter. On a basic level, I seek to demonstrate that influence in theatre and performance is measurable and can be substantiated with evidence. At the same time, on a specific level, I contend that Grotowski's influence is palpable in British theatre, with particular reference to the time period that I am focusing on. However, I would like to emphasise that I am in no way suggesting that Grotowski's influence is felt throughout the whole spectrum of British theatrical practice, nor indeed that it has been evenly felt over time or in all cases. Therefore, I am not technically using these case studies to infer universal theories or propose particular laws. Instead I am applying case study research "to impart a sense of concreteness to an otherwise overwhelmingly abstract account." (Mitchell in Ellen, 1984:237)

4.2 Theatre histories, a brief note

Since my thesis will focus on past events there are a number of historiographical issues I have had to take into account, such as the role of interpretation in re-constructing theatrical events, or the implications of the use of primary and secondary sources[39]. I have read a number of works which tackle the theatre historian's task: *Interpreting the Theatrical Past*, edited by Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (1989); Maria diCenzo's *The politics of alternative theatre in Britain, 1968-1990, the case of 7:84 (Scotland)* (1996); Jacky Bratton's *New Readings in Theatre History* (2003); and Thomas Postlewait's *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (2009). Even though these works are not all as programmatic as Hermerén's book, they have clarified my thinking and been a further help in establishing my methodological approaches to the subject.

Firstly, Postlewait makes a distinction between microhistorians and those who concentrate on "the large, abiding conditions and structures that direct historical conditions and development." (Postlewait, 2009:9) He then goes on to criticise those scholars who, attending almost exclusively to individual events, describe these and quickly conclude their investigation, because they "often fail to place events in relation to one another, either synchronically or diachronically." (Postlewait, 2009:10) Since this thesis focuses on particular events that are not directly connected to each other, it is closer to Postlewait's understanding of microhistory. Nevertheless, I have always aimed to position these cases within their respective contexts, whilst taking into account that 'context' is not a single idea but is made up of a number of various factors (Postlewait, 2009:17).

Secondly, as Postlewait states, "'what' we know depends in great measure on 'how' we know." (Postlewait, 2009:35) Therefore, in order to clarify the ways in which I have constructed my argument I will outline the sources I have used to do so. In relation to the reliability of sources, Postlewait talks about a scale of possibility, plausibility, probability, and certainty (Postlewait, 2009:91); thus I will refer to similar terms throughout my analysis. At the same time, I have taken into account his

[39] On 13th and 14th September 2007 the Grotowski Institute in Wroclaw organised an international conference about the research practice of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards as part of the collaborative programme *Horizons*. During this conference I briefly met Thomas Richards and discussed the aims of my thesis in connection to the British Grotowski Project led by Paul Allain. Richards said to me that I would be 'writing history'. Though at the time I disregarded this comment as being unnecessarily grand, I have come to appreciate what he meant and acknowledge that my work is indeed concerned with the construction of history. This realisation is partly the reason why I have chosen to include this subsection in this chapter.

critical attitude towards primary sources, particularly personal testimonies[40]. As Postlewait goes on to suggest, "we need to investigate the biographical, geographical, chronological, and occupational or functional meaning of any statement by a historical eyewitness. We cannot just lift a sentence out of a document without first determining how and why it was presented by the person who produced it." (Postlewait, 2009:84) Thus, he later states that the motives for an individual's production of testimony that refer to and represent a certain event have to be fully examined (Postlewait, 2009:115) Of course, in my case this issue is resolved by the fact that most of the testimonies I will use are the result of interviews I have carried out myself. Nonetheless, this still leaves me with two challenges. On the one hand I have had to determine to what extent the statements made by my interviewees are based on impressions they had at the time of the event or are based on retrospective reflections. I have attempted to ascertain this by the way in which I questioned them. On the other hand, I have had to contend with the fact that such testimonies are always subjective. Though unable to overcome it, I have acknowledged this challenge by being clear about the personal nature of these statements, pointing out any contradictions between the testimonies of different individuals and, where possible, verifying them by comparing them to other existing sources. That said, it is important that I refer to Bratton's work in this respect. Her approach is less narrowly concerned with factual accuracy than Postlewait's. As she states, primary sources and testimonies, in an attempt to make them into evidence that can be trusted, "have often been trawled for 'factual' information that can be extracted and corroborated from other documentary sources (...) but they have not often been read for what their writers or their subjects seem to stress, or what their contemporary readership might have understood" (Bratton, 2003:95) Therefore, rather than combing through them for facts which might be checked against other sources, such material should be read in its own terms, "accepting the picture it paints as the intended activity of its authors" (Bratton, 2003:101) This is particularly relevant in the case of anecdote because, as Jonathan Bate states, "the point of the anecdote is not its factual but its representative truth." (Bate in Bratton, 2003:103) Similarly, Bratton understands that what matters most about an anecdote is not the more or less dubious facts it contains, but "its inner truth, its truth to some ineffable 'essence'" (Bratton, 2003:103) Neither Postlewait's

[40] As he suggests, there is a temptation to accept the testimony of key participants in an event "because their versions of what happened are consistent with our preconceived narratives of what we want the event to represent; although these participants, to be expected, tend to remember and describe the event in self-serving ways, they are treated as reliable witnesses who sanction the narratives we wish to embrace" (Postlewait, 2009:81)

or Bratton's positions are entirely suitable to my study. Whilst Postlewait's suggestion for historical enquiry would not allow for the nuances and inconsistencies inherent in my subject, it is difficult to reconcile Bratton's rejection of the need for objective verification with my aim to construct a history of Grotowski's influence on British theatre based on facts. Therefore, I have attempted to reconcile their opposing propositions. On the one hand I have corroborated personal testimonies with other sources where necessary, that is to say when further clarification of fact was needed. On the other hand I have accepted those testimonies as subjective statements, reading them in their own terms, and considering their implications rather than taking them at face value.

Finally, I would like to outline how diCenzo's work has contributed to my thinking. Particularly because, drawing upon the work of Paul Knowles[41], she demonstrates "the 'complex series of negotiations' that the historian faces as he or she confronts three 'sites of struggle'" (diCenzo, 1996:7). These relate to primary sources and address the way a company constructs itself for funding bodies, audiences, and themselves; the reception of their work by critics; and the histories that have been or could be written about them by academics (diCenzo, 1996:7). The difficulty here lies in reconciling the sometimes contradictory accounts of these discourses. I have had to face this challenge when using archival materials in my analysis. Like testimonies, documents of this kind are never objective and there is no way of measuring to what degree or in what specific way they are subjective. diCenzo concludes that the only viable option to deal with this problem is to simply record such discrepancies, offering a range of different viewpoints (diCenzo, 1996:16). I will attempt to do precisely this. At the same time, diCenzo raises some questions about the way in which academics organise information and construct the histories of theatre companies. She asks: "How much attention should be devoted to the origins, founders/members, organization or relations of production, creative process, financing, productions, venues, audiences and critical reception?" (diCenzo, 1996:12). This has led me, for the sake of clarity, to expose as openly as possible the ways in which I have embarked upon the analysis of my chosen case studies. For instance, because of my particular angle on the subject of this thesis, I will be focusing on the

[41] Knowles, Paul. (1992) 'Stories of Interest: Some Partial Histories of Mulgrave Road Groping Towards a Method'. *Theatre Research in Canada*, 13 (1-2), pp.107-19.

companies' origins and their practice, leaving aside other issues such as their finances[42].

4.3 Methodological approaches, a summary

So far I have deliberately talked about methodological approaches in plural because, in order to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of each case study, I will not be applying a standardised system for the evaluation of Grotowski's influence on British theatre. Instead my analysis has remained flexible, adapting in response to both the characteristics of each particular case and the available sources. Nonetheless, although there are some differences between each chapter (i.e. regarding their structure)[43], there are a number of key principles which have guided my approach to the various subjects more or less consistently. As already suggested, these have been informed by Hermerén's work as well as my research on case study methods and theatre historiography. Whilst resisting the formulation of a singular system of analysis, throughout this subsection I will outline the main methodological approaches that I have used. Although some of them have already been touched upon, and thus do not need further explanation, I will mention them here for the sake of clarity and to emphasise that my analysis of influence has not been arbitrary.

Though I have not necessarily done this at the beginning of each chapter, my discussion of all case studies acknowledges the primary and secondary sources I have used to build my argument. In relation to this it is important to highlight that whilst in some cases I have had access to audiovisual materials documenting the work, this has not always been possible. Therefore, at times my understanding of the work discussed has been inferred through a close reading of other sources such as reviews, rehearsal notes, or interviews. Whilst I have been able to make objective claims about certain

[42] Moreover, some of the factual gaps which I have encountered concern the individuals who were members of certain groups which I have used as case studies. This is particularly pronounced in the cases of Freehold (chapter IV) and Triple Action Theatre (chapter V), who experienced some major reshufflings of their creative teams. Therefore, in these instances I have chose to concentrate on the companies' directors/figureheads.

[43] For instance, whilst discussing Grotowski's influence on Peter Brook and the Royal Shakespeare Company in chapter II, I will focus entirely on the production of *U.S. / US.* At the same time, in my discussion of Freehold and Triple Action Theatre, I will not limit my analysis to a single production but will draw upon a range of works. Of course it is also worth mentioning that this is partly due to the shortage of primary sources about any one of Freehold's or Triple Action Theatre's performances.

external/explicit elements in some case studies, I have had to allow a degree of subjectivity in others, acknowledging the limitations of the sources used. Moreover where necessary, for instance due to contradicting information, I will comment upon the reliability of the sources used as well as attempt to explain the reasons for such discrepancies. That said, I would like to highlight that my study has embraced a multiplicity of viewpoints and refrained from making value judgements.

As will become apparent, I have placed great importance on context. This will be most explicit in the way that I will place each case study within a specific set of socio-political and cultural circumstances, and will also be relevant to my discussion of how each case study came to know about Grotowski's practice. Of course I have not been able to discuss in detail every single factor making up these contexts but have instead focused on what I have considered to be the most important ones, particularly when explaining the reasons for influence and why it manifested in that particular way.

The starting point for any investigation of influence is to determine what elements or areas of practice the study will focus on. Naturally, traces of influence may be found in various features of a performance and can usually be arranged on a sliding scale according to how easily they can be measured, described and interpreted. Throughout this thesis I have addressed both external/explicit elements which are easily perceptible in performance or the processes of its creation (i.e. aesthetics, physicality, dramaturgy, etc.), and internal/implicit aspects which require a deeper investigation (i.e. psychological work or methodological principles guiding the work). I have chosen to confine my efforts to scenography/aesthetics, physicality and movement, voice, dramaturgy, inner/psychological work, and methodological approaches guiding the creation of the work, because they are some of the more representative features of Grotowski's practice. The above mentioned elements are of course rather general headings and so in each case study I will concentrate on relevant subcategories[44]. What is important to note is that not all of them will be addressed in every chapter. Instead, as I will discuss in a moment, I will concentrate on the features which are more relevant to each particular case study.

[44] For example, within the field of physical movement I may look more closely at the attempt to readdress the body-mind split, or the emphasis on impulse, whilst in the area of dramaturgy I may discuss the approach to spoken language, or the use of a given playtext.

The second key issue I will take into account will be the processes and channels through which influence has taken place: transmission and dissemination on the one hand, direct and indirect contact on the other. In analysing these processes and channels I will begin by determining the ways in which Grotowski's ideas, knowledge or techniques have spread by carrying out biographical and contextual investigations about each case study. For example, I will identify whether there was a direct meeting with Grotowski, for how long and under what circumstances; or whether there is any evidence to support that the influence occurred through the intercession of a third party, or as the result of the reading of a text such as *Towards a Poor Theatre*. At the same time I will discuss the implications of these processes and channels in reference to each case study. This will be particularly relevant when addressing instances of dissemination or indirect contact. Although I will not go so far as to suggest that in these cases the influence will necessarily become weaker, I will acknowledge the fact that the process of interpretation inherent in influence might have a more important role. That is to say, if a practitioner or company has not been influenced by transmission and direct contact with Grotowski, I will recognise that this might have led to changes in or misinterpretations of Grotowski's original practice. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that in such instances I will not make overt judgements about the value of the works created by the influenced artists. Rather, I will simply use the processes and channels though which influence has taken place as a means to explain the nature of that influence and the way in which it became manifest.

Thirdly, implicit within my analysis, I will evaluate the extent of influence discussed in each chapter. In doing so, I will attempt to distinguish between strong and weak influence. This evaluation will primarily focus on the similarities and differences between Grotowski's practice and each case study. Although I am aware that influence does not necessarily result in similarities and that similarities are not always proof that influence has taken place, for the sake of verification, I have deliberately chosen to concentrate on cases where influence is indeed expressed in similarities and can be corroborated by direct or indirect contact with Grotowski. Furthermore, in order to avoid confusion, I will also attempt to establish to what extent the similarities are expressed in more than one aspect, and to what degree they could be said to be precise. That is to say, I will determine whether the similarities concern each case study in its totality or whether they are confined to particular details, as well as putting them into focus with a discussion of any significant

differences or alterations. At any rate, as I mentioned earlier, it is important to take into account that what matters is not necessarily the presence of similarities in itself, but the ways in which the aspects, features or principles which have influenced an artist have been used and applied.

This leads me onto the final issue I will take into account when analysing influence: evaluating its importance in each case study. I will do this by referring to a general ranking system which complements the previously discussed grading of influence from weak to strong. This fourth approach is possibly the most contentious one because it is based on the presumption that I will be able to specify how certain aspects of a work or practice might be more relevant than the rest. As will become clear in the next section, I have derived my rationale from Grotowski's practice by identifying some of the key principles which guided it. Furthermore, I have prioritised artistic importance according to the relative facility with which certain features may be copied without assimilation. Consequently, I will regard as less significant those elements which could be more easily reproduced (i.e. aesthetics), whilst considering more important those aspects which require a deeper understanding of Grotowski's practice to be fully implemented (i.e. inner/psychological work or more complex training methodologies). However this does not mean that I have defined a strict scale which could be applied exhaustively. Moreover, in regard to my conception of artistic importance, I should emphasise that this only relates to the particular aims of my study and not to the general artistic value of the case studies I discuss. Similarly, even though I will talk about the possibility of 'misinterpretations' of Grotowski's theories and practice, I do not intend for this to suggest that the artist who misinterprets has failed in some way. Instead, as previously mentioned, I will acknowledge the creative richness of such misunderstandings. That is not to say that I will take a completely relativist approach, but I will contextualise that particular case of misinterpretation, define why it should be classified as such by explaining how it differs from Grotowski's practice, and consider its effects, whilst at the same time abstaining from passing judgement about the case studies as a whole.

Throughout this section, and particularly this subsection, I have aimed to outline the main points which have guided my evaluation of Grotowski's influence upon British theatre as explicitly as possible. Nevertheless, it is appropriate that I again refer back to Hermerén's warning about the dangers of "doing quasimathematics" (Hermerén, 1975:207). Ultimately this is an investigation of an artistic and creative

phenomenon, not a scientific experiment where all the variables are artificially controlled in a laboratory environment.

5. GROTOWSKI AND INFLUENCE

In this last section I will relate the concept of influence more closely to Grotowski's practice and theories. Even though it will not significantly alter the methodological approaches outlined thus far, it will serve as a means to clarify further my thinking. I will begin by exploring the underlying principles that can be found at the core of Grotowski's practice. I have already referred to the need to list them previously[45] because I will utilise them as measures against which to compare particular case studies, and thus determine to what extent the influence manifest in them could be said to be Grotowskian. Secondly, I will emphasise that Grotowski's practice should not be understood as a coherent 'method', particularly if his own pronouncements are taken into account. Thirdly, I will discuss both the model of Grotowski's influence proposed by Schechner, and the suggested means for its analysis outlined by Wolford. My primary aim in doing so is to position my own investigation in relation to their work. Finally, in two separate subsections, I will explore Grotowski's own relationship to influence by discussing his attitude to the channels of transmission and dissemination, and his belief in the need for change and development inherent to the process of influence. Here I will take into account the wider implications that can be drawn from his understanding, and their application to my study.

5.1 Identifying Grotowskian principles

Grotowski's practice spans over five decades of intense work. As already mentioned, within this extended period of time he displayed a series of changes in direction. Thus any attempts to define or assess Grotowski's influence are complicated because he

[45] See subsection 3.3 in this chapter.

periodically reinvented himself and redefined the aims of his work[46]. However, the differences between these phases should not be overemphasised because they cannot be understood as completely autonomous. Grotowski himself clarified this issue:

> In appearance, and for some people in a scandalous or incomprehensible manner, I passed through very contradictory periods, but in truth (...) the line is quite direct. I have always sought to prolong the investigation, but when one arrives at a certain point, in order to take a step forward, one must enlarge the field. The emphases shift. (...) Some historians speak of cuts in my itinerary, but I have more the impression of a thread which I have followed (Grotowski in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:6)

In this subsection I do not propose to describe a Grotowskian 'method', indeed, as I will discuss later, this is a problematic concept. Instead, I will attempt to determine what the threads in his practice were; that is to say, what key features appeared throughout his various phases of work and remained his guiding principles. Therefore, although I am aware that individuals who have been exposed to Grotowski's practice at one stage or another "are likely to come away with substantially different experiences and different types of performance knowledge" (Wolford, 1996:39), I will argue that there is an equally significant set of similarities between them and that, for the purposes of this thesis, it is relevant to focus on these aspects of Grotowski's practice. I have derived these Grotowskian principles by closely examining his own texts as well as scholarship about his work[47]. Parting from a conviction that Grotowski's phases have a series of common threads running through them, I will not list a set of principles for each different period, but compile a single list of those common to all of them. I am, of course, not the first one to suggest that Grotowski's practice could be somehow understood in such a manner. Indeed, Wolford summarises it by identifying a series of ethos with direct, practical repercussions, such as a commitment to daily training, or a demand for impeccability and accountability

[46] In doing so Wolford argues that Grotowski sought to "destabilize preconceptions about the goals and substance of his work" (Wolford, 1996:39). In regards to my study I have to acknowledge that Grotowski's post-theatrical practice raised many questions. The most recurring ones seemed to be whether this subsequent work had anything to do with theatre as it is normally practised (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:118), and what application might his practice have beyond the confines of his secluded laboratory setting (Brook in Schechner & Wolford 2001:381). The implications of such questions are wide ranging, and this is not the occasion to discuss them. Instead I will touch upon them when discussing the influence of paratheatre on a number of individuals in chapter VI.

[47] Of course I have had to take into account that, in the middle phases of Grotowski's activities, his work was not as extensively documented as his early or later ones. Although "the scarcity of documentation from the work of the paratheatrical and Theatre of Sources periods presents enormous complexities" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:4), I have inferred the principles at work in these phases by drawing on other available sources (i.e. participants' reports).

(Wolford, 1996:42). At the same time, Schechner defines three main ideas from which Grotowski's influences on theatre all flow: "that powerful acting occurs at a meeting place of the personal and the archetypal (...), that the most effective theatre is the "poor theatre" (...), that theatre is intercultural, differentiating and relating performance 'truths' in and from many cultures." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxviii). What I am proposing to do here is therefore by no means new, but to expand the list of Grotowskian principles and formulate them in my own terms. This territory is especially difficult to navigate because Grotowski's practice is a complex web of connected questions, parallel approaches, and intersecting avenues of enquiry which, since they have been carried out over such a long period of time and over such a wide field, are almost impossible to define in a systematic way. The following table should therefore only be seen as an approximation.

Field / area	**Related principles**
General work ethic	- creation of an ensemble
	- commitment to daily training and research
	- emphasis on process rather than product
	- demand for impeccability and accountability
Search for 'essence', 'truth', and the archetypal	- dropping the 'everyday mask'
	- textual montage (apotheosis and derision)
	- role as a scalpel through which to explore the self
	- essentialist aesthetics ('poor theatre')
Human encounter	- emphasis on the actor's presence / working on different qualities of energy
	- emphasis on the relationship between audience and performers or amongst participants
Via Negativa	- training processes as a means to unblock (thus exercises must be suited to each individual's needs)
	- no recipes
Organicity	- work is always psychophysical (body/mind)
	- emphasis on the truthfulness of impulse
	- full use of the physical and vocal capacities as a means for expression

As becomes clear by looking at this table, it is very difficult to talk about these issues separately because they are all interconnected. If I have differentiated between two columns it is because the one on the left lists the main areas of Grotowski's enquiries, and the one on the right lists some of his means to each end. Nevertheless, to attempt to analyse these guiding principles in any more detail, or to propose a more rigorous system of classification, would require a thesis in its own right. Instead, my aim in discussing them here is merely to establish what main features could be said to be representative of Grotowski's practice. This, as I have already mentioned, will later help me to determine how any particular instance of influence may be said to be Grotowskian.

The first set of ethical guidelines relates to practical issues pertaining Grotowski's work ethic. Even though they may seem somewhat superficial in comparison to the others, it is important not to overlook them because to a certain degree they are the basic foundations of his practice. I have taken most of these from an article in which Wolford analyses the influence Grotowski has had on practitioners, as well as companies who have been influenced by him (Wolford, 1996:42). That said, since they concern quite general practical issues, they were certainly present in all of Grotowski's phases, including those beyond theatre.

The second group of principles relates to Grotowski's life-long, empirical search for the realisation/physicalisation of metaphysical concepts such as essence, truth and the archetypal. This was truly his meta-objective and can be found at the core of his whole career, harking back to his childhood interest in Eastern philosophies and spiritual life[48]. On this basis, Schechner goes so far as to propose that Grotowski never belonged to the world of theatre as it is mundanely understood (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvi). What is more, it could be stated that Grotowski's various phases were actually just the means to an ultimate and overarching end. That is to say, in a sense, his phases of work are only distinct manifestations of the same search. For instance, the concepts of 'holy actor' and 'total act' found during the Theatre of Productions relate in a very direct way to these intangible issues, especially because in

[48] For instance, as has become part of the Grotowski folklore, at the age of ten he was given a book by his mother that had a profound impact on him. The book was Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*, in which the English journalist recounts his contact with the mysteries of India. Through this book Grotowski first discovered the teaching of the Hindu mystic Ramana Maharshi, who "believed that a deep investigation of the question 'Who-am-I?' would cause the socialized, ego-orientated 'I' to disappear and reveal one's true, undivided being." (Slowiak & Cuesta, 2007:4).

staging productions Grotowski was aiming to fulfil an 'ethical mission'. The 'holy' actor becomes a martyr through his performance and, sacrificing himself to the audience by revealing his innermost self, spurs them to undertake a similar process of 'self-penetration', inspiring them to cast away their everyday masks to analyse and struggle with their own personal truth[49]. In the end, Grotowski found that audiences always remained distanced from the actor's inner processes, and that mere spectatorship might not be the best means to reach his metaphysical aims. It was this dissatisfaction which ultimately lead him away from theatrical performances and into new territories. As Schechner puts it, "work on oneself led from theatre to Paratheatre; searching for what is transcultural and essential led from Paratheatre to Theatre of Sources; distilling those sources into patterned behaviour led to Objective Drama and Art as Vehicle" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:213). All the while, Grotowski kept asking the same questions: What is essential? How does one communicate sincerely with others at a truly authentic level? At the axis of his practice we find a belief that "what is most intimate and hidden in each individual, what is core or deep or secret, is the same as what is most archetypal or universal." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:27)[50]

On a practical, more explicit level Grotowski's metaphysical search was most plainly observed by the essentialist nature of his aesthetics, "with a minimum accoutrement beyond the presence of the actors" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxviii). This is because his aesthetic choices were by no means concerned with beauty, but were rather an extension of his ethical positions. Even though it is important to remember that this particular approach was only explicitly used during the Theatre of Productions, Grotowski's indirect aesthetic choices did indeed continue along such lines throughout the rest of his career. What is important to emphasis here is that the usage of candles, bread, and a particularly style of costumes was not just a decorative matter but were part and parcel of his metaphysical concerns and his attempt to touch upon archetypal resonances.

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[49] Grotowski talked about this process at several points throughout *Towards a Poor Theatre*. For particular examples see Grotowski, 1968:21. The other two main ways in which Grotowski aimed to achieve this 'ethical mission' in his productions were his treatment of dramaturgical montages as "scalpels with which to operate on and dissect both the souls of the performers and the condition of European society and culture" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvi); and his understanding of the actor's role as a channel through which to explore and investigate the self.

[50] As Grotowski said himself during his paratheatrical period, "if one carries one's sincerity to the limit, crossing the barriers of the possible, or admissible, and if that sincerity does not confine itself to words, but reveals the human being totally, it – paradoxically – becomes the incarnation of the total man" (Grotowski, 1973a:122).

The third set of ethical guidelines specifically relates to human contact and is almost impossible to extricate from those I have just discussed. One of Grotowski's principles clearly discernible during his first stage of work was that the actor should be at the core of the theatrical event. This meant that one of his practice's main concerns was in establishing possible ways of working on presence. At the beginning of Grotowski's career this involved, amongst other techniques, the careful scoring of the actor's actions with regards to the audience's perception, and the achievement of a 'total act' through which the actor would become a "phenomenon *hic et nunc*" (Grotowski in Osinski, 1986:86). Later, as the staging of plays was left behind, the emphasis shifted towards the exploration of different qualities of being or energy. This approach was evident in some of Grotowski's paratheatrical activities, but was at its clearest during Art as Vehicle.

At the same time, in relation to presence, Grotowski declared the communion *hic et nunc* between audience and performers was the basis of all productions. This in part led to the development of spatial configurations that placed the audience in a specific relation to the action[51]. What was essential is not that the actors and spectators be mixed, but "that the relation between the actors and the spectators in space be a significant one." (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:43) Already at this stage, he was defining actors and audience as "participants of the first and second order" (Grotowski in Osinski, 1986:54). Of course during the post-theatrical phases of his work, Grotowski's interest focused solely on participants. However, albeit experiencing a shift in his approach, the emphasis still was the realisation of an authentic and human encounter[52].

I have grouped the fourth set of principles under the heading '*via negativa*', a term which Grotowski fully explained for the first time in *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Although it was coined with particular reference to the Theatre of Productions, and was not used as much in later phases, it was still valid throughout the whole of his career and perhaps best illustrates his methodological attitude. When Grotowski first used this expression in 1965, it was to define "not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks", a state of mind where the actor "does not '*want to do*'" but

[51] In the early productions, such as *Forefathers' Eve* and *Kordian*, this was achieved by direct confrontation whereby the audience would not only be spaced amongst the actors but would be directly addressed by them. In later pieces, especially *The Constant Prince* and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, these rather crude approaches were refined to a less confrontational and yet equally effective arrangement of the space.

[52] I will discuss this issue in more detail in chapter VI, when analysing the influence of paratheatre.

rather "*resigns from not doing*" (Grotowski, 1968:17) [53]. This became manifest in Grotowski's training because exercises were conceived of as a challenge to each individual's limitations. That is to say, it did not set out a system, but a series of ever changing techniques developed as a personal response. When he ceased his theatrical activities Grotowski continued to operate along similar lines. In his main text about paratheatre, 'Holiday', he dispelled the conception of his exercises as recipes, emphasising that they were only considered "as kinds of tests to discover the points of resistance of our organisms." (Grotowski, 1973a:121) Of course, this has implications with regards to the possibility of a Grotowskian 'method', because 'methods' are nearly always seen in terms of 'how to do' (Grotowski, 1973a:121) What Grotowski proposed was the opposite, how to disarm oneself. His suggestion that recipes for creation are inevitably sterile and false, clearly resonates with his earlier concept of '*via negativa*'.

Finally, the last set of Grotowski's principles can be loosely understood as relating to the concept of the performer's organicity. This is particularly connected with psychophysical techniques which sought to make full use of the actor's physical and vocal capacities as a means for expression, always in relation to a stream of personal associations or 'inner life'. Grotowski's primary concern here was to unite body and mind in a single, authentic impulse. Though his work was characteristically and explicitly physical, it should be noted that the extension of the actor's bodily and vocal capacities was never pursued for its own sake. The concept of organicity in itself points at an interdependence between external and inner processes as a unified and organic whole. The aim was not virtuosity, but to seek "a seed of living action born inside the actor's body which extends itself outward to the periphery, making itself visible as physical action" (Wolford in Hodge, 2007:199). As this suggests, the key issue is the incorporation of physical and psychic processes. That is to say, his actors were encouraged at all points, even during the most basic exercise, to allow personal associations to arise from the activity carried out. "The purpose of the work with memories and images was not to play them out (...) as a type of internal projection, but rather to arrive to a state in which one does not anticipate or prescribe what details will emerge" (Wolford in Hodge, 2007:203). Otherwise, Grotowski detected a danger that in focusing entirely on athletics the exercises may become vacuous and just for show. Again, it is easy to see how this links back to some of the

[53] Grotowski's original emphasis.

larger metaphysical questions I discussed earlier. Even though these principles are more easily situated during the Theatre of Productions, because this is the period when Grotowski was more directly involved in their exploration, they do still relate to his later phases of work. In particular, the concept of organicity gained special importance during the Theatre of Sources and Objective Drama.

Throughout this subsection it has become evident that some of Grotowski's principles are more clearly applicable to all stages of his work, whilst others are less conspicuous and can only be found indirectly throughout his career. This is particularly the case because there is often a change in the terminology used to describe certain recurring, basic concepts. As mentioned earlier, Grotowski's practice is best described as a series of interconnecting avenues of enquiry. Even though I have attempted to illuminate this vast territory, I am aware that this is by no means a definite description. Nonetheless, I have been able to identify a set of key principles which can be defined as Grotowskian. Later on in this thesis, when it comes to evaluating claims of influence in each particular case study, I will take these guiding principles as one of the starting points for my analysis.

5.2 Against a 'method'

I have already hinted that Grotowski's work cannot be understood as an applicable 'method'. This is the case in any of the individual stages of his practice as well as his whole career. Grotowski often discouraged actors from using ready-made recipes which, in his view, inhibited creativity and could only lead to stereotypes. In doing so, as Wolford points out, "Grotowski was dubious of not only the efficacy of such methods, but also the impulse behind the desire for recipes and easy solutions." (Wolford in Hodge, 2007:194) The first examples of this attitude can be found in two speeches made by Grotowski in 1969. The first one took place on 22nd February during a meeting with actors and directors at the Brooklyn Academy in New York[54].

[54] Shorthand notes of Grotowski's speech were edited for publication by Leszek Kolankiewicz and were published for the first time in the Polish magazine *Dialog* on 5th May. This text, under the title 'Reply to Stanislavski', has only appeared in English relatively recently in a translation by Kris Salata as part of an issue of *TDR* dedicated to Grotowski's work (*TDR*, 52:2, Summer 2008).

On this occasion Grotowski articulated the problems of attempting to construct a 'method' in relation to his own practice:

> When I realized that the problem of building my own system was illusory, and that there is no ideal system which could be a key to creativity, then the word 'method' changed its meaning for me. There exists a challenge to which each must give his own reply. (...) The experience of life is the question, and creation in truth is simply the reply. One begins from the effort of not hiding and not lying. Then the method in terms of a system does not exist. It cannot exist in any way but as a challenge or as a call. (Grotowski, 2008b:32)

Although at this stage Grotowski was only beginning to tentatively reject the possibility of a 'method' that could encompass his practice, he would soon be more explicit. Later on in 1969 he gave a closing remark after one of the summer worksessions which he had led, organised by Barba's Odin Teatret in Holstebro[55]. This time Grotowski addressed the issue more specifically to the influence that his work was having on a younger generation of theatre makers:

> First, there is no 'Grotowski system. (...) In fact, to work in my spirit means to work in one's own spirit. Nobody can work the way I do, because everyone is different. (...) This is the only thing in which one could see a 'method': to work without lying, without imitating the work, without hiding, without an easy way out; to go towards the actor, to go towards him fully, with all your being; to go until you forget about yourself, to expect the same from him and to meet him. (Grotowski, 2008a:18-19)

What is interesting to note about this is that, in a sense, Grotowski himself was beginning to identify a number of key principles which guided his work, not in a practical way but in an ethical one. This resonates with parts of my discussion in the previous subsection. Clearly Grotowski did not understand 'method' as a series of codified formulae which should be adhered to, but as the attitude of continually attempting to find new means for disarmament and pushing oneself further. Indeed, this is something he applied even to his own work and as a result, for instance, the Teatr Laboratorium would abandon certain exercises and techniques if they no longer posed a challenge to the company members. As Jennifer Kumiega has pointed out, although Grotowski believed in a concrete path of research and training, "the essential condition which qualifies this path or 'method' is that it is individual and personal"

[55] This text was published for the first time in any language in the same issue of *TDR* I have just cited under the title 'Farewell Speech to the Pupils'.

(Kumiega, 1985:111). This leads Kumiega to state that "the only method that deserves the name of the Grotowski method is that of having no fixed and universal method at all" (Kumiega, 1985:111) More importantly, in regards to my discussion thus far, Kumiega then goes to explain that the key aspects of Grotowski's practice are his techniques and ethics: "Techniques we can understand as the minutiae of method (...) the practicable directives which, in certain combinations, produce the verifiable results which are usually classed as method. Ethics are what inform the use of technique – the how, when, why and which of technique." (Kumiega, 1985:111)[56] Again, this is echoed by my previous discussion. Whilst Kumiega mentions 'techniques', I have preferred to refer to them as 'principles' to emphasise further that these were not static formulae. Grotowski's rejection of codifying his practice as a 'method' will also be implicit in my later exploration of his belief that when artists are influenced or handed down ideas, skills and knowledge they should change and develop them for their own purposes. Nevertheless, considering the previous subsection, I wanted to explicitly emphasise that I was not attempting to distil a Grotowskian 'method'.

5.3 Schechner and Wolford, a brief note

Throughout this subsection I would like to briefly mention some of Schechner's and Wolford's understanding of Grotowski's influence. I will not attempt to summarise all their pronouncements about this phenomenon but focus on just a few issues they have raised. In doing so, I will introduce some key questions which I will return to in my concluding chapter.

In his preface to *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, Schechner acknowledges that Grotowski's influence is "deep, wide, abiding, and growing" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxv) even though most young practitioners have little knowledge about him, and have never seen or participated firsthand in his work[57]. It is important to point out that Schechner wrote this after Grotowski's death in 1999, and this new text was first

[56] In relation to this, it is interesting to note Wolford's suggestion that "it is more productive for artists interested in developing their own independent practice to look for inspiration in the *ethos* and fundamental tenets of Grotowski's work than through importing codified exercises." (Wolford in Hodge, 2007:195)

[57] In regards to this issue Schechner states that this is the case "in the United States and the United Kingdom at least" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxv). If the situation regarding a lack of (firsthand) knowledge about Grotowski may be different elsewhere, Schechner does not specify where.

published as the preface to the second edition of the *Sourcebook* in 2001[58]. However there have been developments since then which mean Grotowski's name and has continued to spread, and it is thus arguable whether the situation described by Schechner has remained the same[59]. Naturally, it is impossible to attend one of the Teatr Laboratorium's performances or participate in one of Grotowski's workshops, but there has been a recent move to make documents about his practice more available both in print and as audiovisual materials[60]. Nonetheless, it could be said that the paradox identified by Schechner has not fully disappeared but has instead shifted. Today, the challenge lies not so much in compensating for a lack of knowledge about Grotowski's theories and the impossibility of directly engaging with his practice, but to negotiate and overcome difficulties inherent in the process of adapting the complexity of both his theories and practice to current artistic and educational settings.

At the same time, as already mentioned, a further challenge is posed by the fact that Grotowski's influence is spreading through a number of processes and channels: transmission and dissemination, direct and indirect contact. This is something which Schechner goes on to suggest when stating that "Grotowski's effects on the theatre will not be through the establishment of a method of actor training, an approach to mise-en-scène, or an insistence on a dramaturgy of political purpose. Grotowski will affect theatre through the influence he had on the people with whom he interacted on a personal, even intimate, level." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvi-xxvii) He illustrates this process by comparing it to the way a rock dropped into a body of water creates concentric waves that expand outwards in ever-widening circles (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvii). Nonetheless, this model is little more than a poetic image and

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[58] The book was first published in 1997.

[59] This is especially the case in the UK, where Grotowski has been added to the secondary education and curriculum and is currently 'taught' at most university drama departments and some conservatories. Of course these lateral channels of dissemination raise a set of new challenges in regards to how accurately his practice is being represented. However, due to the specific focus of this thesis, I am unable to discuss the implications of these developments.

[60] For instance, James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta's 2007 book on Grotowski, published as part of the Routledge Performance Practitioners' series, now provides a solid and thorough introduction to his work for those who have not encountered him before. Moreover, marking the UNESCO designated 'Year of Grotowski', a number of more specialised but equally important works have appeared throughout 2009. For instance Paul Allain's *Grotowski's Empty Room* has made available a collection of texts about Grotowski which were previously not printed in English. Ludwik Flaszen's *Grotowski & Company* should also be noted. At the same time, there have been recent attempts to widen the accessibility to video footage about Grotowski such as the re-mastered and digitalised DVD of *The Constant Prince* – to which subtitles in various languages has been added –, or his personal journey to the village of his childhood *With Grotowski – Nienadowka*. What effect all these sources will have on Grotowski's influence and the understanding of his work will only become apparent in coming years.

its workings are far from clear: is the concentric wave-formation a reference to indirect transmission? How does the widening of these circles relate to influence? Is the weakening of the peripheral waves intended to represent a weakening or transformation of the original teachings stemming from Grotowski? To attempt to answer these questions would be to enter into highly speculative territory.

What is certain is that Schechner's understanding of influence emphasises the personal contact between individuals, between Grotowski and every one of his 'disciples'. Nevertheless, in stating that "Grotowski changed lives and therefore changed the theatre" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvii), Schechner does not seem to allow much space for more complex and indirect channels of transmission and dissemination. Although he recognises that there is a relatively large number of individuals and companies with whom Grotowski had some sort of contact, in essence, Schechner suggests that Grotowski's effect on theatre will be carried on by these select few. This is reinforced in his later introductory comments to the *TDR* issue dedicated to Grotowski in summer 2008. Here Schechner identifies that, although in his later years Grotowski paid close attention to transmitting his inner work to Thomas Richards, outside of this closed relationship others were free to interpret Grotowski as they saw fit (Schechner, 2008:10). Again, Schechner seems to refer to his earlier model of a rock dropped into water by stating that there is a first line of individuals who worked with Grotowski at various points in his career prior to his Art as Vehicle phase, and second and third lines of "people who worked with people who worked with people who worked with Grotowski; and those who saw the film *Akropolis* or read *Towards a Poor Theatre*." (Schechner, 2008:10). Clearly, his understanding of Grotowski's influence is based on a hierarchy of contact. Furthermore, the way in which he discusses stereotypical 'Grotowskian' performances and the fact that he states they strike him as parodic suggest that Schechner does not hold them in high regard (Schechner, 2008:11-12) For my part, I would like to fully acknowledge the complex nature of the process of this phenomenon by discussing not only instances where direct contact has taken place but also other, more indirect cases. More importantly, as already explained, I will refrain from making value judgements.

Lisa Wolford has also reflected on Grotowski's influence upon contemporary practitioners. She initially did this more visibly in an article written as a response to

the festival cum symposium 'Survivors of the Ice Age'[61] (Wolford, 1996:38-43). Wolford begins her reassessment in rather general terms, denouncing the way in which Grotowski's name has sometimes been misused and the word 'Grotowskian' has come to conjure up a "wide array of ritualistic and pseudo-primitive associations" (Wolford, 1996:38). Later on she goes on to explore more practical issues which resonate closely with the aims of this thesis. Firstly, even though she places a number of artists within the "loose confederation" of a 'Grotowski tradition', she specifies that it is not her intention to "subsume their identities or to erase the differences among them" (Wolford, 1996:42) Moreover, Wolford considers that these companies do not need to look to Grotowski for legitimation. That is, any historical linkage that connects them to him "becomes of secondary or tangential importance in critical assessments of their respective achievements." (Wolford, 1996:42) As a consequence of this refusal to imply that these practitioners are in any way derivative of a Grotowskian aesthetic, Wolford rejects an analysis of influence based on a search for Grotowski's stylistic features in these companies' performances. As an alternative, she proposes that "it would be more honest and more productive to examine the traces of a Grotowskian influence in relation to something more subtle: an elusive quality of ethos" (Wolford, 1996:42). With this, Wolford argues that the commonalities among those belonging to a 'Grotowskian tradition' have "far less to do with their productions *per se* than with certain elements of their respective performance cultures" (Wolford, 1996:42)[62] She finishes by stating that if one assesses Grotowski's effect by looking beyond superficial, aesthetic similarities, and focusing rather on this more elusive sense, then it becomes difficult to deny that Grotowski has "transmitted – not invented (...) – certain principles that will continue to vitalize theatre art" (Wolford, 1996:42). Wolford's proposition seems at first to contradict the system for the analysis of Grotowski's influence I have outlined thus far. However, it should be understood that her desire to move away from a comparison between features of his work and pieces by other practitioners stems from the fact that most of the companies she discusses, taking part in 'Survivors of the Ice Age', had contact with Grotowski during his post-theatrical phases or through secondary groups such as Barba's Odin Teatret. Furthermore, Wolford is concerned that an analysis of such

[61] 'Survivors of the Ice Age' was organised by PRIMUS theatre company, and took place at College St. Boniface in Winnipeg, Canada, in the spring of 1996. That same year, the fall issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* was dedicated to the festival and its organisers. The symposium/festival was devoted to the discussion and demonstration of survival tactics by practitioners of alternative and challenging work, during an extensive funding recession.

[62] I have already made reference by what Wolford means by this ethos. See subsection 5.1 in this chapter.

similarities may tarnish the critical assessment of their individual and autonomous achievements. The intention of this thesis is a slightly different one. As I have already stated, the evaluation or judgement of a theatre piece's artistic value is not one of my aims. Instead my interest lies in establishing the multiple ways in which Grotowski has affected British theatre practice. Therefore, I believe it is important not to overlook or disregard stylistic, dramaturgical or technical similarities. That is not to say that I will concentrate solely on these visible and tangible areas, but as outlined previously, I will complement such comparisons with an assessment of the more subtle ethos which Wolford identifies. Moreover, the system for the investigation of influence I have detailed earlier has measures built into it which will ensure that an overly simplistic analysis is avoided[63].

5.4 Grotowski, processes and channels for influence

Even though Schechner states that Grotowski can be found everywhere in today's theatre (Schechner & Wolford, 2001: xxvii) he acknowledges that, ironically, he would not have wanted to have such a wide-ranging and indirect influence (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxviii). For Grotowski, "such an outward movement of effects is too haphazard, too risky, too fraught with misuses and misinterpretations. That is why he picked who was to have his most secret secrets, who would transmit the work to the next generation." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxviii)[64] Indeed Grotowski was very careful and selective about the way in which he presented his work to the general public, and the processes and channels through which his practices spread. For instance, an example of the care he took in the process of dissemination can be clearly seen by his insistence on supervising all translations of his main texts, or the way in which after 1968 he no longer recorded in writing the training carried out by the Teatr

[63] In particular I am referring to the ranking of importance of the similarities between works or practices, by which I established a sliding scale that prioritises aesthetic significance according to the relative facility with which certain features may be copied without assimilation. See subsection 4.3 in this chapter.

[64] This has also been suggested by Wolford, who has stated: "Rather than trying to disseminate his ideas broadly, making his techniques and approaches to acting craft available to as wide an audience as possible through short-term workshops and descriptive publications, Grotowski preferred to work in a deeper, more intimate way with select individuals, striving to transmit essential lessons about artistic (and extra-artistic) matters in a format of extended apprenticeship and exchange. (Wolford in Hodge, 2007:206)

Laboratorium in order to avoid misinterpretations of his practice[65] . Moreover, in regards to transmission, during the last fourteen years of his life "he made sure to hand over his knowledge and perpetuate a stream of work, and to make this transfer public ensuing the constant evolution of traditions from generation to generation." (Allain, 2005:50) In 1996, the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski was renamed to include Richards' name, and the process was made official.

Throughout his career, Grotowski sought to have a sincere encounter under intense working conditions with only a few collaborators. Furthermore, he would often focus his attention on one particular individual, not out of favouritism, but as a means to "enter into what Martin Buber called the '*Ich-du*'" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvii): a profoundly personal relationship, one-on-one, which would serve as a springboard for further, more concentrated investigations. Some of these individuals are Eugenio Barba, Ryszard Cieslak, Jacek Zmyslowski, and finally Thomas Richards[66]. Clearly Grotowski understood transmission on these human terms, describing it as "the *inner* aspect of the work" (Grotowski in Allain, 2005:50)[67]. Mario Biagini, Richards' longstanding collaborator and also Grotowski's official heir, expands on this by saying that what is important "is not so much that which belongs to you, but rather that to which you belong" (Biagini in Allain, 2005:50)[68]. Nevertheless, "even if the actual, direct transmission is carried through Richards, the inheritors are plural not singular and the theatre is richer for that." (Allain, 2005:58) In stating this, Allain argues that we cannot talk of a single Grotowskian legacy due to the large number of collaborators who have worked directly with Grotowski over the years and who carry his work forwards. With this he echoes the comments made by Barba during the event 'Tribute to Grotowski' organised by the Centre for Performance Research in February 1999. On this occasion, which served both as an homage to Grotowski after his recent death and as a launch of Barba's *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*, Barba stated that "the word legacy is not appropriate" going on to say that "one thing is sure, we are not the heirs of this legacy. The heirs are always

[65] I touch upon both these issues when discussing the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre* in chapter III, section 2.
[66] Grotowski's relationship to each of them could almost be said to have dominated a particular period of his work. For example, his direct relationship with Barba lasted between 1962 and 1964 and led to the international recognition of the Teatr Laboratorium; with Cieslak he worked intensely for the rest of the Theatre of Productions, Zmyslowski became the main collaborator during his paratheatrical phase; and work with Richards was intimately linked to the final phase of Art as Vehicle.
[67] Original emphasis.
[68] Barba, on his part, talked along similar lines when he described the discovery that he belonged to "a very special 'family tradition' – a vertical environment, in part rooted in the present, and at the same time sunk deep into the preceding generations" (Barba, 2003:111).

anonymous and they always come after many other generations." (Barba, 1999b) With this, Barba seems to suggest that any attempt to limit Grotowski's legacies is inadequate and misplaced. Indeed, I would agree with him in that, as a result of more indirect channels of influence, the increasing number of sources available on Grotowski's work, and the current global cultural climate we live in, we are all in a sense inheritors of Grotowski. This notion, however, is far from being problem free.

As Richards points out, a large number of confusions have been spread through 'Grotowski workshops', "conducted by someone who studied with Grotowski in a session of five days, for example twenty-five years ago. Such 'instructors', of course, often pass on grave errors and misunderstandings." (Richards 1995:4) As an example, he goes on to suggest that Grotowski's research is sometimes wrongly construed "as something wild and structureless, where people throw themselves on the floor, scream a lot, and have pseudo-cathartic experiences." (Richards, 1995:4) Therefore, any modern actor claiming to 'teach Grotowski' or even to 'use Grotowski's techniques' ought to do so with caution, and with a thorough understanding of each of the phases of his work and their socio-historical context. Along the lines of Richards' argument, Wolford warns that we should be aware "of the tendency amongst theatre artists to exaggerate the extent of their connections with certain well-known teachers, using the master's reputation to add an aura of legitimacy or glamour to their work" (Wolford, 1996:41). The problems here arise from three main areas. Firstly, constructing a picture of Grotowski on the basis of partial or fragmented information will result in an incomplete understanding. Indeed, a little knowledge is an extremely dangerous thing. Secondly, the difficulties in carrying out work in circumstances equal to those under which Grotowski operated means that "questions surface as to what value Grotowski's ideas and practices might have if they lack the rigour that he always exacted" (Allain, 2005:47)[69]. Thirdly, the mimicking of superficial elements of Grotowski's techniques or features of his productions generally leads to distorted representations of his practice that lack an appreciation for the level of precision required. For these reasons it is understandable that Grotowski preferred vertical transmission as a means to pass on his knowledge. Nevertheless, the reality that faces us today is quite different. Although his teachings are still spread from individual to

[69] Even though she is talking about Gardzienice in particular, the following statement by Hodge could also be applied to Grotowski's practice: "in the present economic climate of Western theatre practice with the attendant distractions and pressures placed upon actors, sustained training and ensemble work are becoming scarce. It may be that the 'total' model of Gardzienice's practice is difficult to absorb within the commercial environment of western capitalism." (Hodge, 2005: 62)

individual through a more precise and controlled process, there has been a parallel dissemination which sometimes has been conducted less carefully. As Brook lamented in his 1991 article on Art as Vehicle, "unfortunately, this ultra-rapid diffusion has not always gone through qualified people" (Brook in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:381). Nevertheless, if this rapid and unofficial diffusion of Grotowski's practice might lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations and misuses, it also needs to be taken into account that such 'mistakes' could also be seen as positive opportunities for creative development. As Barba stated, "just like all the other great makers he [Grotowski] is a good generator of misunderstandings. And these misunderstandings are very fertile for us. Just like the misunderstanding of Artaud of Balinese theatre, or the misunderstanding of Bertold Brecht towards Chinese theatre." (Barba, 1999b)

The issues I have discussed here will no doubt have implications with regards to my investigations of Grotowski's influence on British theatre. However, due to the complexity of this matter, I am not able to establish a concrete or final solution to resolve it. As will have become clear during my previous methodological explanations, I have attempted to mitigate these complications by specifying the requirements, rankings, and methods for my analysis. In the end, all I can do is maintain an awareness of Grotowski's relationship to transmission and dissemination, and carefully negotiate the difficulties posed by the current circumstances. That said, and I agree with Barba in this respect, I will acknowledge that misunderstandings can also be fertile ground for creative growth.

5.5 Grotowski, the need for change and development

Leading on from the issues I have just discussed, it is necessary that I explore a further point in order to gain a rounded view of Grotowski's conception of influence. His relationship to the processes of transmission and dissemination described above may lead us to think that he was an advocate of purism and would only have accepted the most faithful approaches to his work. The fact is that there are a number of scholars who do give such an impression. This, for instance, can be illustrated by Wolford's pejorative tone when she argues that "artists who have had brief encounters

with Grotowski over the years or who have been exposed to so-called Grotowskian 'methods' through secondary sources have been surprisingly creative at bastardizing what they have learned" (Wolford, 1996:38-39) However, to assume that Grotowski would have wanted his followers to exactly reproduce his work is far from correct. As part of his conception of influence, Grotowski did in fact emphasise the need for change and development in the practice of those he influenced. In his composite text on Theatre of Sources[70], he declared that "almost every true teacher is looking to be robbed by somebody of the next generation." (Grotowski, 1981:256). This process of appropriation is crucial to Grotowski's approach and is connected to his rejection of a codified 'method' and his belief that universal 'recipes' for creativity could be found. Instead, he proposed that each individual should arrive at his or her own solutions. As mentioned previously, following the principle of '*via negativa*', the exercises that Grotowski carried out with his various collaborators were direct responses to their individual, psychophysical needs and his concerns at that particular phase of his work. Already in 1967 he gave an indication of this during a four-week course, which he had led with Cieslak, for a small group of students from New York University's School of Arts. During one of the sessions a student had asked Grotowski how the work could be continued after he had gone. Answering, he said that the group could continue to carry out the exercises but that "if he returned after five years and found them doing the same work it would mean they had proceeded incorrectly." (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:35) With this Grotowski was clearly pointing out that the group, in order to follow his practice, would have to develop the techniques he had taught them to suit their own needs[71].

Only two years later, in 1969, Grotowski explicitly stated that he did not want disciples: "I want comrades-in-arms. I want brotherhood-in-arms. I want kinsmen, even those who are far away, who perhaps receive impulses from me, but are stimulated by their own nature. Other relations are barren. They only produce either

[70] This text is based on different extracts from Grotowski's explanations of the Theatre of Sources Project. Some of them belong to a Polish article whilst others were taken from a talk given at York University in Toronto. The dates of these various fragments range between 1979 and 1982.

[71] Grotowski's attitude in this respect can even be detected in some of those practitioners working today who are indirectly linked to his work; for instance Gregorz Bral, director of the Wroclaw-based company Teatr Piesn Kozla (Song of the Goat). In a public discussion at the Barbican Pit in May 2005, following his company's performance of *Chronicles, a Lamentation*, Bral was asked to what extent he remained 'faithful' to Grotowski's training. In response he stated "I would challenge anyone to remain true to Grotowski's teachings without first redefining them for himself. He did not want actors to simply go through the motions, but to live in them. It is in these outward ripples that his work lives – his work is breathing and developing – if we follow slavishly we miss the point." (Bral, 2005)

the type of tamer who tames actors in my name, or the dilettante who hides himself behind my name." (Grotowski, 2008b:32) As he went on to explain:

> When I used to say that the technique I follow is the technique of creating one's own personal techniques, there was in this, as a matter of fact, a postulate of the 'high betrayal'. If a disciple senses his own technique, then he will depart from me, from my needs, which I actualize in my own way and in my own process. He will be different. He will move away. I think that only the technique of creating your own technique is important. Any other technique or method is barren. (Grotowski, 2008b:39)

Of course, this is related to Grotowski's rejection of a standardised 'method'. Furthermore, he suggests that younger theatre makers should not be limited by his 'teachings' but use them as a springboard to delve into their own personal investigations and develop their own techniques. The reasons for Grotowski's emphasis on departure from the 'master', change and development rather than orthodox reproduction, not only concern the artistic growth of the individual who has been influenced, but relate to his wider concern with the direction of a particular practice. This is articulated most clearly by Grotowski in a text published posthumously in the summer 1999 issue of *TDR*, where he wrote: "In a branch of Tibetan Buddhism it is said that a tradition can live if the new generation goes a fifth ahead in respect to the preceding generation, without forgetting or destroying its discoveries." (Grotowski, 1999:12) With this, Grotowski clearly championed the need for evolution as a means to avoid sterility. Ultimately, he did not conceive his practice as a museum piece, but as a living and breathing organism in constant transformation.

At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that Grotowski's insistence on the need for change and development does slightly complicate matters further. How can the new generations depart from Grotowski and yet remain true to his practice? How can they adapt Grotowski's teachings to their own needs and concerns without 'bastardizing' them? Brook has identified that if those groups who followed in Grotowski's footsteps "did not possess his quality of understanding, then all the work they did, instead of taking them towards the idea, brought the ideal down to their own level" (Brook in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:382). Clearly this is a problematic area that needs to be resolved to some extent. A possible answer can be found in the fact that whilst Grotowski emphasised that one should discover a personal path, he also

stated that this could only happen with great effort. The following statement illustrates this:

> I often observed people who tried to simplify certain exercises, arguing that they were making them personal that way. But in that way they were stripping them of their whole meaning, adapting them to their own fears and lies. To their own laziness. But they say, 'Yes now it is my personal style of exercises.' A personal system of exercises in a true sense of this definition exists when we discover the most difficult exercises, to the point of giving up the surrogates and covers that our self-indulgence suggests to us. These exercises are personal because they function as a test for our personal inhibitions. So they are much more difficult for us than for others. (Grotowski, 2008b:35)

Therefore I would propose that the answer may lie in the intangible principles found throughout Grotowski's career previously discussed. In themselves, these do not prescribe specific styles or techniques, but are open enough to be interpreted and adapted by each practitioner to suit his or her needs and concerns. Therefore, individuals or groups may be able to remain true to Grotowski and not 'bastardize' his achievements, whilst at the same time furthering their practice. This confirms the importance of the ranking system I established during the previous section, and according to which similarities between each case study and Grotowski will have more weight and significance if they concern his overarching beliefs and practical ethos. That said I would again like to emphasise that, unlike others scholars in Grotowski's orbit have done, with this thesis I do not intend to appoint myself as the zealous custodian of his practice. I will not be passing judgment and pronouncing which case studies should be defined as appropriate or correct instances of influence, and which have 'bastardized' his work. As I have stated elsewhere, I am not concerned with establishing orthodoxy, but with identifying and explaining Grotowski's influence on British theatre in a dispassionate way.

To end I would like to quote Barba, whom I believe has demonstrated a gentler, more positive attitude towards 'misunderstandings' and indirect influences than other have done:

> Theatre is constituted by roots which grow in a particular place, but it also consists of seeds carried by the wind and following the routes of birds. Dreams, ideas and techniques travel around with individuals, and each encounter deposits pollen, a promise of

fertility. The fruit ripens through persistent toil, blind necessity and a spirit of improvisation, and contains the seeds of new rebellious truths. (Barba, 1999a:68)

Chapter II

U.S. / US

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter's primary concerns are to recount and assess the legacy of the work Grotowski and Cieslak carried out with the Royal Shakespeare Company[1] during two weeks in August 1966, towards Peter Brook's production *U.S./US*[2]. However, before I focus my discussion on these workshops and the performance itself I believe it is necessary to address some key issues that will contextually frame my investigation. The following subsections will explore the first contacts between Grotowski and Britain and how he came to know Brook, how Brook's career led him to the project that would become *US*, as well as briefly outline some of the main events of the Vietnam War and the conditions under which *US* was produced.

1.1 First encounters

Reports about Grotowski and his company's activities first reached Britain through two articles published in October 1963: Alan Seymour's 'Revelations in Poland' in *Plays and Players*, and Michael Kustow's '*Ludens Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinorum*' which appeared in *Encore*.

Seymour had been part of the group of about twenty delegates who during the Tenth Congress of the International Theatre Institute (8th to 15th June 1963) were taken by Eugenio Barba from Warsaw to Lodz to see the Teatr Laboratorium's *The Tragical*

[1] From this point onwards I will refer to this company simply as the RSC.
[2] As I will explain later, the production had a deliberately ambiguous title which referred both to the United States of America and 'us', the British general public. Brook has stated that the team continually pronounced the title both ways, *U.S./US*, because "in a sense the two are equally descriptive both of the war and the content of this particular show" (Brook in Whitehead. 2007). For the remainder of this chapter I will refer to the production simply as *US*, but this should be understood as shorthand.

History of Doctor Faustus[3]. This, as Barba pointed out, would mark a turning point for Grotowski's international recognition (Barba, 1999a:73). In his article, Seymour praised Polish theatre's intoxicating verve and brilliance, and highlighted the Teatr Laboratorium's piece as the "greatest theatrical experience" (Seymour, 1963:33) amongst the works showcased during the congress.

Kustow also saw *Doctor Faustus*, but had done so at the company's home base in Opole. He had come to hear about Grotowski's work through one of his university friends, Mike Elster, who was studying film in Lodz and had directed the first film on the Teatr Laboratorium, *Letter from Opole*, in 1963. In September of that same year Elster took Kustow to Poland where he met the company and attended the above mentioned production[4]. Therefore it is not surprising that Kustow's article is especially noteworthy for providing an insightful account of the Teatr Laboratorium's practice. Not only had he seen them perform *Doctor Faustus*, but he had witnessed one of the company's training sessions and talked to Grotowski[5].

With descriptions of extreme and dedicated training that resulted in a wonderful and rich performance, both articles must have aroused interest amongst British theatre circles. Grotowski was not just proposing radically new approaches to theatre, and producing "actions and images that seared and troubled beyond the grasp of words" (Kustow, 1963:13), but he and his company belonged to an exotic and enigmatic world. Today, with flights between European cities being perceived as little more than extensions of our local bus services, it is hard to think of Eastern Europe as an 'other' place. Nonetheless, it is worth remembering that in the 1960s Poland existed in an altogether different reality. The Communist Block had entered a post-Stalinist era under the leadership of Khrushchev in 1956 and the USSR had somewhat loosened its grip on Eastern Europe. Thus, as the cold climate of hermeticism began to thaw, the suspicions of the West were replaced by a newfound curiosity in their Eastern neighbours. This, as well as Barba's efforts, certainly benefited the Teatr Laboratorium's exposure. Two years after Seymour's and Kustow's visits to Poland and the publication of their

[3] For Barba's account of how this unofficial trip, outside the congress' programme, was carefully arranged by him, see Barba, 1999a:68-77. Hereafter I will refer to this production by is shortened title, *Doctor Faustus*.

[4] Since Kustow was already professionally associated with Brook through the RSC, this web of personal connections reaches further, and it is likely that they might have talked about the Teatr Laboratorium. Moreover, Brooks recalls that when he was working with the RSC on the experimental Theatre of Cruelty season in 1964, one of his friends said to him "I was in Poland recently and I met someone there who is doing experimental work that you would find very interesting." (Brook, 1989:41) It is thus very probable that this person, who first mentioned Grotowski to Brook, was Kustow.

[5] In his article, Kustow dedicated much space to Grotowski's own pronouncements. With what Kustow described as "Artaudian fervour" (Kustow, 1963:9), Grotowski discussed his views about theatre, and outlined the group's aims, methodologies and core practice.

articles, Grotowski, this intriguing and relatively unknown Pole, crossed the Iron Curtain and make his first public appearance in the UK.

In the summer of 1965 Grotowski set foot in England for the first time. The occasion for this visit was a personal one: Barba's wedding[6]. However, and perhaps unsurprisingly, Grotowski's brief stay in London was used to its fullest potential. An evening was arranged on 3rd September during which Grotowski gave a lecture and Mike Elster presented his film *Letter from Opole*[7], followed by an open discussion. Nonetheless, the importance of what could today be seen as a landmark event has not been properly recognised. If it is difficult to assess the impact this lecture may have had, it is because it only appears to be mentioned in one source: a letter Grotowski wrote to Barba on 5th September 1963 (Barba, 1999a:152-154). From this we know that the success of the event had been hanging on a thread due to several organisational problems which were overcome at the last minute thanks to Alan Seymour and Mike Elster. However, a much relieved Grotowski recalls that thankfully everything went much better than he had foreseen. He goes on to state that "many people participated – critics, theatre people, psychologists, cultural anthropologists, etc." (Barba, 1999a:152), and that the evening was attended by "all the big names who had been invited" (Barba, 1999a:153). More importantly for the purposes of this chapter, it was during this event that Grotowski first met Brook[8]. As he wrote to Barba:

> I made several interesting acquaintances, but the most remarkable is without doubt Peter Brook. We spent several hours together. He seemed to me not only to be an expert in the craft, but also an interesting personality. (Barba, 1999a:152)

Grotowski also mentioned that he presented Brook with a copy of Barba's *Alla Ricerca del Teatro Perduto* (*In Search of Lost Theatre*), which had been published earlier that year, in February 1965. This book, which Barba had written in defence of the Teatr Laboratorium's practice[9], was thus Brook's first in-depth introduction to the company's

[6] Barba married Judy Jones, whom he had met two years previously during the Tenth Congress of the International Theatre Institute in Warsaw.

[7] *Letter from Opole* not only featured extracts from the Teatr Laboratorium's *Doctor Faustus*, but also showed the ensemble's daily life and some of their training sessions.

[8] As I have mentioned earlier, Brook had first heard about Grotowski through Kustow. See footnote 4 in this chapter.

[9] Barba had begun to write the book in 1962 in response to criticisms levelled against the Teatr Laboratorium by Ferenc Hont, director of the Centre of Theatre Studies in Budapest, who had said "Clearly what you are doing is formalism and your theories are ideologically blameworthy. We could print them in a special limited series about reprehensible theatre practices." (Barba, 1999a:90). Barba then

work. From this point onwards, Grotowski and Brook developed a deep friendship because, as Brook would recall in an interview with Krzystof Domagalik, they shared numerous common interests and issues in their work (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowsi, Allain, 2009:36). Only a year after, in 1966, Grotowski, this time accompanied by Ryszard Cieslak, was invited by Brook to return to London. They were to demonstrate the Teatr Laboratorium's practical methodologies and deliver a ten day workshop for RSC actors who were preparing a new piece under Brook's direction[10]. This piece was, of course, *US*.

1.2 Peter Brook

By the early 1960s, Peter Brook was already deemed a leading British director, had been involved in various productions abroad, and had worked with some of the country's most acclaimed actors. At the start of the decade he had been invited by Peter Hall, who had recently assumed the lead of the RSC, to become one of his associate directors. In 1962, after completing the filming of *Moderato Cantabile* (1960) and *Lord of the Flies* (1963), Brook took up this position. As Hunt and Reeves suggest, he "had for some time been showing increased disenchantment with the conveyor-belt of four week's rehearsal" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:65-66). It is therefore not surprising that Brook's professional aspirations took a turn and that he embarked for the first time in his career upon an entirely experimental project. The emphasis would not be on a final outcome, but on the process itself. This was theatre research; "nothing like that had ever happened in the British theatre mainstream before" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:66) In January 1964, with the assistance of Charles Marowitz and the enthusiasm of twelve young actors, Brook began his search in a series of workshops titled 'Theatre of Cruelty'. This was a homage to Antonin Artaud, whose radical writings served as a stimulus for the group's research, and whose dissatisfaction with theatre based on words Brook had come to share (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:71). "Brook was looking for a form of

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gave a copy of the manuscript, originally in French, to his friend Giampiero Bozzolato. He was a Italian professor at Krakow University and directed the series *Sarmatica* with the publishers Marsilino in Padua. It was Bozzolato who urged Barba to translate the book into Italian and give it its final title. (Barba, 1999a:91)

[10] I will discuss the lead up to Grotowski's invitation later in this chapter. See subsection 3.1 in this chapter.

theatre that would not depend on anecdote or character, or on verbal messages, but which could communicate *directly* to an audience"[11] (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:71).

Although it never had been a pre-requisite, after eight weeks of work, the group's activities culminated in the presentation of a programme, a 'work-in-progress' that served as a test of the material. This is not the place to delve into Brook's and Marowitz's methodologies, nor is it the time to evaluate in detail their successes and failures[12]; it is enough to state that even though the work was largely misunderstood by theatre critics[13], in creative terms it facilitated Brook's discovery of untapped resources, and signalled the beginning of his continuing research. On a practical level, the main achievement was to get the actors to move very physically (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:78). Moreover, Hunt goes further and suggests that, in a particularly powerful scene featuring Glenda Jackson, Brook momentarily achieved his aim of presenting "visual images, almost devoid of narrative content, through [the actors'] bodies and their gestures" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:81). Many years later, writing retrospectively, Brook himself would situate this work in relation to Grotowski's:

> Over many years and many trials and errors, we learned that sensitivity at every moment to one another and to the audience is more important than the wish for self-expression. In the early sixties this was new territory, there were no models, so it was with great relief that after a time I learned of a fellow seeker, Jerzy Grotowski in Poland, making very precise experiments, far more systematic than our own. (Brook, 1998:135)

Later that year, in June 1964, feeling that "some dangerous and explosive material was needed to prod them even further towards new discoveries, as well as to provide some focus to the work" (Williams, 1988:53), Brook set out to test a number of scenes of Genet's *The Screens* with his actors. The intention had been to invite the Lord Chamberlain to ascertain whether he would allow the RSC to produce the play. However, upon reading the script he was not impressed and, deeming it far too obscene and an insult to the French nation, he refused the production outright[14]. "So that left Brook with a group of highly trained actors and no play to perform" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:83). By chance, Martin Esslin received the script of *The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under*

[11] Original emphasis.

[12] Albert Hunt is particularly critical as to whether the exercises proposed by Marowitz allowed the group in any way to overcome the trappings of naturalistic acting. (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:73-74)

[13] See Hunt & Reeves, 1995:75-81.

[14] From 1737 to 1968, under the 'Licensing Act 1737' and the 'Theatre Act 1843', the Lord Chamberlain was responsible for censoring plays in London.

the Direction of the Marquis de Sade[15]. He immediately rang Brook and told him this was the play he was looking for (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:83). Only a month later, on 20th August 1964, *Marat/Sade* opened at the Aldwych Theatre in London. The play's themes and setting allowed Brook to draw from the discoveries he had made during the 'Theatre of Cruelty' season and developed later during the experiment on Genet. *Marat/Sade* became an immediate sensation and was met by an enthusiastic critical reception. However, for the purposes of my discussion on *US*, I find it more interesting to pause on the production's transfer to New York in December 1965, after its three month run in London. Whilst the UK critics had focused on the production's remarkable theatricality, their American counterparts engaged with it more directly, considered the play's political implications more carefully. Besides a change in one of the leading roles[16], Hunt and Reeves suggest that the second factor which radically affected the production and its reception was the socio-political climate of the United States in the mid 1960s. "What made the audience particularly responsive was the growing unease about the Vietnam War." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:90) In New York, in January 1966, Brook felt the play struck a nerve with audiences because there was a particular need for it. Therefore it is not surprising that although the project existed in an embryonic stage and "Brook had already embarked on the journey that was to result in *US* before he left, the American response [to *Marat/Sade*] was to reinforce Brook's determination to make a play that confronted the Vietnam War." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:90)

1.3. The War

I do not wish to enter into a lengthy discussion about the Vietnam War itself. However, it is both appropriate and necessary to briefly recount the sequence of main events up to and including 1966 for the purpose of this chapter because some of these events were referenced in the production of *US*.

The U.S. had been deploying support troops to Vietnam since 1954, but it was not until 1959 that hostilities began to escalate. In May 1961, President Kennedy sent 4.000

[15] Although this is the play's full title, hereafter I will refer to it by the shorter and widely used title of *Marat/Sade*.

[16] "One of the reasons why Marat's position had seemed so weak in the London production was that Marat had been played by an actor unsuited to the part." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:90) The authors consider Clive Revil's replacement by Ian Richardson a fortunate event.

American 'green berets' as 'special advisors' to South Vietnam. Seven months later that year, the first U.S. soldier was killed in action by enemy fire. The situation continued to escalate. On 11th June 1963, Quang Duc was the first Buddhist monk to burn himself to death as a protest against the South Vietnamese government, then under Diem. Many other self-immolations followed. In August of that year the first organised protest against the Vietnam War took place in New York and Philadelphia. We would have to wait until 24th March 1965 to see the first campus sit-in at the University of Michigan. Later that year U.S. troops were increased to 125.000. On 2nd November 1965, Norman Morrison burnt himself to death outside Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara's office at the Pentagon. He was the second of a total of five Americans to have self-immolated in protest of the war. In February 1966, American forces launch four search and destroy missions against the Vietcong, who remained elusive. Four months later, after heavy fighting near Con Thien, nearly 1.300 North Vietnamese troops were killed. On 3rd July 1966, a crowd of 4.000 demonstrators gathered outside the U.S. Embassy in London; there were 33 arrests. Only a day later, rehearsals for *US* officially began. By the end of the year, U.S. forces in Vietnam were up to 385.000 with an additional 60.000 sailors stationed offshore. 1966 alone saw 6.000 Americans killed and more that 30.000 wounded, with Vietcong troops suffering 61.000 losses. Although President Nixon began to withdraw troops in 1969, the last American forces would not leave Vietnam until 1973. The conflict raged a further two years before it subsided[17].

As will have become clear by the obvious chronological gaps, I have deliberately not applied any particularly historic rigour in choosing these facts and figures. Instead, this list is merely aimed at painting a rough sketch of the Vietnam War for those who are not familiar with its turbulent history. It seems particularly fitting to do so since, after a brief prologue, the performance of *US* began with a potted history of Vietnam[18].

It is also worth mentioning now that, although the production was 'peppered' with facts and references to various sources, it was never intended to be viewed as 'documentary theatre'. The emphasis was rather on exploring a new theatrical language which would communicate the horrors of war in a direct way[19]. Nonetheless, it may be

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[17] These dates and figures have been drawn from a variety of internet sites, mainly: www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/index.html, www.vietnam-war.info/timeline, www.vietnamwar.com, and www.vietnam.vassar./edu

[18] As set in the playtext, Pauline Munroe dryly introduced this section: "History of Vietnam. Here we see a series of tableaux, designed to impress on the memory of our shamefully ill-educated people the history of Vietnam." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:37)

[19] I will discuss this issue, the reasons Brook had for wanting to distance himself from 'documentary theatre', as well as the methods he used to achieve his aim, in due course.

interesting to note at this point the extent to which two of the historical events listed earlier, in particular, informed the production. The self-immolations of the Buddhist monks and Norman Morrison found a powerful theatrical echo in *US*. This 'burning' was adopted by Brook as a recurring theme and central metaphor. Moreover, as will become clear later, this was in fact just one of the ways in which Grotowski left his mark on the production[20].

1.4 Preparing *US*

As I mentioned earlier, the project that would become *US* already existed in an embryonic form prior to the RSC's New York run of *Marat/Sade*. Just before the production had its transfer to Broadway, in December 1965 a meeting about the possibility of tackling Vietnam as the subject of a devised piece had taken place at Brook's house. With Geoffrey Reeves and Albert Hunt, who would become associate directors, he had discussed two subjects which were on his mind:

> The first was the Vietnam War - not so much about the war itself as what we, in London, could do about it, and how an awareness of the war could affect our lives. (...) The other question that was in Brook's mind that night was a very simple one from the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'Shall I fight?' (...) Brook wanted to create a show in which this question would be raised in terms of the war in Vietnam. (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:12-13)

Brook was disturbed to see that English theatre had so far failed to reflect upon the terrifying reality of a subject as central as the Vietnam War (Brook, 1998: 138). Having read the scripts submitted to the RSC, he concluded that the project would require an unorthodox approach. An individual playwright working alone, he believed, would not be "capable of handling such a theme on the epic scale he envisaged." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:96)[21]. His intention was to "establish a situation in which people, including writers, could collaborate to write such a play" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:96). For Brook, a performance that dealt with the Vietnam War was an imperative necessity. "Believing that if one side of the research is to spend infinite time on a single gesture, the other side

[20] See subsection 4.2 in this chapter.

[21] I have so far not been able to ascertain the nature of these submissions, or the reason for them. Did Brook, through the RSC, establish an open call for playwrights to submit scripts? I am merely following Hunt and Reeves.

of the same coin is speed" (Brook, 1998:138), a deadline was set and work began as quickly as possible.

In the spring of 1966, after returning from New York, Brook assembled a team largely composed of people with whom he had worked on *Marat/Sade*: the designer Sally Jacobs, the poet Adrian Mitchell and the composer Richard Peaslee. In addition Albert Hunt and Geoffrey Reeves – with whom Brook had discussed his original ideas about the production –, the playwright Charles Wood[22], and Kustow and Michael Scott as adaptors of documentary material, were all brought on board. As for the cast, a total group of twenty-five, Brook managed to attract four actors who had been involved in the 'Theatre of Cruelty' and *Marat/Sade*[23], as well as six who had participated in the latter[24]. This means that Brook counted with a small yet significant number of skilled actors who had experience in his recent new approaches, and who were familiar both with improvisational and highly physical work. As the input of the whole team would be of utmost importance, it is not surprising that Brook took such care in putting it together. When the company met for the first time on 4th July 1966, Brook briefly explained the working process. The project would go through two stages. During the first one, the actors would improvise on material provided by Brook, as well as the associate directors and the documentary advisors. Moreover, he invited the actors themselves to bring material of their own, which as Hunt recalls, several of them did. The material was extremely topical, reflecting not only the context and events taking place in Vietnam, but also the current cultural climate. Therefore it ranged from Vietnamese folk stories, newspaper articles, interviews and official reports, to happenings, American popular culture, comics, and songs (Williams, 1988: 53). During the second stage, a playwright would take on the challenge of shaping what the company had produced during these improvisations and work on the script would begin (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968: 17). Reflecting this joint effort, Brook would later summarise the project as a "group-happening-collaborative spectacle on the Vietnam War" (Brook, 1990:27).

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[22] Charles Wood was supposed to turn the material arising from the rehearsals into a proper script. Wood, however, left in order to work on Richard Lester's *How I Won the War* (1967) in Germany, featuring John Lennon. This, as I will discuss later, left Brook without a playwright to work on *US*. Eventually Denis Cannan was brought on board and wrote the second act for the production.

[23] These were: Mary Allen, Glenda Jackson, Leon Lissek, and Robert Lloyd.

[24] The actors involved in *Marat/Sade* were: Ian Hogg, Mark Jones, Clifford Rose, Hugh Sullivan, and Henry Woolf.

It is hard to fully grasp the extent to which this project was a creative adventure, and certainly risky territory for a company so firmly set within the British theatre establishment and usually associated with more conventional plays. One must remember that although today 'devising' is a widespread practice that has entered the mainstream, this was not the case in 1966, where such experiments were commonly relegated to the 'fringe', and reserved for student groups and recently formed companies. As Albert Hunt stated, "*US* was, above all, a search. It was a collective search" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:12) Nevertheless, despite the project's exploratory nature, there was a clear aim. Unlike with the 'Theatre of Cruelty' season, Brook's intention had always been to produce a show that would run at the company's London base, the Aldwych Theatre. At the same time, Brook understood that this would not be a conventional process. This led him to carefully negotiate the circumstances in which the work would take place with the RSC's Artistic Director, Peter Hall. The group was given the luxury of an unusually long period dedicated to rehearsals, a total of fifteen weeks (from 4th July to 13th October). Moreover, their work would clearly be given "the status of an experiment and therefore might not lead to a result that would be suitable for the stage of the Aldwych." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:97) Aware of the sensitivity of the material they were going to tackle and the vulnerability of the whole process, Brook arranged a further condition; it was agreed that only after the first ten weeks would the decision be taken as to whether there would be any public performances. In the end, the show opened on 13th October 1966. Brook explained the reason for its appropriately ambiguous title, both U.S. and us, by stating:

> For us to take the illusory position of saying 'we in England are not American, we have nothing to do with America, therefore we can judge', to me is evasive and hopelessly naive. We are in no position to dissociate ourselves in that manner from America, and turn America into a 'them' that we can then label and dismiss; that 'them' is ourselves. (Brook in Whitehead. 2007)

The production was given fifty performances at the Aldwych, running for over six months. Later, Brook would lament that something was lost in this process, that "one performance would have been the true culmination. We made the mistake of feeling obliged to enter our own repertoire" (Brook, 1990:27)[25]. Nonetheless, the production

[25] Brook goes on to say: "A repertoire repeats, and to repeat something must be fixed. The rules of British censorship prevent actors adapting and improvising in performance. So in this case, the fixing was the beginning of a slide toward the deadly..." (Brook, 1990:27) At the same time it is important to recognise the role played British censorship laws at the time in regards to the issue of repetition and fixing. As Hunt

remains a landmark to this day, not only for its daring experimental nature, but for being the first theatrical performance to tackle the Vietnam War (it came a month before the New York opening of Megan Terry's *Viet Rock*)[26]. If I am not exploring the connections between *US* and the emerging trend of political theatre further, it is because my focus rests on Grotowski's involvement with the RSC and the ways in which his visit might have influenced the production.

2. *US*, TOWARDS ANALYSISING INFLUENCE

Before focusing on the details around Grotowski's visit to the RSC and arriving at the core of this chapter, it is relevant that I address two of the main issues which I had to overcome. On the one hand, in setting out to analyse the extent to which Grotowski might have influenced *US*, my first challenge was to gain a deep understanding of the production itself. This meant I had to gather a variety of printed and audiovisual documents in order to re-construct a clear vision of the piece. I will therefore briefly outline the available sources which enabled me to do this. On the other hand, if my analysis was to be balanced, I had to ascertain what similarities existed already between Brook's project and Grotowski's practice before the workshop with the RSC cast in August 1966. Both these areas clearly have methodological implications, but since the latter could be said to be more important I will investigate it in more detail. At the same time, whilst doing this I will also aim to give a sense of the production itself, since I will not be merely describing *US* elsewhere.

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and Reeves point out, "although the company worked internally to keep the show alive the form remained frozen. Nothing could be improvised, nothing could be changed without prior submission to the Lord Chamberlain." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:112)

[26] *US* was part of a growing trend on the British stage which concerned itself with political issues and documentary materials. Also in 1966, the National Theatre was contemplating a production about the Cuban missile crisis, and the Hampstead Theatre was putting on plays about Lee Harvey Oswald and the nuclear physicist J Robert Oppenheimer (Billington, 9th January 2003). Of course the fact that *US* was part of a growing trend did not mean that, when the playtext for *US* was sent to the Lord Chamberlain, it was all plain sailing. In fact he initially refused to approve its production, and a tense episode ensued which jeopardised the entire project. In the end the intervention of Peter Hall as artistic director of the RSC, and his threat to cancel the season of the company's performances at Stratford-Upon-Avon, ensured that *US* would be able to go ahead. For a brief mention of this turbulent episode see Hunt & Reeves, 1995:104. For a more extended discussion of the trials of the RSC to approve the performance of *US* see De Jongh, 2000:148-155.

2.1 Existing sources

My research on *US* began by consulting a variety of books which explore Brook's career directing theatre, film and opera. It is interesting to note that some of them, such as J.C. Trewin's *Peter Brook: A Biography* (1971) and David Williams' *Peter Brook, A Theatrical Casebook* (1988), do not dedicate much space to discussing *US*, at least not in comparison to some of his other works. To an extent this is understandable since this production could be said to have been dwarfed by the magnitude of Brook's later achievements, for example his white-box *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970), the ambitious *Orghast* (1971), or the epic *The Mahabharata* (1985). By contrast Albert Hunt's and Geoffrey Reeves' *Peter Brook* (1995) does tackle *US* in some detail and engages with the production both analytically and critically. This book's usefulness is further expounded by the fact that both its authors, as I have already mentioned, were directly involved in the creation of *US*. Moreover, as I will discuss later[27], Hunt and Reeves are the first to have given some indication of the work that Grotowski and Cieslak carried out with the cast. For the most part I have used these books, addressing Brook's career as a whole, to provide the background to my exploration of *US*. This has been complemented by some of Brook's own retrospective pronouncements about the production which can be found in his *The Empty Space* (1968) and *Threads of Time* (1998).

If I have been able to sketch the foreground, it has been primarily thanks to *Tell Me Lies*. This is the book that was compiled about *US* in 1968; Kustow, Reeves and Hunt are credited as editors. It contains an introduction by Peter Brook, the full playtext as performed by the RSC, and some examples of the critical response that *US* received in the press. At the same time, *Tell Me Lies* features several black and white photographs of the production and gave me the first opportunity to visualise its aesthetics clearly. More importantly, it also includes rehearsal notes by Hunt and Kustow. Under the title of 'Narrative One', Hunt's notes go from before rehearsals officially started, giving his account of the preparation time leading to the start of the project, until 25th July (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt,1968: 12-30). The rest of the process is recounted by Kustow in 'Narrative Two' (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968: 132-152). These accounts enabled me to have a clear sense of how the project developed as a whole. However, neither Hunt's nor Kustow's rehearsal notes mention Grotowski's visit in much depth. The

[27] See subsection 3.2 in this chapter.

sources I have generated to research this particular aspect of the production's rehearsals will be discussed later as an introduction to my analysis of Grotowski's influence[28].

Finally, the other sources I used in my initial research came from the Shakespeare Trust Archive. They sent me a large number of reviews of *US*. These expanded upon the fragments already contained within *Tell Me Lies*, and gave me a more rounded view of how the piece was received at the time of its performance. I will come to discuss these towards the end of this chapter. I also received a series of photographs taken by the production's official photographer, Morris Newcombe, which had not been printed in *Tell Me Lies*. As well as giving me a further understanding of the aesthetic used throughout *US*, there was one particular photograph which would play a crucial role in my analysis of Grotowski's influence on the RSC cast[29].

With all these sources I was able to gain a relatively good idea of *US* and its creation. However, even though I had seen some still images, I was still lacking an understanding of how the piece worked in performance. I had seen the film which Brook directed in 1968, *Tell Me Lies*[30], which was based on *US*. The problem lay in the fact that this was not an orthodox adaptation of the stage piece but was rather a reimagining of the play for the camera, in a new fictional setting rather than the stage. In fact, with the exception of some songs and textual fragments, all other elements differ from its original conception[31]. The breakthrough which finally allowed me to visualise *US* in performance, on the stage, came when I found Peter Whitehead's documentary *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*. This film, produced in 1967, features interviews with Brook, Reeves and some of the actors[32], as well as an extract from the press conference that was held when *US* opened. More importantly, Whitehead's documentary also includes several scenes of both the first and second acts. These were recorded, in colour, by two stationary cameras and one hand-held camera operated by Whitehead. The filming took place throughout the course of a day at the Aldwych, but without an audience present. Nonetheless, even though I came across this documentary later on in my research, it did not lead me to redefine my analysis of *US*. Rather, it complemented and expanded my thinking. Therefore Whitehead's documentary, together with the playtext published in

[28] See subsection 3.2 in this chapter.
[29] See subsection 4.2 in this chapter.
[30] To avoid confusing this with the book I have previously mentioned I will refer to this film as '*Tell Me Lies* (film)' hereafter.
[31] For a filmic analysis of *Tell Me Lies* (film) see Scott MacKenzie's 'Atrocities at the Door: Peter Brook's *Tell Me Lies*, Images of Terror and Brechtian Aesthetics' (*Cineaction* vol.76, Spring 2009) Accessed online at http://cineaction.ca/issue76sample.htm
[32] Glenda Jackson and Ian Hogg.

Tell Me Lies, allowed me to both visualise the production and understand how it was performed on the Aldwych stage.

2.2 Existing similarities

As an experimental and creative project, *US* had many similarities with Grotowski's own artistic agenda and practice. Since I am looking back in time and assessing the production retrospectively there is a danger that, with hindsight, I may attribute to Grotowski ideas, elements, and intentions which were already part of the RSC's project from the onset. Therefore, even though there were also a number of differences between the two, in order to correctly assess the true extent and nature of Grotowski's influence upon *US*, it is necessary to outline these similarities. They could be summarised in the following manner: the relationship to the audience, a desire to reject naturalistic acting, and the striving beyond simplistic responses towards a sense of 'truth'. Although these issues cannot be treated as separate entities because they intermingle, I will attempt as far as is possible to examine them individually.

By July 1966, when rehearsals began, the Vietnam War had been going on for over six years. British society, Brook argued, had reached a point of saturation where the horrors of the war depicted and described in newsreels, reports and television programmes no longer had any effect upon people[33]. He had drawn a similar conclusion after giving a late night reading of Peter Weiss' *The Investigation*[34]. In what he called an 'oratorio-stage documentary', Weiss had selected and dramatically shaped transcripts of the concentration camp trials[35]. Although edited and arranged into 'cantos', the entire playtext is verbatim. The reading led Brook to believe that the factual nature of this catalogue of atrocities, as was the case with the media accounts of the Vietnam War, only resulted in anaesthesia and could even produce boredom in the audience. It was clear to him that 'documentary theatre', primarily concerned with minute details and

[33] Of course it is worth remembering that the Vietnam War was the first conflict in history which was televised on a global scale.
[34] This reading, prepared by Brook and David Jones, was presented by the RSC at the Aldwych Theatre on 19th October 1965. "That night the same text was being played simultaneously on thirteen stages in East and West Germany, and the Berliner Ensemble, like the Royal Shakespeare, was presenting it as a public reading." (Trewin, 1971:149)
[35] The Nazi War Crimes trials had begun in 1964 and had ended recently, in March 1965. They were held in Frankfurt, Germany.

facts, would not be a suitable response to the brutality of the events in Vietnam. In simply mirroring the media reports, this particular approach would have spoiled the desired effect of the production, and ruined the opportunity of reaching the audience in a new way.

Instead, what was required was precisely a more direct communication of what was an actual and extreme reality. As Brook explained to the company at the start of rehearsals, "in a ritualised situation, it might be possible for us to see the horrors in a fresh way" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:97). Seeing the horrors in a new way of course meant to lead the audience towards a reassessment of their thoughts and feelings on the Vietnam War. Referring to it as 'theatre of confrontation', David Williams sees this approach as a development of elements which had already been explored during the 'Theatre of Cruelty' season and *Marat/Sade* (Williams, 1988:74). 'Confrontation' is indeed a fitting description, and in fact Brook himself used the word in his preface to *Tell Me Lies*[36]. Nonetheless, we must not adopt a reductive attitude and understand this designation on simplistic terms. The aim was not to defiantly attack or assault the audience, but rather to meet them head on, to come face to face with them[37]. What Brook was truly interested in was the quality and immediacy of contact with the audience. This emphasis on creating, or rather enabling a genuine encounter, became the substance of the evening (Brook, 1990:27). Already during the initial meeting with the company he emphasised: "On some night in October, we have a meeting with an audience. It is that meeting that we must always keep in mind" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:97).

The question facing the team Brook had assembled was how this might be achieved. How could the contact amongst performers and audience be emphasised? How could the barriers between stage and auditorium be broken down? In this area Grotowski had already been explicitly experimental. In the very first paragraph of his article 'Towards a Poor Theatre' he emphasises that his productions "are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship" (Grotowski, 1968:15)[38]. With the assistance of the architect Jerzy Gurawski, Grotowski devised a different seating arrangement for each new production[39]. These often daring spatial configurations immediately situated the

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[36] "We were interested in a theatre of confrontation. In current events, what confronts what, who confronts who?" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:10)

[37] Etymologically, confrontation comes from the Latin, *cum* (with) *frons/frontis* (the forehead).

[38] Grotowski expands on this issue further on in the article (Grotowski, 1968:19-20).

[39] His essential concern was "finding the proper spectator-actor relationship for each type of performance and embodying the decision in physical arrangements." (Grotowski, 1968:20) Gurawski was instrumental in finding the appropriate 'physical arrangements' except for *Akropolis* and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. In the former it was Josef Szajna who was the scenographer, in the latter there was no scenography at all and

audience in a very specific position/role, which in turn emphasised their contact with the actors. I mention this here because Brook must have certainly been aware of Grotowski's explorations with theatrical space[40]. However, with regards to *US*, Brook was limited by the Aldwych's proscenium arch and its fixed stalls. That said, we can find several attempts throughout the RSC's production which, directly or indirectly, strove to break this spatial rigidity and facilitate a more direct contact between the cast and spectators.

First there was the scenography. Sally Jacobs' set design, although mostly confined to the stage, was dominated by a thirty-six-foot puppet of a dead American soldier which hung outside the proscenium arch. Carefully positioned, it was winched down during one of the scenes, further disrupting the proscenium arch, like a hand coming out of a picture frame. As Jacobs herself noted, "it was quite something when it started to move as, being out front, it was right on top of the audience. It looked dangerous and came down with a tremendous screeching sound effect." (Jacobs in Hunt & Reeves, 1995:102) The restrictive nature of the auditorium meant that this was the only instance during the production which altered the space physically. Other elements of the design, however, did lend themselves to be used more easily. As Hunt and Reeves point out, "Brook's concern with making some kind of direct contact between actors and audience led to a dramatic decision about costumes" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:104). Only days before the opening night, Jacobs' Vietnamese pyjama-style costumes were rejected and the whole company were instructed to wear their own, everyday clothes[41]. The actors would appear as "real people" (Jacobs in Hunt & Reeves, 1995:104).

At the same time, Brook resorted to other, non-scenographic means of reaching his aim; namely the performers' attitude towards the spectators. The production was characterised on the whole by a presentational, head-on delivery. This, coupled with frequent direct addresses to the audience as well as the use of song, gave *US* an almost Brechtian aura. There were two crucial moments in the production which serve as more

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the audience merely sat around the perimeter of the room. Sketches of the special seating arrangements devised for the company's main productions can be seen in *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Grotowski, 1968:125-132).

[40] Not only had he seen Elster's *Letter from Opole*, which featured extracts from the Teatr Laboratorium's *Doctor Faustus*, but he had read Barba's book on the company and, as I will discuss later, had even attended a performance of *The Constant Prince*. See subsection 3.1 in this chapter.

[41] As Sally Jacobs herself recounts, this decision was taken after the first run-through of the production in which the cast wore the costumes she had designed. Suddenly the connection was lost and the performance only looked like a "costumed production". When during the following rehearsal the actors again wore their everyday clothes, the problem seemed to disappear. The solution became clear. (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:104) It is curious to note that, years later, Grotowski would make a similar decision when he refined *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* and attempted to purge it from any theatricality. I discuss this development in a later chapter. See chapter VI, subsection 1.

specific examples of Brook's approach, and how the concern with reaching the audience inscribed itself on the play and became manifest in the action itself. At the end of the first act the actors placed paper bags over their heads and proceeded to scramble through the stalls, making their way towards the exits with the audience's assistance. At the end of the play, following the release of several butterflies into the auditorium and the burning of the last one[42], the house lights came up and the actors remained on stage looking out front, waiting until the audience had exited. The first of these two scenes was cut after only four performances[43]. Not only had the actors disliked it in the first place, but as Kustow noted, it had by then "lost even [its] shock value as a happening" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:149). The second scene, with its powerful and pregnant silence became, on the contrary, an appropriate climax and was seen by many commentators as one of the highlights of the production. These two different approaches illuminate Williams' description of *US* as 'Theatre of Confrontation'. At the same time, they hint at the fact that the production was not concerned with aggressive tactics. Clearly, the least forceful of the two scenes I have just discussed was favoured precisely because it demanded a response from the audience but did so in a more subtle manner. The silence that ended the production punctuated its socio-political concerns and emphasised that the piece should not be merely consumed as entertainment, but serve as a platform for the audience's personal reflection on a 'burning' issue. The fact that the performance was rarely followed by applause suggests that, in this respect, it was a success. Moreover, potential similarities could be drawn between the quality of the silence that ended *US* and that following the performances of the Teatr Laboratorium[44].

To end my discussion on this area I feel it is necessary to draw special attention to one last, yet very important, detail. As with Grotowski, Brook's explicit desire to explore the possibilities of a new kind of contact with the audience went beyond theatrical concerns; its motivation was not merely aesthetic or scenographic experimentation. If for Grotowski the interest in the relationship between audience and performers had metaphysical and spiritual overtones, in this particular instance Brook's

[42] Three or four white butterflies were released from a box by one of the actors and flew into the auditorium over the audience's heads. This is such a small and delicate event that its magnitude may be misjudged. I would like to think that those butterflies reasserted the theatre as a space shared by audience and actors alike. This is us, we are here, we are all present, and those white butterflies are actually flying over your heads. Naturally this magnified the impact of the next moment when, one of the actors took a last butterfly out of the box and burnt it (the fact that it was a paper decoy was unbeknown to the audience). This is us, we are here, suffering does happen, and we are all responsible.
[43] It is nonetheless featured in Whitehead's *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*.
[44] Flaszen provides an insightful discussion on the quality of the audience's silence that followed the Teatr Laboratorium's performances; see Flaszen, 2010:177-178.

desire had political implications. During the press conference leading up to the production, Brook had clearly stated that his "capacity to influence the course of British Foreign Office policy and American State Department policy (...) is absolutely nil" (Brook in Whiteheard. 2007). Even if he did not aspire to stop the war, or convert anybody, he believed that "possibly something in the show would plant a seed of change" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:97).

If the similarities between *US* and Grotowski's practice have been relatively clear during my discussion of Brook's desire to find a more direct connection with the audience, they become less evident when looking at the following two points: the rejection of naturalistic acting, and the striving beyond simplistic responses towards a sense of 'truth'. The difficulty in tackling these questions comes partly from the fact that they are less concrete and tangible than the one discussed earlier. Throughout my examination of the actor-audience relationship in *US*, I have been able to base my arguments on the hard evidence provided by the scenography, the actions described in stage directions, and the critics' responses to the production. Of course there is some recorded footage of various scenes of the piece in Whitehead's *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*. This has enabled me, to some degree, to evaluate to what extent the company was successful in going beyond naturalistic acting. Yet I am reluctant to use this document as the basis for my assessment of the production's achievement of a sense of 'truth' beyond simplistic responses. Primarily this is due to my awareness that, lacking the live presence of the actors, the recorded footage of *US* is not the performance itself but rather an echo. Moreover, as already mentioned, the documentary was filmed without an audience but solely for the cameras. Therefore, in respect of this second issue, I have chosen not to talk at length about the actual production presented on the Aldwych stage. Instead I will focus on the rehearsal process that led to it and the intentions of the creative team.

My first visualisation of the acting in *US* was facilitated by a number of black and white photographs contained in *Tell Me Lies*. Even if they only offered me a limited glimpse into the production, what they revealed was confirmed by the footage of the production included in *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*. The first act, which was created entirely through improvisation by the actors in rehearsal, involved an eclectic mix of acting styles ranging from violent gestures to pantomime, from parodic songs to exuberantly physical movements. The actors even engaged in an action painting of sorts. Roger Brierley, personifying Vietnam and not wearing anything but a black

loincloth, was covered in two colours of paint to illustrate the country's division after the Geneva Conference in 1954. Brierley then proceeded to writhe in agony on a large piece of paper whilst the rest of the cast cheered and booed[45]. This was one of the ways in which the creative team attempted to "catch the immediacy of Happening, while having a fixed, dramatic structure." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:30) The second act, which had been written by Cannan, took a different approach and was far calmer in nature. It featured actors sitting on the floor facing the audience and delivering their lines in a more realistic manner, whilst the rest of the cast sat around watching them. This second act could be said to have involved naturalistic performances, and yet its focus was not on behavioural acting. Rather it emphasised the power of the text by favouring quiet introspection and paring down the actors' performances to their simplest components. What is clear is that, from its conception, *US* lacked a unity of style and the project was creatively driven as an attempt to generate a theatrical language based on bringing together many different elements (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:30). As I have already suggested, this was particularly the case with the production's first act. Naturally, this eclecticism is explicitly referred to in the rehearsal notes. It is to these that I will now turn because they reveal the process by which the piece was created and some of the challenges encountered by the cast. What is interesting is that Hunt linked this need to discover a new language of acting to the production's form and the subject matter itself. He stated that the complexity of the issues addressed required a multitude of thematic links, between "the world where political decisions were made, the cultural pressures behind those decisions and the effects of those decisions on anonymous people far away" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:22). As a result, the piece could not be developed in conventional terms of story and character, but only "though a flow of imagery, with actors who could move rapidly backwards and forwards between several different styles" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:22). This comment, written during the first week of rehearsals, already suggests a deliberate attempt to depart from naturalistic techniques. At the same time though, Hunt had to acknowledge the actors' weaknesses and the limitations in their training, largely centred on 'character' acting, and confessed that the group had to "begin slowly and painfully at the beginning" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:22).

Surprisingly, during the first rehearsals, the work focused on what Hunt describes as "naturalistic improvisations" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:21). For a three week

[45] Before Brierley's naked body was covered in paint it was held up by Patrick O'Connell and Leon Lissek in an archetypal pietà pose. Even though there is no hard evidence to suggest that this image might have been slightly inspired by Cieslak's role in *The Constant Prince*, the likeness is remarkable.

period the company worked closely with Joseph Chaikin and explored American life, American popular myths, and the intellectual world of happenings[46]. Throughout the first week, it seems, the actors were coming to terms with a new *modus operandi* by departing from familiar territory and gradually venturing into the unknown. Increasingly, the minutiae abundant in their naturalistic approach gave way to a more direct way of communicating to the audience. Nonetheless, as Hunt recalls, the initial problems were thrown into sharper focus when Brook turned to the war itself. Having already encountered some difficulties in tackling the American material explored with Chaikin, the cast at first struggled with coming to terms with and fully expressing the reality of Vietnam, a totally alien world to them. One exercise in particular, which Hunt recalls in his notes, may illustrate this issue. Having been asked to improvise their response to an air-raid, the actors staggered across the rehearsal room "in various attitudes of pain" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:21). After a while, Brook began the exercise again, this time instructing the cast to create a Vietnamese village. The throwing of a chair would signal the start of the air-raid. Suddenly, a small incident called Hunt's attention to the "thin-ness of the work" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:21). One of the times the chair was thrown by Brook, it nearly hit one of the actors. Instinctively he flinched as if threatened by real pain, but when the chair missed he returned to simulating a wounded Vietnamese peasant. The problem was pretence, and its inadequacy when faced with such delicate material:

> We – or rather the actors – could not convincingly simulate the bombed villagers. They could only confront a particular audience on a particular night with their own, unblistered bodies. Whatever was communicated finally would come, not through skilful imitation of pain, but through that confrontation. To this extent, each performance would be a Happening. The flinching from the thrown chair said more to me about Vietnam that morning that any of the tortured gestures of the actors. It was this quality of immediacy that we should have to look for. (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:23)

Hunt believed that this small incident raised a number of questions that were never correctly addressed. Rather than tackling this problem straight on, the difficulties in creating a real air-raid were cleverly avoided by Brook, who "tried framing the exercise between two screens, in a theatrical situation." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:24) In rehearsal, the air raid was substituted by a propaganda performance for Vietnamese

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[46] Joseph Chaikin was the director of the Open Theatre. He arrived at the first rehearsal on 4th July 1966 and worked for three weeks with the company. His thoughts on this process are reflected in a number of letters (Chaikin, 1988:41-45).

villagers in which each actor was allowed to make just one point, with a gesture, about the air-raid. Inexplicably, it was the first of these two options which made its way into the final production. Since this scene is not included in *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* it is hard to evaluate the actors' success. Years later though, writing a retrospective critique on *US*, Hunt would come to the conclusion that, "for all Brook's talk and writing about theatre that went beyond naturalism, his theatre was, and had always been, basically naturalistic in concept." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:117) In a sense, Hunt's criticism is not without foundation because, whilst Brook aimed to go beyond naturalistic acting in some respects, it was still present in the initial stages of the rehearsal process and certain scenes of the production.

I have previously mentioned that one of the existing similarities between *US* and the Teatr Laboratorium's practice was a rejection of naturalistic performances. However, it is necessary to specify what this meant for Brook and what it meant for Grotowski. As I have previously explored, *US* did feature moments of realistic performances as part of its aesthetic mix. For Brook, a rejection of naturalistic acting meant that the cast would use a variety of performance styles, and that they would have to be able to change incredibly quickly between these different modes. In more particular terms, it meant that the actors would not be concerned with conventional notions of character and, stripping away all unnecessary details, would achieve something closer to 'pure presentation'. As Hunt pointed out, "they were being asked to strip away every superfluous detail that would distract from one clear, central statement." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:21) This, in a sense, suggests that Brook's motivation could be said to have been partly Brechtian. Indeed, many of the exercises carried out during the rehearsal period had this character[47]. On the other hand, Grotowski's reasons for rejecting behavioural acting were tightly connected with his desire to expose the actors' impulses and inner 'truth'. As he put it: "at a moment of psychic shock, a moment of terror, of mortal danger or tremendous joy, a man does not behave 'naturally'. (...) We subtract, seeking distillation of signs by eliminating those elements of 'natural' behaviour which obscure pure impulse." (Grotowski, 1968:17) Clearly, his desire to develop a new language for the theatre differed significantly from Brook's aims. I have discussed these issues here it to clarify that *US*'s partial rejection of naturalistic acting cannot be attributed to Grotowski's work with the cast.

[47] During the first week Albert Hunt describes in his rehearsal notes that some of the actors engaged in a "Brecht exercise. They went through *Good King Wenceslas*, singing alternate lines – each moving quickly from Sinatra to Caruso and then to Mick Jagger." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:22)

The question of the company's striving beyond simplistic responses towards a sense of 'truth' is equally as troubled as the issues I have just discussed. Moreover, it is difficult to extricate this final point from the previous one. In the preface to *Tell Me Lies*, Brook wrote:

> We aimed not at a kill, but at what bullfighters call the moment of truth. The moment of truth was also our moment of drama, the one moment perhaps of tragedy, the one and only confrontation. This was when at the very end all pretences of play-acting ceased and actor and audience together paused, at a moment when they and Vietnam were looking one another in the face. (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:10)

From this it can be concluded that the rejection of naturalistic techniques, and the actors' struggles to portray a reality that went beyond simulation and pretence, are inexorably bound up with the search for 'truth'. The connection between these two issues is further suggested in Hunt's rehearsal notes:

> If we were to find a language to communicate to other people, we must first be able to look honestly at ourselves. Throughout rehearsals, this proved to be very difficult. We all of us – the actors included – had a number of easy responses to the material we were studying. How to get through these responses until we were confronted with what we really experienced? (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:28)

Indeed, the question facing the company was: how does one work on 'truth'? One of the strategies employed was to expose the cast to as many different points of view on the war is possible. During the period leading up to Grotowski's arrival, the actors and the creative team had been involved in frequent discussions. Journalists and people who had recently been in Vietnam were invited to talk to the group[48]. One of the more remarkable meetings took place at the start of the second week of rehearsals when a Vietnamese monk from the Hampstead Vihara talked to the cast about the political attitudes of the Buddhists. Hunt recalls this being a heated discussion, particularly because of the monk's seemingly conflicting views[49]. The actors' negative reaction to

[48] Albert Hunt mentioned this to me during our interview, but he was unable to remember any names. Joseph Chaikin makes a similarly vague mention of these visits in one of his letters of July 1966. "Today more meetings with people just returned from Vietnam – hair-raising stories about Americans swaggering through Saigon and journalists and opium." (Chaikin, 1988:45)

[49] "He said that nobody wanted the Americans to withdraw, only to fight the war more humanely, and to allow the Buddhists to set up a popular government. But weren't the Buddhists against fighting? (...) The monk answered that he himself would not fight. He was a monk, and it was not the job of monks to fight. The soldiers would fight – that was their job. The actors suddenly became hostile. They had felt that the

his statements, in a sense, highlighted the difficulty of going beyond one's initial response to the topic. As Brook stated:

> We very soon discovered that we had no reason whatsoever for believing any one person's view, opinion or interpretation of what was going on in Vietnam. We very rapidly saw that there are only a very small number of totally convincing, objective realities. One of those objective realities was the suffering, another was the urgency, another was the confusion, and another was the contradiction inherent in every slice of the Vietnamese scene. (Brook in Whitehead. 2007)

The Vietnam War was a burning issue. It is worth remembering that only a day before rehearsals began, on 3rd July 1966, a crowd of 4.000 demonstrators gathered outside the U.S. Embassy in London, leading to 33 arrests. Faced with this delicate and contentious subject nobody in the creative team could offer easy solutions. In order to avoid ready-made responses, each of the actors would have to carefully consider what the events in Vietnam mean to them personally, looking honestly into themselves. As Williams writes, during the rehearsals "the emphasis was on a continuous and vigorous process of self-research, a daily reassessment of oneself and of one's art, of the relationship between theatre and everyday life." (Williams, 1988:75) These issues were often brought to the surface as the result of other exercises carried out. In one instance, four actors engaged in a torture-scene improvisation set by Brook whilst the rest of the company watched with a mix of fascination and disgust. After having discussed the work, the group revealed "the gap between what we pretend to feel, and the disturbing impulses inside." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:28) Hunt recounts how at a later stage in the rehearsal process the whole company threw themselves with vigour into a 'ritualistic game' he had devised[50]. Having thoroughly enjoyed frightening the victims who could not see, they sat down again and declared how torture was disgusting. On this occasion "it was important for each one to confront the germs of cruelty in himself as a first step towards understanding." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:29) Therefore it might be questionable whether Brook did in the end achieve the aims he had pursued. Nonetheless, there may be a hint of his success in what a critic of the *Morning Star*

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monk was offering something new, and now it appeared that he wasn't." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:24-25)

[50] The game that the RSC played was a version of one Hunt had devised with a group of art college students at Bradford. To explain it very briefly: it involved a structure from which hung various objects. This structure would spin if it were touched. Throughout the game, five players felt their way with paper bags over their heads. They were divided into two teams. One of them carried a stick and hunted others. When he found somebody a referee blew a whistle, and the victim would be taken away. The hunter never knew which team his prey belonged to. For a full account of the game see Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:15.

wrote about the production: "it had a concentrated, fanatical fierceness of self-examination" (Trewin, 1971:154)[51]. At any rate, what is clear is that during rehearsals the issue of 'truth' had not yet been explored in a more direct way by the cast, but would later crystallise and form into coherent exercises after Grotowski's visit. That said, it is important to recognise that whilst Grotowski's work with the company was instrumental in guiding them towards achieving a sense of 'truth' that went beyond simplistic responses, this was an aim which the group had already set for themselves[52].

Throughout this section I have tentatively explored the main existing similarities between the intentions of Brook and his team, and certain aspects of the Teatr Laboratorium's practice. I have made a deliberate distinction between 'intentions' and 'practice' and would like to emphasise this in order to avoid falling into an 'intentionalist fallacy'. Moreover I have not lost sight of the fact that these two companies' circumstances, as well as their background and approach, differed significantly. What is important to note is that there were certain affinities between *US* and Teatr Laboratorium's work or, as Brook said, "parallels and points of contact" (Brook in Grotowski, 1968:12). It is these existing similarities which I will take into account when assessing the extent of Grotowski's influence on the production. When Brook embarked with the RSC on this project, he was not following a pre-established formula. He was in search of a new theatre language; a language that would communicate in a new and more direct way with the audience, that would go beyond naturalistic methodologies, and that would strive towards a sense of 'truth'. In spirit at least, *US* was not a far cry from Grotowski, even before he had arrived on the scene.

[51] Towards the end of this chapter I will briefly discuss some of the critical responses to the production.
[52] I will expand on this later, when I come to discuss the influence Grotowski had on *US*.

3. MEETING GROTOWSKI

3.1 Brook's invitation

In the early summer of 1966, Brook travelled to Paris "where he observed and talked to the Polish Lab Theater" (Chaikin, 1988:42). Although the specific date is uncertain[53], it is probable that this escapade coincided with the Teatr Laboratorium's performances of *The Constant Prince* in Paris (21st to 25th June), where the group had been invited to present their work at the Tenth Season of the Théâtre des Nations. This indicates that Brook's visit to Paris would have taken place before rehearsals for *US* had officially begun. Of course, it would be entirely speculative to suggest that at this early stage Brook was already thinking about inviting Grotowski to work with the RSC. Nonetheless, as Chaikin writes in one of his letters, on his return Brook frequently talked about the Teatr Laboratorium's work: "Peter carries on and on about Grotowski" (Chaikin, 1988:45). In further correspondence, Chaikin indirectly hints at the dates when the official invitation was sent to Grotowski, and when he accepted it, possibly 11th July and 21st July respectively[54]. On 31st July 1966, Grotowski arrived in London accompanied by Cieslak. The very next day they began their work with the RSC.

At this point, a question begs to be asked: why did Brook invite Grotowski in the first place?[55] In his search for an eclectic acting style that would bring together a number of different elements, Brook had exposed the cast to a variety of methodologies, from Brechtian exercises to Happenings. Furthermore, Brook invited a number of

[53] The letter in which Chaikin mentions Brook's visit to Paris and his meeting with the Teatr Laboratorium is not fully dated; it simply reads "July 1966".

[54] I only say that Chaikin hints at these dates because I cannot be absolutely certain that they are correct. This is because I am merely following the dates on the letters in which Chaikin mentions both the invitation and the acceptance. First, in a letter dated 11th July 1966, he writes: "Peter sent for Grotowski from the Polish Lab Theater to come here for a few days and demonstrate his work. I hope he accepts." (Chaikin, 1988:43) Later, in a letter dated 21st July 1966, he writes: "I wrote you that Peter carries on and on about Grotowski from the Polish Lab. Well, he just got Grotowski to come to London for 10 days and work with the company here – by demonstrating and teaching his techniques." (Chaikin, 1988:45)

[55] Of course the same question could be asked in reverse: why did Grotowski accept Brook's invitation? To answer this I can only speculate that he might have been attracted by curiosity, since he had thought highly of Brook when they had first met the previous year. On a more pragmatic level, Grotowski might have been drawn to the proposal by the fact that this invitation, from an internationally renowned company such as the RSC, would have given him and his company a certain degree of kudos in the eyes of the Polish authorities. This hypothesis is particularly relevant if we take into account that up to that point these authorities had only given relative attention to the Teatr Laboratorium. Therefore, the more illustrious invitations Grotowski received, the more likely his company's standing would rise within Poland.

practitioners to work with the group. As mentioned earlier, for the first three weeks the actors worked with Joseph Chaikin, from the Open Theatre. Towards the end of this period Chaing Lui, was brought in. He had some experience in Chinese theatre and observed the company tell a Vietnamese legend, the Story of the Mosquito, on which they had been working for some time. He corrected some of their basic mistakes and pushed them towards the precision required for certain gestures: how to cook rice, how to sweep a hut, how to climb a mountain, how to walk. This precision and the way in which he obtained it disturbed and shocked some of the actors (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:27). Grotowski's visit needs to be understood within this theatrical kaleidoscope. Nonetheless, his work with the cast was of a slightly different nature; it was to be deeper and more demanding. In Kustow's words, it arose from Brook's decision to "shift the focus inwards for ten days" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:132). Hunt was more eloquent and expands on this point:

> What was still lacking was a sense of disciplined control by the actors, either physical or emotional. What was needed, after all the exploration of different styles, was a tight concentration in one particular area. This was what we were hoping for from Grotowski when this first period of rehearsal came to an end. The work he was going to do with the actors would inevitably determine the way the material we already had would be shaped and organized. (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:30)

Hunt's suggestion that Grotowski's visit was the result of a quest for 'disciplined control' was later echoed by Brook's own comments. In an interview with Domagalik, he stated that, speaking to Grotowski, he felt that his work was "of an eminently practical character, it wasn't a theory, but something that really passes through the body." (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowski, Allain, 2009:36) Having met Grotowski the previous year and having attended a performance by the Teatr Laboratorium in Paris, Brook thought it would be interesting for the RSC cast to receive "some kind of new but vital experience" (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowsi, Allain, 2009:36).

3.2 Generating sources

I have already discussed the sources which enabled me to develop an understanding of *US*. Nonetheless, before fully exploring Grotowski's work with the RSC actors, I feel it

is necessary to pause for a moment and carefully consider what sources are available which might shed light on this event. Following the two weeks which concern me here, Peter Brook wrote an article for *Flourish*, the RSC newspaper (Brook, Winter 1966)[56]. This piece gained its highest level of visibility after it was chosen as a preface for Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Grotowski, 1968:11-13)[57]. However, in this article Brook refused to describe the work Grotowski had carried out for two reasons:

> First of all, such work is only free if it is in confidence, and confidence depends on its confidences not being disclosed. Secondly, the work is essentially non-verbal. To verbalise is to complicate and even destroy exercises that are clear and simple when indicated by a gesture and when executed by the mind and the body as one. (Brook in Grotowski, 1968:11)

Kustow's rehearsal notes on *US*, which are published in *Tell Me Lies*, are not particularly revealing either. They cover the period between 1st August and the opening night, and thus include the time of Grotowski's and Cieslak's visit. Nevertheless, Kustow seems to have either agreed with Brook's reluctance to disclose what took place during those ten days, or honoured his explicit wishes that the rehearsal confidences should not be exposed. As Brook did, he deliberately did not give any details of the work Grotowski carried out with the actors, and simply quotes Brook's article in its entirety. Kustow himself only provides us with a very rough sketch which seems to paraphrase Brook's words:

> What followed in the next ten days is difficult to describe, because it took place on such a private, naked level, because it was in every sense a workshop, a consulting-room, a confessional, a temple, a refuge, a place of reflection, but reflection conducted not only with the mind, but with every fibre and muscle of the body. (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:132)

It would not be until Hunt wrote his open critique on *US* twenty-five years later[58] that we would have a first impression of what took place behind closed doors. His tone seems to be somewhat cynical of Grotowski's methodologies, saying that "it was as if

[56] Since it was first published, it has been reprinted a number of times: in *Tell Me Lies* (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:132-135), and in *The Shifting Point* (Brook, 1989:37-40).

[57] There are no clear indications as to why Barba, as editor of *Towards a Poor Theatre*, might have chosen Brook's article as a preface. However it is probable that he might have done this because Brook was, at the time, already recognised as a leading theatre director. The high esteem he held for Grotowski could be said to have helped validate the Teatr Laboratorium.

[58] This open critique is included in the chapter dedicated to *US* that is part of a book Hunt co-wrote with Geoffrey Reeves on Peter Brook's oeuvre. He starts his critique by stating: "When I contributed an essay to the published text of *US* (that is, *Tell Me Lies*), Brook said that it lacked my usual critical astringency. So twenty-five years later I'll try again." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:112)

Moses had paid a brief visit, bringing with him the tablets of stone." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:114) Primarily, Hunt disapproved of Grotowski's attitude in the rehearsal room, pointing out that whilst he constantly chain smoked, "the sound of a match being struck by someone else was enough to bring a look of anger into his face" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:114). At the same time Hunt does not deny that the extension of the actors' vocal and physical capabilities was more than astonishing. These improvements, of course, came at a cost. If Hunt's writing is illuminating, it is precisely because he reveals the true intensity of Grotowski's work by outlining some of the gruelling exercises the cast were submitted to. He describes two particular examples and condemns how Grotowski 'assaulted' Glenda Jackson, one of Brook's leading actresses[59]. Hunt writes that Brook had spoken to Grotowski about her on the day of his arrival; Jackson possessed great talent and yet "kept it all inside her" (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:115), never loosing her cool detachment. Thus Hunt suggests that Brook had inadvertently encouraged Grotowski to "break down her control in order, as he saw it, to build her up again." (Hunt & Reeves, 1995:115) He then states with some satisfaction, that Grotowski did not manage to break through[60].

However interesting, Hunt's report is rather limited for various reasons. In discussing the whole rehearsal process and the production at large, he is only able to dedicate a fraction of his critique to this workshop in particular. Yet, as he himself indicates, he spent a significant part of Grotowski's visit working with a group of understudies and was thus not able to attend every session. These limitations do not make Hunt's writing any less valuable, but they result in a lack of definite answers and specific details.

[59] To read a full description of this occurrence, see Hunt & Reeves, 1995:115.

[60] When during an interview I asked Glenda Jackson about all this she said: "I distinctly remember this was on the Saturday. And on the Sunday, Brook rang me and said 'what did you think?' I said 'well, there is no point in my coming back now he's there because I know what he is trying to do and he is not gonna do it'. So, Brook said, 'well I would like you to come back, because as I said to Grotowski it's all very well breaking people down but you have to be able to build them back up again. And in the timescale that we have we don't have that.' So I went back on the Monday and it was all smiles then. I mean he'd sort of got over that." (Jackson, 2007) Interestingly, when Brook talked about this incident he did so in rather milder and kinder terms. In his article 'Quality and Craft' he does not mention having instigated Grotowski to 'break down' Jackson. Instead, he wrote:

> I remember Glenda, who was close to breaking – he [Grotowski] pushed her right to the point where she could no longer carry on. At the same time she did not want to give up, as she felt that there was something of value in this extraordinary demand. In the end, she discovered that this severity was only a role that Grotowski had assumed. When the workshop was finished he quickly abandoned this attitude, went towards her, caressed her. I remember this image as the image that speaks of his humanity and understanding. (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowski, Allain, 2009:68)

In an attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of the available sources, I have conducted a series of interviews with some of the RSC actors who were involved in *US* and worked with Grotowski and Cieslak. I am extremely grateful for the contribution and help offered by Ian Hogg, Glenda Jackson, Marjie Lawrence, Leon Lissek, Robert Langdon Lloyd, Pauline Munro, Barry Stanton, and Henry Woolf, as well as Albert Hunt. The following section is based on their testimonies.

Before I begin my analysis, I should highlight the personal nature of these interviews. These were informal telephone conversations, and the thoughts reflected in them are entirely individual and subjective. They do not offer the impartial coolness of accurate facts, but the idiosyncratic character of a person's anecdotes and feelings. This however, does not mean they are invalid. Since I am discussing an event which was experiential at its core, I believe that in fact they offer a series of unique and illuminating viewpoints. That said, although I am grateful for everyone's efforts, I have to acknowledge that these are recollections going back more than forty years. As most of those interviewed stated themselves, their impressions had to be dragged out from under the veils of time and memory. It is therefore not surprising that I have had to contend with somewhat fragmentary information and often have had to negotiate the discrepancies between one account and another. Partly for this reason, it is understandable that some of these testimonies have been more useful than others. Whilst some of my interviewees had difficulties in remembering Grotowski's visit, others were able to recall a great level of detail about it and had clear impressions about his work.

3.3 Grotowski and Cieslak, first impression and methodological approaches

The RSC cast received their first surprise when, the week before the work was scheduled to begin, they were instructed to come to the rehearsal space wearing outfits usually associated with gymnastics[61]. On the Monday after Grotowski's arrival, the actors were met by the stage management team who said they should go away and come back later because Grotowski had said that the rehearsal room was not sufficiently

[61] The men had to wear shorts and no tops. The women had to wear leotards and a fitted top. Nobody was allowed to wear socks. Both Hogg and Stanton mentioned this in my interviews with them.

clean[62]. On their return, the RSC actors met Grotowski and Cieslak for the first time, and the work began. Cieslak would always lead the physical work, whilst the vocal and inner work was led by Grotowski. Since he did not speak English he spoke to, and frequently screamed at, the group in French, with Brook acting as translator. Moreover, though there is no record, it is probable that Grotowski and Brook maintained private conversations outside the rehearsal space[63].

The first thing that all those interviewed seem to agree on is the strong impression caused by Grotowski. Following a very serious introduction, they were faced with a plump man wearing black from head to toe. The dark suit and dark glasses would remain his attire for the whole ten days. This rather mysterious and sombre appearance, they would soon discover, was mirrored by his inaccessibility. Barry Stanton expressed that Grotowski was not 'one of them', but always appeared distant. As Henry Woolf said, "one couldn't talk ho him, and it wasn't a barrier of language, it was a barrier of distancing. He didn't expect to be talked to." (Woolf, 2007) Stanton believed that "Grotowski saw himself as a guru figure. And the only way you can have complete control over a group, is to give them nothing at all of yourself. By that I mean, non-personal." (Stanton, 2007) He goes on to say that, in his opinion, Grotowski's imposing appearance and attitude may have been a response to the company's cohesiveness. Having worked together during four weeks already, the cast were welded together. Faced with the difficult task of coming into a tight group, Grotowski may have deliberately "come in with something quite strong." (Stanton, 2007) Pauline Munro made a similar suggestion, saying that since his time with the company was short, "maybe he had to concentrate everything into this persona that he had." (Munro, 2007) It is important to recognise that when Grotowski visited the RSC in 1966 he had not yet undergone the personal transformation which, in autumn 1970, would see him dramatically change the ways in which he presented himself[64]. Moreover, Flaszen recognises that this transformation extended beyond Grotowski's physical appearance and had repercussions on the way in which he conducted his interpersonal relationships,

[62] "So we went away and came back and found that they'd laid out on the floor, you know those kind of coconut mats you had at school when you did gym." (Jackson, 2007)

[63] These conversations, in a sense, might have led to influence on both sides. However, due to a lack of evidence, this is immeasurable.

[64] In the summer of 1970 Grotowski had been on a personal trip to India and Kurdistan. Directly after this, he had arranged to meet the Teatr Laboratorium in Shiraz ahead of performances scheduled for the Iranian capital's international festival. His appearance had changed so radically, from the suit-wearing figure to hippy-esque attire, that even his close associates failed to recognise him at first (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:95). For Flaszen's account of this transformation see Flaszen, 2010:228-231.

including how he approached his work with actors. Before 1970 Grotowski's close associates recognise that he did have a stern and slightly authoritarian attitude[65].

The impression of Cieslak amongst the RSC cast was radically different. Even though there were obvious difficulties with spoken communication, to the actors he seemed far more approachable. Woolf saw him as "a brilliant actor and a saintly man, who could do all Grotowski's physical exercises (...) he was a sweet man." (Woolf, 2007) As Stanton said, "he was his body." (Stanton, 2007) It was this physicality and his acrobatic capabilities that most astounded the cast. According to Jackson, Susan Sontag was present at some rehearsals in the capacity of an observer[66] and, on one occasion, she said "Grotowski is gonna ask Cieslak to fly, and he will." (Jackson, 2007) One of the first things he demonstrated was what Stanton defined as 'the falling athlete': an athlete runs in slow motion but with full energy, suddenly something makes him trip and fall, leading him to do a complete somersault before getting up again, all in slow motion. During my interview with Hogg, he mentioned that one of Cieslak's first demonstrations was an adaptation of the Hatha Yoga sequence 'salutation to the sun'. It is therefore possible that this is the exercise referred to by Stanton. Brook too, described Cieslak's demonstration as a series of exercises based on yoga which he had evolved for himself (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowsi, Allain, 2009:37). At any rate, the cast soon discovered that behind Cieslak's physical prowess was a human being, with inconsistencies and flaws. As Stanton recalled, "we asked him to do it again another day. And when he did it again it wasn't as good, which is what endeared him to us then. (...) He is not just a performing body." (Stanton, 2007)

The relationship the RSC cast had with Grotowski and Cieslak developed purely and strictly on professional terms. There was no socialising at all. Only on one occasion, about the third or fourth day, did the actors convince Cieslak to go for a coffee out of hours. However, this was frowned upon by Grotowski and did not happen again.

The second issue which was mentioned by all interviewees was the shock the group received when they were exposed to Grotowski's radical methodologies. Even though most members of the cast had been involved in vast amounts of improvisation throughout their careers, and some had even participated in experimental theatre

[65] Flaszen mentions this several times in *Grotowski & Company*. For instance, see Flaszen, 2010:173.

[66] I have not been able to find any further evidence that Sontag had indeed been present during Grotowski's workshop with the RSC.

projects[67], none of them had ever experienced such demanding work. Woolf described Grotowski as what he calls a 'kamikaze kid'. "He went *a l'etance* which is the French for, you know, to the ultimate. It means fighting to the death in mediaeval terms." (Woolf, 2007) Already in the initial meeting, Grotowski announced that their work would take them "through the barriers of fear and pain" (Woolf, 2007), pushing their bodies and voices, as well as their experience of themselves, to the extreme. Woolf recognised the Catholic overtones in this statement and expands by saying that the cast were never very far away from suffering. Furthermore, "the idea that suffering was very good for one and not only an inevitable by-product of living but somehow an essential part of the process" (Woolf, 2007) was one of the most dominant concepts. For the most part, the actors found the absolute dedication demanded by Grotowski and his striving towards a sense of total purity admirable. Nevertheless, in a similar way to Hunt, they did not fully appreciate what they perceived to be the rather dictatorial ways in which he achieved it. During their improvisations at the beginning stages of rehearsals, Brook had given them total freedom within narrow tracks, and "as long as you didn't go off the tracks you were ok, you were doing what he wanted." (Woolf, 2007) Therefore, it is not difficult to see why they were shocked by Grotowski's approach. As Woolf said, "Grotowski you had to obey." (Woolf, 2007) Of course it is worth remembering that this attitude was also symptomatic of the working culture that Grotowski came from. Whilst he respected his actors and valued their creative contribution towards the Teatr Laboratorium's productions, Grotowski also placed high demands on them. The way in which this translated to their interpersonal relationships was, for instance, that the members of the Teatr Laboratorium addressed each other formally rather than using their first names[68].

Strict and highly disciplined working conditions were established at an early stage. As Robert Lloyd recalls, during their first meeting, Grotowski declared that "there was to be no laughter" (Lloyd, 2007a). Most of the cast members tried their best, "but there was a temptation every now and again to cause and then suppress uncontainable giggles. And this was absolutely frowned upon." (Lloyd, 2007a) The situation was unsustainable as Woolf remembers, "it all came to a rather disastrous end" (Woolf, 2007). Grotowski was screaming at one of the actors, trying to get his voice to come

[67] As I mentioned previously, Mary Allen, Glenda Jackson, Leon Lissek, and Robert Lloyd had all participated in Brook's 'Theatre of Cruelty' season. Marjie Lawrence also had experience in experimental theatre because she had worked in Joan Littlewood's company the Theatre Workshop.

[68] Stefania Gardecka, who worked as administrator for the Teatr Laboratorium between 1966 and 1984, recalls that this formal address changed after Grotowski's transformation in 1970. (Gardecka in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010)

from behind his knee, or some other unconventional resonator. Unable to help herself, one of the women in the company began to quietly giggle. Gradually the rest began to giggle with her, then chuckle, and finally "began to laugh uproariously at this ludicrous sight. Grotowski was completely dumbfounded, and Cieslak was appalled that *le maître*, the saint, the god, was being laughed at." (Woolf, 2007) Both Woolf and Lloyd understood this incident as the result of cultural difference rather than genuine disrespect. "English actors like to laugh a lot, and they are very quick to assess the ludicrous aspect of anything, and when people take themselves as seriously as Grotowski they lay themselves open to being teased" (Woolf, 2007). As Lloyd went on to recognise, to leave laughing outside of the rehearsal room can be a good idea, maybe even a necessity, when the work that is to be undertaken is of such a serious nature as on this occasion. "We all know that laughter can ease a sort of nervous uptightness, and make everything alright. And he [Grotowski] didn't want everything to be alright in that way." (Lloyd, 2007a) However, "it is a nearly disastrous thing to say to an English theatre company" (Lloyd, 2007a) who will quite likely react to it like a bull to a red rag.[69]

Laughter was not the only thing which was deliberately and openly vetoed; questions and discussion did not have a place in the rehearsal room either and were even discouraged to take place outside amongst the actors during break times[70]. For Stanton in particular, this approach was somewhat troubling. He recognised that "English actors are great, great social beings, they are great chatterers, they discuss the work openly, and frivolously sometimes" (Stanton, 2007), and that allowing frivolity to spread is not beneficial to the work. He also confessed that his reaction was terribly suspicious. Again, he appears to place cultural difference at the core of this discrepancy with Grotowski by saying that "English actors are terribly suspicious of that sort of non-explanation of what you are doing, what's happening. We still are." (Stanton, 2007) His disagreement came from the feeling that by not being allowed to question or discuss the work, the actors were not permitted to explore fully the nature of what was taking place.

[69] Hogg made a similar comment by saying that there is a tendency to "make attempts to lighten everything, because you don't want to work in a heavy, intense atmosphere. It's not the kind of dark, draining area that British actors want to occupy." (Hogg, 2008)

[70] Later, in 1968 during his closing remarks to the participants of a practical worksession convened at Odin Teatret in Holstebro, Grotowski clearly articulated yet another reason for why he disliked discussing the work. "Stanislavsky analyzed this kind of need in the actor. During the rehearsals of Tartuffe, his last performance, he said: 'Notice during the second or third rehearsal that the actor who had expressed the most brilliant concept will be then the most paralyzed, most barren, and laziest in the work.' Why? Because he verbalized this whole concept just in order to avoid work." (Grotowski, 2008a :21)

I would not like to rule out that indeed this disagreement was partially the by-product of cultural differences. Undoubtedly, Grotowski's and the RSC team's comprehension of the teacher-pupil or master-disciple relationship varied greatly. However, it would be simplistic to reduce this issue to a question of nationalities. We could also say that these discrepancies stemmed from diverging worldviews, or simply different methodological approaches. The fact remains that Grotowski shared a characteristically Eastern view that understanding *per se* is not a discursive process, but requires instead the engagement of the whole body. Without going into much detail, it is enough to mention the extent to which Grotowski pronounced himself on this subject: understanding is achieved through doing, it is physical[71].

3.4 A series of shocks

Before going on to tackle the issue of influence itself I would like to give some more details about the work Grotowski and Cieslak carried out with the RSC. Of course Grotowski's practice fully integrates a series of physical, vocal, and psychological elements. However, for the sake of clarity, I have chosen to discuss them separately. As Brook later summarised, the work gave each actor a series of shocks:

> The shock of confronting himself in the fact 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 untapped resources. The shock of being forced to question why he is an actor at all… (Brook in Grotowski, 1968:11)

Earlier, I mentioned that Cieslak was in charge of leading physical work. He would demonstrate the exercises and the actors would copy his actions as best as they could. The level of control he had over his body made some of the cast members feel ashamed of their physique and clumsiness, and that their attempts in following his instructions were rather pathetic. Believing that they lacked the physical form or appropriate training which would direct them towards a correct approach, some participants even questioned

[71] Though this notion permeates Grotowski's entire career he stated it most clearly in his text 'Performer': "The true teacher – what does he do for the apprentice? He says: *do it*. The apprentice fights to understand, to reduce the unknown to the known, to avoid doing. By the very fact that he wants to understand, he resists. He can understand only after he *does it*. He *does it* or not. Knowledge is a matter of doing." (Grotowski, in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:376)

the fairness of having to undertake such extreme work (Lissek, 2007). Nonetheless, as Jackson recalled, if after several trials somebody declared they were unable to carry out one of the exercises, Grotowski and Cieslak would acknowledge this and there would be no hard feelings because of it. The physical work undertaken with the cast included a variety of balances, daring jumps, forward and back flips, and was imbued with Grotowski's ethos, demanding that the actors go through the barriers of tiredness, fear and pain. In keeping with this, and contrary to today's sensibility, there were no warm-ups of any kind. Instead the cast had to throw themselves wholeheartedly and without hesitation into the physical exercises. This is something which some of the actors disapproved of, particularly Lloyd: "Dancers warm up, athletes warm up. As I remember, Grotowski believed that the daring, the hurling of oneself into something without preparation was the right way to do it." (Lloyd, 2007a) He believes that this was the reason which led some of the actors to physically damage themselves. Lawrence and Lissek specifically recalled having suffered injuries. Whilst she put her neck out, discovering the following day that she was unable to turn her head in one direction, he assured me that having hurt his back he has continued to have problems with it ever since that day.

The vocal exercises, led by Grotowski, were equally demanding and like the physical sessions, pushed the cast to their limits. However, their responses tended to be more positive. It is safe to suggest that during this time British theatre placed a great emphasis on vocal delivery and that most British actors would have finely tuned instruments and extensive experience of vocal work, however, Grotowski's approach was radically different to anything they were accustomed to. What the cast members found particularly astounding was his work with various resonators. Through these explorations they discovered a wide array of possibilities: "you can have a chest voice, you can have a top of the head voice, you can have a back of the neck voice, and you can have a lower spine, middle of the spine voice (...) Now, this was extraordinary." (Stanton, 2007) Such work was at the time unprecedented in Britain. Lloyd gives a clear example of how radical Grotowski's approaches were. During one of the voice sessions he assured the group that if one were able to produce a certain sound out of the space between the shoulder blades, it would be possible to blow out a candle. As Lloyd recognises, the validity of this statement is highly questionable in physiological terms. "Nevertheless, the attempt to do it will alter the breathing, and will alter the sound you make. And maybe you will slightly open a resonator (…) that hasn't been opened

before." (Lloyd, 2007a) Again, it was the reaching beyond the seemingly impossible which drove the work further.

Striving towards a higher aim is something which was not only present in Grotowski's physical and vocal work, but could be said to have had metaphysical implications. Although the most visible aspect of his methodology was the emphasis on acrobatics, Jackson stated that this was always "imbued with something else" (Jackson, 2007). It was this 'something else', deeper than physical prowess, which made the work so interesting and unique. When I asked her to expand on what she meant with 'something else', she simply said that one had to be able to see it in order to understand it. Interestingly, Woolf mentioned something similar but was able to be a little more precise. He talked about the wonderment of seeing "an absolutely dedicated actor who was taking acting so far, that it was not acting anymore, it was something else." (Woolf, 2007) In his view, this 'something else' meant achieving a special sense of 'authenticity' which went beyond pretence and acting itself. This, he said, would shake the audience at their core, leaving them with no refuge: "one was being eviscerated in the theatre." (Woolf, 2007)

Naturally, such achievements were not possible in the short amount of time the company spent with Grotowski. However, during some of the sessions he led the cast in what can only be described as 'inner work'. Sometimes, in the words of Lawrence, he would instruct the actors to lie on the floor, often for quite a long time, and just try to think about moments in their lives which had affected them deeply. She likened this experience to a session with a psychiatrist and confessed that it was somehow cathartic. Other members of the company remained more sceptical. Lloyd recalled a particular occurrence which made him doubt whether Grotowski was qualified and able to carry out such delicate work. The exercise was to begin to demonstrate the sort of behaviour one despises in other people. One of the actors began the exercise and started by imitating someone who was slightly feminine in manner. As the exercise continued he was encouraged to explore this more and more fully until it was almost caricaturesque. At this point the exercise switched in tone and the actor was made to acknowledge that this was in fact a deep part of himself. Finally, he was instructed to literally beat it out of himself and he began to bash his head against the wall so severely that some of those present were afraid he would actually cause serious damage. Lloyd's disapproval of such approaches stem from the fact that, as far as he could remember, the actor was then simply left in this state. "Anybody who has been trained to perhaps lead somebody

towards a catharsis, they are then also trained to get them out the other side, and not to just leave them." (Lloyd, 2007a)

I would like to end this subsection by quoting two particular statements made by Stanton. Overall I believe they are extremely valuable because they give an account of very specific exercises which Grotowski conducted with the group.

The first of these testimonies illustrates the extent to which Grotowski pushed the actors according to their individual needs, and demonstrates that, for him, exercises were never understood as recipes but as particular solutions to an actor's personal weaknesses:

> I remember one exercise, in which Glenda was involved, whereby we were all animals, and we had to attack her, but we couldn't touch her. So we had to attack her, but only with our physicality, not touch her. We did that for about twenty minutes and then he [Grotowski] said: 'Now we will do it again, except Barry, (me), and you are a tiny, tiny, little, light-weight bird'. And I'm not. I'm a large guy. And I thought that was a very interesting, you know, observation, and an idea. That he was pushing me against what would be called type, or whatever, physical type. And I remember that went on for about two hours that bloody exercise. I remember I couldn't stand up for two days after that. (Stanton, 2007)

The second exercise Stanton remembered was called 'the inner melody'[72]:

> The inner melody is where you have a song or a tune, going over and over, over and over, and over in your head.(...) The example we had was a man called Paddy O'Connell, who was Irish, was singing *Danny Boy* but only in his head. (...) you take this rhythm on with you, and you keep it going all the time. So the two things are going, there is the rhythm of the song in your brain which is going on consciously, and what you are saying as well. Now, you don't relate one to another, you just see how they inter-react. (Stanton, 2007)

These two exercises serve as an example of the complexity of some of the techniques that Grotowski introduced the RSC cast to. What is particularly notable is the sophistication achieved by using simple elements and Grotowski's holistic approach, aiming to strike a balance between physical work, rhythm, and 'inner life'.

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[72] Hogg recalled this particular exercise too, though he was not able to give as much detail about it (Hogg, 2008). In email correspondence following our interview, Lloyd also remembered this exercise, and stated that Muhammad Ali was mentioned by Grotowski as the example of a man who is in touch with his 'inner melody' (Lloyd, 2007b).

4. INFLUENCE, AN UNDERGROUND STREAM

I will now assess the extent to which Grotowski's and Cieslak's visit might have influenced *US* and/or the RSC cast. There are, of course, a number of contextual factors which I have taken into account. First, the socio-cultural circumstances under which Grotowski's practice had developed and the London of the mid 1960s were radically different. These discrepancies, as already discussed, had an effect on the company's reception of Grotowski's and Cieslak's work. Secondly, by the time of Grotowski's arrival, *US* had been in rehearsals for four weeks and most of the material which would go into the production had already been created. Thirdly, as in the previous instances when Chaing Lui and Chaikin were invited to lead workshops with the actors, Brook did not have a clear or definite outcome in mind. Rather, their visit was part of the RSC's exploration of theatrical possibilities and different approaches. Nonetheless, even though Grotowski's and Cieslak's visit was the last in a series of workshops and talks, in the view of most interviewees they certainly left the strongest impression. Fourthly, and perhaps more importantly, the actors worked with Grotowski and Cieslak for only two weeks. Moreover, in the larger scheme of the production's timeline, this work covered a relatively short period of time. As a result, it is probable that it was somewhat accelerated and took place at an unnatural speed. Finally, the company rehearsed for a further nine weeks until the opening night on 13th October 1966, meaning that the production continued to develop.

As I have done throughout the previous sections, I will base my arguments on the testimonies of the company members I have interviewed. I will also use audiovisual documents of the production. In regards to my interviewees' accounts, it is important to recognise that their individual views about the extent to which Grotowski had an impact on *US* tend to vary significantly. Whilst some believed that his influence was subliminal, others suggested that it was something which was definitely felt in the final performance. Even though others still were of the opinion that Grotowski had little effect at all on *US*, it is hard to believe that any of the actors involved would remain untouched after this experience.

4.1 Resistances

As previously mentioned, Brook wrote that Grotowski's and Cieslak's work gave the RSC team a series of shocks (Grotowski, 1968:11). What is interesting to note is that implicit within Brook's choice to use the word 'shock', is the fact that some cast members reacted negatively and put up a degree of resistance. Indeed, Lissek confessed that some of the older actors in the company found Grotowski's approach particularly difficult to come to terms with and did not look on him favourably. This was partly to do with the national temperament and its suspicion of authoritative approaches; in Woolf's words, "the English don't take fanaticism well." (Woolf, 2007) Lissek also suggested that some of those resisting Grotowski's work had established careers and had come from repertory theatre. Stanton too linked these suspicions with some of the actors' working success. He believed that this might have led them to think: "why should I change, I mean, I do what I do, and why should I change." (Stanton, 2007) He also went on to echo Brook's criticism of English actors saying that "they come to rehearsals the first day and they show you exactly what they can do. They always go through the routine of what they can do. They never use rehearsal for what they can't do." (Stanton, 2007) Understandably, for those members of the company who were already firmly set in their ways, the work with Grotowski may not have had such a great impact as on younger or less experienced ones. At the same time, Lawrence suggested that there may have been a gender divide, since she felt that the four women in the group were more open to the work: "we reacted much more in a way, we were more emotionally involved than the boys really" (Lawrence, 2007). This level of engagement, she recalled, led to tears being shed on more than one occasion. That said, it is impossible to draw clear divisions along lines of seniority, experience, or gender. Ultimately, each actor had a personal experience and responded to the work individually. This means that, to an extent, it could be said that Grotowski's influence on *US* became primarily manifest on an individual basis and varied from actor to actor.

4.2 Aspects of influence

In January 2009 the Grotowski Institute organised the international conference 'Grotowski: what was, what is, and what is to be done'. In the context of this event,

Brook launched his *With Grotowski Theatre is Just a Form*. During the question and answer session that followed, Paul Allain asked Brook to what extent Grotowski and Cieslak might have affected *US*. In response to this Brook said:

> I think it is extremely difficult, even now with great distance, to answer this because what one calls an influence is like this underground stream. It follows its own course, and it's not something that produces immediate, visible results. I think that for those who took part, something in their deep sensibility was really touched. I think that within their work, in all the actors who were there, it was a strong experience... (Brook, 2009)

That said, Grotowski's influence did become manifest in surprisingly explicit ways. On the one hand, he could be said to have affected the production in larger terms. As Kustow's rehearsal notes from 15th August 1966 suggest, Brook's decision that burning, the act of burning oneself, could become one of the production's central images had been "certainly influenced by the fiery commitment which Grotowski had succeeded in drawing from our actors" (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:135). Indeed, burning did become one of *US*'s main themes[73]. On the other hand, there were a number of more practical ways that Grotowski's work with the cast influenced their performances. Earlier, I explored how his approach to theatre, which demanded total commitment, left a strong impression on the actors. For instance, Munro stated that Grotowski helped her in overcoming limitations she had placed upon herself. As a result of this work she was able to overcome the wall beyond which one stops oneself from going further, whether it may be due to tiredness, fear, or lack of imagination:

> I do think that that has helped me enormously, you know because sometimes when I am working on a part and I am, you know, you just think: 'Oh, you know, I can't, I just can't see the end of it.' But actually, if you go on and keep hitting it, you do come out the other side and you do achieve a sort of breakthrough. (Munro, 2007)

Therefore, in the first instance it could be said that Grotowski influenced the cast's performance in methodological terms, encouraging the cast to push themselves further

[73] The metaphor of 'burning' is found everywhere: the production's opening prologue paid homage to the Buddhists' self-immolation; the first act included a Quaker memorial service in memory of Norman Morrison where the congregation sang the hymn 'Send the Fire'; the second act, written especially by David Cannan, was centred around a fictional man, based on Norman Morrison who wants to burn himself outside the American embassy in London. This metaphor culminated in the production's final scene with the provocative burning of what the audience believed to be a live butterfly.

than they had previously done. Nonetheless, Grotowski's and Cieslak's work with the actors also had more immediate effects.

The intentions which led Brook to embark on *US* were motivated by his desire to make the audience see the horrors of the Vietnam War afresh and lead them to reassess their relationship to the conflict. This, in turn, meant that whilst creating the piece the actors were required to undertake a process of self-examination in order to go beyond easy responses to the topic of Vietnam. Therefore it is not surprising that the 'inner work' which Grotowski carried out with the cast was extremely helpful towards the production. Lawrence was particularly vocal on this issue and emphasised that this aspect of the work affected her deeply. She went on to suggest that the exercises during which the company were instructed to 'dig into themselves', examining their thoughts and experiences, had a lasting effect on the improvisation the group carried out during later rehearsals. According to her, in this respect, Grotowski's work "definitely did affect the production." (Lawrence, 2007) Similarly Munro recalled the way in which he "drew things out of you" (Munro, 2007), and Stanton said that these exercises gave him a sense of inner self and inward exploration he had never encountered before. Furthermore, as Kustow noted in his rehearsal notes of 15th August 1966, Brook said to the cast:

> With Grotowski, you explored deeply and intensely a very focussed, tight, personal area of commitment, your own bodily commitment as actors. Now in the third stage, we shall broaden our scope again. But the intense personal exploration will continue – I don't want anyone to feel that the last ten day's work with Grotowski have been a summer school, a refresher course having no direct contact with our subject. No, this personal search – and I know many of you have found it painful – will continue.[74] (Brook in Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:135)

Nevertheless, not everybody's view on this issue was so positive. For Hunt the 'inner work' carried out by Grotowski had disastrous consequences and resulted in his disapproval of the production. When Hunt used the word 'disastrous' during our interview he did not mean that this had been a negative experience for the actors, but that it did not help the political direction of the piece. He believed that after Grotowski's visit the focus had shifted significantly towards "the internal feelings of us, what could we do about the war and so on and so forth, and the feeling that we couldn't do anything

[74] Brook's words could certainly be linked to Grotowski's understanding of performance, in particular the text, as a means for self-examination: "For both the producer and the actor, the author's text is a sort of scalpel enabling us to open ourselves, to transcend ourselves, to find what is hidden within us and to make the act of encountering the others" (Grotowski, 1968:57)

so we were pretty impotent." (Hunt, 2007) Hunt expressed this in terms of the production's title by saying that "the emphasis shifted very much (…) from *US* meaning U.S., meaning what the Americans were doing in Vietnam with our support, to us in London, you know, and the helplessness, the impossibility of doing anything about it."(Hunt, 2007) Having embarked on the project out of a personal interest in political theatre and trying to see how far theatre could do something that was connected to contemporary events, he felt disappointed with the end result. This change towards a more inward looking attitude Hunt clearly attributed to Grotowski, and the emphasis placed by his work on the actors' feelings and getting to the 'truth' of their performance. On the contrary, when queried about this Brook stated: "I don't think that the form of that show was in any way amended or altered by the workshop." (Brook, 2009)[75] At the same time it is important to recognise that Hunt's negative impression is closely related to the second act which had been written by Cannan. When I mentioned this to Jackson, who featured heavily in the production's second act, she seemed to agree with this by saying that the actual shaping of *US* was not related to Grotowski's visit but "happened pretty much in the last few weeks of a very lengthy rehearsal period, and it crystallised when we actually had a text which became the second half of the show." (Jackson, 2007) Inevitably this issue remains unresolved, not only due to Hunt's and Brook's conflicting accounts, but because of its relatively intangible nature. Nonetheless, as I will now go on to explore, Grotowski's influence on the production also became manifest in some of the actors' performances

As already discussed, Grotowski exposed the company to a deeper sense of commitment, introducing them to the notion that there was nothing which they could not achieve. Therefore, above all, the one lasting effect this work had on the cast was the liberating sense that one could achieve anything with one's body and one's voice (Woolf, 2007). This became manifest in a number of specific ways.

One of the photographs of *US* taken by Morris Newcombe, which was published alongside a review by *The Times* drama critic on 14th October 1966, will serve as my first example[76]. In the foreground, Michael Williams, is performing a shoulder stand; his face and torso are pressed against the floor whilst his legs rise upwards, bending slightly at the knees. The pose appears to be characteristically Grotowskian. If this photograph was of a performance in London today, I would be willing to question my argument. However, bearing in mind the circumstances in which it was taken, the

[75] Paul Allain asked Brook about his opinion on Hunt's criticism during the question and answer session mentioned earlier.

[76] See illustration no.1

evidence is beyond doubt. This must be the remnant of one of the physical exercises which Cieslak led with the company and which somehow it found its way into the final production. When I put this theory to Stanton he thought it was fascinating because "Brook being the greatest plagiarist of all times, as all great people are, borrowed from Grotowski exactly what he wanted." (Stanton, 2007) Stanton's comment is emphasised further if Newcombe's photograph is understood in its context. It depicts the final moment from the musical number *Zapping the Cong* in act one. As Hogg mentioned "the song was about battle ecstasy, it was about American pilots going in with the napalm and just blasting anything to hell. It wasn't to be a song necessarily of evil, it was just battle ecstasy." (Hogg in Whiteheard. 2007) With a gold chain around his neck, Williams had been singing in the style of James Brown, giving a suitably physical performance. In the background some members of the cast simulated torture scenes: an actor twisting another's arm behind his back, another still holding someone's foot and making him gyrate on the floor. As part of the song's climax the action on stage built into a frenzy. Then the actors suddenly stopped and as the song came to an end Williams froze in the shoulder stand I have just mentioned. Thus, whilst it could be said to have been used as part of this scene's physical exuberance and intensity, strictly speaking this pose was not a direct copy of the Teatr Laboratorium's aesthetic. Rather, as Stanton suggested, Brook had appropriated one of Grotowski's techniques for his own purposes and reframed it in the particular context of the production.

Hogg also made a connection between his own performance during the scene I have just mentioned, and Grotowski's work. Brook had requested that on the third verse of the song Hogg should turn into a 'man-monster' which had been the subject of previous improvisations around American horror comics; the cast referred to this as the Sinister Sponge Man. As Hogg recalled:

> the *Zap* song went its merry way and then came the moment for the Sinister Sponge Man to arise. And it was at that point that you realised just what Grotowski had been about because something charged right through the body, that was of the song, that was of the horror comic. It just sort of exploded the body. (Hogg in Whitehead, 2007)[77]

Again, this illustrates how the work that Grotowski and Cieslak had undertaken with the RSC was individually absorbed by some cast members, and how it became manifest in the production. Moreover, in a sense, this example goes

[77] When I reminded Hogg of this statement during my interview with him he said he still agreed with it and could not put it into better words.

beyond the shoulder stand I have discussed earlier. As Hogg pointed out during our interview, his expression of 'exploding the body' related to the fact that Grotowski's practice integrated physical, vocal and emotional elements into a psychophysical whole. This issue is observed even more clearly in the following two examples.

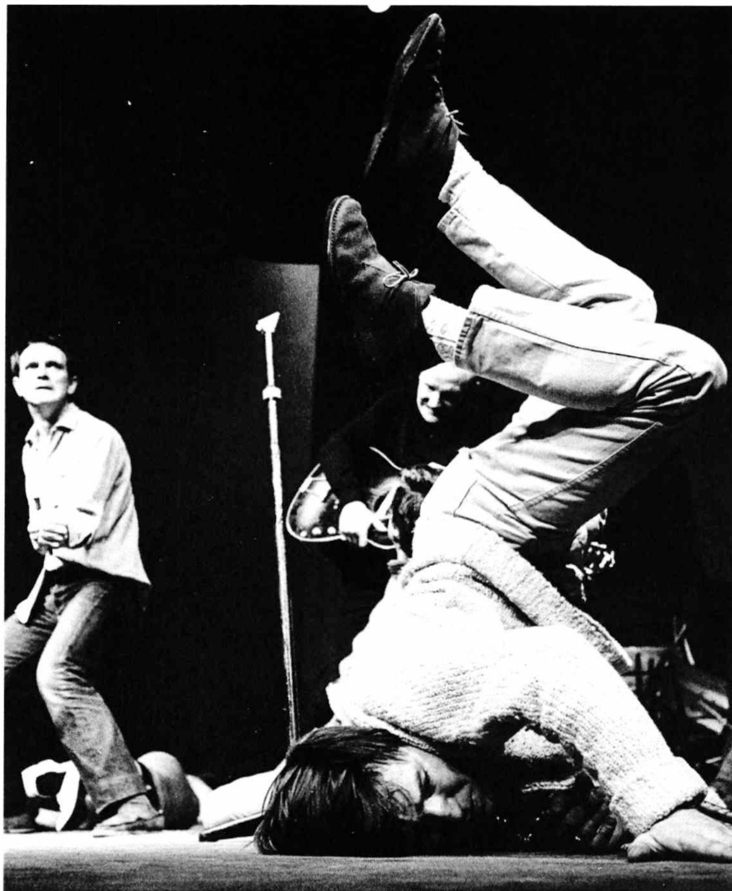

Illustration no.1 Climax of *Zapping the Cong*, in *US*.

For Lloyd, there was a particular moment in *US* in which the work with Grotowski came into its own. During a scene in act one he played Norman Morrison, the American Quaker, and was faced with the challenge of acting out Morrison's death. As he said himself, "this was real, Norman Morrison was real. He burnt himself to death on the steps of the Pentagon. I had to honour that." (Lloyd, 2007a) In the production, Lloyd silently mimed pouring gasoline over himself, setting fire to it, and burning to death. He would start standing and then with various contortions end up curled up on the floor. As he recalls, "it was excruciating to do" (Lloyd, 2007a). During this intense scene, he felt that Grotowski's influence was for him at its greatest, not only on a physical level but also emotionally.

There are clear parallels between this and Brook's comments about the opening scene in *US*, which was based on the footage of Quang Duc's self-immolation filmed in 1963. As Brook recalled:

> You saw the flames around him, you saw this man still, motionless, absolutely motionless and you saw him burning and he still didn't move. You saw him turning black like charcoal and still he didn't move. And one imagines the incredible strength of inner determination, not only to kill himself as a protest against the war, but to be able to hold that determination with such purity that nothing in him could move. Until a moment when in the flames, suddenly he fell back because there was no life in him. (Brook, 2009)

Clifford Rose was the actor who took on the role of the Buddhist monk burning himself to death. Sitting motionlessly on stage, his only gesture came at the moment when he fell backwards. This could be said to have been an even more challenging task than Lloyd's depiction of Norman Morrison because it was even simpler and more pared down. In Brook's opinion the work led by Grotowski and Cieslak had a palpable influence on Rose. To illustrate this Brook went on to describe an exercise which had a particular relevance to the opening scene mentioned above. Rose had been instructed to tear his body apart and throw himself against the walls as if trying to get a devil out of himself[78]:

> Then, in that frenzy Grotowski suddenly called on him to come back into a position of absolute silence, and imagine that he was entering into a fire; and being in that fire, all the violence that had been in him was gradually burnt away. (...) you could see him having a really different experience as all that energy that he had just been using was taken away. Not only because somebody leading the exercise had been able to say 'it's over, relax', but had given him this image that he was being purged by an imaginary fire that he was in. And there is no doubt that when one of the actors had to act this Buddhist monk with nothing more than sitting motionless and then at a moment falling back, all that influence enabled him to bring something that none of his acting training could have brought him. (Brook, 2009)

Throughout this subsection I have discussed various examples of Grotowski's influence on *US*. From the evidence I have provided it is clear that this became manifest in a number of ways, from the production's central image of 'burning' to several aspects of

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[78] This might have been the same exercise mentioned by Lloyd and which I briefly discussed earlier. See subsection 3.4 in this chapter. Nonetheless, as will become clear, Brook's account differs from Lloyd's in one crucial detail. The actor was not simply abandoned in his frenzied state, but was taken through the exercise towards a final resolution.

the actors' performances. Due to the range of examples I have discussed I can only conclude that Grotowski's influence on *US*, though subtle, was extensive. Nevertheless I would like to emphasise that the RSC did not slavishly reproduce the Teatr Laboratorium's aesthetics or techniques. Instead, having experienced ten days of intense work with Grotowski and Cieslak, Brook and his team adapted what they had learnt to suit their own artistic aims, and borrowing a number of these particular aspects, applied them to a performance that stylistically could certainly not be described as Grotowskian. The level of success with which they accomplished this should perhaps be related to the similarities between their project's intention and Grotowski's practice which I explored earlier in this chapter.

4.3 Critical reception of *US* as further evidence

If I have reserved any discussion of the production's reception for what amounts to a brief citation at the very end rather than referring to the reviews *US* received throughout my argument, it is because on the whole they are not particularly useful. For the most part the mixed responses the performance received do not illuminate my analysis in any way[79]. There are nonetheless some exceptions. One of the more noteworthy reviews, in connection to my assessment of Grotowski's influence, appeared in *The Times*. In it, the unnamed critic declared that "this event conforms to no existing theatrical category and lies outside the scope of conventional criticism." (*The Times*, 14th October 1966) More interesting still, he went on to write that the piece relieved the cast of self-righteousness by "placing them on an equal footing with the audience and permitting the contact and vulnerability of a personal meeting. This is something new in British theatre." (*The Times*, 14th October 1966) From an anecdotal point of view I also feel it is necessary to bring to attention the only review which mentioned Grotowski's work with the RSC:

> Brook pays homage to the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski, who runs a 'laboratory' theatre in Wroclaw. 'Here in this provincial Polish town is the most interesting theatrical experimentation going on in the world today', says Brook. Last summer Grotowski put the Aldwych team through a couple

[79] For instance, there is a lack of descriptions or of comments on the acting. This is understandable to an extent because most of the space in these reviews was dedicated to the polemical subject of the piece. The critics engaged in circular arguments about the production's political views, and tended to focus on whether it was anti-American, propagandistic, or not. More worryingly, a large number of them described *US* as documentary theatre, or 'Theatre of Fact'.

> of weeks of what Brook describes as 'pure acting exercises of the most incredibly gruelling kind and fantastic intensity.' Not on the material of *US* itself, but on their own selves as actors – getting down to the 'fundamental problem of what that something is that stirs in a man when he is doing what is called acting.'[80] (*The Observer*, 16th October 1966)

However, the most remarkable report was written by the Bishop of Woolwich. His was not a review in the conventional sense of the word, but a response to the countless articles, letters and notes which had appeared in newspapers. This explains why it was published in *The Guardian* almost a month after the opening night[81]. Already the title, 'The Aldwych liturgy', gives us an indication of his views. He began by expressing his dissatisfaction with the categories into which *US* had been placed by the critics. In his opinion it could not be classified as "'theatre of fact', a documentary, journalism, 'vicarious psycho-drama', or indeed as a play in any sense at all." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:197) Instead he plainly stated that he believed the production to be a liturgy. As he went on to explain, "the function of liturgy, as the Church has understood it, is to involve its participants in the saving acts of their redemption. It re-en-acts." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:197) Not only does liturgy overcome a gulf of two thousand years, but it makes present past events in and through embodied actions. "It is this liturgical function of annihilating distance by involvement that *US* is primarily concerned to accomplish." (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:197) When he stated that what was presented during the piece is not in any strict sense 'theatre', the Bishop of Woolwich suggested that *US* was not merely a theatrical spectacle. If I have mentioned this here it is because of the way that this report would later be echoed by Brook's opening comments to the filmed version of the Teatr Laboratorium's *Akropolis*[82]. To put it briefly, in his introduction, comparing the production to a black mass, Brook praises *Akropolis* for its ability to bring into being the horrors of Auschwitz, that is to say for "making the spirit of the concentration camp live again for a moment." (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowski, Allain, 2009:16). Of course I do not have any evidence that Brook had seen *Akropolis* before he began work on *US*. Therefore I cannot define this as an example of influence. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the striking similarities

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[80] With this comment Brook was clearly making an explicit reference to the issues of 'inner work' and self-exploration which I have previously discussed.

[81] I have been unable to find an original print of this article, thus my inability to correctly date its publication. Nonetheless, 'The Aldwych liturgy' appears in full in the final section of *Tell Me Lies*, which is dedicated to the critical response *US* received (Kustow, Reeves, & Hunt, 1968:197-199). It was also reprinted in William's *Peter Brook: A theatrical casebook* (Williams, 1988:111-112). In both sources, the publication date simply states: November 1966.

[82] I will discuss the filming of this performance in the following chapter. See chapter III, subsection 1.2. For a full transcript of Brook's introduction to *Akropolis* see Banu, Ziolkowsi, Allain, 2009:14-24.

between Brook's statement about the Teatr Laboratorium's piece and what the Bishop of Woolwich had written about the RSC production.

4.4 Legacy, further avenues of research

This chapter has only addressed Grotowski's influence on *US*. Due to the focus of my thesis I have not been able to discuss what effect the work he carried out with the company might have had on the actors, or indeed Brook, over the coming years. As Brook himself pointed out the contact with Grotowski might indeed have had its fruits "in another place, in another time" (Brook, 2009). Nonetheless, I would like to end this chapter by mentioning some further avenues of research which might have their roots in Grotowski's involvement with the RSC in the creation of *US*. Firstly, there is the fact that in 1969 Brook decided to leave Britain. Seeking conditions which would benefit laboratory experimentation, the following year he would go on to found the *Centre International de Recherche Théâtrale* (International Centre for Theatre Research) in Paris. Hereafter, Brook's practice would concentrate on theatrical research, including such projects as his trips through Africa. Though of course this might be speculative, it would be interesting to see to what extent the seeds of this development might have been sown through his contact with Grotowski. Secondly, in direct relation to Grotowski's involvement in *US*, it would be relevant to assess why Barba might have chosen Brook's article on the production as the preface to *Towards a Poor Theatre*, and how relevant this could have initially been in supporting Grotowski's international recognition. Thirdly, a further research avenue might be the fact that in 1985 Cieslak collaborated with Brook on *The Mahabharata* when he played the King of Hastinapur, Dhritarashtra[83]. Finally, on a different note, it would be interesting to see what role Grotowski's work with the RSC might have played in the company's tradition of inviting foreign practitioners, particularly in relation and comparison to the visits of Gardzienice Theatre Association in 1991 and 1992. Nevertheless these are all doors which remain to be opened at a different point.

[83] Brook talked about this collaboration during his interview with Domagalik. See Brook in Banu, Ziolkowski, Allain, 2009:41-44.

Chapter III

1968 – 1969

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will primarily focus on three main events: the Teatr Laboratorium's first UK performance in 1968, the company's subsequent tour of the country in 1969, and the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Although it first appeared in 1968, I have chosen to tackle this publication separately from the Teatr Laboratorium's performances in the UK for the sake of clarity. That said, even though this chapter will not follow a strict chronology, its principal concern is to explore some key moments in the history of Grotowski's contact with the UK. I will thus finish by discussing the development of alternative theatre practices in Britain as a way to further contextualise the above mentioned events. Moreover, as will become clearer later, this final section will serve as an introduction to my next two chapters.

2. THE TEATR LABORATORIUM IN BRITAIN

2.1 First performances

Though Grotowski and Cieslak's first visit to the UK in 1966 and their work with Brook and his RSC had been a success, they did not return to British shores until two years later[1]. In 1968, the Teatr Laboratorium had its first appearance in the English speaking

[1] This delay is peculiar because the Teatr Laboratorium had already undertaken three tours abroad. In its first foreign tour the Teatr Laboratorium took *The Constant Prince* to Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo, from 6th February to 25th March 1966. The second tour, between 18th June and 4th July that same year, saw the company perform the same piece at the Tenth Season of the Théatre des Nations in Paris and at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam. The third tour took place between 16th June and 12th July 1967, with visits to the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy. *Akropolis* had its first performances outside Poland during this tour, in Amserdam, Utrecht, the Hague, Rotterdam, and Brussels. In Spoleto, Italy, the company presented *The Constant Prince*. This piece was performed again, though not part of a tour, at the First International Festival of Experimental Theatres (BITEF 212) in Belgrade, 6th to 11th November 1967. (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:87)

world when *Akropolis*[2] was presented as the chief continental contribution to the twenty-second Edinburgh International Festival[3]. The production, "preceded by strange rumour" (Small, 23rd August 1968), had been eagerly awaited and tickets had sold out months before the opening night. However, the British premiere of *Akropolis* had to be delayed a day because some of the wheelbarrows used as props were lost on the way to Edinburgh[4]. Despite these difficulties, the production finally opened on 22nd August 1968[5] in an unconventional venue on 11 Cambridge Street, the former Festival Office, where the company gave eight performances in total[6]. For the most part it seems critics agreed that this was theatre of the highest calibre of a kind that had never been seen before in Britain:

> Allen Wright in *The Scotsman* writes that in comparison to the wonderful discipline and deftness of Grotowski's actors, American avant-garde attempts seem clumsy and chaotic. Helen Dawson in *The Observer* emphasises that the unparalleled tension that is created between the actors and the audiences during the performance cannot be described in words. (...) Eric Shorter in *The Daily Telegraph* calls the Laboratory Theatre an innovatory and 'difficult' group, the like of which had never been seen in the UK. Terry Coleman in *The Guardian* – although he complains about the discomfort the audience had to endure throughout the performance – concludes "The majority of happenings don't work. This one did. (Taborski, 2008:6)[7]

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[2] The production had been performed for the first time on 10th October 1962 whilst the company was still based in Opole; when the piece was shown in Edinburgh it was in its fifth and last version. According to Osinski, the second version of *Akropolis* was first performed on 24th November 1962, the third on 10th June 1964, the fourth on 16th January 1965, and the fifth on 17th May 1967 (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:23). As Zygmunt Molik has explained, the reason for these different versions was that some of the roles were changed, for instance when he himself left the Teatr Laboratorium for a while (Campo & Molik, 2010:128). However, as he later suggests, even though the performers changed the 'score', the action, remained always the same (Campo & Molik, 2010:137).

[3] After their UK visit the Teatr Laboratorium went on to Mexico, where they performed as part of the cultural activities organised in tandem with the Olympic Games (3rd – 20th September 1968), and France, where they performed at the Théatre de l'Epée de Bois (13th – 26th September 1968). A six week tour of the United States had been organised but was cancelled at the last minute due to problems with securing visas for the company (presumably due to Poland's assistance in the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia). See Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:88.

[4] In his review Irving Wardle mentioned that the wheelbarrows had been lost on their way from Leith (Wardle, 24th August 1968). Taborski was less specific, saying they had been lost between Warsaw, London and Edinburgh (Taborski, 2008:5).

[5] It is also interesting to note that, as one critic remarked, the Teatr Laboratorium's performance had been "overshadowed by events" (Small, 23rd August 1968). On the night of 20th to 21st August 1968, the Soviet Union, assisted by Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary and Poland, invaded the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in order to halt Alexander Dubcek's Prague Spring political liberalization reforms.

[6] *Akropolis* was performed between the 22nd and 24th and then between 26th and 30th August (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:88).

[7] This summary of the reviewers' responses to *Akropolis* is provided by Taborski in his 'My Grotowski story: a tale of unique friendship. Memories, letters and notes' (Taborski, 2008:5-7).

Unfortunately I have only been able to find two full reviews of the Teatr Laboratorium's Edinburgh appearance, held at the Grotowski Institute archive in Wroclaw. The first, 'Polish theatre's fearful mockery of patriotism', was written by Christopher Small and appeared in *The Glasgow Herald* on 23rd August 1968. The second, 'Big catch from Poland', was written by Irving Wardle and was published on 24th August 1968 in *The Times*. After shaking off his characteristically British cynicism, remarking how ironic it was that a company "dedicated to a saintly ideal of theatrical poverty" (Wardle, 24th August 1968) would cancel a performance due to a few lost props, Wardle went on to applaud the Teatr Laboratorium's production. Talking of 'iron precision' he remarked: "If you stopped the action at any point you would have a fine plastic composition, equally, while in motion, you notice its rhythmic delicacy under the brutal surface." (Wardle, 24th August 1968) The company's physical and vocal discipline led him to conclude that he could "think of few more potent images than that of Jacob's wedding procession with his scrap-heap bride and the final singing descent into the ovens." (Wardle, 24th August 1968) Whilst Wardle tended to concentrate upon the technical aspects of the actors' performances in *Akropolis*, Small paid tribute to Grotowski's effective transposition of the setting from Wyspianski's original Wawel Place in Krakow to Auschwitz. Even though he acknowledged that much of the original play's transformation was lost to an English speaking audience, "the production and the intense absorption in it of the seven performers, cheek-by-jowl with the audience" did have a powerful effect (Small, 23rd August 1968). Moreover, Small went on to say: "The universal ugliness, the horror, and, it may be added, the deadly monotony of the death camps is unquestionably touched here, so far perhaps as words and acting can touch the unspeakable and unrealisable." (Small, 23rd August 1968)[8]

What the reviewers did not record, and this of course was not necessarily their role, was the audience's response to the production. A suggestion of what this was like was provided later that year by Brook, in his introductory comments to the film of *Akropolis*. Answering the interviewer's question about whether he could give some advice for someone who had never seen this kind of theatre before, Brook stated:

> I was very struck in Edinburgh to see an English-Scots audience coming in suspiciously, not knowing what they were about to expect but the force of what was happening gradually exploding

[8] Of course, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, in his introduction to the film of *Akropolis* Brook would go a step further by suggesting that with this production the Teatr Laboratorium had found a way to make the horrors of the concentration camp actually become, momentarily, manifest.

> their preconceptions, so that for the first time they were, by the force of the show, made open. (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowski, Allain, 2009:23)

Nevertheless, and this is a crucial detail, the audience then did something which audiences at the Teatr Laboratorium's performances rarely did: they applauded. As Brook went on to explain: "And the reason they applauded was not only an automatic habit, just to show that they liked what they had seen, but because this got them off the hook and put Grotowski and the performance back in its place." (Brook in Banu, Ziolkowski, Allain, 2009:24)[9] Thus, this led Brook to say the only piece of advice he could offer to new spectators would be to remain open. Of course there is no evidence that this applause – or as Brook's interviewer said, this 'cop out' – took place on each of the eight evenings *Akropolis* was shown in Edinburgh. That said, I do believe that it is a small yet telling example of a certain level of discomfort felt by British audiences when they were confronted with the intensity and passion of the Teatr Laboratorium's work. For some, as I will discuss in due course, this discomfort would soon develop into suspicion.

2.2 Vehicles for dissemination: film and publications

Later on in 1968, from 27th October until 2nd November, the Teatr Laboratorium worked at Twickenham Studios on filming *Akropolis* for American television[10]. The film was directed by James MacTaggart and produced by Lewis Freedman. It was first shown on 12th January 1969 on New York Television (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:88). Brook was interviewed by Freedman about his impression of Grotowski's theatre, and *Akropolis* in particular, for the introduction to the film. Even though the film is an undeniably valuable record, in a footnote to his section introducing the first part of *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, Richard Schechner has remarked that it does not come close to the stage production. His two main reasons are that "the studio audience for the film look ill at

[9] This should be understood in relation to Flaszen's discussion of the audience's silence that usually followed the Teatr Laboratorium's performances. See Flaszen, 2010:177-178.

[10] This was, in fact, the second time the production had been filmed for television. The first time it had been recorded for Flemish Television during the company's run at the Palais Des Beaux-Arts in Brussels between 26th and 28th June 1966 (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:87). Nevertheless, unlike the filming that took place in London, in Brussels *Akropolis* was not filmed on a film-studio stage, but in actual performance, in front of a ticketed rather than an invited audience. Unfortunately it seems that no copy of this film survives.

ease; the space itself is too large and too neutral for the production." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:496) Furthermore, he is of the opinion that "Brook's introduction, though praising and interesting in its own way, is more a barrier than a bridge." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:496)[11] Regardless of these criticisms, Schechner cannot deny the importance of this document for the wide dissemination of Grotowski's work. In fact, he states that *Akropolis* was perhaps Grotowski's best known production, precisely because the footage recorded at Twickenham Studios was for many years the only full performance by the Teatr Laboratorium widely distributed through film[12].

1968 was a crucial year for the horizontal dissemination of the Teatr Laboratorium's practice, not only thanks to the filming of *Akropolis*, but due to the appearance of a number of key publications. Brook paid homage to Grotowski in a chapter titled 'The Holy Theatre' in his seminal book *The Empty Space* (Brook, 1990:66-69). He discusses him amongst the work of other practitioners such as Artaud, Beckett, Cunningham, and the Living Theatre, yet the enthusiasm with which he talks about the Teatr Laboratorium's precision and discipline clearly makes the company stand out from the rest. Of course, 1968 was also the year in which *Towards a Poor Theatre* was published, first by Odin Teatrets Forlag. Due to the importance of this publication, the complex issues attached to it, and the wide ranging influence it would have, I will focus on it in a separate section later.

However, what is important to recognise here, is the great extent to which Brook's publication served as a stepping stone towards Grotowski. As I will discuss later on in this chapter, the late 1960s saw a blossoming of theatrical experiments in Britain, and yet there had been no writing which these alternative trends could identify with. This, as well as Brook's already recognised status as an innovative director, explains how *The Empty Space* became such an important and popular book in a relatively short time. In doing so, and this is the key issue, it became a tantalising introduction to Grotowski, reaching a much wider readership than *Towards a Poor Theatre* could have achieved on its own.

[11] Although he does not go on to expand upon this criticism, I can only presume that Schechner might have considered Brook's words to be unsuitable for a general audience because of their 'specialist' tone. To a certain extent, Brook did indeed seem to be addressing an audience with a degree of previous theatre knowledge since he refers, for instance, to Weiss' *The Investigation*.

[12] Indeed, even though the recording was merely intended to be aired on a New York television channel, in 1971 the film was picked up by a distribution company, Arthur Cantor, Inc. (New York), which made it readily available on videotape format.

2.3 A British tour, 1969

In 1969, Grotowski and his company returned to Britain[13]. This time they brought two new pieces: *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* and *The Constant Prince*[14]. Their first stop was London. Kustow, as artistic director of the Institute of Contemporary Art[15], had been instrumental in arranging this second visit[16]. However, yet again, the lead up to the opening night was fraught with difficulties. In his novel *Tank: An Autobiographical Fiction*, Kustow gives a brief account of this episode[17]. From the onset, the central character K, encounters some reticence from the Institute's Chairman, who believes that the work of the unnamed Polish theatre company K wants to programme "was old hat" (Kustow, 1973:154). Accepting the given financial constraints, K raises a donation from a rich Polish expatriate to finance the venture. The second hurdle K has to overcome is presented by the company itself which, upon seeing the proposed space for their performance and testing it, reject it for being unsuitable. With only forty-eight hours to spare, K has no option but to cancel the opening night. After a flood of phone-calls to everyone he knew in theatre circles, K sends "squads of helpers combing gymnasia, temples, fencing-schools and church halls" (Kustow, 1973:155). Fortunately, by the following afternoon K has found a suitable space[18].

In fact, the Teatr Laboratorium's performances were originally intended to take place at the National Portrait Gallery on Trafalgar Square[19]. The organisers then changed the venue to the Donmar Rehearsal Theatre off Covent Garden, but it had to be changed again when deemed unsuitable by Grotowski. In my interview with Mike Elster, who had directed the documentary *Letter from Opole* in 1963, he mentioned that Brook

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[13] This second visit was part of the Teatr Laboratorium's fifth international tour, which would then take them, finally, to the USA.

[14] Although the former was created a year before the latter – *The Constant Prince* was first performed in 1967 and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* was premiered in 1968 – I have mentioned these two pieces in the order in which they were presented during the company's London run.

[15] From here onwards I will refer to the Institute of Contemporary Art using its acronym, the ICA.

[16] When I asked Kustow about his motivation to arrange this visit he stated: "I was running the ICA and I decided that one of the most important contemporary artists in the world was Grotowski, and I had to bring him to London." (Kustow, 2007)

[17] I am aware that *Tank*, as its title suggests, is a mixture of truth and fiction. However when I asked Kustow to recount the Teatr Laboratorium's first London performance in an interview, he simply said: "Read the novel, everything is in there." (Kustow, 2007) For a full account of Kustow's fictionalised recollections on this issue see Kustow, 1973:154-157.

[18] This difficult episode brings to the fore an underlying conflict between K and the Institute's board of governors. As a result, moments before the opening night, K is on the brink of resigning from his position as artistic director. However, the following day he is summoned by the Chairman who suggests that "K take two months' paid leave." (Kustow, 1973:156)

[19] This information appears in an original poster printed by the ICA advertising the event. See illustration no.2.

helped Kustow find and secure the final venue (Elster, 2007). In the end, the performances took place in the crypt of St. George's Church in Stepney. In his later, non-fictional book *theatre@risk*, Kustow recalled that although Grotowski approved of this location "he insisted, with great emphasis, that the place be scrubbed from top to bottom. It was as if these vaults were to become not just a theatre but an operating theatre, in which delicate and risky interventions of the body and the spirit were to be conducted in strict conditions." (Kustow, 2001:151)[20] Finally, *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* opened on 18th September 1969, with five performances until 22nd September. The following week, from 25th to 29th September, the company presented *The Constant Prince*. Since there was no way of alerting the audience about the change of venue, Kustow had to hire a coach to take spectators from the West End to the East End of London. This time, the critics' reception of Grotowski's work was even more ambiguous than it had been in Edinburgh the previous year, veering towards the negative.

Oleg Kerensky's short review of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* for *The Stage and Television Today* complained that with only 40 spectators at a time, and seemingly addressed to the ICA's own members, the performances would not be seen by more people (Kerensky, 25th September 1969). Even though he went on to suggest that the erotic scenes were at least as explicit as anything seen from off-off-Broadway, he finished by stating that "the total effect was never crude or sensational, but so moving that the audience left quietly at the end, without applause." (Kerensky, 25th September 1969)

Ronald Bryden's review of *The Constant Prince* for *The Observer* followed a similar pattern to the 1968 reviews of *Akropolis*. He began with derisive comments about Grotowski's status saying that "such is the theatre's newest name of God (…) he is the magis' mage, the guru of gurus: the ultimate to which Living Theatre, Peter Brook and the *Tulane Drama Review* bow down" (Bryden, 28th September 1969). Comparing the Teatr Laboratorium to Mecca and to Charing Cross, 'from which all mileages are measured', he criticised the notion of a 'poor theatre' for attempting to reinstate the 'nineteenth-century tyranny of the actor' (Bryden, 28th September 1969). And yet,

[20] When I asked Kustow about this in our interview he stated that Grotowski said that the space was a 'pigsty' and "he threw what in English we would call a wobbly, he just went over the top" (Kustow, 2007).

notably, Bryden went on to compliment Grotowski for using the text as a "springboard for a display of extraordinary intense and disciplined acting" (Bryden, 28th September 1969). Nonetheless, the general impression he gave with his closing words was a sceptical one:

> It's only as you emerge, dazed and winded, that you notice how much of the world, as with religion, is left behind; how many ordinary pleasures, impure but benign, have been sacrificed to monastic fervour. Grotowski's theatre is marvellous, it's all they say. Including poorer. (Bryden, 28th September 1969)

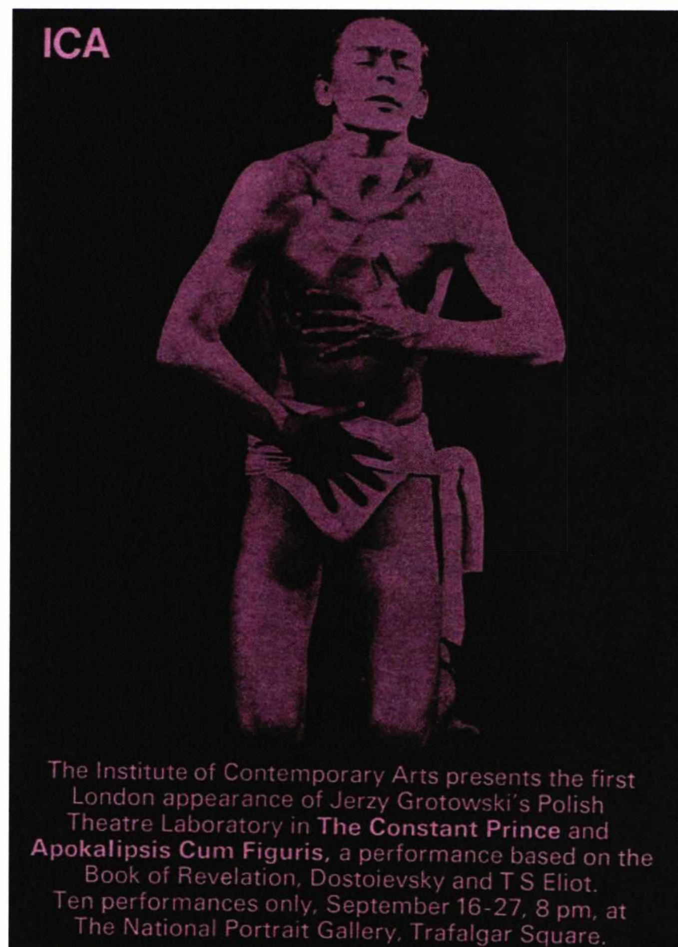

Illustration no.2 Original poster advertising the Teatr Laboratorium's 1969 performances in London.

Irving Wardle's review of both the Teatr Laboratorium's productions was equally critical. To begin with he appeared to be somewhat insulted, especially as he opens by complaining about the difficulties he faced due to the two cancellations of the opening night, and by recounting how the coach was broken into during the performance and how all the audience's belongings were stolen. Titled 'Grotowski the Evangelist', just

like Bryden's, his review seems to be mainly concerned with debunking the Polish director from his perceived status as a guru. "Grotowski is seen as the latest saviour in the apostolic succession of theatrical evangelists, and his name has been invested with the fashionable glamour that often comes as an unsought bonus to prophets." (Wardle, 4th October 1969) If his review of *Akropolis* in Edinburgh did include words of praise for Grotowski and his company, there were very few of them in this second review. Besides these biting comments against Grotowski, and a rough account of the action in both productions, Wardle gave a little more insight. He did grant that Cieslak's performance as the Constant Prince exceeded anything he had seen "in extreme human exposure: this really is the bare, forked animal." (Wardle, 4th October 1969) However, he also stated that he did not identify with him and that he did not learn anything about his response to suffering through watching Cieslak suffer. To end, Wardle likened 'Grotowski's rituals' with the 'fantasises of a sadistic voyeur', concluding that "there is no question of their aesthetic power, what I think is in question is Grotowski's Western reputation as a spiritual guru." (Wardle, 4th October 1969)

Directly after their London run, the Teatr Laboratorium took part in 'From Poland with Art', a cultural festival organised by the North West Arts Association in collaboration with the Polish Ministry of Culture and the Polish Cultural Institute in London. Between 2nd and 7th October, they gave four performances of *The Constant Prince* in Manchester; and on the 10th and 11th of that month they showed the same piece at the Nuffield Studio Theatre in Lancaster. These performances, tucked away from the capital in the north of England, were the last ones the Teatr Laboratorium ever gave in Britain. Although I have not been able to find any reviews for these performances, Christopher Baugh discusses at length the presentation of *The Constant Prince* in Manchester (Baugh, 2005:191-197). His account is particularly insightful for two reasons: he was part of the technical crew and attended the performances in Manchester, and, in line with his book's scenographic concerns, he gives particular details of how the Teatr Laboratorium's piece was set within its venue, the Studio of Manchester University Drama Department. For instance, Baugh discusses how Grotowski refused to use the space's grey linoleum floor and demanded that it should be wood. When rented flooring was brought in, it then had to be sanded down because Grotowski deemed its varnished surface just as offensive as the original floor.

It would take Grotowski twelve years to return to the UK, in July 1981, when Cardiff Laboratory Theatre hosted him for a month[21]. Although the Teatr Laboratorium *per se* would never perform in Britain again, it did come together to deliver a series of workshops in 1982 at the Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff[22]. Considering the degree of influence the Teatr Laboratorium would have on the alternative theatre scene in Britain, it seems peculiar to think that most of its direct contact with the UK took place between August 1968 and October 1969. It is also worth remembering that the following year, on 12th December 1970, Grotowski gave a conference at the New York Town Hall in which he outlined his move beyond theatre towards 'active culture'[23]. Perhaps this departure, and the ambivalent relationship between Grotowski and the British cultural establishment illustrated by the reviews I have just discussed, kept him away for so long. Nevertheless, the high exposure that the Teatr Laboratorium received at the end of the sixties meant that their work continued to be a reference point in the British theatrical landscape. This interest, as I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, was particularly pronounced amongst the experimental scene.

3. *TOWARDS A POOR THEATRE*

As Barba has suggested, *Towards a Poor Theatre* became one of the main sources of Grotowski's 'disruptive force' (Barba, 1999a:41). There is no doubt that, since its publication, the book has become the most important vehicle for the dissemination of Grotowski's practice and methodologies. I would like to briefly acknowledge this by discussing the events which led to its publication and distribution. I will also touch upon a number of key conceptual issues which, as I will explain, have particular implications in regards to how the book was read and misread. Moreover, since *Towards a Poor Theatre* will be mentioned in the following three chapters, it is relevant that I introduce it properly here.

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[21] The circumstances around this visit are somewhat peculiar and unclear. I discuss them at a later point. See chapter V, subsection 2.1.

[22] These workshops took place between the 12th and 20th November 1982. Again, Cardiff Laboratory Theatre (whom I shall refer to as Cardiff Lab from here on) was instrumental in organising this event.

[23] I will discuss this departure and the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical work in chapter VI.

3.1 Publication and distribution

Since 1965, Barba's Odin Teatret had been publishing a theatre journal tackling both theory and practice, *Teatrets Teori og Teknikk*. The first issue was, for the most part, dedicated to Grotowski (Barba, 1999a:97). Throughout the 1960s Barba had already been instrumental in getting articles about the company to appear in publications across Europe and America, for instance *TDR*[24]. However, in 1968, the seventh number of Odin Teatret's journal was unlike any other previous issue. "It was published in English, it had the format of a book with the title *Towards a Poor Theatre*, and it was presented as a collection of Grotowski's writings." (Ruffini in Allain, 2009:94) [25] The publication was to a large extent the result of Barba's self-confessed "zeal and missionary activism" (Barba, 1999a:60), and part of his programme to disseminate the Teatr Laboratorium's practice and have it recognised as a major force in theatre[26]. This motivation has to be taken into account together with two further reasons that led Barba to dedicate a whole issue to Grotowski. As I will discuss later, he had detected a need or a hunger for information about the Teatr Laboratorium. On a more practical level, Grotowski had become a regular teacher at the summer seminars which took place at Odin Teatre's base in Holstebro[27]. Since the participants were made up of an increasingly international audience, and in 1968 came mostly from America, Barba

[24] During one of his dissemination missions, Barba was recommended to contact the magazine's editor, Richard Schechner, who replied in the spring of 1963, stating his interest and mentioning that he was preparing a special issue on Marlowe. The following summer, in 1964, *TDR* reported for the first time in America on the Teatr Laboratorium with a feature on *Doctor Faustus*. By mistake, Schechner printed the article under Grotowski's name, when in fact it had been written by Barba. (Barba, 1999a:63) Since then, and for a number of consecutive years, *TDR* continued to publish texts about the company. Schechner continues to be one of the key players in the dissemination of Grotowski's work. In 1997 he co-edited with Lisa Wolford, *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, a retrospective of texts by and about Grotowski. This publication has, in turn, become a seminal volume.

[25] For Barba's own account of the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre*, see Barba, 1999a:97-102.

[26] Barba had begun to work with the Teatr Laboratorium in 1962 when he arrived in Opole to take up an internship as Grotowski's director. As Ruffini points out, his role expanded beyond that of assistant director to incorporate those of ambassador, spokesperson, and theorist (Ruffini in Allain, 2009:93). As a foreigner holding an Italian passport he was able to travel outside Poland with ease, and obtain foreign currency. It was this, from a pragmatic point of view, which allowed him to fully express his fervent belief in Grotowski's work and become a true proselyte (Barba, 1999a:51). In the previous chapter I have already discussed Barba's crucial role in attracting the ITI's attention to the Teatr Laboratorium in 1963. It is important to acknowledge that this was just one instance amongst many illustrating how pivotal he was in building up the company's international reputation. Further examples are discussed throughout his *Land of Ashes and Diamonds*. In April 1964, Barba's direct association with the Teatr Laboratorium was suddenly interrupted when he was refused entry back into Poland – as a persona non grata – after one of his travels (Barba, 1999a:85-6). Nevertheless his support for Grotowski and his company continued, even as he set up his own group Odin Teatret, by contacting periodicals, befriending influential individuals, helping to arrange contacts and tours.

[27] The first of these annual seminars took place in July 1966, only a month after Odin Teatret had moved from Oslo to the new premises. That year, Grotowski and Cieslak gave a two week practical seminar.

decided to publish the issue in English[28] with the intention of selling the issue to the participants attending the annual seminar in July. It was thus that *Towards a Poor Theatre* was first published in June 1968.

Nevertheless, from a commercial point of view the book was not an immediate success. The final bill had increased significantly due to the cost of corrections and the inclusion of more photographs than originally intended. Barba was also having difficulties distributing it. Believing that sales would be a success, he had ordered five thousand copies, five times the normal print run of Odin Teatret's journal (Barba, 1999a:99). However, he soon discovered that book distribution is an arduous task, and that copies were not selling as quickly as he had originally imagined. Despite Grotowski's fame, it took Odin Teatret more than twenty years to sell every copy of the original edition (Barba, 1999a:100). This was mainly because they had no way of shifting the volumes to booksellers and their primary market was composed, almost in its entirety, of participants attending summer workshops at Holstebro. Not surprisingly, *Towards a Poor Theatre* gained a wider readership much more quickly once it was taken up by the publishing industry proper[29]. Already in 1968 it was printed in New York by Simon and Schuster and, the following year, by Methuen in London. It was through these two editions that, within two years, the book became one of the seminal theatre texts of the twentieth century.

3.2 What's in a name?

Grotowski often behaved like a magpie in regards to terminology. From the phrase 'dialectic of apotheosis and derision', which was first used by a Polish theatre critic; to 'Art as Vehicle', a term used by Peter Brook to describe Grotowski's last period of work, Grotowski tended to appropriate terms that has been coined by others to articulate his practice. This is because "talking always followed realization" (Taviani in Allain, 2009:133). Grotowski's primary concern was not to theorise his work, and this activity was always retrospective. 'Poor Theatre' is no exception. The expression was first used

[28] The publication was translated into English by Judy Barba, Eugenio's wife.

[29] Odin Teatret's literary adviser, Christian Ludvigsen, introduced Barba to Martin Berg, a writer who also owned a small publishing house for avant-garde writers. Berg became Odin Teatret's agent, wrote to his contacts abroad, and presented the book at international fairs (Barba, 1999a:100).

by Ludwik Flaszen, the Teatr-Laboratorium's literary advisor, who used it in an article on *Akropolis* appearing in Poland in 1962. Flaszen coined the expression to convey a theatre which was organized on the principle of the strictest autarchy. Grotowski appropriated the term in September 1965 when he titled his article appearing in the Polish magazine *Odra* 'Towards a Poor Theatre'. As Barba states, Grotowski "made it into a slogan, a battle cry to which he gave quite another meaning" (Barba, 1999a:30), that theatre could exist without all its conventional trappings and rely purely on the relationship, on the direct and live 'communion' between actor and spectator[30].

Three years after the appearance of 'Towards a Poor Theatre', when Barba and Grotowski were preparing their publication, the issue of the title was raised. It had to stress the new direction of the Teatr Laboratorium's methodologies. "What is more, it had to be stressed that it was not a question of an aesthetic, a technique, a system, but of something that was open, in motion: a process." (Barba, 1999a:99) 'The Poor Theatre' was rejected because it was perceived to sound too static; thus the importance of 'towards' in the title. This preposition suggests an aim which has not been reached yet, a yearning, a daily struggle, and organic processes. Even though Barba states that "it was truly the Theatre's New Testament" (Barba, 1999a:101), it is important to recognise that 'scripture' does not have to be fixed but can be understood as something which evolved over time. Indeed, it had never been Grotowski's intention, or Barba's, to publish a programmatic manifesto. This, although often forgotten, is something already suggested by the book's title.

3.3 From vertical transmission to horizontal dissemination

No other book on theatre during the 20th century had such an immediate impact (Barba, 1999a:100). Barba gives two main reasons for this phenomenon. On the one hand *Towards a Poor Theatre* "appeared at a particular moment and had characteristics which set it apart from other 'foundational books' of our century." (Barba, 1999a:100) Indeed, as Barba goes on to explain, theatre in Europe and America had been shaken by

[30] Nonetheless, to understand the book as solely focused on this issue would be a reductive view. "This way of thinking cripples our century's most wide-reaching revolution which changed the material body of the theatre in four fundamental areas: the relationship between stage and auditorium; the relationship between the director and the text; the function of the actor; and the transgressive possibilities of the theatre craft." (Barba, 1999a:38)

new means of storytelling and acting which were different to the verisimilitude of mainstream theatre. "May 1968 was barely over and there was a need for commitment, renewal and a desire to rediscover in the theatre the political, ethical and social meaning that had characterised the research of the theatre reformers of the first three decades of the twentieth century." (Barba, 1999a:101) Therefore it could be said that *Towards a Poor Theatre* had tapped into the zeitgeist. In particular, it proposed a viable alternative to established theatre, thus appealing in particular to a new generation of young creative experimenters. I will discuss elements of this favourable context in the last section of this chapter. On the other hand, by the time of the book's publication, the 'legend' of Grotowski's productions was widespread. Although in the late 1960s the Teatr Laboratorium was still met by a cold reception in Poland (Cioffi, 1999:83), by 1968 the company had already caused a furore in France, Belgium, Italy, Yugoslavia, Britain, Mexico and the Scandinavian countries. The following year they would go on to 'conquer' New York. Considering the world's relatively recent 'discovery' of Grotowski it is not surprising there was a thirst for knowledge about his work, and consequently a hungry readership for *Towards a Poor Theatre*.

Moreover, I would like to suggest that Barba's choice to include Brook's article[31] on Grotowski further benefited the book's appeal. Even though Brook had originally written this text as a direct response to Grotowski's work with the RSC in 1966, taken out of this context, his enthusiastic and passionate support for the Teatr Laboratorium served as the perfect preface to the publication. In a sense, since Brook was an internationally recognised practitioner, this gave *Towards a Poor Theatre* a seal of approval. Of course, that is not to say that the book's content needed any further validation. As Barba states, it confronts the principal challenges facing both the actor and the director:

> It begins with the first step – the technical preparation (…) It opens up radical dramaturgical perspectives, until then unthinkable, about ways of approaching the texts which tradition has handed down to us. It presents a vision of theatre, which goes beyond its characteristics of artistic performance or entertainment, reaffirming its simultaneously sacred and secular vocation of collective ritual. (…) Never before had a book been written in which there was room for both the great obsessions as well as the concrete aspects of the craft. (Barba, 1999a:101)

[31] This article was published in *Flourish*, the RSC newspaper (Brook, Winter 1966) as already mentioned in the previous chapter.

Taking into account all these factors and socio-cultural circumstances it is not surprising that, since its publication in 1968, *Towards a Poor Theatre* has never been out of print and has been translated into countless languages[32]. Therefore, and this interests me in particular relation to the process of influence, the publication of this work marked a drastic change for the dissemination of the Teatr Laboratorium's practice.

Even though after 1966 the company frequently travelled abroad, due to the limitations imposed on audience numbers, its productions were only seen by a small number of spectators (Barba, 1999a:41). At the same time, throughout the mid and late 1960s, Grotowski and Cieslak led a significant number of workshops and seminars across Europe and in America[33]. As well as the toured productions, these were instrumental not only in spreading news about Grotowski, but also practical knowledge about his work. However they too could only reach a limited audience[34]. The nature of these live events, whether performances or taught sessions, meant that dissemination could only take place vertically from individual to individual. Even the printed material on the Teatr Laboratorium which was available at the time had its shortcomings. Reviews of the company's productions might have introduced Grotowski to individuals who had not been part of the audience, but they were not appropriate channels for the dissemination of his methodologies due to their brevity and focus. Articles about the company's work had been published almost consistently since the mid 1960s which, due to their length and tone, were better suited for a more detailed exploration of the Teatr Laboratorium's practice. However, even those articles authored by Grotowski and his close collaborators, tended to appear in specialist magazines and journals, appealing

[32] Osinski, writing in 1979, mentioned that the book had been translated into French, Spanish, Japanese, German, Persian, Portuguese, Serbo-Croat, Slovenian and Italian (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:87). It is peculiar to note that it was finally published in Polish in 2009.

[33] Kathleen Cioffi writes that "all of the Laboratory Theatre's appearances in foreign countries were accompanied by workshops in their techniques" (Cioffi, 1999:90). Though this might be a slight exaggeration, most of the company's performances were indeed preceded or followed by practical sessions, which were often led by Grotowski and Cieslak. A very good example is the ten day seminars held at Skara Drama School (Sweden). This session took place at the end of January 1966 and was followed by a performance of *The Constant Prince* in Stockholm, as part of the company's first international tour. Moreover, in some instances Grotowski and Cieslak delivered practical sessions without presentation of the Teatr Laboratorium's productions: in 1966 they led a course at the Institut des Arts Spectaculaires in Brussels (Belgium); in November 1967, during Grotowski's and Cieslak's first visit to the USA, they led a four week course at the School of the Arts at New York University; and of course they taught at the summer seminars organized by Barba in Holstebro between 1966 and 1969.

[34] Of course, a wider audience would only have access to reports of what had taken place during these sessions when they were published as part of *Towards a Poor Theatre*: Franz Maijinen's notes on the workshop led by Grotowski and Cieslak in Brussels would become the tenth chapter, 'Actor's Training (1966)'; Grotowski's closing speech, after the seminar held in January 1966 at Skara Drama School (Sweden) became chapter twelve, 'Skara Speech'. Following the four-week course at New York University Schechner interviewed Grotowski, which became the thirteenth chapter in the publication, 'An American Encounter'. With the exception of the latter, none of the above mentioned texts had been previously published. They entered the public domain only with the appearance of Grotowski's and Barba's book.

primarily to an academic audience. Moreover, since they were published in periodicals with a single print run, they only had a relatively short shelf life. I have mentioned all this here to emphasise that up to 1968 knowledge about the Teatr Laboratorium depended on vertical channels: performance – audience, workshop – participant, review/article – reader, or between individuals as word of mouth. It was not until the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre* that knowledge about the company's work began to flow horizontally, thus reaching a much larger number of individuals[35]. Moreover, appearing within a cohesive frame which had been carefully constructed, this knowledge was finally being widely disseminated in a way approved by Grotowski and which made justice to the Teatr Laboratorium's methodologies.

3.4 Misreadings: the book as a bible

Osinski has stated that *Towards a Poor Theatre* "became a kind of Bible for experimental theatre groups in the world." (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:87) When he used this metaphor, and when others repeat it, it was in order to declare the book's canonical status and how it had been eagerly adopted by a young generation of individuals developing alternative theatre practices. However I would like to push this metaphor away from the realm of praise, devotion and veneration towards a more critical ground. If *Towards a Poor Theatre* is a kind of 'Bible', this is in more ways than one.

Half the texts in the book, seven in total, were spoken rather than written[36]. As Taviani suggests, Grotowski "wanted to work against both the fleeting character of oral expression, by trying to fix it in an unmistakable manner, and also against the fixedness of the written word, trying to give it back the fluidity of a continually changing relation

[35] Of course this might have been further facilitated by the fact that the book was first published in English, and not Danish as the previous issues of *Teatrets Teori og Teknikk*.

[36] Chapter 2: 'The Theatre's New Testament', is the compilation of notes deriving from a series of discussions between Grotowski and Barba, with questions inserted retrospectively. Chapter 3: *Theatre is an Encounter*, is the transcript from an interview with Grotowski held by Naim Kattan in Montreal. Chapters 9 and 10: 'Actor's Training (1959-1962)' and 'Actor's Training (1966)' respectively, developed from annotations taken by Barba and Franz Marijen during practical sessions of the Teatr Laboratorium. Chapter 11: 'The Actor's Technique', is the transcript of an interview with Grotowski held by Denis Bablet in Paris. Chapter 12: 'Skara Speech', is the closing talk given by Grotowski after a ten day workshop in Sweden. Chapter 13: 'An American Encounter', is a series of fragments from the transcript of an interview with Grotowski held by Schechner in New York after a four week practical seminar. The full interview had been published in *TDR* (Volume 13, no.1, Fall, 1966).

with a dialogue partner." (Taviani in Allain, 2009:119)[37] Since the transcripts of these talks, interviews and conversations cannot capture the original intonations, pauses and other nuances, these texts could be said to be incomplete. More importantly, the process of transcription was necessarily a process of reworking and rewriting which in some instances resulted in significant changes[38].

At the same time, it is important to recognise the issue of translation. Even though I am not qualified to discuss this at length I can refer to the expression *traduttore, traditore* (translator, traitor)[39]. An example of this is given by Osinski, who compares two sentences from 'Methodological Exploration'. Whilst in the English edition one can read "The Bohr Institut has fascinated me for a long time as a model illustrating a certain type of activity", the original Polish edition says 'Instytut Bohra jako pewien wzorzec rzec by można, model postępowania, interesuje nas od szeregu lat,' ['The Bohr Institute as a definite pattern, let's say: a model of activity – has interested us for a number of years'] (Osinski, 2004) Whilst the English translation uses the first person singular the original text uses the first person plural. The difference may be small and perceived as insignificant, but it becomes relevant if one considers Grotowski's position within the company. 'Us' is important because it reveals that the interest was shared by all members of the group.

The two issues I have just outlined are, to an extent, minor problems and do not explain the common misreading of *Towards a Poor Theatre* as a programmatic manifesto or manual. The reasons for this, I would like to suggest can be found in the following aspects of the book, which again liken it to the Bible.

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[37] At the same time, this issue is related to the fact that throughout his life Grotowski tented to favour vertical channels of transmission which required a personal contact. This is clearly reflected in the kind of profoundly symbiotic relationships he would establish with his closest collaborators. (Barba, 1999a:26) Even in these cases he was always drawn to knit tighter links with a particular individual, as he did with Cieslak and later Thomas Richards. Moreover, from a socio-political point of view, it is important to recognise that under the Polish socialist regime, Grotowski had to be extremely careful about his choice of words. As Barba states, "you could be religious, openly profess your religion and frequent the omnipresent churches. (...) But to be defined a 'mystic' or an 'idealist' meant that the regime considered you to be an opponent." (Barba, 1999a:45) Therefore, it is not surprising that he preferred the fleeing nature of spoken language over the fixed written word.

[38] For instance Ruffini does suggest that amendments were made in 'The Theatre's New Testament' between its publication in 1965 as part of Barba's book *In Search of Lost Theatre* and its subsequent addition to *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Ruffini even provides the passages that had been cut from the original text. See Ruffini in Allain, 2009:95-96.

[39] As Barba clearly states, despite the extreme care taken in the process of translation, the result is far from perfect. Grotowski was meticulous, personally checking the text word by word even though at that point he did not fully understand English. This had important repercussions for the readers because he insisted in preserving the construction of certain French phrases "even though in English they acquired a different meaning or were quite simply meaningless." (Barba, 1999a:98)

Firstly, as I have already said, *Towards a Poor Theatre* is made up of different texts. Moreover, these were 'written' by different authors. Therefore, like the Bible, it is not a unified work but a collection of heterogeneous texts which had been created, even published, in different contexts before they were edited together by Barba. This is already hinted at in the contents' page but is further clarified at the start of each chapter, where a short paragraph gives all the relevant information. Nevertheless, perhaps because the book is authored by Grotowski, it is easy to fall into the trap of understanding it as a unified whole. This I would argue might be the first cause for the misleading tendency to approach *Towards a Poor Theatre* as a recipe book.

Secondly, a further challenge is posed by Grotowski's use of language. As Taviani suggests, "the written word always served two functions: on the one hand it should state the experience clearly and without misunderstandings, and on the other it should also give space to perceive different levels of reality and experience, leaving the reader free to roam within them." (Taviani in Allain, 2009:135) That is to say the texts in *Towards a Poor Theatre* pull in diametrically opposed directions. On the one hand there is a palpable concern about the precision of language, which might be a further explanation for why the book is often used as a technical handbook. On the other hand Grotowski, aware that "theatre is not a scientific discipline" (Grotowski, 1968:95), attempted to keep the text open "as not to block any flow of associations with what was not being said." (Taviani in Allain, 2009:135) With its mixture of accuracy and associative language, *Towards a Poor Theatre* attempts a difficult balance. This issue is further complicated by Barba's later statement that, when Grotowski wrote that the actor "can 'illuminate' through personal technique, becoming a source of 'spiritual light'" (Grotowski, 1968:20), he was not using a metaphor but making "a pure statement of fact." (Barba, 1999a:31) Though I am not interested in contesting his position, I would like to point out that, even if Grotowski's words refer to 'facts', these are non-verifiable events of an experiential nature. Moreover, even if the words chosen to describe such events are used systematically in an extremely specific manner, their basis remains associative. Therefore I would argue that the interplay between metaphorical and scientific language could perhaps be seen as the largest contributing factor to the misunderstanding of *Towards a Poor Theatre*.

Thirdly, it is important to recognise that the book contains certain 'contradictions'. On the one hand, as Barba notes, there had been a shift in Grotowski's priorities

between 1964, when Barba was unable to return to Poland, and 1966, when Barba first saw *The Constant Prince* during the company's first international tour. Throughout the first phase, the time in Opole, Grotowski had concentrated "in the construction of the performance as a 'secular' ritual and the psychic and emotional consequences it must have on the spectator." (Barba, 1999a:98) After moving to Wroclaw, in what could de labelled as the second phase, "the central concern had become the actor's 'total act' and the process by which it was achieved." (Barba, 1999a:99) This development naturally became manifest in Grotowski's discourse. As the work's emphasis shifted, so did the vocabulary used to describe it. Therefore the terms 'archetype' and the 'dialectic of apotheosis and derision' gave way to new terminology: 'poor theatre', '*via negativa*' and 'total act'. *Towards a Poor Theatre*, of course, records these developments. On the other hand, as Ruffini points out, there had been a change in the training. This was a tangible result of the shift previously described, and is evident in the differences between the two chapters dealing with the Teatr Laboratorium's training, 'Actor's Training (1959-1962)' and 'Actor's Training (1966)' (Ruffini in Allain, 2009:96-97); for example the Kathakhali based eye-exercises which had been adopted in December 1963, were dropped only some months later. Ruffini goes on to explain how Barba's chapter, which appeared in its first version in *In Search of Lost Theatre*, was reworked before it was included in *Towards a Poor Theatre* in order to reflect these changes. "There are numerous other changes and cuts in the revised version of the text (...) The biggest cut is a long passage (pp.129-137) which includes rhythmical exercises based on Stanislavski's physical actions (pp. 131-134), as well as a description of concentration." (Ruffini in Allain, 2009:96) I have mentioned this here to emphasise that, above all, *Towards a Poor Theatre* illuminates the Teatr Laboratorium's practice over a particular period of time and contains certain important developments. Contradictions therefore necessarily exist and the inability from the reader's point of view to recognise and understand them inevitably results in a misreading of the book[40].

Finally, and here the similarities with the Bible end, I would like to emphasise the visual material included in *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Its sheer number points at its

[40] As Grotowski himself stated later in his life, in an article about Romanticism published in *Dialog* in 1980:

> You are right if you think that there are many contradictions in what I am saying. I am aware that I am contradicting myself in what I say, but please remember that on a basic level, I am a practitioner. And practice is contradictory. This is its substance. So if I am contradictory – I am so as a practitioner. I cannot theorise about practice. I can only talk about my adventure – with all the contradictions which were there and which are there. (Osinski in Allain, 2009:43)

importance; in total, the book contains sixty-one photographs[41], as well as eight drawings showing the various scenographic arrangements used in the Teatr Laboratorium's productions[42]. It is clear that the photographs and diagrams were aimed at illustrating the performances and Teatr Laboratorium's practice. A more pressing issue is what repercussions they had, and continue to have, for the reader. The pictures included in *Towards a Poor Theatre* merely convey what is external. Since the photographs overemphasised the productions' aesthetics above the inner processes of the actors, this could explain the common misconception that Grotowski's work was diametrically opposed to Stanislavski's. Furthermore, the fact that the tenth chapter, 'Actor's Training (1966)', is accompanied by several sketches illustrating the Teatr Laboratorium's exercises is a further possible reason for the book's misuse as a theatre manual.

Throughout this subsection I have explored how Osinski's metaphor of *Towards a Poor Theatre* as a Bible could be extended beyond his initial intention. In doing so, I have pointed out how certain aspects of the book might have given rise to the common misunderstanding that it is a programmatic manifesto. Nonetheless, my motivation has not been to criticise the book itself, rather I have aimed to find possible reasons for this misreading. Ultimately, the responsibility rests with the reader. That is to say, any misuse of *Towards a Poor Theatre* as a theatre manual stems from the heightened expectations placed upon it by some of its readers. As Osinski pointed out, after making his biblical comparison, Grotowski himself described the book "as a kind of 'logbook'." (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:87) This is of particular relevance to my discussion because Grotowski's choice of the word 'logbook' clearly dispels any doubts about the book's function. It was not intended as a manifesto, but as a means to articulate and

[41] These depict mostly the Teatr Laboratorium's performances from 1961 to 1965. It may be worth listing them in order of appearance: 12 pictures of *Akropolis*, 9 pictures of *Doctor Faustus* and 17 pictures of *The Constant Prince*. Towards the end of the book there are also 16 photographs of training exercises, two pictures of *Forefathers' Eve*, and three pictures of *Kordian*. In light of this it is important to note that the productions with the most pictures are the two pieces of the list which travelled abroad (*Akropolis* and *The Constant Prince*). Considering Grotowski's meticulous nature I refuse to believe that these are chance occurrences. Instead I would like to suggest that these pictures are evidence of a deliberate choice in how the Teatr Laboratorium was represented. At the time when *Towards a Poor Theatre* appeared, there existed little documentation about the company's production and Grotowski and Barba seized the chance of this publication offered them to disseminate the company's work. Therefore it is not surprising that the more prominent examples would be those which had already received some recognition around the world. Furthermore, the highest achievement to that date of Grotowski's methodologies was considered to be, by Grotowski himself as well as by the critics, the extremely physical role played by Cieślak in *The Constant Prince*. Amongst the 17 pictures included of that production, 8 belong solely to Cieślak's climactic monologue. These pictures entered a category of their own, becoming icons of Grotowski's revolutionary propositions for the theatre as well as the main example of what he meant by the 'holy actor' and the 'total act'.

[42] Most of these were drawn by the architect Jerzy Gurawski, one of the company's early collaborators. The importance of his role is indeed credited (Grotowski, 1968:125).

illustrate the Teatr Laboratorium's practice over a particular period of time. A logbook, it is worth remembering, is a record of past events, and not a programme of how they are to be done in the future. That said, it is important to note that as a result of the misreading and misuse of *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Grotowski made a conscious decision not to continue documenting the exercises used by the Teatr Laboratorium. As Wolford points outs, he had become "increasingly wary about providing descriptions of specific physical and vocal exercises, as he observed a tendency to fetishise such techniques as if they provided a 'recipe for creativity'." (Wolford in Hodge, 2007:194)

3.5 Some negative receptions

I would like to finish my discussion of *Towards a Poor Theatre* by acknowledging some criticisms it received when it was published, and how certain individuals did not embrace it wholeheartedly. Whilst the Teatr Laboratorium had its lengthy run in New York[43], Eric Bentley published a scathing open letter to Grotowski in *The New York Times* on 30th November 1969:

> Do you realize that the Anglo-American version of your book isn't even in good English? And that this was what, for many of us, heralded your visit. Mind you, we could have penetrated bad prose, if that was the only problem. But this, surely, must be a bad book in any language. If there is a new theatre, it deserves a properly articulated description, if not a grandly conceived theory. You have made the mistake of publishing a bundle of scraps and pretending that it is a worthy manifesto. A book that oscillates between the trivial and the grandiose. (Bentley in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:166-167)

What is interesting to note is how Bentley's negative comments exemplify the kind of inadequate reading of *Towards a Poor Theatre* I have explored before; particularly because he presumes it to be a manifesto. Similar misunderstandings are present in Roland Hayman's review of the book which appeared in the English journal *Drama: The Quarterly Theatre Review*. Though his comments are not as aggressive as

[43] In 1969 the company performed *The Constant Prince* 23 times between 16th October and 2nd November, from 29th November to 3rd December, and from 5th December to 7th December. *Akropolis* was performed 11 times, between 4th and 15th November; and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* 14 times, between 18th and 26th November, and between 10th and 15th December. All performances took place at the Methodist Church in Washington Square in Greenwich Village (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:88).

Bentley's, what Hayman does illustrate is the characteristically British mixture of admiration and suspicion that critics had felt about Grotowski when he presented his productions in London in 1969. Hayman criticised the book for being meandering, fragmentary and repetitive, harbouring some serious reservations about Grotowski's propositions. Firstly, he was not convinced that the Teatr Laboratorium's grotesque and stylised productions could achieve a connection with the audience, but that instead they would inhibit and alienate the spectators. Secondly, he thought many people must have found Grotowski's obscure terminology and "his quasi-religious pretensions off-putting" (Hayman, 1969:61). But Hayman did recognise the book's value and importance by saying that there is much to be learnt from Grotowski, and that any serious actor who might come in contact with him "– even if it is through this book – will not be wholly unaffected." (Hayman, 1969:61) Indeed, the speed with which *Towards a Poor Theatre* spread and particularly its success amongst young experimental theatre groups are testament to this power to affect people. As Barba stated, "each sentence spoke to each one of its readers in a different language: intimate, technical, dramaturgical, social, esoteric, political, moral. But always a language of fire. (Barba, 1999a:101)

4. ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES IN BRITAIN

The final section of this chapter fulfils a number of aims. The Teatr Laboratorium's appearances in Britain between 1968 and 1969 and the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre* did not take place in a socio-political and cultural vacuum. Therefore, I will firstly outline key aspects of this wider context. In particular, I will focus on certain events which led to a blossoming of theatrical experimentation in the UK. Though Grotowski was not solely responsible for this, his contact with Britain coincided with these developments and thus, to an extent, could be said to have potentiated them. Secondly, I will explore some of the general traits amongst the young companies which changed the face and dynamics of British theatre. In doing so, I will expose the synergies that existed between their aspirations and Grotowski's practice. Finally, I will discuss the links that some academics have made between the Teatr Laboratorium and the work of these alternative companies. As a result, this last section will serve as a

precursor of my analysis, throughout the next two chapters, of Grotowski's influence on British alternative practices.

4.1 Existing histories

Before I continue, it is pertinent that I acknowledge the sources which I have used to assemble a broad picture of the context which I am about to discuss and the development of an alternative scene in Britain. Though this period of British theatre is still somewhat regarded as one of its 'untold stories'[44], there have been a number of books which specifically attempt to throw some light upon it: Hayman's *The Set-Up: An Anatomy of the English Theatre Today* (1973), J. W. Lambert's *Drama in Britain 1964-1973* (1974), Peter Ansorge's *Disrupting the Spectacle: five years of experimental and fringe theatre in Britain* (1975), John Elsom's *Post-war British Theatre* (1976), Craig's *Dreams and Deconstructions* (1980), Catherine Itzin's *Stages in the revolution: political theatre in Britain since 1968* (1980), Baz Kershaw's *The Politics of Performance, Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (1992), and Maria diCenzo's *The Politics of Alternative Theatre in Britain, 1968-1990, the case of 7:84 (Scotland)* (1996). The work of Ansorge, Craig, Itzin and Kershaw has been particularly useful to me because they all give a brief outline of a variety of companies as well as analysing their cultural and socio-political context. diCenzo's writing is insightful because her approach is somewhat different to the rest, and closer to mine, in that she focuses on one particular company, 7:84 (Scotland), as a case study. Interestingly, she goes so far as to criticise the works of her fellow academics stating that "despite their importance, however, they are rarely able to offer more than an overview of the companies or discussion of key productions by relevant groups." (diCenzo, 1996:10). Indeed, some of these writings do tend to be survey-orientated and therefore are sometimes, inevitably, unable to go into precise details. Regardless of such shortcomings, these publications have collectively allowed me to gain a sense of the period, and the varied mosaic of companies working at that time. At the same time, I have researched a number of

[44] Of course, there is a canon of companies whose work is often written about (Joint Stock for instance). Nevertheless, the majority of groups, particularly those using devising techniques to create theatre, have remained in the dark. Recently Susan Croft – writer, researcher, and former curator of Contemporary Performance at the Theatre Museum – has launched an initiative titled 'Unfinished Histories' dedicated to recuperate the legacy of the British theatre alternative. See www.susan.croft.btinternet.co.uk/cp_unfinished_histories.htm

journal articles. As with the books mentioned above, I have deliberately aimed to strike a balance between accounts written at the time and more current evaluations.

4.2 The wider context

As I did in the previous chapter, it is important that I place the companies I shall analyse later within a wider context. diCenzo emphasises the necessity to do this "in order to account for alternative tendencies in all their complexity" (diCenzo, 1996:5), and calls for a "shift to a more interdisciplinary analytical framework" (diCenzo, 1996:5). By this she means that theatre historians should consider factors which go beyond the merely artistic and creative into social, political and economic terrains. In doing so, diCenzo follows, and indeed quotes, Kershaw's suggestion for a "move beyond formalist analysis" (Kershaw, 1992:5). Notably, in relation to my own study, Kershaw goes on to stress the need to see performances "in relation to the aesthetic movements of which they are part" (Kershaw, 1992:6). Consequently, my attempts to position the two alternative companies I will discuss later within a loosely Grotowskian tradition should be understood as serving, at least in part, this revisionist programme. Nonetheless, since the focus of this thesis is not macrohistorical, but instead centres on assessing the influence Grotowski had upon these young practitioners, it is not necessary for me to replicate what others have already done elsewhere[45]. That said I would like to paint a rough picture of the British socio-political climate of the late sixties and early seventies in order to provide a wider context to the events discussed earlier in this chapter[46].

As the 1960s progressed, the drabness of the post-war fifties was left behind, and was replaced by a new found confidence and optimism. Britain experienced an unprecedented move towards modernisation. This buoyant national mood and its faith in progress can be clearly exemplified by Labour's rhetoric of 'white heat' technology, new town planning, the success of *Dr. Who* (1963), and the construction of the London Post Office Tower (1965). Moreover, the new cult of youth – with its mini-skirts, Technicolor, James Bond and exciting music scene – injected Britain with energy. At

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[45] diCenzo's second chapter, titled 'Creating a context: alternative theatre in the seventies and eighties' gives a particularly insightful account of the context within with these young companies operated. See diCenzo, 1992:17-78.

[46] I have based this on Andrew Marr's television series *A History of Modern Britain*, in particular the third episode, 'Paradise Lost', which covers the period between 1964 to 1974 (aired on 5th June 2007 on BBC2).

the same time, as I shall expand upon later, in the face of global political events, the second part of the 1960s saw the emergence of an idealistic movement led by a politicised and forward-looking youth. Nevertheless, by the end of the decade, this widespread optimism had largely been replaced by economic collapse, political crisis, and disillusionment. Together with the Vietnam War, these developments continued to fuel a hunger for social revolution and progress. Even though in economic and political terms restlessness progressively worsened (the miner's strikes, energy cuts, and the IRA's attacks), in cultural and artistic terms the rolling stone was unstoppable.

Since this has been but a brief sketch, it might be more useful that I now concentrate on a number of specific factors which contributed more directly towards the blossoming of theatrical experimentation. I would therefore like to go back to 1968, a year which has often been signalled by historians as the critical period marker for the birth of Britain's cultural alternative scene. Ansorge, for instance, stated that "1968 can be marked out as a watershed in our recent theatrical, if not political history" (Ansorge, 1975:1). Although most academics writing on this period take this date as a reference point, they also acknowledge the inadequacy of overemphasizing a single year. Interestingly, current trends have developed which question the validity of 1968 as a marker altogether:

> Gradually, through the late 1970s, historians began to identify the Fringe theatre movement as the successor to the Angry Young Man movement, and to identify 1968 as the next node on the historical timeline. But, unlike 1956, 1968 boasted no single obvious generative event or founding father. The adherence to a historiography of avant-garde succession, however, made revolution the accepted and anticipated mechanism of historical change in British theatre. Thus 1968, the year of the barricades, furnished a convenient new period marker to adopt as the birth of the Fringe. (Gibson, 2006:36)

Even though Gibson's arguments are very persuasive, I have nonetheless chosen to make 1968 the starting point for my discussion on the cultural context within which my two following case studies originated. Ultimately, this was the year in which they began to formalise as professional groups. That said, although "1968 was in many respects lift-off year for alternative theatre (...), like all earthquakes, it was preceded by a number of warning tremors." (Craig, 1980:18) Though Craig lists a number of such precursors which came from within the UK, such as the establishment of the Traverse Theatre or Brook's *Marat/Sade* and *US*, it is relevant for my later discussion that I highlight the visits to Britain of three American companies. The Living Theatre performed in Britain

for the first time in 1961, presenting *The Connection* at the Duke of York Theatre in London, and returned in 1964 with *The Brig*, shown at the Mermaid Theatre. The other two companies visited London in 1967: Café La Mama performed *Futz* at the Mercury Theatre (returning the following year to present *Tom Paine* at the Vaudeville Theatre), and Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre showed *America Hurrah!* at the Royal Court. If the work of these three companies was important for the development of a British alternative, it is because they offered young audiences an escape from "theatrical claustrophobia" (Ansorge, 1975:24). Though this will become clearer later, I would like to point out that they achieved this by introducing the British public to the experimentation which had been taking place on mainland Europe for the last five years.

As already suggested, 1968 was coloured by dramatic events. The socio-political climate continued to be influenced by the escalating war in Vietnam, but was also strongly affected by the May revolts in France, the police riot at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, the Prague Spring and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia that followed. All this sent shockwaves throughout the young generations who, inflamed by a newly found idealism, championed the cause for reform, liberty, and brotherhood. Nothing was taken for granted, questions were being asked that were previously unthinkable, and there was a felt desire to discover new pathways and alternative modes[47] of existence and creation. "Ideologically, the possibility of material freedom was complemented by demands for cultural and creative freedom" (Craig, 1980:15). Craig goes on to note that one of the most significant slogans from the Parisian barricades was for 'power to the imagination'. This sense of urgency was, at the same time, accompanied by the development of a strong youth movement. As Freeman suggests, "the writings of Hammond and Ansorge mark a shift in the implication attached to the word 'fringe', as it becomes linked to politics and the 'underground' of youth culture rather than to 'semi-official' experiments aspiring to become part of the establishment" (Freeman, 2006:367).

The new generations' hunger for freedom in 1968 coincided with the end of government censorship in Britain. In September of that year, Parliament approved the Theatres Act and the Lord Chamberlain was relieved of his duties as pre-censor. As a result of this aesthetic freedom many companies became bolder in their artistic experiments, some of which amounted to little more than 'shock for shock's sake' (Craig, 1980:17).

[47] Though somewhat anecdotal, it is worth remembering that at the height of their popularity, in 1968, The Beatles travelled to the foothills of the Himalayas in India in search for something that fame and fortune could not give them: a sense of inner peace and the promise of enlightenment.

The one event which academics credit as having the largest impact upon the nascent alternative scene was the establishment, in January 1968, of the Arts Lab in London's Drury Lane. The venue, founded by the American Jim Haynes[48], occupied two warehouses and housed a cinema in the basement, a gallery on the ground floor, a theatre in another connecting warehouse and a restaurant upstairs. Though it was only open for twenty one months, the Arts Lab became the Mecca for various artistic and bohemian types, and provided adventurous audiences with "a remarkable shop window on a new theatrical phenomenon" (Ansorge, 1975:1). Ansorge goes on to say that "in the space of a single year the Arts Lab spawned a new generation of young actors, directors and writers who were refusing to work within the context of conventional theatre institutions." (Ansorge, 1975:1) Haynes positively valued an experimental attitude on all levels:

> An average evening at the Arts lab might have involved sitting through a highly subjective one-act play, listening to a combination of Cage and rock on the stereo system, watching the all-night films (...) it is impossible today to enter any of the new theatres, studios and workshops across the country without becoming aware of the immense debt owed to Hayne's Arts Lab. (Ansorge, 1975:25)

Not only was the Arts Lab a fantastic meeting place where ideas, conversations and various substances flowed through the night, but most importantly, it provided young companies with a platform to develop. Haynes offered a performance space and actively nurtured these groups by giving them access to a free rehearsal space. "Nearly all of the British fringe groups of interest or merit which were born around this time were either conceived from the London Arts Lab, or became generally known through appearances there." (Hammond, 1973:37) In October 1969, the Arts Lab closed "leaving debts of over £10,000 and an unresolved conflict between those who wanted it to live up to its name and those who, like Jim Haynes, saw it as a social centre for the 'alternative society'." (Hammond, 1973:42) When Haynes' venture folded, the baton was taken forwards by the Oval House in Kennington. Peter Oliver, its artistic director, had progressively transformed this sports-orientated boys' club into a full blown arts venue.

[48] Jim Haynes ran a bookshop in Edinburgh and was the founder of one of the country's most important theatre venues, The Traverse. Craig, amongst others, lists this as one of the 'warning tremors' that signalled the emergence of the alternative theatre scene (Craig, 1980:19). Though Haynes personally dates the opening of the Traverse to the first performance he organised at his Bookshop in Edinburgh, The Paperback Bookshop, in 1960, The Traverse Theatre Club officially opened on 2nd January 1963. Richard Demarco became Vice-Chairman and Director of the Traverse gallery, whilst Terry Lane was the first Artistic Director. The venue maintains to this day a policy declaring it as a writers' theatre that only produces new plays (http://www.jim-haynes.com/life/theatre.htm)

He replaced Haynes as the godfather of the generation by continuing to programme, support and offer free rehearsal space to a number of alternative companies. "Like the Arts Lab it furnished the groups with a space to perform in and freely allowed them the right to experiment and the right to fail, without the pressures engendered by theatres" (Craig, 1980:156). Naturally, the Oval House became the second 'home' for many of these companies.[49]

Moreover, I would like to briefly note the important role played by university theatre studios in providing young companies with the opportunity of touring their work across Britain. Further education institutions across the country became an active circuit for groups to showcase their work, particularly during their early stages of development. More often than not, it was the students themselves who would invite and programme alternative theatre on their campuses. Workshops often accompanied these performances and became a popular way for experimental practices to be shared amongst the student body. As can be seen in the yearly reviews published in *Plays and Players*, the National Student Drama Festival (hosted at a different university each year) became a hotbed for innovative activities.

Similarly, in terms of exposure and the sharing of information, it is important to mention again the positive benefits brought by the publication of *Time Out*. The magazine, with its listings category titled 'Fringe' devoted to alternative practices outside the traditional venues, provided a real service to young groups "always from a supportive, partisan position" (Craig, 1980:16). Finally, these companies had a playbill to advertise their performances to a wider audience on a regular basis. Moreover, this produced a domino effect and, slowly but steadily, other publications began to pay attention to these groups by divulging and reviewing their work. In the early 1970s *Plays and Players*, for example, began to have specialist writers dedicated to reporting on the activities of the alternative scene[50].

Finally, 1968 was also the year in which the Arts Council began to take notice of these groups. A sub-committee, which would later become the New Activities Committee, was set up to investigate these new theatrical happenings (Craig, 1980:16). The following year the Arts Council's Drama Panel decided to make a 'general grant'

[49] Though these two venues were key figures in the development of the alternative theatre scene, a number of other spaces also deserve a mention: the Traverse, The Theatre Upstairs, The Bush, The ICA Theatre, and The Other Place. These, amongst others, are discussed in Malcom Hay's chapter 'Showcasing the Fringe' in Craig's book (Craig, 1980:153-64).

[50] Jonathan Hammond was one of the regular reviewers of the new companies for *Plays and Players*. Notably, in 1973, he published his article 'A Potted History of the Fringe' in *Theatre Quarterly*.

available to companies which did not work from traditional scripts. To begin with these subsidies were relatively small, but by 1971 they had nearly quadrupled. Even though Arts Council funding for alternative practices only ever reached around 5% of the total drama budget, "there is no doubt that the size and range of the alternative theatre movement in the seventies was made possible by subsidy" (diCenzo, 1996:62). As diCenzo observes, this was mainly due to the fact that these companies performed in small venues which, together with an emphasis on keeping prices low, meant that they could not finance themselves though box office takings alone. In the long run, because this was the sole or main source of funding for many groups, a problematic level of dependency developed which came to a head in the late seventies (diCenzo, 1996:62)[51]. Many academics have written about the phenomenon of public subsidy and its consequences for alternative theatre. The most insightful account however, is given by diCenzo, who traces its effects, from the gradual recognition by the Arts Council of these companies in the late sixties, to fatal issues which faced them at the end of the following decade.

4.3 Some general traits

As already pointed out, the alternative scene was formed by a wide array of groups, working in a number of multiple ways. Each company had its distinct ethos, yet there are some general similarities between them which I would like to discuss now in order to avoid repeating myself later. Even though some of the traits I will mention shortly can be found throughout alternative theatre at the time, I will be focusing particularly on some of the characteristics of what Craig calls 'actor-based companies'. With this expression he describes a bewildering variety of companies who shared, though with different emphases, a primary aim. Unlike 'writer-based companies' where this was a secondary concern, 'actor-based companies' wanted "to restore the actor to his/her central position in the creation of theatre" (Craig, 1980:25). Generally speaking this meant that they laid "greater stress on non-literary forms of expression" (Craig, 1980:25).

One inevitable aspect which all groups had to face were the limited resources they had at their disposal. This financial reality has been seen by academics and artists alike

[51] See diCenzo, 1996:28 / 62-78.

as one of the main creative lubricants of the alternative scene; at a time when artistic freedom had suddenly exploded, this served as a boundary which young practitioners had to negotiate and overcome with imaginative means. Not surprisingly, many of them welcomed Grotowski's notion of a 'poor theatre' that, stripped of all traditional trappings, emphasised the performer's craft.

If the first aspect that shaped the practices of alternative theatre was a material one, the second was ideological. The other force driving these new companies was the idealistic worldview shared by young people during this period. It is important to stress however that I am not naming these in any order of importance, but that they operated in conjunction with one another. As mentioned in the previous subsection, there was a widespread desire for change, freedom and a strong anti-establishment attitude. In practical terms, this resulted in the rejection of conventional theatre forms and buildings. There was also a general rejection of the production apparatus of such institutions. Moreover, as Colin Chambers has suggested, "the fringe arose as much out of the habitual discontent of performers as out of the wider political and social changes of the sixties" (Craig, 1980:105). Actors were looking for new ways of working, more challenging parts, and more democratic working conditions. Undermining traditional hierarchies, many chose to work collectively, a trend which was felt most strongly amongst 'actor-based companies'. Of course, "many companies combined elements of the writer/director and collective structures" (diCenzo, 1996:57). So whilst there was some division of labour which capitalized on individuals' skills and talents, there remained a strong emphasis on preserving a democratic environment. Inevitably though, due to the financial constraints discussed earlier, the pay was not as good and the conditions of work were not as comfortable as in more traditional theatre settings. "The important difference was that actors could take an equal part in the process of production. No longer disposable, cheap commodities, they could control their own work and its environment and begin to develop new relationships, first with the other participants and then with their audiences." (Craig, 1980:105)

Finally, even though there were marked differences between them, there was one further quality which was shared by many of these companies. "That quality is to be found in the new relation between the stage and the audience, a relation of engagement." (Craig, 1980:28) Despite their heterogeneous approach to form and content, they all had a shared desire to find new means of communication. In political terms, this resonated with their idealistic convictions. In creative terms, this search for

immediacy, authenticity and community is redolent of Grotowski's propositions for the theatre. Furthermore, as already suggested earlier, it is important to emphasise that their dissatisfaction with existing forms and conventions pushed these young groups towards the extremes of artistic experimentation. If they were to connect with their public in a new and unusual way, they would test and explore, in a quasi-scientific venture, all the possibilities that performance offered as a medium. This attitude resulted in an acknowledgement of the importance and value of process over product[52]. Creation and performance were no longer seen as just part of an industry, but were conceived of as activities in their own right. Since they operated outside the confines of commercial theatre, young companies were able to devote a longer period to the development of a new piece; training and the exploration of new techniques came to be understood as an intrinsic part of this artistic process. However, most of the 'tools' handed down by drama education centres were not suitable to this new way of working. Besides, many of their members had no theatre background whatsoever. In their rejection of the establishment and their search for alternative methodologies, it is therefore not surprising that many of these groups looked beyond Britain for inspiration.

4.4 Grotowski and the alternative scene

Already in his review of the Edinburgh performance of *Akropolis*, Wardle had stated that Grotowski enjoyed a "god-like status amongst experimental troupes of the west" (Wardle, 24th August 1968) Though for now I will not use any specific examples of this influence, or analyse the extent to which it became manifest, I would like to briefly outline some academic responses to the possible effects that the Teatr Laboratorium had on Britain. That said, I would like to emphasise that these accounts do not differentiate between the company's actual performances and other means of dissemination of its work, through film or published materials.

Some historians writing about the alternative groups that sprung up in the late 1960s and early 1970s do recognise the impact that Grotowski had upon them. For instance, in his timeline for fringe theatre, Jonathan Hammond, in his article 'Potted History of the

[52] diCenzo notes that this was a characteristic found mostly in 'actor-based companies', and that writer/director-based companies had a "tendency to focus on changing the product [the subject matter and styles of plays] and not the process" (diCenzo, 1996:55).

Fringe', lists the Teatr Laboratorium's appearance at the Edinburgh International Festival and their subsequent performances in London, Manchester and Lancaster amongst the critical events which shaped the alternative scene (Hammond, 1973:40). Echoing this, Elsom goes as far as to suggest that Grotowski's influence "permeated the fringe movement" (Elsom, 1976:149). Furthermore, Hayman suggests that Grotowski had a marked effect upon the architectural design of British theatre spaces which became freer and more flexible (Hayman, 1973:76-77).

However, even with the benefit offered by a few years of critical distance from the time Grotowski's productions were seen in the UK, some commentators remained sceptical. For instance, Lambert compares the Teatr Laboratorium's two visits with the disappointment felt by audiences and critics after the much awaited and hyped visit of the Living Theatre[53]. Emphasising the competition for places in the limited audience, he goes on to state that "the performances themselves left nothing in their wake save whatever is to be found in the eclectic masterpieces of Peter Brook" (Lambert, 1974:49). Moreover, though all admired the technical virtuosity of Grotowski's actors, he suggests that "few, if any, save perhaps Charles Marrowitz at the Open Space, could share his unwearied preoccupations with physical and spiritual pain" (Lambert, 1974:49). Clearly the academics' relationship to the Teatr Laboratorium continued to be as divided as the critics' responses in the late 1960s. In regards to this, throughout the 1970s, two opposing camps seem to have developed. There are those who dismissed their effects upon the British theatrical climate and those who acknowledge its importance. Interestingly, historians of the alternative scene tend to concentrate on the influence exhorted by American companies such as the Living Theatre and Chaikin's Open Theatre. However, this widespread tendency usually fails to recognise the extent to which these groups had in turn been affected or inspired by Grotowski's work. The American theatre critic John Lahr, in an interview for *Plays and Players* (December 1973), summarised this influence by saying that "Grotowski's ideas have touched something very deep in America. It's the yearning to transcend oneself (...) a wish to train the body to the point of reaching a new state of becoming, of change." (Lahr in Ansorge, 1975:29) For example, the Living Theatre's seating arrangements became significantly more adventurous once they had become aware of the Teatr Laboratorium's spatial experiments, and Chaikin was strongly marked by his observation of Grotowski's work with the RSC in 1966. As will become evident in the

[53] Lambert stated that the Living Theatre only offered "poorly talented, slow, clumsy, crude, hectoring, and childish entertainment" (Lambert, 1974:49).

following chapter, these American groups served as yet another way in which Grotowski's indirect influence spread to the British alternative scene.

At any rate, it is also important to recognise that all this scholarship was retrospective and had a historic character. In France, according to Temkine, "two years after the performance of *The Constant Prince* there were still, in the magazines, traces of the initial swirls." (Temkine, 1972:25) In Britain however, the company's visits were not followed by an ongoing engagement by critics and cultural commentators with Grotowski's practice. That is to say the Teatr Laboratorium had not managed to permeate the mainstream cultural establishment as successfully as it had done in mainland Europe and America[54]. Nevertheless, as I will discuss in the following two chapters, Grotowski's name continued to circulate and maintained currency in the experimental and alternative scene.

[54] Of course it is important to recognise the role played by certain individuals as champions of the Teatr Laboratorium, particularly by Schechner in the USA.

Chapter IV

FREEHOLD

1. INTRODUCTION

Officially formed in 1969, Freehold was one of the first professional groups to arise from the cultural hotbed which was Jim Haynes's Arts Lab. The company, headed by Nancy Meckler, quickly gained notoriety with their first production, an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* (1969). At the time, critics highly regarded the group's work because of its discipline, total emotional commitment, impeccable execution, and sensitive choice of themes. Some, like Ansorge, considered that Freehold occupied a dominant position in the alternative scene (Ansorge, 1975:30). As Helen Dawson wrote for *The Observer*, Freehold stood out from the crowd because they avoided the "self-indulgent sensation-seeking" which muffled so many good experimental intentions (Dawson, 5th March 1972). Considering the climate of free-fall experimentation which ruled at the time, and some groups' insistence upon shock tactics, it is not surprising that one reviewer, writing in *The Times Educational Supplement*, remarked that, thanks to Freehold, alternative theatre in Britain had "more or less come of age" (Peter, 28th January 1972). Their style, exploring texts through physical and non-naturalistic means, had been developed by Meckler through exercises originating from Grotowski (Rees, 1992:19). Therefore, Freehold's aesthetic was clearly indebted to the Teatr Laboratorium, leading Collin Chambers to describe their practice as "'poor' theatre" (Craig, 1980:106). Moreover, the company's emphasis on collective creation meant it was regarded as "one of the pioneers on the fringe of an ensemble approach." (Hammond, 1973:39)

I had already come across Freehold during my preliminary research, but what intrigued me and fuelled my interest was one of Mike Pearson's recollections[1]. He remembered that during the National Student Drama Festival of 1969, held that year in Manchester, he attended a workshop given by Freehold in which Meckler

[1] I initially interviewed Pearson with the intention of writing about the experimental company he was part of during the early 1970s, RAT Theatre. However, due to the limitations of scope of this thesis I had do take the difficult decision not to include the group's work in my study.

demonstrated one of Grotowski's exercises, 'the Cat'. This became the catalyst which led me to investigate this company further.

1.1 Sources

Considering that Freehold was in existence for only four years, between 1969 and 1973, it is perhaps surprising to find a large amount of scholarly work dedicated to it. The first significant mention of the company is in Ansorge's 'Underground Explorations - No2: Made in USA' which appeared in *Plays and Players* in March 1972. This article is notable because Ansorge had conducted an interview with Meckler where, as I will explain later, she demonstrated 'the Cat' exercise. Similarly useful in providing details of Freehold's training methodologies, is Theodore Shank's 'Collective Creation'. This article had an even wider distribution as it was published in *The Drama Review: TDR* in June 1972. Even though Shank discusses the work of a number of collaborative companies, his analysis of Freehold's practice stands out because he had attended one of its full day workshop-rehearsals, giving him first hand knowledge of the subject. Since these two articles discussed the company's work thoroughly and were written after direct contact with its members, it could be suggested that they served as the basis for later mentions of Freehold by other academics: Hammond (1973), Hayman (1973), and Roberts (1973). In 1975, Ansorge would again discuss Freehold's work in *Disrupting the spectacle: five years of experimental and fringe theatre in Britain*. This is particularly noteworthy because, since by this point the company had folded, Ansorge was able to talk about Freehold's development and career in quite some depth. The next work I would like to mention is Colin Chambers' 'Product into Process, Actor-based workshops', which appeared in Sandy Craig's *Dreams and Deconstructions* in 1980. I found this particularly interesting because Chambers put Freehold's actor-orientated practice in relation to other groups who were working in similar ways at the time, thus allowing me to better understand the company in its original context. Roland Rees' *Fringe First, Pioneers of Fringe theatre on Record* (1992) also provided me with a useful insight because it includes an interview with Stephen Rea, former member of Freehold. Finally, I must acknowledge my use of Kristin Crouch's PhD thesis for Ohio State University:

Shared experience theatre: exploring the boundaries of performance (2003)[2]. Though she focuses on the work of British company Shared Experience, Crouch discusses Meckler's career at length because he became one of the group's artistic directors in 1987. Moreover, Crouch includes a full interview with Meckler in her appendices, in which Meckler discusses her work with La Mama Plexus and Freehold. This allowed me to corroborate many of the statements Meckler made during the interview I carried out with her.

At this point I have to acknowledge a relative shortcoming in regards to primary sources. Unfortunately, there is an almost complete lack of visual records of Freehold's work. The only exceptions are three photographs of *Antigone* (1969) which were published together with Shank's article (Shank, 1972:17). Nonetheless, I have been able to find a collection of documents on Freehold: press cuttings, press releases, reviews, and a few administrative notes and letters. All these are held at the Traverse Theatre archive[3]. Although not small in number, the brevity and function of these documents mean that they are only relatively useful to construct a picture of Freehold's working practice. That said, they have complemented the academic sources I discussed earlier, allowing me to gather further evidence and build my argument.

1.2 Nancy Meckler in New York, early influences

Meckler had taken an undergraduate drama degree at Antioch College in Ohio (USA), where she carried out a basic directing course under Meredith Dallas. She then went on to study acting at HB Studio in New York[4], which gave her a grounding in the process of acting, as well as an understanding of how to approach and work with actors (Crouch, 2003:344). Meckler also completed a master's degree at New York University[5] in a new course led by Schechner titled 'Theory and Criticism'. It was during her studies at NYU that Meckler recalls having heard about Grotowski for the

[2] The dissertation has been published online by the OhioLINK Electronic Thesis and Dissertations Center, and is available as a pdf document. www.ohiolink.edu/etd/view.cgi?acc_num=osu1054738772
[3] Meckler and her group performed and had some of their pieces produced by this Edinburgh venue towards the end of their creative venture.
[4] HB Studio was established as a drama school in 1945 by the Viennese actor/director Herbert Berghof. The institution has continued its pedagogical activities to this day. www.hbstudio.org
[5] Hereafter I will refer to New York University as NYU.

first time because Schechner talked about him all the time (Meckler, 2008a). Although she was not able to attend the workshop Grotowski and Cieslak lead at NYU in November 1967, her practice would in time be influenced by them indirectly.

Whilst studying in New York, Meckler became involved in the thriving experimental theatre scene. In particular, she began to work with La Mama Plexus. The group had been founded by Stanley Rosenberg and was backed by Ellen Stewart as director of the venue/company Café La Mama. Though her primary interest was in producing the work of new playwrights, Stewart was a keen supporter of collectively devised theatre. Therefore, she offered La Mama Plexus a space to train, rehearse and, if they so wished, perform their pieces[6]. Within this setting Meckler worked as both an actor and as an assistant director. As Heddon has pointed out and I will explore in the following section, the main influences upon Rosenberg's company were Grotowski and Barba (Heddon, 2006:47). Recalling that the focus of workshops and rehearsals was not on creating productions or performing, but on exploring a theatrical process, Meckler stated that her work with La Mama Plexus liberated her from her conventional background. In my interview with her she talked about the Grotowskian/Barbaesque training they carried out: "These exercises were very freeing, so I became very interested in the fact that these exercises seemed to open up the other side of your brain, starting from the physical, starting from the intuitive." (Meckler, 2008a) This realisation that there was an alternative, more organic way of working that did not depend so heavily upon the director, was a major turning point for Meckler (Crouch, 2003:144). Her focus shifted away from her earlier, conventional training and towards the avenue of work she would later continue to pursue with Freehold. Though she only remained with La Mama Plexus for a period of eight months, the experience of working with this company would remain, in her own words, one of her biggest influences (Crouch, 2003:344).

[6] As Nancy Meckler recalled in my interview with her, La Mama Plexus would meet regularly to work, between 3pm and 7pm, every day. Therefore, even though their practice was experimental and not geared towards productions, it can be said that this was a serious endeavour which required the participants' full commitment.

1.3 Freehold, an overview

In the late sixties, Meckler came to Britain in order to undertake a year of postgraduate study at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Considering her earlier experiences with La Mama Plexus it is not surprising that her studies of classical acting did not cause a lasting impression (Crouch, 2003:344). Meckler had developed a passion for experimental theatre and so she began to work with Wherehouse La Mama[7]. This group had been formed as a consequence of Café La Mama's 1967 European tour and was a London-based offshoot of the American company which was associated with Haynes' Arts Lab. Led by Beth Porter, former member of the New York group, Wherehouse La Mama was partly formed by individuals who had worked with Tom O'Horgan[8]. "The Wherehouse group's first show was entitled *Alternatives* and set out to tell the story of a child growing up in a society whose rules are made and enforced by the young girl's family and group." (Ansorge, 1975:26) Throughout 1968, Beth Porter had to constantly travel to New York where one of Café La Mama's productions, *Futz!*, was being filmed. Though this interim period is somewhat hazy, Meckler recalls that Porter wanted to fold Wherehouse La Mama. Nevertheless, since they had already been booked to appear at the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill, eight of its actors decided to stay together, and splintering off in October 1968, they formed Freehold[9]. The group's practice continued to develop the physically experimental approach which Meckler had inherited from Stanley Rosenberg in New York, and began to work towards their first production, *Antigone*[10]. Their main breakthrough came at the end of 1969, when Freehold took this piece to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. They were performing in a tent on the Meadows, "beyond, beyond the fringe" (Meckler, 2008a). Although the remoteness of this makeshift venue meant that audience numbers were not large, thanks to the intercession of Jim Haynes, Freehold were picked up by a producer who programmed them for a festival in Berlin later that year. The kudos of having performed *Antigone* abroad does explain, to a degree, the way in which the company

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[7] The company is also referred to as Warehouse La Mama, for instance in Crouch, 2003. However, during our interview, Meckler assured me that the correct name for the company always was Wherehouse La Mama. Moreover, Ansorge also refers to them as Wherehouse La Mama. Therefore I will continue to use that spelling of the company's name.

[8] O'Horgan built his reputation directing productions for Café La Mama and directed the first Broadway production of the musical *Hair* (1968).

[9] Meckler has suggested that this change of name was a result of Beth Porter's insistence (Meckler, 2008a).

[10] This production is discussed by Ansorge. See Ansorge, 1975:26-7.

were so quickly placed by commentators amongst the leading groups in British alternative theatre.

Through a review of their Edinburgh performance, Freehold attracted Kustow's attention. What followed was a chain of near misses and unrealised possibilities. When he originally approached the company, Kustow said he thought they were "the perfect company to do a workshop with Grotowski" (Meckler, 2008a). In the end this workshop did not materialise, in part because of the group's touring commitments[11]. Nevertheless, Kustow asked Freehold to perform an extract of *Antigone* for him and Brook at their new base, the Oval House. Though Brook was not able to attend, Kustow did see the piece, which impressed him to the extent that he remarked he would convince Brook that he ought to work with Freehold in some project or other (Meckler, 2008a). A meeting was scheduled between the company, Kustow, and Brook, to investigate if there might be a possibility for collaboration. However, since the date coincided with Freehold's performance dates in Berlin, the actors went off to Germany and Meckler stayed. Though she finally met Brook, nothing came of the meeting: "Peter Brook turned to me and he said 'Michael has been telling me about your work, but I don't know anything about it so there is nothing I can say'. So I said, 'well I perfectly understand', and that was the end of that conversation" (Meckler, 2008a).

The success of Freehold's *Antigone* was recognised in May 1970 when the company became the first collective, as opposed to a playwright, to receive the 'John Whiting Award for New Drama'[12]. Later on that same year, the company was sent to festivals in Belgrade and Venice by the British Council[13]. Meckler admits that the company "found it really difficult to do another show that had the same impact" (Meckler, 2008a). In response to this challenge Freehold created a version of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* which opened at The Young Vic. Nevertheless, it was not as well received and Meckler herself did not rate it as highly. After having directed these two productions she left her company for a year to have her first child. As a result,

[11] A further missed opportunity to encounter Grotowski and see his work came in 1969, during the Teatr Laboratorium's performances in London. Having followed the bus transporting the audience to the venue in the East End, Meckler was then not allowed into the crypt because the capacity had been reached.
[12] This is a national award for playwrights which was originally established by Arts Council England in 1965, in order to commemorate Whiting and his distinct contribution to post-war British theatre.
[13] The photographs which accompany Shank's discussion on Freehold were taken in Venice. See illustrations no.3, no.4, and no.5.

throughout 1971 Freehold was led by two guest directors. This presented a change of gear for the company who, under new leadership, would tackle 20th century plays using a less overtly physical style. Roland Rees directed the group in Brecht's *Drums in the Night*, and Michael Rudman directed them in Michel de Ghelderode's *Pantagleize*, which was co-produced by Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre which Rudman led. It was at this point that the company slowly began to break apart; not only was Meckler absent, but the two productions with these guest directors had not quite worked and some members left dissatisfied. When Meckler returned, with only two of the original actors remaining, she put together a new ensemble. Freehold continued to work in this new incarnation for another two years, touring Britain and occasionally Europe. In 1972 the company produced two new plays written specifically for them by Roy Kift: *Genesis*, which had clearly been influenced by Chaikin's 1969 piece *The Serpent* (Ansorge, 1975:28); and *Mary, Mary*, which was "an almost unique instance in the English underground of treating an apparently naturalistic subject in a completely different and free-wheeling manner." (Ansorge, 1975:28) The following year they premiered a version of *Beowulf* arranged by Liane Aukin, a piece which Meckler considered adequate but not entirely satisfying (Meckler, 2008b). Shortly after this the company began to run out of steam. As I explained earlier, Meckler had left the company for a year and Freehold was led by two guest directors. The experiences of *Drums in the Night* and *Pantagleize* made her and the actors realise that this was not a feasible way to develop the company (Meckler, 2008b). Though she had returned to create *Genesis*, *Mary, Mary* and *Beowulf*, Meckler found it increasingly difficult to go on tour with the company, thus being unable to rework these pieces on the road, or commit to creating new ones. Moreover, Meckler admits that by 1973 Freehold was "struggling to find material which invited the kind of emotional and physical expression" (Meckler, 2008b) to which the group was committed. Throughout their previous work Freehold had learnt that its work tended to be more successful when a writer or literary assistant was on board[14]. However, "later attempts to find writers for the company had been only moderately successful" (Meckler, 2008b). As Meckler goes on to say, often young writers were "wary of getting involved with a 'physical' theatre company, as if their words would be neglected" (Meckler, 2008b). Consequently, the combination of feeling worn out by long tours, an inability to find the right source materials, Meckler's inability to

[14] Peter Hulton had assisted them with their adaptation of *Antigone* (1969). Roy Kift had written *Mary, Mary* and *Genesis* (both 1972) specifically for the company. And in 1973 Liane Aukin had worked on *Beowulf*.

accompany the group on their trips, and a refusal to work with guest directors, resulted in the end of Freehold.

Even though it had only been in operation for six years, and not all of its performances received critical acclaim, Freehold was one of the key companies which helped to change the face, not only of the alternative scene, but of English theatre. Meckler's work, as I will analyse more closely in due course, was one of the first and most successful exponents in Britain of an experimental approach which championed a psychophysical conception of the actor and an emphasis on universal myths.

2. THE MISSING LINK

I have already hinted that Grotowski influenced Freehold indirectly. Therefore, before I go on to analyse this issue further by examining Meckler's company more closely, it is pertinent that I make a brief detour. Throughout this section I would like to explore the nexus which connected Freehold to Grotowski's practice. I already knew that Meckler was familiar with 'the Cat', so the question was how she had learnt this exercise. The obvious answer might have been that she simply reconstituted the exercise from the two very brief descriptions of it which appear in *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Grotowski, 1968:103/154). However, in this instance, influence took place through more complex channels. When I asked Meckler about 'the Cat' she revealed that it was part of the daily training she had undertaken with La Mama Plexus. Thus the missing link between Freehold and Grotowski seemed to be Stanley Rosenberg. In order to investigate this further I carried out an interview with him; the following subsections are based upon this.

2.1 Grotowski, Barba, Rosenberg

In the early sixties, Rosenberg arrived in New York. Having completed his undergraduate theatre degree at the University of Hawaii he dreamt of becoming a playwright and director. Nevertheless his career began backstage, where he worked in

both commercial and off-Broadway venues. By 1965 he had become associated with Café La Mama and that year he accompanied the group as lighting director and stage manager on its European tour, from Yugoslavia to Scandinavia. Knowing about his true ambitions, Ellen Stewart suggested that if he wanted to become a director, he should go to Odin Teatret, in Denmark. Once the tour had been completed Rosenberg stayed in Europe and, after travelling around visiting other companies, he went to Odin Teatret's new base in Holstebro and asked if he could "hang around" (Rosenberg, 2008). Eugenio Barba agreed that he could be his directorial assistant, "which to him meant to be like a secretary" (Rosenberg, 2008). Rosenberg stayed for a year, sitting through the afternoon rehearsals. The piece in rehearsal for the whole year was *Kaspariana*, a production that Odin Teatret had started to develop the year before[15]. Witnessing the slow development of *Kaspariana* introduced Rosenberg to a way of working which was heavily process-orientated. In my interview with him he recalled that "a scene that would last twenty seconds could take four or five days of rehearsals" (Rosenberg, 2008). As he could not understand the language, Barba had asked Rosenberg to pay close attention to the visual composition and its emotional implications[16]. More importantly, Rosenberg also took part in the four hour long training which took place every morning[17]. It was during these sessions that Rosenberg learned the exercises carried out by Odin Teatret. As he recalls, the training always followed the same format: it would start with voice work, then 'the Cat', clowning, acrobatics and long movement improvisations carried out in slow motion (Rosenberg, 2008).

Upon returning to the USA, Rosenberg began to teach drama and direct at Yale University. Crucially, it was at this time that he set up La Mama Plexus. As he himself noted, his methodological approach and practical training were heavily influenced by his experiences with Odin Teatret. Nonetheless, Rosenberg remained aware that this process was an 'interpretation' of what he had learned: "I did bring in some things myself, but I was basically trying to recreate the training that I saw in Odin theatre" (Rosenberg, 2008).

[15] This production is discussed by Marc Fumaroli. See Fumaroli, 1968:46-56.

[16] In my interview with him Rosenberg said that Barba told him to look out for "what the feelings were, and what the visual thing was", but he never actually asked him what he experienced or what he thought.

[17] In fact Stanley Rosenberg appears in a photograph of Odin Teatret's training, published in Erik Exe Christoffersen's *The Actor's Way* (Christoffersen, 1993:43). The photograph's caption dates the picture to 1968, when Rosenberg briefly returned to Holstebro to collaborate with Odin Teatret for a second time.

It is certain that the training he experienced in Holstebro would have been influenced to some degree by Barba's apprenticeship with Grotowski, which had only come to an end two years earlier. Nonetheless, Rosenberg acknowledges that he could not really differentiate between what Odin had received from Grotowski and what they had brought in themselves (Rosenberg, 2008). Since no records remain of the training carried out by La Mama Plexus, it is impossible to compare it either to existing accounts about Odin Teatret's or the Teatr Laboratorium's practice. Therefore, I cannot ascertain the precise degree of Barba's and Grotowski's influence upon Rosenberg, nor to what extent one might have influenced him more than the other. Nevertheless, I am able to trace the journey of a single exercise. Though it would have changed in some way or another, 'the Cat' was handed down by Grotowski to Barba, from Barba to Rosenberg, and from him to Nancy Meckler. This series of interlinking connections clearly exemplifies the complex processes involved in cases of indirect influence. Moreover it is important to recognise that a further link in this chain was Mike Pearson. As I mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, in 1969 he had seen Meckler demonstrating 'the Cat' at the National Student Drama Festival. The fact that he was so struck by it and recalls it so vividly suggest that indirect influence can change direction and go from a vertical transmission, from person to person, to horizontal dissemination, whereby a whole series of individuals can be influenced at one time.

2.2 An anecdote

Before continuing my discussion of Freehold, I would like to recount an anecdote which Rosenberg shared during our interview. In 1968, after the La Mama Plexus venture, he returned to Holstebro to work with Odin Teatret for a second time. What's more, he attended a seminar given by Grotowski and Cieslak. The following year, in 1969, Rosenberg brought with him a dozen actors from the Yale School of Drama. During this second visit to the summer seminar, Rosenberg would sometimes carry out parts of the training he had taught the Yale students in New York and which he had first encountered during his time with Odin Teatret. He confessed: "I was trying to show we had the real training", with the illusion that "if you did these things, if you did the Cat, and the acrobatics, and the voice work, then you would have a good

performer" (Rosenberg, 2008). Upon seeing this, Grotowski stated that he was simply trying to imitate the Teatr Laboratorium, something which Rosenberg did not deny. Grotowski, emphasising that people should be authentic rather than copying a style, then said to Rosenberg: "You look at me and you want to do what I'm doing. I'm doing what I'm doing, and I see so many mistakes and so many problems, that I can't imagine that anybody would want to be like me." (Rosenberg, 2008) Later on, in private, Grotowski suggested to Rosenberg that in order to rid himself of the tendency to copy him and Barba, he "ought to leave the theatre and find myself, and then if I wanted to come back to the theatre then I should" (Rosenberg, 2008)[18]. Although at the time Rosenberg did not consider the full implications of Grotowski's suggestion, it is interesting to see that he eventually did leave theatre altogether. He continued his interest in the body along a different path and is now the director of his own physiotherapy institute in Denmark[19].

Although this anecdote is somewhat peripheral, I believe that it is pertinent for two reasons. On the one hand it illustrates the naivety of alternative companies at this time who, eager to adopt new ways of working, would often misunderstand Grotowski's practice and attempt to copy it. On the other hand, it reinforces Grotowski's own attitudes towards the processes of influence, transmission and dissemination which I have discussed in the first chapter.

3. FREEHOLD AND GROTOWSKI

Throughout this section I will discuss how Freehold was indebted to Grotowski's practice. Of course the only piece of hard evidence I have found to illustrate a tangible connection between them is 'the Cat'. In positioning Meckler's company in relation to Grotowski I am not arguing that the similarities between their approaches are a direct result of this single exercise. Rather I would like to suggest that Freehold's practice is best understood as the British forerunners of a particular Grotowskian line of work. As I will discuss shortly, not only did the company's work feature telling similarities

[18] Of course it is peculiar, in a coincidental way, that Grotowski had given this advice to Rosenberg shortly before his own departure from theatre. For my discussion on the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical activities see chapter VI.

[19] See www.stanleyrosenberg.com

to the Teatr Laboratorium and operate on a model similar to the Polish group, but it actually used some of Grotowski's principles as guiding elements of their training. Although, as stated earlier, there are no materials which specifically document Freehold's processes, I will draw upon reviews, existing scholarship and my interview with Meckler in order to carry out this analysis. As a way of assessing the similarities and differences between Freehold's and Grotowski's work I will touch upon the following areas: emphasis on physicality, ensemble work, rehearsal strategies, choice of themes, and dramaturgical construction.

3.1 Physical approaches

Freehold's productions, specifically the ones directed by Meckler, foregrounded the use of the actors' bodies as flexible means of expression. Reviewers of their work tended to agree that one of the company's strengths was the performers' ability to create arrestingly poetic images out of meticulous combinations of the simplest sounds and movements (Jones, 5th February 1973). Whilst the spoken word, props and scenography were relegated to second place, the body was used as a supersensitive instrument in performance, and was the foundation of the group's devising process. As I will discuss later, Freehold's approach to generating theatrical material for their productions relied upon movement improvisations and physical work. Therefore, this emphasis upon physicality meant the company placed a great deal of importance on training. Even though I have been unable to find any records which describe it at length, Meckler stated that the group would regularly meet to train even when they were not working towards a performance, suggesting that training was seen as an activity in and of itself. Theodore Shank has pointed out that one of Freehold's primary objectives during these sessions was "somewhat like that of Grotowski: an attempt to eliminate the conscious mind between the stimulus and the impulse so as to avoid the mask of clichés" (Shank, 1972:18). As Meckler had stated:

> the whole idea is to work from impulses, not the intellect. (...) I don't mean animalistic, all grunt and groans – you can put across the loftiest thoughts. And if you make an enormous physical and passionate commitment – like a man writing with his guts pouring out – then you've got to communicate. But you've got to have

discipline, or you'll make people sick. (Meckler in *The Times*, 7th May 1970)[20]

Of course Freehold shared this fervour with many other companies at the time. As discussed in the previous chapter this interest in impulse, the non-rational, and direct communication could be seen as manifestations of the late 1960s zeitgeist. Thus, naturally, this cannot be attributed to Grotowski. Nevertheless, what is crucial to note is that Meckler, unlike some of her contemporaries, did have a clear understanding of the importance of discipline in this kind of work. Considering that there is a traceable connection between her and Grotowski I would argue that this aspect of Freehold's work, in particular, should be related to the Teatr Laboratorium.

At the same time, a more specific similarity can be found between Freehold and Grotowski's practice, in that this emphasis upon physicality was not merely balletic or gymnastic, but always involved inner processes. This psychophysical approach was explained to me by Meckler, who connected the interest in pushing the body to its limits with a desire to explore alternate mental states[21]. The use of a heightened physicality was thus, at least in part, a means of investigating the human psyche. However, the company did not ascribe to the American trend, common amongst groups such as the Living Theatre, to over-rely on pure self-exposure (Crouch, 2003:150). In contrast, Freehold's work took a more disciplined approach which involved "exposing yourself through material – or through an image." (Crouch, 2003:150) Of course this kind of psychophysical conception of the actor as well as this particular use of associative work, are remarkably close to Grotowski's practice. Unfortunately there is no hard evidence available that might illustrate the extent to which Grotowski's influence upon Freehold was actually felt, or the particular ways in which it was manifested. For instance, though the group clearly worked within a 'poor' aesthetic, it is difficult to say whether their productions resembled the qualities and nature of the Teatr Laboratorium's performances. For instance the photographs of *Antigone* I mentioned earlier suggest that, whilst Meckler's group clearly relied on the actors' bodies, their physical approach was more overtly stylised and gymnastic than the Teatr Laboratorium's work – at least in that particular production[22]. That said, one must remember that Freehold were working in this way at a time when such

[20] This article, titled 'Yes and Noh', is part of the Traverse Theatre Archive held at the Scottish National Library. Though the date and name of the publication are visible, the name of the author does not appear.

[21] "People were wanting to explore this alternative mental state, and this was a way of achieving it without drugs." (Meckler, 2008a)

[22] See illustrations no.3, no.4, and no.5.

approaches were not very widespread amongst British theatre companies. It is thus particularly telling that Meckler and her actors were actually employing exercises as the foundation of their training which had been developed by Grotowski. To close my analysis of Freehold's emphasis upon physical work I would like to discuss their use of 'the Cat'[23].

Illustration no.3 Freehold's *Antigone*.

Illustration no.4 Freehold's *Antigone*.

[23] For Grotowski's own description of this exercise see Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:37.

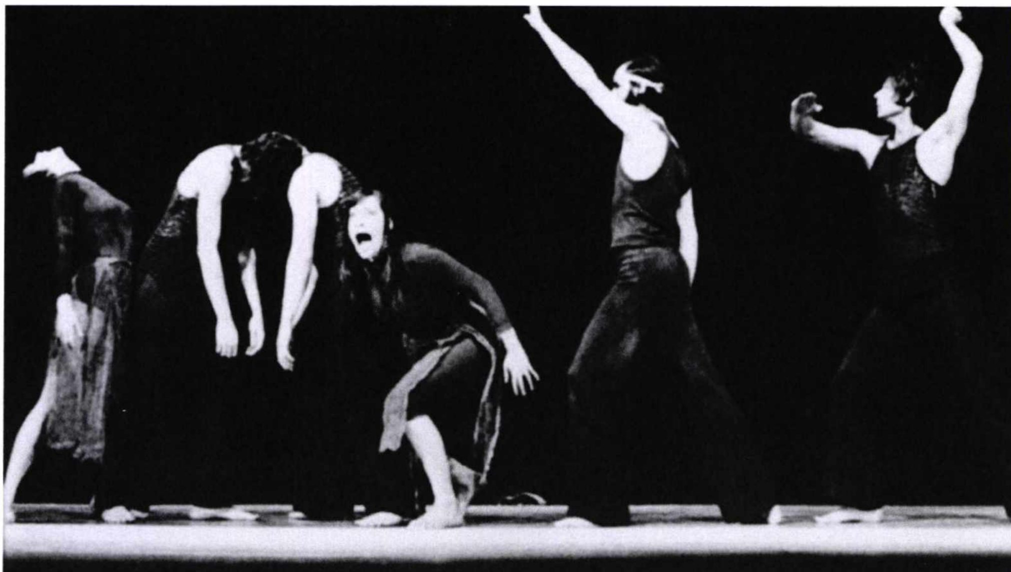

Illustration no.5 Freehold's *Antigone*.

As explained earlier, Meckler was taught this exercise by Stanley Rosenberg who was the indirect link between her, through Barba, with Grotowski. Freehold's use of 'the Cat' has been commented upon by several reviewers and academics[24]. This sequence of stretches was one of the cornerstones of the company's process, in particular during their rehearsals for *Antigone* (Ansorge, 1972:20). What is even more interesting is that, when talking to Ansorge in preparation for his 1972 article, Meckler referred to 'the Cat' as ""more than just an exercise. It's something Freehold *do*."[25] (Ansorge, 1972:18) Unable and unwilling to describe it verbally, she performed it in front of Ansorge, who recounted it as follows:

> She lies face down fully stretched, on the carpet and concentrates. This is followed by an extremely complicated series of movements, legs balanced perilously, feline-like activity – a still and hushed concentration. The phone rings but it doesn't break the concentration. Nancy Meckler jumps up when it's over and says that although I've *seen* the Cat being demonstrated – that's still very different from understanding it. [26] (Ansorge, 1972:18-20)

Meckler's comments to Ansorge about 'the Cat' signal her sophisticated understanding of the technique because she suggests that knowledge can only be attained through doing. Moreover, she did not just conceive it as a source of discipline

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[24] See Ansorge, 1972:18-20; Crouch, 2003:148-149; Rees, 1992:40; Roberts, 1973:102; and Shank, 1972:16.

[25] Ansorge's original emphasis.

[26] Ansorge's original emphasis.

for the body, achieving control and flexibility, but saw it as a means of exploring one's inner life[27]. The psychophysical nature of Freehold's use of 'the Cat' was noted by Shank who, observing the group in rehearsal, commented that, besides its strenuous physicality, 'the Cat' could be used to express many different feelings by concentrating on various images and personal associations (Shank, 1972:16). Furthermore, Meckler had remarked that "there must be some kind of energy it releases which can be used by the group. The level of concentration that a person can achieve doing the Cat can be a criterion for him to judge his own concentration at any given rehearsal. It is the starting point for developing a way of working." (Ansorge, 1972:20) Even though this technique operated in ways which are difficult to rationalise, benefiting both physical and emotional aspects, Meckler refused to "make a big mystical thing out of it" (Ansorge, 1972:20). Her attitude was mirrored by Stephen Rea, one the company's original members:

> We never took it as seriously as he (Grotowski) did. It was a way of preparing the body, based on the movements of the cat, and a way of preparing concentration. Very physical. Americans took it very seriously but Europeans, especially Irish Europeans, were not as entirely po-faced about it as perhaps the Poles were! (...) I never regarded the Cat and our rehearsal methods in Freehold as a religious experience. (Rea in Rees, 1992:40)

With these comments both Meckler and Rea reveal a practical and 'healthy' attitude. Though Freehold took the Teatr Laboratorium as a reference point and were influenced by Grotowski's practice, they did not feel the need to sanctify or venerate him in the way other groups felt inclined to do, as Rosenberg had done earlier. Moreover, as Rea seems to suggest, Freehold did not slavishly copy the Teatr Laboratorium's exercises, but adapted them to their own needs. It could therefore be said that Meckler and her actors did not see Grotowski as a guru figure, central to their own work, but 'simply' a teacher in the craft of theatre. This, of course, could be a consequence of the fact that they did not have a direct connection with him but had been affected indirectly.

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[27] Meckler's understanding of 'the Cat' was also shared by the American practitioner Stephen Wangh. In his book *An Acrobat of the Heart*, Wangh commented: "The Cat acts as a container for your inner life. In other words it is a physical form that evokes thoughts and feelings while at the same time providing safety and permission for their expression. In fact, the Cat is a very strong and a very safe container; there is no thought or feeling that is too powerful for it to hold. Since it keeps your hands and feet rooted to the floor, it creates a vehicle through which even an emotion like rage can be safely expressed. All you need to do is let yourself know what you are feeling while it is happening, and give yourself permission to allow that feeling to inhabit the form." (Wangh, 2000:53-54). For a more detailed account of the specific movements of 'the Cat' see Wangh, 2000:57-60.

3.2 Methodological approaches

Although this subsection is concerned with Freehold's methodology, Meckler admits that she did not have an "intellectually precise method" (Meckler, 2008a). To an extent, this was symptomatic of the open-minded and experimental approaches of the British alternative scene. However, that is not to say that Freehold conducted itself without any coherence. Instead, Meckler led the company according to a number of guiding principles which impregnated their whole way of working.

Firstly, Freehold's rehearsal strategies were shaped by their recognition of the importance of process. This, together with the amount of time dedicated to training, meant that usually the company spent lengthy periods of time to develop and rehearse a performance. This dedication to a prolonged process was seen by several commentators as characteristic of the group's approach[28]. Of course Meckler's company was more prolific, in relation to its lifetime, than the Teatr Laboratorium[29]. This, in part, was a result of the completely different situation regarding public subsidy under which both companies operated. Whilst Grotowski's group, thanks to the support from local authorities, was able to dedicate many months, even years, to develop their pieces, Freehold had to work within a setting where public funding for experimental theatre groups was only in its infancy. Nonetheless, Freehold still took a considerably long time to present their work publicly, at least for British standards. This is clearly illustrated by the following example. When Michael Rudman was directing Freehold's production of de Ghelderode's *Pantagleize* at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh (1971), he found it necessary to request funding from the Scottish Arts Council to cover a total of six weeks of rehearsal rather than the usual three[30]. This is particularly relevant because although Meckler was absent from the company, the group still considered it very important to allow for a longer amount of time than the Traverse was used to. Nevertheless, the six weeks granted by the venue

[28] See Ansorge, 1975:26; Craig, 1980:106; and Shank, 1973:18.
[29] In only five years Freehold created seven main productions, whilst the Teatr Laboratorium produced only nine major pieces in nine years.
[30] From a letter by Michael Rudman (Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre) to Alasdair Skinner (Scottish Arts Council), 26th January1971. This letter is part of the Traverse Theatre Archive held at the Scottish National Library.

fell short of the average three months that Freehold usually dedicated to develop a piece[31].

The second of these guiding principles regarded the group's organisational structure as a creative venture. In its very early stages Freehold attempted to operate entirely without a director. However, this strategy was not felt to be successful because it just amounted to one individual or another imposing his or her ideas on the rest (Shank, 1972:16). Though Meckler eventually became the group's figurehead, Freehold maintained a democratic atmosphere, to the extent that Shank discusses their practice in his article 'Collective Creation' (Shank, 1972:333-31). The company's productions continued to be developed as a team effort (Wright, 1st April 1972). As Meckler stated in an interview with Cathy Turner, "everything was collective, that was the emphasis. Even to the point where when we performed, we never printed what parts the actors were playing." (Meckler in Heddon, 2006:47) The similarities between Meckler's and Grotowski's ensemble approach are only relative, since this was a time when several other companies followed this democratic pattern. Nevertheless, there is a particular resemblance between Freehold and the Teatr Laboratorium because both worked on a similar model, where an individual acted as figurehead to push the rest of the group forwards. Clearly, though led by Grotowski, his group could also be said to be a company that developed its practice and its performances collectively. In fact, Grotowski often resented the way he was too often credited as the sole author of pieces which had instead been jointly created[32]. However, in order to fully assess the similarities between both companies in this regard, it will be necessary to investigate how Freehold operated as a joint venture in more detail.

During her experiences with La Mama Plexus, Meckler had encountered a more democratic way of working, where, as she said "the director was used differently, as a guide or a catalyst, choosing from what people were doing." (Crouch, 2003:144) Freehold's process followed this ethos, and the initial work on a production was largely based upon improvisational situations. In his discussion of the company,

[31] In the case of *Antigone*, this process took approximately fourth months (Shank, 1972:18).

[32] In a written note accompanying the Teatr Laboratorium performances in 1969, Grotowski emphasised that the company was not a 'one-man band'. Dispelling the tendency to singlularly attach his name to the company's work, he stated: "My name is, in fact, only there as a symbol of a group and its work in which are fused all the efforts of my associates." (Grotowski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010) He then went on to clarify that in the Teatr Laboratorium's productions 'next to nothing' was dictated by himself, particularly in the pereparatory stages of the work, and that he should neither seen as the unique source of the exercises and techniques developed by the group.

Shank describes a number of these exercises which he witnessed during one of the group's rehearsals, carried out after a morning's training session (Shank, 1972:16-18). For instance, Meckler would instruct the actors to work in pairs and, starting by only using non-verbal sounds, she would ask them to communicate in a dialogue by expressing simple ideas. In the following step, the couples would then have to continue these conversations through movement only, embodying their thoughts and feelings abstractly in movement, without miming or indicating them in charades. Finally, Meckler would tell them to combine movement and vocalisation (Shank, 1972:16). When it came to developing scenes for a production, the work maintained the spirit of these initial improvisations. For example a strategy which Meckler recounted to me, and which is also explained by Shank (Shank, 1972:18), involved a number of actors exploring a scene they had never worked on before. Rather than learning the text beforehand, somebody would call out one line at a time, and the actors would use this to improvise freely, often in slow motion (Meckler, 2008a). Meckler favoured these approaches because they allowed the group to circumvent an excessive rationalisation of the work. Guided by the preceding psychophysical training sessions, as she stated, the actors would experiment between themselves and create movements or say things "in certain ways that they would have never thought of doing" (Shank, 1972:18). During these improvisations, Nancy Meckler would make notes on those moments which could be developed further. After a certain period of time she would stop the work and have a brief discussion with the actors about what had just been done. "Then the same actors, or perhaps different ones, [would] repeat the process with the same lines but concentrating on those directions or images which in the first attempt, or through discussion, seemed to have the most interesting possibilities." (Shank, 1972:18) As Shank goes on to state, though it was Meckler who guided the actors and selected the elements which would be included in the production, all the members of the group contributed towards the creative process through their structured improvisations (Shank, 1972:18). This strategy for generating, gathering, and working through material is remarkably similar to the way Rosenberg recalled Barba leading his rehearsals with Odin Teatret (Rosenberg, 2008). Therefore it would not be too speculative to state that the approaches used by Rosenberg with La Mama Plexus had come from Barba and thus, indirectly from Grotowski. Though it is difficult to specify the exact ways in which the Teatr Laboratorium generated material in a collective manner, it is well known that Grotowski would often leave his actors to work on their own material and develop

etudes which they would then present to him. Consequently, one can draw an uninterrupted, though changing, line of practice which links, at least to a degree, the creative strategies developed by Grotowski to those Meckler used with Freehold.

3.3 Dramaturgical approaches

The similarities between Freehold and the Teatr Laboratorium extend to Meckler's choice and treatment of dramatic material. As should have become obvious when I briefly discussed the company's productions earlier, Freehold tended to favour plays which tackled universal themes. With the exception of the productions directed by Rees and Rudman in 1971, all other pieces evidence a clear preoccupation with myth. Even *Mary, Mary* (1972), which was based on contemporary issues and explored the actions of a girl-murderess, was primarily focused on more essential questions about the nature of childhood innocence. Ansorge stated that this fascination with myth "owed an undoubted debt to the work of the Open Theatre." (Ansorge, 1975:25) Indeed, Freehold's thematic choices reflected the concerns of sectors amongst the young and idealistic generation which had developed during the late 1960s, and which was interested in topics such as humanity, brotherhood, and truth. These themes, as was noted by some critics, were explored by Freehold with a certain amount of naivety[33]. Though an extensive comparison is not possible due to a lack of records, it is possible to elucidate from reviews that the company's performances did not achieve the level of dramaturgical sophistication reached by the Teatr Laboratorium. Nevertheless, there is a notable similarity between Meckler's and Grotowski's groups with regard to their shared interest in dramatic material. However, it arose for different reasons. Grotowski's attraction to universal works came from his desire to investigate the audience's collective unconscious. As he stated himself: "Every great creator build bridges between the past and himself, between his roots and his being. That is the only sense in which the artist is a priest: *pontifex* in Latin, he who builds bridges." (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:44)[34] Moreover, he envisioned the texts as a scalpel which could be used to delve into the performer's psyche and by

[33] I will go on to discuss this during the section which centres on the company's critical reception.
[34] In his interview with Margaret Croyden, Grotowski went on to emphasise that his choice of plays was determined by the importance he placed upon making a connection with the past, and confronting it to better understand the modern experience. See Croyden in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:83-85.

extension confront spectators with their innermost assumptions (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvi). This dual aim, in turn, led him to develop the psychophysical techniques of expression which came to characterise the Teatr Laboratorium's work. Contrary to this, the reasons for Meckler's interest in tackling such dramatic material could be said to have had a less metaphysical and more theatrical motivation. She was attracted to these plays as a means to explore "the biggest possible emotions about the nature of existence, rather than (...) a reproduction of the mundane." (Crouch, 2003:144) At the same time, Meckler's choices were the result of Freehold's commitment to a physical expression and a particular aesthetic. The texts were seen, primarily, as suitable vehicles for the company's style[35]. Therefore, as Meckler herself seemed to suggest during our interview, the interest in this kind of material arose from an explicit desire to explore a non-literary way of acting. That is not to say however that Freehold did not share some of Grotowski's metaphysical concerns, simply that their reasons for wanting to tackle such themes were also, to a large extent, the result of a search for appropriate material which would suit the theatrical forms they were exploring.

What is more interesting still are the similarities between the Teatr Laboratorium and Freehold's particular use of classical texts. This resemblance in approach, which has been noted by Shank (Shank, 1972:16), is undeniable. As already mentioned, Grotowski's productions took canonical texts as a starting point, which were often part of the Polish Romantic repertoire. Grotowski's aim was not to merely represent these plays but to 'meet' them head on (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:39). Therefore his company would create textual montages, often based on a main source with secondary interpolations, which were structured in order to confront the central themes. As he said himself, the group would eliminate those parts of the text which had little importance for them, rearranging scenes and words according to the logic of their cues (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:44). Though the source material was reshaped in this way, the essential parts – those which carried the sense of the literary work – remained intact and were treated with great respect; otherwise, Grotowski goes on to say, "there would be no meeting" (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:45). Freehold's productions of classical texts also adapted them in a similar fashion. This attitude towards the written word was seen by some commentators as a direct attack on Britain's "most notable stage convention – namely, drama as

[35] For instance, the idea to create a version of *Antigone* came from Meckler's experiences during the La Mama Plexus' workshops on *Oedipus Rex* (Crouch, 2003:148), where Rosenberg had chosen this text as a means to experiment physically.

literature." (Ansorge, 1975:26) However, it is important to note here that the company's more successful work came out of a productive relationship with a literary assistant, particularly when Peter Hulton helped develop their production of *Antigone*, and when Roy Kift wrote *Mary, Mary* with them. As Chambers has noted, "the result was a balance between the physical and the verbal, overcoming British theatre's usual emphasis on the latter while avoiding some of the fringe's obsession with the former." (Craig, 1980:107) This approach began in 1969, when Hulton approached Freehold offering his help as literary advisor on *Antigone*. Originally the company had intended to produce the whole play, but he began to suggest scenes which were not really needed and rewrite certain sections[36]. This work was carried out in a similar fashion to the way in which Grotowski prepared a textual montage beforehand and then continued to develop it with his actors (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:44). Like the Teatr Laboratorium, Freehold did not simply retell a story or illustrate the plot, but rather aimed to explore certain themes. For instance, their version of *Antigone* concentrated on "the interchangeability of the dead Polynices (representing all dead brothers), the kinship of Man and the struggle between social organisation and the love of freedom." (Elsom, 1976:149) Grotowski's adaptations of classical texts relied to a certain extent upon the spatial configuration of the performance area[37]. Whilst Freehold never carried out such experiments, perhaps due to the restrictions placed upon them by the available venues[38], the company's re-workings of the classics followed a visual dramaturgy. As Irving Wardle commented, one of the company's innovations which earned them a leading place amongst experimental groups was their "capacity to evolve a fluent succession of images, each arresting in itself and each leading on to the next in an unbroken line" (Wardle, 2nd March 1972). With their use of movement and stage compositions, Meckler was "trying to blow open texts" (Rea in Rees, 1992:38).

Nevertheless, even though the company did work with some writers and literary advisors, it is very important to note that Freehold did not benefit from working with a

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[36] For example a long speech was transformed into a poem (Meckler, 2008a).

[37] The clearest example of the importance of these spatial arrangements can be seen in the productions of *Kordian* (1962) and *Doctor Faustus* (1963). In the first of these pieces the themes of romantic sacrifice and passionate idealism were scrutinised by setting the action in a madhouse, where the national hero Kordian is represented as the inmate of a mental asylum. Grotowski talked at length about this relationship between space and the confrontation of the play's themes (see Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:39:40). In the case of *Doctor Faustus*, the audience were treated as guests to Faustus' 'last supper' and sat around long tables upon which the actors played. By recounting the central character's live story moments before his final damnation, this central character was portrayed as a saintly figure who had sought martyrdom.

[38] With the exception of their last and minor production (*Three Sisters*, 1973), all of Freehold's productions were created for and performed in traditional settings with proscenium arch theatres.

'Flaszen-figure'. Ludwik Flaszen, a well known literature and theatre critic, worked as literary advisor with the Teatr Laboratorium right from its origins in 1959. Though that was his official role, Grotowski acknowledged the importance of his assistance in the development of their practice: "He is very analytical and he always looks for intellectual and objective formulas. He seeks to clarify explanations and seeks coherence. He is our devil's advocate." (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:38) As Grotowski went on to explain, Flaszen would be invited to sit in during the group's rehearsals and asked to 'attack' incoherent and weak spots. Therefore, it could be stated, and indeed Grotowski seemed to suggest, that the high level of conceptual sophistication and the tight dramaturgy of the Teatr Laboratorium's performances were due, partly, to Flaszen. Lacking such an important figure, it is not entirely surprising that Freehold's productions were uneven. This was particularly pronounced in their versions of *The Duchess of Malfi* (1970) and *Beowulf* (1973). In our interview, Meckler recalled that the challenge posed by the first of these pieces was the density of Webster's text, something which she did not feel the company were able to overcome. Similarly, the company encountered difficulties in their adaptation of the Anglo-Saxon epic even though they had a writer on board. It can thus be said that Freehold were not always successful with regards to achieving an effective relationship with the source texts at the centre of their productions.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise that this part of my analysis differs significantly from the issues I have discussed earlier. Previously I explored the clear and tangible connection between Freehold and Grotowski in terms of their psychophysical approach, the use of certain exercises and principles, and some of their rehearsal strategies. Contrary to this, in regards to Freehold's choice and treatment of dramatic materials, the connection with the Teatr Laboratorium's work is far more tenuous. Moreover, since I have been unable to find any hard evidence to support it, it might even be nonexistent. Nevertheless I considered it pertinent to acknowledge the similarities between Freehold and the Teatr Laboratorium concerning text and dramaturgy because, even though they do not point at a causal relationship, they do suggest a certain affinity between both companies. At least in this respect, Freehold's practice might not have developed in response to Grotowski's work but parallel to it. That said, due to the integrated nature of their work, it is impossible to extricate this from my earlier discussion of Grotowski's influence on Meckler's company.

3.4 Freehold's work, critical reception

In this final subsection I would like to briefly discuss the reception of Freehold's work[39]. This is pertinent for a number of reasons. Firstly, it will further contextualise the company within the British alternative scene. Secondly, I am aware that so far I have mostly talked about the positive impressions of Freehold's work and, since I would not like this to skew my discussion, I feel it is necessary to achieve a certain balance. Finally, and most importantly, discussing the critical responses to the company's work will put into perspective the similarities I have outlined above between Freehold and the Teatr Laboratorium. That is to say, whilst I have established that Meckler and her company had indeed been influenced by Grotowski, I would like to clarify to what extent they achieved the same standards as the Teatr Laboratorium. Though I will not focus entirely on negative impressions, I have structured this subsection according to the two main criticisms that were levelled against Meckler's company: the physical emphasis of their acting, and their unconventional approach to spoken text.

In his review of Freehold's *The Duchess of Malfi*, Allen Wright stated that the company were "drilled to the point of being mechanical, the stamp of a foot being the signal for a change of pace or mood." (Wright, 1st April 1970)[40] He then went on to complain that the actors seemed "like puppets and, no matter how skilfully they are manipulated", they could not express feelings (Wright, 1st April 1970). This would be contradicted two years later by Michael Billington's comments about *Genesis*. In his review, Billington praised Meckler for imposing a strenuous discipline on her actors "without making them look like Gang Show recruits or Gordon Craig Uber-marionettes" (Billington, 5th January 1972). Though he regarded the company's physical emphasis highly, he wondered in a later review of *Mary, Mary* whether Freehold had "evolved a slightly complicated theatrical method for saying fairly straightforward things" (Billington, 2nd March 1972). It is interesting to note that, generally speaking, the productions which received more criticisms are the ones

[39] Before I begin I must acknowledge the fact that this is only a partial account, as I have had access to more reviews of Freehold's later productions than on its early work. This is mainly due to the fact that the collection of original documents which has been a cornerstone of my research on the company was compiled by the Traverse Theatre. Therefore, the reviews I have had access to tend to concentrate on Freehold's works after 1970, when the group established a close relationship with the venue.

[40] I have been unable to determine the publication where this review was printed. However, the fact that the Traverse Theatre Archive also holds later reviews by Allen Wright which appeared in *The Scotsman*, means it might not be too speculative that his critique of Freehold's *The Duchess of Malfi* was also printed in this newspaper.

which Meckler, during our interview, seemed to not be particularly pleased with. On the one hand *Antigone* and *Mary, Mary* were praised by critics for their precision, rapid changes of gear, the fluidity and effectiveness of their images, as well as the actors' skill and dedication. On the other hand, reviews of *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Genesis*, and *Beowulf* criticised Freehold for their overreliance on stylistic innovation. For example, though he recognised the production's choreography and physicality, Lewis McDonald stated that *Genesis* was "at times still smacking of the drama school exercise syndrome." (McDonald, 15th March 1972) What he was probably referring to with this derogative expression was the shouting and furious physical activity which C.S.[41] described as "manifestations of childish impulse" (C.S. 16th March 1972) and which he found tiresome and off-putting. Similar criticisms were written about the company's last touring production, *Beowulf*. Again, reviewers seemed to agree that the group was sacrificing "the mighty drama of the story for the sake of theatrical novelty" (Jones, 5th February 1973). Nevertheless, I cannot help but speculate to what extent the criticisms levelled at the company for being too concerned with style were in fact criticisms about its unconventional approach to performance. Whilst it may have been 'acceptable' that foreign companies presented highly physical work, such as the Teatr Laboratorium or American troupes, I wonder whether critics were somewhat uncomfortable when the actors performing these stylistic experiments were working within British theatre. Ansorge arrived at a similar conclusion when he discussed *Genesis* in relation to Chaikin's production *The Serpent* (1969), stating that the critics' cool reception was not a result of the company's relative lack of expertise. "Rather Freehold's lack of success in the field of myth and legend – also evident in their 1973 adaptation of *Beowulf* – mirrors an important distinction between the English and American views of underground theatre." (Ansorge, 1975:9) As Ansorge went on to explain, basing his argument on the American critic John Lahr, the American avant-garde in the late sixties and early seventies moved away from making direct socio-political statements and concentrated instead on a protean desire to emerge from oneself (Ansorge, 1975:29). This trend was not as popular with reviewers and artists in Britain's politicised cultural climate.

The second criticism most commonly made about Freehold regarded its relationship with written text, and how the company used these sources in

[41] Though in this case I have been able to determine the date of publication of this review (16th March 1972), and the name of the newspaper where it was printed (*Glasgow Herald*), the press cutting does not give the full name of the reviewer, and simply refers to him or her as C.S.

performance. Meckler's group recognised the importance of classical texts in their own practice since they always were an integral part, though secondary to movement, of their creative process. However, critics would often write that the meanings of their productions were in danger of being lost. Two opposite camps developed around this issue: those who condemned Freehold's perceived lack of respect for words, and those who praised the group for combining "physical expressiveness with a respect for language" (Billington, 5th January 1972). The one exception to this divergence was, it seems, *Mary, Mary*. In this case critics seemed to agree that any misgivings regarding the role of the text disappeared with this production (Dawson, 5th March 1972). This was something which earlier commentators noted in the group's first piece, *Antigone*, but it would not be until *Mary, Mary* that critics would again be unanimous about a balanced relationship between words and action (McDonald, 15th March 1972). The disagreements amongst critics I have mentioned before are observable in relation to most of Freehold's productions. This is best illustrated by two reviews of *Genesis*. Where one reviewer saw "conspicuous gaps in the story" (C.S., 16th March 1972), another one noted "dramatic economy and narrative clarity" (Billington, 5th January 1972). Nevertheless, it could be said that the unresolved views critics held in this area of Freehold's work came from a misunderstanding of the nature of their adaptations. In the previous subsection, when discussing the company's choice of themes and relationship to classical texts, I have already stated that their intention was not to reproduce the play but to distil certain themes. For instance, John Peter classed their production of *Antigone* as superb in its picture of the play's elemental emotions:

> The subtler matters of law and equity, Sophocles' ruthless questioning of the nature of rebellion and repression, were quite outside its reach. Nor were Freehold trying to encompass such things. This enterprising and imaginative group work within a limited field; and part of the excitement in watching them perform comes from seeing their combined creative intelligence pushing the boundaries of their chosen idiom slowly outwards. (Peter, 28th January 1972)

Peter's comments about the success of *Antigone* signal a widespread misunderstanding of Freehold's approach, and point towards an obsession with theatre as enacted literature which British critics were only beginning to shake off. Again, the fact that this was one of the only companies in the UK to carry out these textual experiments may have meant that reviewers had different expectations, presuming and demanding an orthodox treatment of classical sources.

Throughout this section I have attempted not to excuse the company of its failings, but to balance positive and negative comments written about Freehold's performances. These criticisms and praise put into perspective the similarities between their practice and that of the Teatr Laboratorium. Therefore I can conclude that partly as a result of their inexperience and naivety, and partly due to the practical difficulties they encountered, Freehold did not convince British reviewers unanimously. Clearly the company's work was inconsistent and, though always well executed, their productions were not always developed to the same degree. Although Meckler's group did follow elements of Grotowski's methodology and were influenced by him in varying degrees, they were clearly not always able to adopt these practices successfully within their own context.

4. CONCLUSION

As Hammond summarised, Freehold created "several brilliant, polished productions [*Antigone* and *Mary, Mary*] as well as other more pretentious, less successful" pieces (Hammond, 1973:39) such as *Genesis* and *Beowulf*. Though they were not always well received by critics, in its short but intense career the company came to be regarded as one of the pioneers of the ensemble approach. More interestingly still, Ansorge stated that they were recognised "as the most successful exponent of 'physical theatre' in England" (Ansorge, 1975:18)[42]. Freehold could therefore be said to be amongst the first wave of experimental groups in the UK to explore unconventional processes and alternative means of expression. However, this mark upon British theatre was not a lasting one and is only faint. "The sense of mysticism, of bringing the body to the point where it can actually 'change shape' and rediscover a lost paradise" free from social tensions did not have an extensive influence (Ansorge, 1975:30). This, Ansorge suggests, is the reason why Freehold's approach and style had a less widespread influence on the mainstream and alternative scenes than the early success of their *Antigone* might have suggested.

[42] As far as I have been able to determine, this is the earliest mention of 'physical theatre' as an umbrella category. With this passing comment Ansorge may have just, inadvertently, coined this infamous term which would be popularised during the early eighties.

Nevertheless, Freehold represents an important point in the history of Grotowski's influence upon the British stage. Of course there are a number of differences between its practice and that of the Teatr Laboratorium, but it can be derived from the evidence I have presented that these are outweighed by certain marked similarities. Furthermore, my discussion of 'the Cat' supports the case that Freehold were indeed influenced by Grotowski. What is more, this chapter has revealed some interesting issues regarding the process of influence. As Chambers has pointed out, throughout the 1960s the US "acted as a channel for many of the mainland European experiments." (Craig, 1980:106) Clearly Meckler's experiences in New York with La Mama Plexus, which had been informed by Rosenberg's work with Barba, corroborate this and suggest a forwards and backwards motion across the Atlantic. This, as I have discussed, had direct implications on the ways in which Grotowski's practice was transmitted and disseminated. At the same time, I would argue, it had an effect on the way in which his influence on Freehold was manifested. I say this because it is important to recognise that the group did not consciously model itself on the Teatr Laboratorium. Even though Meckler used certain techniques and approaches which had originated with Grotowski, the group did not capitalise on this connection. In fact I have not found any reference to him in any of Freehold's press releases or reviews. The only mention of Freehold in relation to the Teatr Laboratorium was a later, academic phenomenon. Whilst Meckler's company could be said to have been working within an emerging Grotowskian line of work, they were not devout disciples. For instance, it is notable that there is a complete lack of his terminology in Freehold's discourse and Meckler's vocabulary; for instance, there is no mention of *via negativa*, holy actor or total act. This suggests that the group did not subscribe to all of Grotowski's intellectual concerns but rather had a more practical outlook. Their main objective was not to follow the Teatr Laboratorium but to produce performances in an experimental way.

Following on from this, it is worth mentioning Freehold's relationship to *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Meckler recalls her and her actors' were interested in the book because, emphasising a process of stripping back extraneous elements and placing the actor at the centre of performance, it presented an alternative. However, Freehold did not use the volume, as many would do later, as a recipe book or a Bible. The fact that Meckler had inherited Grotowski's practices second hand gave her group a certain

amount of critical distance which liberated them from any attempt to directly emulate the Teatr Laboratorium's processes or aesthetics[43]. Instead Freehold developed their own approaches according to a series of principles which had been passed down to them, and which had been heavily shaped by Grotowski's practice. Amongst these, the most important ones were: the group's aim to create a basic human experience which could be shared between audience and performers; their collective means of gathering material through improvisation; and their montages which intended to liberate texts from their period. However, the most notable and evident similarity between the Teatr Laboratorium and Freehold is their shared emphasis upon psychophysical techniques as the basis of their creative process[44]. This could be used as proof that the type of process and channels though which influence takes place has a direct correlation with the nature and extent of that influence. That said, beyond these principles, it is difficult to assess to what extent Grotowski's influence was pervasive throughout the entirety of Freehold's work, not only because there are also some differences between them, but because the only hard evidence I have been able to find about this influence is Freehold's use of 'the Cat'. At any rate, it is important to recognise that Freehold indirectly introduced younger generations to a Grotowskian line of work through workshops like the one delivered at the National Student Drama Festival in 1969, and their yearly tours to alternative venues and university campuses. In conclusion, all that can be stated is that Meckler and her actors were an integral part of the alternative scene; that they were indirectly influenced by Grotowski and were thus one of the first companies to display a number of significant, though relatively indistinct, similarities with the work of the Teatr Laboratorium; and that they were, at least to some degree, instrumental in propagating these innovative approaches amongst theatre practitioners in the UK. Even though a lack of sources makes it impossible to determine to what extent Grotowski's influence was actually felt upon Freehold, their place within the lineage of his influence on British theatre is undeniable.

[43] In our interview, Meckler noted the great influence that Chaikin's Open Theatre had on her since her student days. This became manifest in Freehold's production of *Genesis*, which as I have suggested earlier was indebted to Chaikin's *The Serpent*. In relation to this, Meckler stated "I think when you really adore something you copy it in order to understand it." (Meckler, 2008a) Nevertheless, it is important to note that she did not talk about Grotowski in the same terms, suggesting that she did not 'adore' him as much as Chaikin.

[44] This can be clearly illustrated by stating the basic principles, used by Schechner as a summary, which guided Grotowski's training approach: "(1) to relate the physical to the psychic; (2) to surpass fatigue; (3) to follow one's innermost associations; (4) to avoid 'beauty' and 'gymnastics'." (Grotowski, Schechner & Chwat, 1968:36) In a sense, this could almost be a description of Freehold's training.

Chapter V

TRIPLE ACTION THEATRE

1. INTRODUCTION

Amongst the various case studies in this thesis, Triple Action Theatre[1] covers by far the longest period of time. Between 1968 and 1969 Steven Rumbelow began to work, somewhat informally, with a number of actors and the following year the group was officially formed. Whilst individual performers came and went over the years, Rumbelow continued to work as Triple Action's director until the early 1980s, when growing pressures resulted in his self imposed exile to Canada and thus the end of the company. Since its history spans more than a decade, it is not surprising that Triple Action's work can be divided, roughly speaking, into three stages which chart its development[2]. During the first phase, the company's practice was characterised by an overtly expressionistic and grotesque aesthetic which emphasised visual and compositional elements. In the second stage, which began around 1973, a crucial trip to Wroclaw, an exposure to the Teatr Laboratorium's practice, and an encounter with Barba resulted in a radical change in Triple Action's work. This became particularly manifest in the company's aesthetics, which adopted a 'poorer' and more essential approach. In the final stage, Rumbelow deepened the company's experimentations by developing the findings of their previous research ventures and, more interestingly, veered off into paratheatrical territories with a workshop-event titled *Leap in the Dark.*

The structure of my discussion throughout this chapter will loosely follow the timeline of these three stages. After briefly outlining Triple Action's origins, I will analyse the general characteristics found in their early work and the criticism that it received. Then I will assess the most important moment of change in Triple Action's development and the company's subsequent relationship to Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium. Finally, I will discuss two specific examples of the group's later work,

[1] Hereafter I will refer to this company as Triple Action.
[2] In my interview with him it was Rumbelow himself who used this subdivision when summarising the group's progress.

and some 'internal' criticism on the company's activities based on an interview with ex-member Carole Pluckrose[3].

1.1 Sources

Although Triple Action operated for more than a decade, with extensive national and international tours, there is a relative scarcity of academic reports and analysis of its practice, particularly in comparison to the attention which had been given to Freehold[4]. There are a few exceptions. The first article dedicated entirely to Triple Action was written in 1975 by Ruby Cohn and is particularly useful because it describes a significant amount of the company's pieces (Cohn, 1975:55-62). The second, by Patricia Keeney Smith, was published in 1983 after Rumbelow had left Britain, and thus serves as an overview of the group's entire career (Keeney, 1983:121-124). At the same time, Boleslaw Taborski[5] wrote about Triple Action's work, but he did so focusing on the company's adaptations of Byron's dramatic poems: first in *Byron and the Theatre* (1972) and later in his article 'Byron's Theatre: Private Spleen or Cosmic Revolt, Theatrical Solutions – Stanislavsky to Grotowski' (1981:)[6].

For the most part of this chapter I have had to rely on primary sources which I found at two different collections. The first was a file on Triple Action held at the Arts Council of Great Britain archive, which is housed in the Victoria and Albert Collection at Blythe House, London. Though it consists mainly of administrative documents and production programmes, it does shed some interesting light upon the company's activities. The second was Triple Action's own archive. This collection of

[3] I found a transcript of this interview in the Triple Action archive at the University of Leeds. This document, like other sources on the company, was not fully catalogued. Nevertheless I have been able to confirm that the interviewer was Paul Cowan. See footnote 69 in this chapter.

[4] This seems even more unusual when one considers the similarities between Rumbelow's group and Freehold. Like Meckler's company, Triple Action were praised for their rejection of "the indulgences of trendiness" (McIntyre, 9th March 1972), their use of first-class scripts, and their physical discipline. Even the criticisms levelled by reviewers at both companies, as will become clearer later, are strikingly similar. And yet, for one reason or another, Freehold does have an entry in the history of British theatre whilst Triple Action does not.

[5] Taborski is a Polish writer and scholar who was based in Britain, and translated a number of texts relating to Grotowski into English, for example 'Holiday' (1973) and *On the Road to Active Culture* (1979). This meant he had a close working relationship with Grotowski over many years. For Taborski's discussion of some of his memories and experiences see Taborski, 2008:2-108.

[6] Published in *Byron: Poetry and Politics*, eds. E.A. Stürzl and J. Hogg, Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1981.

various materials (letters, programmes, company minutes and reviews) was handed to the Drama Department at Bretton Hall University by Rumbelow, when he emigrated to Canada in the early 1980s; it is now held at the University of Leeds' Special Collections Department.

The task of constructing a picture of Triple Action's work is complicated by the group's long history and its various phases of development. Moreover, unlike with Meckler's company, there are virtually no records of Rumbelow's training, rehearsal approaches and methodology. One significant exception is *The training of Triple Action Theatre* (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982) which was printed as part of the Dartington College of Arts' *Theatre Papers*. This publication includes Frances Clarke's account of the training which preceded the company's rehearsals for *Solaris* during September 1979, and Simon Coulton's notes on *Leap in the Dark*, a paratheatrically-inspired workshop he attended in December 1980. Nevertheless, since these two testimonies belong to the last stage of Triple Action's history I have not deemed it suitable to base my entire analysis on them. Instead I will only discuss them in the last sections of this chapter. Finally, in order to complement all these primary and secondary sources, I also conducted a lengthy interview with Rumbelow.

1.2 Origins of Triple Action

The origins as well as the early practice of Triple Action are intimately linked with Rumbelow's theatre career. His interest in physically-oriented work started with his first passion, visual arts. As a precocious youngster, Rumbelow was an emerging painter who, having had his own exhibitions during his teenage years, was heading to the Slade School of Fine Art when he was hired by the art department for work on a film written by Charles Wood (Rumbelow, 2008a)[7]. His early experiences with a two-dimensional medium would inform Rumbelow's first theatrical experiments, where the performance was conceived of as a three-dimensional paining in which the actors' bodies were the primary materials for artistic creation. Allegedly, Rumbelow made the imaginative leap from canvas to stage when, watching some rushes, a film strip got stuck in the projector and melted. This led him to the conclusion "that he could

[7] Rumbelow could not recall the title of this film.

'paint' the stage with actors" (Keeney, 1983: 122)[8]. Rumbelow's theatre work started backstage, at the Bristol Old Vic, where a series of accidents led him to go from stagehand to technical stage manager in a period of six weeks. His proper introduction to the world of theatre *per se* came in 1968 when he was offered an assistant's job with the RSC. His first assignment was to simply observe rehearsals for as many productions as possible. The most extraordinary, according to Rumbelow, was Peter Brook's work on *The Tempest* at the Roundhouse (Rumbelow, 2008a)[9]. Terry Hands, then artistic director of the Aldwych Theatre, asked Rumbelow to set up and manage a new studio environment, similar to the venture which developed in Stratford after the 'Theatre of Cruelty' season. Working in an exploratory manner free from commercial pressures, this experimental unit produced several Shakespeare plays as well as a small number of newly written texts. This was Rumbelow's principal formative experience in theatre and in my interview with him, he talked about is as a "clarification" of his previous thoughts on theatre (Rumbelow, 2008a). It was at this time that he met Morgan Sheppard, one of the actors who had worked with Brook on *US* and had participated in Grotowski and Cieslak's workshop. After rehearsals, Sheppard recommended that Rumbelow should read *Towards a Poor Theatre* and, the next day, brought him a copy[10]. Considering his background in visual arts it is not surprising that Rumbelow was, in the first instance, impressed by the photographs of Grotowski's productions. Though at the time he "did not realise they were not descriptive of the work" (Rumbelow, 2008a), these images chimed with Rumbelow's interest in grotesque expressionism and stage composition.

After leaving the RSC Steven Rumbelow gathered a group of actors, some who had followed him from the RSC and some who had joined him from Charles Marrowitz's company, based at the London New Arts Laboratory – which replaced Hayne's Arts Lab when it folded. His aim was to continue the experimental work and training which he had recently been developing. That same year, in 1969, they

[8] Interestingly, during my interview with him, Rumbelow's recollection about the effect that the melting strip of film had on him is rather different. He stated that: "I had this major epiphany, which was that film was art. And the only way I knew how to get into film would be to get into theatre and then switch." (Rumbelow, 2008a) This would seem to suggest that theatre, at that stage, was only an interim step for Rumbelow. However, I would not like to place too much importance on this disparity between statements. If I mention it here, it is not to undermine Rumbelow's credibility, but only because it serves as a perfect illustration of the inherent difficulty and relative unreliability of memory.

[9] Brook had begun work on this production in Paris under the auspices of Jean-Louis Barrault in 1968, but due to the student revolt in May that year he had to relocate the project to London. For a general discussion of the production see Croyden, 1968:125-128.

[10] This meeting, which served as Rumbelow's introduction to Grotowski, is also mentioned by Cohn in his article about Triple Action. See Cohn, 1975: 55.

presented an ambitious staging of *Macbeth*[11], but with its eighteen strong cast "they could not meet expenses, much less support themselves, and they dispersed after the production." (Cohn, 1975:58) However, Rumbelow's resolve to continue his explorations in theatre was firm, and in 1970 he officially formed Triple Action with a smaller group of actors.

2. EARLY WORK

I will begin my analysis by discussing the general traits found in Triple Action's early work, up to 1972, touching upon the company's ethos, aesthetic and training, and its relationship to text, as well as exploring the company's critical reception. Unfortunately, I have not been able to gather any substantial evidence, unlike with Freehold, about Triple Action's methodology. Therefore my arguments will not be based on descriptions of their training and rehearsal approaches but rather will use a variety of indirect accounts, for instance in company documents and promotional materials. Before I continue though, I would like to emphasise that at this early stage, the only traceable connection between Triple Action and the Teatr Laboratorium is the fact that Rumbelow and some of his actors had read *Towards a Poor Theatre*.

2.1 General characteristics

Triple Action's practice can certainly be placed amongst actor-based companies, as defined by Craig (Craig, 1980:25), due to its focus on the performer's work. Nevertheless the company did not appear to follow the democratic approaches used by others, such as Freehold. Rumbelow's background had been as a painter, an individual artist, and therefore he was more inclined towards the notion of the director as auteur. His frequent programme notes seem to confirm this by the way in which he constantly asserts his aims in a strong, individualistic voice.

[11] This production is briefly described by Ruby Cohn. See Cohn: 1975: 57-58.

Although hard evidence of any such practical issues is missing, there are several sources which do provide a picture of Triple Action's ethos in a wider sense. Even from its early stages of development, Rumbelow had always been vocal about his group's views on theatre, producing a significant outpour of pamphlets, brochures and programme notes. Amongst the various statements made by Rumbelow and his company there are two which are particularly telling of their approach to theatre. Firstly, in a brochure advertising their productions for the 1971-72 season, the group declared that their aim is to create pieces which are recognised as a distinct British style. Rumbelow wrote: "Our work is new but not sensational, unequivocal but not didactic or dogmatic. The prime purpose of our highly disciplined nucleus of actors and actresses is to produce a polished and professional form of *British*[12] experimental theatre." (Triple Action Theatre, 1971a:3)[13] This brings me to the second statement, which relates to Triple Action's attitude towards experimentation. In an interview with *Time Out*, Rumbelow described the state of the alternative theatre scene as 'depressing', since "there were a lot of low-budget groups nominally experimenting but in fact just churning out productions." (Rumbelow, 7th January 1972:17) At the same time he rejected theatre as "a soapbox from which political or social themes are propounded." (Triple Action Theatre, 1972:8) Instead, Rumbelow understood experimental practice as a means to "take theatre into different levels of communication where it can contact, through a number of particular instances, the collective consciousness of the audience." (Triple Action Theatre, 1972:8) This emphasis upon the audience was expanded upon by Mahmoud Haridi, Triple Action's assistant director for a few years. In his 'Triple Action and the Empty Relation', printed in a pamphlet for the company's own use, Haridi highlighted the importance of replacing "the increasing emptiness in the relationship between actor and spectator" (Triple Action Theatre, 1971c:2) with a more meaningful one, a significant and 'authentic' connection.

However, it is important to note the tensions between the company's discourse and the realities of their work. I say this because it is somewhat difficult to reconcile Rumbelow's creative values – which emphasised process, commitment and discipline to the point of criticising others for 'churning out productions' – with the fact that

[12] Original emphasis.

[13]This statement is relatively problematic, as I will discuss later, when considering the influence that Grotowski, a Pole, exerted over Triple Action. I will come to assess this issue in my concluding section about the company.

Triple Action was a surprisingly prolific company[14]. As diCenzo warned, it can sometimes be the case that a company deliberately portrays themselves in one way through their own publications and printed material, whilst in fact operating in a different manner. Nevertheless we can already draw some vague parallels between Triple Action's attitude towards experimentation and the ethos of Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium. The extent to which these are tangible or not will become apparent later.

Though there is no recorded footage of Triple Action's productions, the company's aesthetics can be ascertained thanks to a number of existing photographs[15]. These documents suggest a general sparsity in Rumbelow's approach to the *mise-en-scène*: bodies in space. Occasionally his stagings did involve ambitious scenographic elements. For example, Triple Action's first *Hamlet* (1972)[16] took place on a rope-web suspended above the audience's heads. However, even in these instances, the focus was clearly placed upon the actors. In his programmatic 'Seven Points'[17] which serve as a manifesto, Rumbelow emphasised that Triple Action aimed to create an 'unadorned theatre' that dispensed of everything which was merely decorative in favour of the performance itself. The only exception was the expressionistic make-up often worn by the cast. This pared-down aesthetic, in part, arose from Rumbelow's conviction that the spectators' concentration and attention were better suited and more receptive to the visual[18]. His creative process, indebted to his background as a fine artist, would begin with an image that had been suggested to him by a particular play.

[14] On average the group presented three new productions each year.

[15] Photographs of various productions were published in the company's 1972 brochure "Triple Action Theatre, The Classical Theatre of the 1970s". Further pictures, of *The Deformed Transformed*, appear in Taborski's *Byron and the Theatre* (Taborski, 1972: 376-377). See illustration no.6.

[16] For a description of Triple Action's *Hamlet* (1971) see Cohn, 1975: 59-60.

[17] These 'Seven Points' were published as an appendix to "Triple Action, Study No.3, Our Purpose" (Feb. 1971 X); and the following year reappeared in an expanded form as 'Rumbelow's Eight Articles' in the company's brochure "Triple Action Theatre, The Classical Theatre of the 1970s". Both documents can be found in the Arts Council of Great Britain archive.

[18] Another of Rumbelow's 'Seven Points' reads: "The Spectator will listen to 100% of the play but will only hear between 60% and 80%. The Spectator may retain some of what was said but cannot remember the way in which it was said: it is impossible to imagine a sound although one can imagine and remember pictures, words and rythms [sic]. Therefore the production should rest upon visual effect – things which are pleasing to the eye and easy to recreate in the mind: symbolism of movement, lighting and colour is all important." (Rumbelow in Triple Action Theatre, 1971c:5)

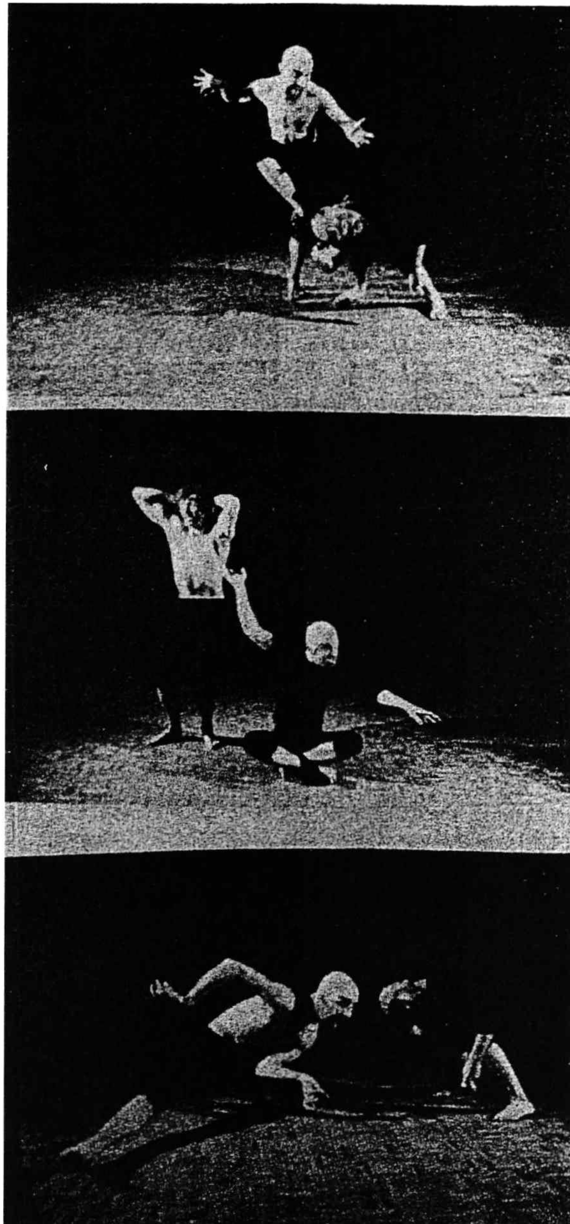

Illustration no.6 Triple Action Theatre's *The Deformed Transformed.*

This stimulus would then be taken into the rehearsals, starting with a workshop period where the company attempted to physicalise the image (Cohn, 1975:59). He understood the actor's body as material. Thus, in order to be "any kind of material" (Rumbelow, 2008a), that is to achieve an utterly expressive flexibility and freedom, Rumbelow placed great physical demands on his actors. Further proof can be found in a programme note for *Julius Caesar* (1971)[19], where Rumbelow wrote:

> The Triple Action Theatre Group was formed not to present a type of theatre but to recreate the essence of theatre. Our technique, if an aesthetic mode may be said to have a technique, is to create a three-dimensional actor in that the actor is inspired

[19] For a brief description of Triple Action's *Julius Caesar* (1971) see Cohn, 1975:58.

> through his participation to move beyond what he considers to be his own physical limitations. The actor may often go beyond the summit of what was thought to be his own personal achievement. (Triple Action Theatre, 1971b)

This notion of surpassing oneself, which only five years earlier had shocked the RSC actors working on *US* when they worked with Grotowski and Cieslak, was one of the cornerstones of Triple Action's practice. As Cohn points out, the actors were subjected to "an amalgam of rigorous exercises derived from Grotowski-type workshops and from Rumbelow's own experience in ballet, boxing, kendo, rugby, and yoga." (Cohn, 1975:55) What is important to recognise here is that the company's training had not been inherited from a single source, but was rather a collage of various techniques. The group met and trained regularly outside the rehearsal schedule, but no specific details of their daily activities survive. Without such evidence it is not possible to elucidate the miscellaneous origins of Triple Action's training. The only document which does make some sort of direct reference to what took place during their working sessions is a list compiled by Rumbelow:

> <u>'Rules of Training'</u>
> 1 Exploration of body control.
> 2 Instinctual human sound production.
> 3 Exploration of sound production other than instinctual or intellectual.
> 4 Exploration of extreme emotional expression.
> 5 Exploration of touch and physical reflections of touch.
> 6 Exploration of sight and physical translation of sight.
> 7 Exploration of music and physical translation of music.
> 8 Exploration of sub-conscious contact and communication.
> 9 Exploration of Stimulus Response and Human Ritual.
> 10 Exploration into application of recognisable visual associations with which the spectator is familiar.
> (Triple Action Theatre, 1972:10)

The usefulness of this list is inevitably limited by its vagueness. Nevertheless it can offer a partial glimpse into Triple Action's approach to training. On the one hand it corroborates what Rumbelow suggested during our interview, that the actors should be as flexible and free as possible in order to maximise their expressive capabilities. On the other hand it evidences the multi-faceted nature of the company's training. Nowadays we have become accustomed to similar approaches, which include the physical and the psychological, the concrete and the abstract. Moreover, it is not

unusual in contemporary theatre practice to apply strategies and techniques which do not strictly come from the world of drama. However, at the time when Triple Action were attempting to formulate a training method which would serve the group's purposes, such experimental and open-minded attitudes were still considered to be radical within the British context.

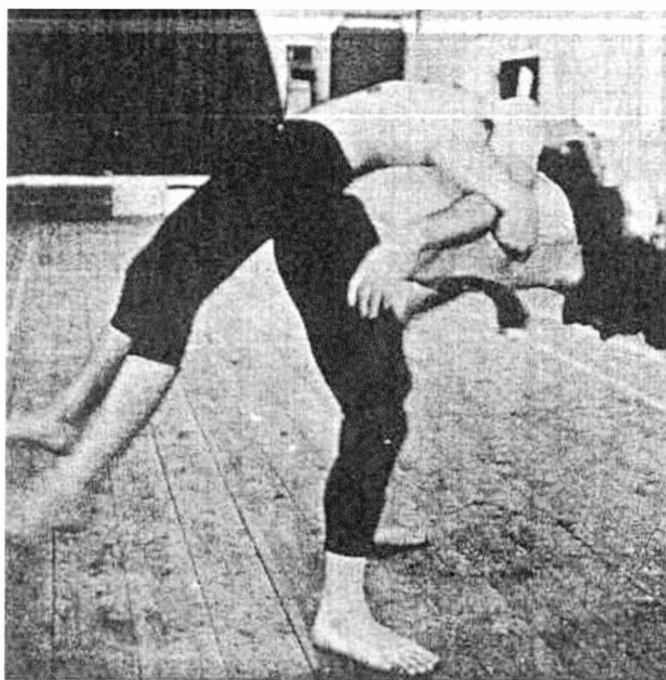

Illustration no.7 Open workshop led by Triple Action Theatre.

Illustration no.8 Open workshop led by Triple Action Theatre.

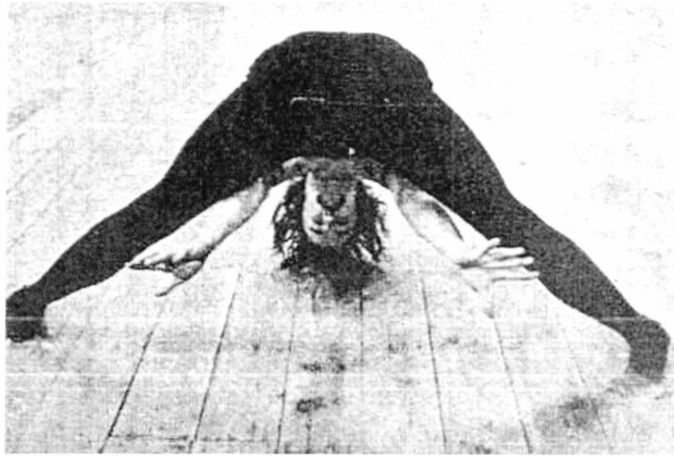

Illustration no.9 Open workshop led by Triple Action Theatre.

Whilst there is no traceable connection between the Teatr Laboratorium and Triple Action at this early stage in their creative development, it is clear that Rumbelow's company was aware of Grotowski, and that this did have a profound effect on them. Bronson Shaw recounts how an encounter with *Towards a Poor Theatre* had led him to question his previous theatre experience, pointing him "to the immense potential of the actor's only vehicle of expression: his body – in which emotion, movement and sound are an organic unity." (Shaw in Triple Action Theatre, 1972:10) Soon after this creative crisis Shaw joined Triple Action, fuelled by a desire to experience a similar working situation in which he "could develope [sic] and learn how far the body could be stretched and what it could teach [him]" (Shaw in Triple Action Theatre, 1972:8). Evidently Triple Action presented itself as an attractive alternative. When Shaw began to work with Rumbelow he experienced an approach which he went on to define as a "tendency to discard rules and conventions and thus obtain complete freedom for artist's self-expression." (Shaw in Triple Action Theatre, 1972:8) Though tempting, it is important not to make a leap in connecting the process described by Shaw and Grotowski's *via negativa*. Both strategies may have been born out of a similar intention, yet there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that Rumbelow and his company's practice was as sophisticated or as conceptually sound as the Teatr Laboratorium's. Though what can be said is that Shaw's statement does seem to echo or have been influenced by Grotowski's propositions for the theatre. The indirect effect that Grotowski had on Triple Action, the way in which they understood their practice, and the discourse through which they articulated it, can be exemplified more clearly by the following statement made by Nigel Watson:

> Real gains are made by learning to translate the pain a stretching movement may cause into a three-dimensional pattern of extreme emotion which the spectator can *see*[20] being physically articulated. Through this continual desire to realize his acting impulses through every source available, to give a little more than he thought possible, the actor is offering the spectator a relationship of invisible energy of sympathy, understanding, or whatever. And the spectator's awareness of being offered this connection has been triggered by sincerity formed into a uniquely theatrical stimulus, through which profound statements on basic universal human themes contrived in classical texts may be transmitted. (Watson in Triple Action Theatre, 1972:8)

Unlike with Shaw's comments, I find it difficult not to make a tenuous link between Watson's statement and Grotowski. In the quote above he does appear to be making direct references to a number of key themes and concepts characteristic of the Teatr Laboratorium: the importance of overcoming psychophysical blocks; the way in which the physical leads to personal and emotional associations; the notion of actors making themselves vulnerable; the concept of the performance as a gift to the audience and the effect this may have upon them.

Such links are tantalising and would suggest that Triple Action's early work had already been influenced, in some way, by Grotowski. Nonetheless, I cannot make such a claim without taking into account the fact that their understanding of Grotowski's practice was rather limited. I say this in regards to some marked differences between them, which can be illustrated with the opening line of 'Rumbelow's Eight Articles'[21]. This 1972 manifesto stated that Triple Action aimed to "destroy Stanislavskian concepts and create a theatrical art which is more suitable for the bases and history of British theatre before 1910." (Triple Action Theatre, 1972:11) Though Rumbelow did not explain what he meant by this[22], the previous year he had already declared 'total war' on Stanislavski. In doing so, Triple Action was deliberately rebelling against the Russian master's "obvious naturalistic narrative" and the way in which he asked the actors "to explain their acting as they do it" (Triple Action Theatre, 1971a:3). Distancing themselves so radically from Stanislavski must have been a means of exerting the group's identity as an alternative

[20] Original emphasis.
[21] These were a second version of the programmatic 'Seven Points' which the company had published the year before. See footnote 17 in this chapter.
[22] Though this notion of 'return' is an interesting one, Rumbelow does not expand upon it nor does he mention it elsewhere.

and experimental company[23]. I have dwelled upon it here momentarily, because I have deemed it important to point out that, although somewhat infatuated with a general notion of the Teatr Laboratorium's work, the members of Triple Action did not have a full understanding of Grotowski's practice and ideas[24].

To conclude my discussion of the general traits found in Triple Action's early work I would like to consider the company's relationship to spoken language and text. As I have already explained, Rumbelow and his actors worked primarily within the realm of the visual and the physical. However, their productions always took classical plays as a starting point. It is therefore somewhat paradoxical that Rumbelow talked about creating a theatre what would become increasingly independent from language and dialogue, where language would eventually become onomatopoeic sound with an immediate capability for communication (Triple Action Theatre, 1971a:5)[25]. As he himself recognised, his choices of dramatic material showed a tendency to favour plays which probed "man's spiritual predicaments", those "full of interrogatives" which spoke of "eternal questions, philosophy and the cosmos" (Rumbelow in Triple Action Theatre, 1971c:4). Though this concern with a universal truth cannot be attributed to Grotowski, some of Rumbelow's statements do seem to echo, or at least run parallel to, Grotowski: "Our purpose is to penitrate [sic]; to dispense with surface incongruities allowing us to see and understand the truth contained in the particular play." (Rumbelow in Triple Action Theatre, 1971c:4) Interestingly, Rumbelow set out to achieve these aims in a similar way to the Teatr Laboratorium's use of classical texts. From the outset, Triple Action's productions were carefully constructed textual montages. In *Manfred* (1970)[26], Byron's play was edited to include some of his poems, especially *The Dream*, and even Edgar Alan Poe's *Silence*. This practice culminated in Triple Action's early career with Rumbelow's second production on the Faustian myth, *The Damnation of Faust* (1972), which was adapted as a duologue between Faust and Mephisto. Moreover, the company's textual experiments were not

[23] Such a reactionary attitude is symptomatic of the creative sensationalism that many groups at the time succumbed to, and is therefore not entirely out of kilter with the zeitgeist.

[24] Later in my discussion of Triple Action's work I will provide a more detailed analysis of the nature of Grotowski's influence upon Rumbelow's company. This naïve misunderstanding regarding Stanislavski will be one of my examples.

[25] When Cohn stated that unlike most 'Artaudian' groups Triple Action had not become anti-verbal, it is because Rumbelow considered that poetic drama provided "the widest scope for varied and rhythmic movement in space" (Cohn, 1975:55). Taborski too, approved of such a strategy saying he considered that the actors' stylised movements were a valid complement to the texts' verse and its rhythmical patterns (Taborski, 1972:376). Moreover, in following this approach, the company was able to evoke the extra-literary and emotive qualities of the text better than more traditional interpretations (Taborski, 1981:377).

[26] For a description of *Manfred* and its critical reception see Taborski, 1972:371-72.

reduced to introducing secondary material into classic plays but went so far as to completely restructuring the plot. Rumbelow's *The Tempest* (1972)[27], for instance, was re-imagined as the fantasy of a wounded and dying Prospero (Cohn, 1975:59). Unfortunately, without access to the company's reworked scripts it is impossible to gauge the extent to which these adaptations were dramaturgically successful.

My primary concern throughout this section has been to give a sense of Triple Action's early work. Although I have made occasional references to Teatr Laboratorium's practice in connection to Triple Action, this does not mean that Rumbelow's approaches stemmed directly from Grotowski. This is not a case of tangible, direct influence. Rather, Triple Action shared some of its concerns and attitudes with the Teatr Laboratorium, though not necessarily its practical methodologies. In fact Grotowski is mentioned by Rumbelow in the introduction to 'Triple Action Theatre, The Classical Theatre of the 1970s', as one of the sources of inspiration for the young company's practice[28]. Rumbelow's choice of words here is an interesting one, talking of inspiration rather than influence[29]. Therefore, my analysis up to this point would seem to imply not a clear and undisrupted line of influence from Grotowski to Rumbelow, but a complex system of murky, overlapping, vague, and parallel resemblances; a picture which is further complicated by the presence of certain misunderstandings and divergences.

2.2 Critical reception

To close my analysis of Triple Action's work up to 1972 I would like to briefly discuss its critical reception. Firstly, though this may seem incidental, I believe it is relevant to take these responses into account as they will provide a further glimpse into the company's creative output. Secondly, as I will explain in a moment, this will shed more light onto the relationship between the company and Grotowski. I have chosen to tackle Triple Action's critical reception in a different section for the sake of clarity, since these views and comments should be treated separately from the company's own discourse.

[27] For a description of Triple Action's *The Tempest* (1971) see Cohn, 1975:59.

[28] Alongside Grotowski, Rumbelow mentions Artaud, Brecht, the Living Theatre and La Mama (Triple Action Theatre, 1972:1).

[29] Similarly, Taborski used the same term when stating that Triple Action were "a young British group which looked, in part, to Grotowski for their inspiration" (Taborski, 1972:368).

The negative reviews of Triple Action's productions all tend to stress the same points. Critics stated that Triple Action's work catered for minority tastes, that actions had a tendency to swamp words, that the constant state of heightened emotion and declamatory style was not suitable in a modern context, and that the plot lines were convoluted and masked by theatrical effects and dramaturgical experiments. The division amongst critics, between those who disregarded and those who praised the company's efforts, can be best illustrated by Irving Wardle's and P. McIntire's reviews of *The Deformed Transformed*[30] when it premiered at London's Roundhouse. Wardle vehemently expressed his dislike of the actors' expressionistic performances stating: "encased in this stylistic Iron Maiden, whatever talents they may have get no chance to appear." (Wardle, 7th March 1972)[31] Contradicting this, McIntire stated that Triple Action represented "much of what is right with experimental theatre" at the time, because they rejected the "indulgences of trendiness" and worked with a high physical discipline on first class scripts (McIntyre, 9th March 1972). These polar opposites seem to clash in an altogether more interesting document which also comments on this performance: an internal, unpublished letter, written the day after the premiere by one of the theatre officers working for the Arts Council of Great Britain, Nicholas Barter[32]. He opens by requesting that someone else go and see Triple Action's work as he himself found it increasingly difficult to assess. Whilst he recognised that this was the most 'integrated and consistent' production by the company he had seen so far, Barter also thought it was 'the most boring'. He recognised that 'undoubtedly' Rumbelow was "earnestly exploring the limitations of physical and vocal flexibility, but the result in this case was a terrible sameness and it lacked the variety of his other productions." (Barter, 3rd March 1972) He also stated that the director still had not "induced sufficient vocal or physical relaxation within his very grotesque style to enable the audience to hear sufficiently clear or concentrate with sufficient ease on a text as dense and rhetorical" (Barter, 3rd March 1972). Clearly Triple Action's performances did not make for easy spectatorship, and its creative aspirations meant that the work remained situated on the fringes of British theatre. At the same time these reviews and comments evidence that the company's

[30] For a description of Triple Action's *The Deformed Transformed* (1972) and its critical review see Taborski, 1972:374-380.
[31] Though not everybody was supportive of their performances, it is worth noting that Triple Action did attract reviewers of the stature of Irving Wardle.
[32] Later in his career Barter would become principal of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. He held this position from 1993 until he retired in 2007.

productions were not flawless. In fact, there is a suggestion that Rumbelow's experimental approach may have been too forceful and, divorced from its native context, may have left audiences bewildered.

The second issue that is worth discussing in relation to Triple Action's critical reception pertains to Grotowski. Although relatively few, a significant number of these early reviews did make a link between the company's work and the Teatr Laboratorium. Since the critics did not go into detail, I can only presume that they did this as a result of Rumbelow's use of pared-down aesthetics, overt physicality, and tendency towards a grotesque style. Whilst Robert Page suggested that Triple Action's work owed much to Grotowski, Ted Whiteread went so far as to say that it derived from him[33]. Other reviewers expanded upon this issue a little further. In his review of *The Deformed Transformed*, David Leigh wrote: "People have been known to wince on hearing the name Grotowski. Here come those tired old twitches again, they say, as the actors prance about."[34] However, he went on to say that Rumbelow's group had "real discipline and a vocal and choreographic polish which gleams not from mannerism, but from their text's recovered insight." It is somewhat unclear whether, in talking about 'wincing', Leigh is referring to Grotowski's company itself or the work of young groups who clumsily copied his 'style'. My interpretation of his words, bearing in mind their context, is that he is making a distinction between Triple Action and other experimental companies working along similar lines. In any case, it is clear that Leigh praised Rumbelow's work. The same cannot be said of Gary O'Connor's comments about Triple Action's production of *The Tempest*:

> The production is mounted in ascetic style obeying the gospel according to Grotowski, who defines in his book 'Towards a Poor Theatre', the code to be followed by the penitential and self-flagellating faithful. Grotowski can bring magic, however, to

[33] I found Page's and Whiteread's reviews as press cuttings in the Triple Action archive held at the University of Leeds. I am unable to give the references for these reviews as the information regarding their publication was not available (they had not been annotated and cut in a way so that the name of the newspaper where they appeared had been lost). However, since they were next to reviews of *The Deformed Transformed* I would imagine that these were reviews of that production too.

[34] Again, I am unable to give the full reference for this review. All the information available is that David Leigh wrote it after attending Triple Action's performance of *The Deformed Transformed* at the Traverse Theatre (Edinburgh) in 1971. The review was part of the same collection of press cut-outs mentioned in the previous footnote.

effects which in lesser hands are clumsy and makeshift. (O'Connor, 1972)[35]

It appears that O'Connor's mockery was not entirely directed towards Grotowski's own work, though of course he seemed to hold some contempt towards him. Rather, his review berated the work of derivative groups. It is telling that, echoing Osinski, he mentioned *Towards a Poor Theatre* as a 'gospel' and a 'code to be followed'. Though of course Grotowski never intended the volume to be read in this way, O'Connor's comments give an indication of how it was used by young companies at the time. For him, Triple Action belonged amongst the 'lesser hands' which attempted to replicate Grotowski's practice but were not able to successfully replicate it. Of course, it is worth mentioning that it is impossible to know the extent to which these critics were familiar with the Teatr Laboratorium or their level of understanding; therefore their comments cannot be taken at face value. Nevertheless, they are a testimony to the fact that Grotowski was indeed part of the cultural currency in circulation at the time, and that Triple Action's work was seen in relation to it, whether positively or negatively.

3. A TURNING POINT

What is possibly the most interesting aspect of Triple Action as a case study, is the developments felt in the company's work after 1973. As Rumbelow acknowledged in our interview, up to that point their productions had been very stylised and leant towards expressionism: the actor's movements were dance-like, the *mise-en-scène* referenced visual artworks, and though the company's aesthetic was simple, with little or no scenography, the performances involved complex lighting rigs. However a series of events that took place between 1972 and 1973, resulted in a change of direction for the company towards a theatre stripped to its bare essence.

[35] Again, I am unable to give the full reference for this review. All the information available is that Gary O'Connor wrote it after attending Triple Action's performance of *The Tempest* at some point in 1972. The review was part of the same collection of press cuttings already mentioned.

3.1 Gravitating towards Grotowski

In 1972, Taborski had attended several performances of *The Deformed Transformed* at London's Roundhouse. Eventually he approached Rumbelow and asked if he had ever worked with Grotowski[36]. Considering them an interesting young British company, with a certain resemblance to the Teatr Laboratorium, Taborski arranged for Triple Action to attend the Wroclaw Student Theatre Festival later that year. Rumbelow describes the experience as a "big eye opener" (Rumbelow, 2008a) due to the impact of encountering the high quality of the work being carried out in Poland, not just Grotowski's but also the productions by younger groups such as Theatre of the Eighth Day and Mysterium. Rumbelow also stated that attending a performance of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* gave him a better sense of what the pictures in *Towards a Poor Theatre* were about. He now began to understand "what a fundamental change in theatre life that work meant" (Rumbelow, 2008a). Certainly these events, which included observing a workshop led by Grotowski, must have made a strong impression on him and the rest of his company. However, the changes in Triple Action's work would begin to explicitly manifest after a further incident. Having met him in Wroclaw the previous year, Rumbelow had a chance meeting with Barba in Bergamo in May 1973, where Odin Teatret was showing *Min Fars Hus*. After the performance, they talked at length. According to Rumbelow, Barba was trying to persuade him to 'throw away' everything he had developed with Triple Action (Rumbelow, 2008a): the carefully constructed stage compositions, the overtly choreographed movements, and particularly any traces of unnecessary adornments. Rumbelow was reluctant because he felt that the company might lose its audience, which had come to respond positively to their visual style. Nevertheless Barba's words seem to have crystallised something in Rumbelow which had begun to take hold since his visit to Poland. From that point onwards, Triple Action took a more essentialist approach, and their work became more 'simple and intense' (Cohn, 1975:61).

Rumbelow had already considered working on Shakespeare's *King Lear* as his next production. He had envisioned a gigantic white beard out of which the characters would emerge (Cohn, 1975:61), but encouraged by Barba, Rumbelow drastically

[36] Rumbelow recounted this anecdote in my interview with him. The two men developed a strong friendship; Taborski even became godfather to Rumbelow's son.

changed his plans. The piece that directly arose from this key moment in the company's development was *Leir Blindi*. Meaning 'blind clay' in Icelandic, this new piece was indeed an adaptation of the Lear story[37], but it was like none of the company's previous works. Rather than using elaborate lighting or carefully arranged stage compositions, the production took place in almost absolute darkness; rather than expressionistic gestures the actors moved in a more fluid way. Not only had Rumbelow been inspired by his conversation with Barba, but seeing *Min Fars Hus* had a direct and tangible effect on Triple Action's new piece and could, to an extent, be said to have 'engendered' it. Without documentary materials such as video footage or photographs, it is impossible to fully assess the extent of the similarities between both productions. Nevertheless, reading Cohn's brief description of *Leir Blindi* in parallel to a review of Odin's *Min Fars Hus*[38], the resemblances are striking. Triple Action moved out of a traditional auditorium and, using a bare room where benches demarcated a small stage area, they performed in close proximity to the audience. This set up, of course, also mirrored the first version of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*[39]. Moreover, and this is something that Rumbelow must have directly taken from Odin's production, the action in *Leir Blindi* was entirely lit by candles or matches, and included a number of traditional songs and abstract vocalisations. Though this might indicate that this production was very close to Odin Teatret's work, when the piece was shown at the Wroclaw Student Theatre Festival in 1973 a number of Polish reviewers placed it in direct relation to Grotowski's practice[40]. Whilst Mirian Sienkiewicz praised Triple Action for its impressive physical technique and excellent vocal work (*Przekroj*, 11th November 1973), others were not so positive. In his article for the Warsaw publication *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, Srokowski acknowledged that the 'Great Spirit' of Grotowski hovered over the entire festival, but that this was especially the case in Triple Action's piece. He then went on to say that Rumbelow "could not leave the enchanted circle of repetitions and technical effects generated by the Theatre Laboratorium" (Srokowski, 18th November 1973). Writing in an earlier, Wroclaw-based publication, Srokowski had been even more critical, stating that the

[37] The programme note to *Leir Blindi* acknowledged the role played by Barba: "it's a very new step for TAT which was inspired by Barba, director of The Odin Teatret and the man who compiled Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre*." (Triple Action Theatre, 1973)

[38] See Carlson, 1973:381-382.

[39] As I will discuss in the next chapter, the later version of this production did not include benches and the audience simply sat on the floor or stood along the walls of the room.

[40] I have taken the following comments from Polish reviews, extracts of which appear translated in a document held at the Triple Action archive held at the University of Leeds.

British company were "repeating the Master's [Grotowski's] technique and stylistics without any logical justification" (Srokowski, 8th November 1973).

Though clearly some Polish commentators were particularly critical of Rumbelow's efforts, Triple Action continued to travel to Wroclaw on a yearly basis to attend and/or perform at the festival, and even toured Poland on more than one occasion[41]. These trips, the contact with Polish work and audiences, and a growing relationship with the Teatr Laboratorium, had a number of tangible effects upon Triple Action. From a practical point of view these visits gave the company a certain kudos and credibility back in the UK. Artistically speaking, they consolidated and strengthened the change in direction prompted by Barba. Considering the extent of this creative shift, it is not surprising that it resulted in an actual shift amongst the company's cast; whilst some members left, others followed Rumbelow into this new territory. The effects of this development were also felt in the way that the company approached texts. This is evidenced in the booklet about their 1974-1975 season, which is divided into two sections: 'Of the past...', 'and the future'. In the latter Rumbelow stated:

> We are not however progressing further than ever before in our history. Since my meetings with Eugenio Barba last year and our experiences when performing in Poland recently we find ourselves moving further away from the text and closer to the theme of a given play. (Rumbelow in Triple Action, 1974a:2)

It was at this time that Triple Action began to change the way in which it adapted classical texts, from a relatively straightforward process of interpretation and editing, to a more radical and freer process of constructing texts and devising around them. For instance, as he stated in the programme note, *Shadows* (1974) was initially conceived by Rumbelow as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* following a similar approach to the one used during the company's early stages. However, the final production was quite different. Rumbelow chose to call this new approach a 'construction'. "The script eventually presented to the actors was a series of stage directions which [he] amplified with language during subsequent rehearsals." (Triple Action Theatre, 1974b) A further example of this new relationship to texts would be *Baptism* (1974), which collaged works by T.S. Eliot, Jacques Prevert, and The Bible with a play that William Dumaresq had written for the company. As Rumbelow

[41] In my interview with Rumbelow he stated that these trips took place every year between 1973 and 1981, becoming a recurring feature in the group's calendar.

explained in the programme note, he provided Dumaresq with a set of images and asked him to write a kind of 'frame-work'. What he produced was a play which Rumbelow did not consider to be appropriate, but Dumaresq's text inspired the ideas that eventually led the company to *Baptism*. Though again it is difficult to be precise about it, this production presented some tantalising links to Grotowski. Firstly, some of the writings used in the textual collage (by T.S. Eliot and the Bible) coincided with some of those in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. Secondly, *Baptism* followed the structure of the Roman Mass and was based on some of its central images; a surprising choice for an experimental British company in the mid 1970s. Finally, in his production note for *Baptism*, Rumbelow's statement seems to echo Grotowski's ideas on 'body memory': the concept of a deep connection to the past, of history as something which is physically within us, leaving traces and gestures that can be 'excavated'.

Finally, the last aspects in which Triple Action was affected by the events of 1973 and the consequent changes in artistic direction related to the company's discourse and its working conditions. Rumbelow, as director, began to articulate his group's practice in terms of a laboratory focused on theatrical research. This new way in which the company understood itself became manifest in such practical areas as its work space. Though every summer the group would go to work in the Yorkshire village of Strensil, it maintained a permanent base in London. However, in 1974, Triple Action moved to a little studio in Newark, Nottinghamshire and converted it into a suitable training and rehearsal facility. Rumbelow acknowledged that this move from the capital, and the particular set up of the new space, had been inspired by the Teatr Laboratorium's base in Wroclaw (Rumbelow, 2008b). After two years, in 1976, the company was approached by the regional council offering the use of the Carnegie Building, a disused library in Mansfield[42]. As Clive Tempest would recognise in his 'Drama Department Show Report' for the Arts Council of England, this new location suited Triple Action in particular because the relative isolation fostered their concentrated and disciplined work (Tempest, 30th March 1979)[43]. As Rumbelow himself stated, the company had not started in this way, but its creative development had progressively led to investigations which "involved work in psychology, communications, behaviourism, anthropology." (Keeney, 1983:123) By the mid 1970s, Triple Action's practice had begun to go beyond the merely theatrical and into

[42] This became the Triple Action International Research Centre. It served as a home for the company, where training, rehearsals and public workshops took place. At the same time Triple Action ran the building as a local arts centre, screening art-house films and hosting productions by touring groups such as People Show, Lumiere and Son, or Forkbeard Fantasy.

[43] This report is based on Triple Action's production of *Titus Andronicus*.

other modes of enquiry. For instance, Rumbelow recounted to me how he developed an interest in trance-like states, shamanic practices, pushing the limits of perception and awareness, and even conducted experimental training routines which followed a twenty-one hour circadian rhythm. Of course these changes and excursions into non-dramatic territory can be closely associated with Grotowski's move into paratheatre and were the result of Triple Action's contact with the Teatr Laboratorium. Indeed, as I will discuss later, Triple Action even began to organise open sessions which approximated a paratheatrical nature[44]. Interestingly, in connection to this, Rumbelow suggests that "Grotowski was nihilistic because he led you out of the theatre" (Rumbelow, 2008a).

To conclude this section, and as a final illustration of this gradual simplification and refinement of Rumbelow's theatre work, I would like to briefly discuss Clive Tempest's Arts Council report on Triple Action's production of *Titus Andronicus* (1979). Tempest began by writing that though he had admired the company's work for many years, he had never really liked it. Nevertheless, in his opinion, this production was certainly the most accomplished one of all those he had seen to date. He simply summarised the piece by saying that it focused on conveying the emotional substance of the play rather than being concerned with Shakespeare's plot. The group, he continued, employed "chunks of Shakespeare's speeches, acrobatics, gestural effects, some grunting and groaning, the by now obligatory flagellatory scene, cunning use of lighting and candle-flame... and so on." (Tempest, 30th March 1979) His report is particularly interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, Tempest's comments stand in stark contrast to Nicholas Barter's 1972 report on *The Deformed Transformed*[45]. Seven years on from Barter's scolding comments, Tempest almost seems to be talking about a different company when listing the three reasons why he valued Triple Action's work: "on the level of pure research into a physical language for theatre, as a remarkably disciplined training ground for actors, as the sole purveyor of a particular form of theatre in England." (Tempest, 30th March 1979) Tempest gives a sense of the quality of the cast's performance when he described them as "exceptionally talented human beings who were extending themselves through performance to enact a ritual before our eyes." (Tempest, 30th March 1979) Secondly,

[44] For a discussion of these activities see subsection 5.2 in this chapter.
[45] See subsection 2.2 in this chapter.

and more importantly in relation to the Teatr Laboratorium's influence on Triple Action, Tempest went on to state:

> Rumbelow's hand-me-downs from Meyerhold and Grotowski can be made to work. It's taken him many years to reach this point of refinement and actor-training.... But now he can integrate with very simple means his conception of a ritual and physical theatre form and his vision of an unfolding drama. He no longer uses theatrical tricks to excessive ends. (Tempest, 30th March 1979)

Clearly, Rumbelow was not exaggerating when he talked about *Leir Blindi* as signalling a major turning point in his artistic vision (Keeney, 1983:122). His and the company's creative journey can be described as a process of distillation, particularly if bearing in mind the notable differences between their adaptation of Lear and the almost baroque *Macbeth* Rumbelow had directed five years earlier (Cohn, 1975:62). What is a key issue in regards to my analysis of Grotowski's influence on the company is that the evidence I have presented strongly suggests that these developments were largely in part due to Triple Action's contact with the Teatr Laboratorium, Barba, and the Polish experimental scene.

4. TRIPLE ACTION AND THE TEATR LABORATORIUM

As I have hinted at in the previous section, Triple Action established links with the Teatr Laboratorium throughout the mid and late 1970s. Rumbelow made a few comments about this in our interview and I was able to corroborate them with some of his company's documents, such as minutes and newsletters, held in the archive at the University of Leeds. Nevertheless, I have not been able to find sufficient information to conduct a full and thorough analysis of this relationship. That said, I do consider it important to briefly outline my findings for two reasons. On the one hand they evidence a direct link between Triple Action and the Teatr Laboratorium, providing further confirmation about the way in which Rumbelow's group was influenced by their contact with the Polish company. They are also an interesting addition, if

somewhat anecdotal, in relation to my history of Grotowski's contact with Britain. The analysis that follows will therefore follow a chronological order.

4.1 The development of a relationship

In the previous section I have already explained that Triple Action travelled to Poland on a yearly basis between 1973 and 1981. Though at first they had only met socially, by the late 1970s Rumbelow and his actors had established a working collaboration with the Teatr Laboratorium. Around 1975[46] they were approached by Zbigniew Cynkutis, who was then running the 'Dostoievski Project', and invited by him to take part. Rumbelow accepted in condition that it should be a co-operative collaboration. In our interview Rumbelow stated that, as a result, both companies carried out a number of exchanges in order to work and learn from each other (the two company members that he recalled coming to the UK were Malgorzata Switek and Jacek Zmyslowski). This contact, Rumbelow went on to say, helped him lead his practice beyond the physical and into more 'exotic' territories. He exemplified this with 'The Flow', an exercise which the members of the Teatr Laboratorium shared with Triple Action and which, curiously, was not that dissimilar to an exercise Rumbelow had himself developed, 'The Horse'[47]. Both exercises did not follow a set formula but were rather loose structures concerned with generating a continuous flow of impulses and movement in the participants. However, Rumbelow recounted that unlike his own exercise, 'The Flow' introduced a 'spiritual' aspect to the work. By this he meant that it was not just focused on physical energies, but with developing an acute awareness. As he said, "you had to be aware of the other movements in the room without being visually aware of them. You had to feel the currents in the room. (...) It meant that you had to open up in more 'spiritual' ways" (Rumbelow, 2008a).

In March 1978, enthused by their growing relationship, Rumbelow's company attempted to organise a workshop at the Open Space (London) with members of the Laboratorium. Unfortunately, a number of practical difficulties (financial and

[46] I cannot be more precise about the exact date because I am relying on Rumbelow's memory. Such recollections, as I have explained elsewhere, cannot be taken as hard evidence.
[47] For Rumbelow's description of 'The Horse' see Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:38-39.

diplomatic) meant this event never took place[48]. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, as I will explain in a moment, Triple Action continued to try and bring the whole of Grotowski's company over to Britain to no avail. However, they successfully hosted individual members of the Polish group. The first visits, of which I have found solid proof, were made by Zmyslowski who led a number of 'vigils'[49]. These took place between 26th November and 10th December 1978 at Triple Action's base in Mansfield, and were part of the first 'Open Seminar' season. As well as these events, which were open to the public, Zmyslowski worked with Rumbelow's company privately.

1979 was possibly the year when Triple Action had most contact with the Teatr Laboratorium. Between August and September that year they had planned a visit from the Polish company to Britain which would have included three performances of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* and two workshops of *Tree of People*. However, delays and limitations in the bureaucratic process meant the Polish authorities did not allow the Teatr Laboratorium to tour any more that year. Somehow though, Rena Mirecka did travel to Mansfield. There, between 3rd and 10th August, she led two sessions of *Tree of People*[50]. After this, Triple Action visited Wroclaw where they worked in private with Cieslak and Cynkutis amongst others[51]. Straight after their trip to Poland, in November, Rumbelow and some members of his group attended a conference in Milan organised by the *Centro di ricerca per il teatro* (Centre for Theatre Research). Titled '*La Frontera del Teatro*' ('The Frontier of Theatre') this was an international meeting of theatre companies who were working along similar lines[52], and which was centred on the figure of Grotowski[53]. Also present at the conference were a number of academics from various fields (psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc). Rumbelow recalled in our interview that the scholars' presence was rather disruptive and that

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[48] Evidence of this attempt can be found in the minutes of Triple Action's company meetings on 16th and 24th January 1978. These documents are held at the Triple Action Archive at University of Leeds library.

[49] I can only presume that this was the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical project *Vigil*, which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

[50] The first session ran between 3rd and 5th August, and the second one between 8th and 10th August 1979 (Jedrychowski, Osinski & Ziolkowski, 2005:155).

[51] This account can be corroborated with the transcript of Carole Pluckrose's interview. See Pluckrose, 1986:5.

[52] As I will discuss in the following chapter this conference was also attended by Jennifer Kumiega and Sandra Reeve.

[53] In my interview with him, Rumbelow recounted that Grotowski had publicly said about him that he was "a catalyst for change". When I asked him what he thought Grotowski meant by this he simply said that he "never tried to figure out the workings of Grotowski's mind", but that he may have been trying to bring Rumbelow "into the fold in a particular way" (Rumbelow, 2008a).

they treated the young groups' work with contempt. As a result, during one of the group discussions Rumbelow made the controversial statement that there were two kinds of people, those that talk and those that do, upon which him and his company got up and left[54]. It would not be too speculative to suggest that Triple Action's confidence in themselves and their work had increased significantly, and that this may have been in part due to their association with Grotowski and his company.

Towards the end of 1979 Rumbelow was involved in a small scandal which involved Poland, politics, Grotowski and international relations. An extract of an internal memo by the Arts Council, dealing with various issues relating to Triple Action, reads as follows:

> 23rd November 1979
> Re: the 'panic' in 'The Stage'
> Steve did in fact smuggle out a letter from a group of Polish dissidents who were imprisoned in their town. These letters appeared in *The Times* and other European papers, one of which leaked the source. *The Stage* falsely linked this with the Polish Government's refusal to allow Grotowski a second tour of Europe. In fact they were simply applying similar regulations to ACGB's. Steve wrote a protest to *The Stage* which, despite promises, they did not print. He has sent copies to the Polish Embassy who have confirmed that they understand his position and that relations between Poland and Triple Action Theatre are as good as ever.[55]

The document, it would seem, makes reference to the failed attempt to bring the Teatr Laboratorium to Britain in September 1979. The memo went on to say that this visit had been postponed to the spring of 1980, and that the British Council had provided Triple Action with the necessary funding[56]. Though the Polish company's visit to Mansfield had been rescheduled to take place between 16th March and 2nd April 1980, it also had to be cancelled. This time the reason was Antoni Jaholkowski's inability to

[54] Though Rumbelow mentioned this in my interview with him, this account can be corroborated with the transcript of Carole Pluckrose's interview. See Pluckrose, 1986:5.

[55] This document is held in the Arts Council of Great Britain archive.

[56] Moreover, there is a suggestion that the Arts Council had inquired whether the number of performances could be increased, or that the Teatr Laboratorium might even present their work elsewhere in the UK: "There is no possibility of any other British bookings because Grotowski's company do very few performances, but they hope to come to Britain on a second visit. Already the visit is almost booked out by interested parties and this is all excellent publicity for Triple Action. The Company are taking out a week from their Touring schedule for preparations." (Arts Council of Great Britain, internal memo, 23rd November 1979)

perform owing to his ill health[57]. Nevertheless, in October of that year, Triple Action travelled to Toronto (Canada). There they participated with Grotowski in a special weekend of experimental theatre at York University, performing their latest piece *Ulysses* (Keeny, 1983:121). In my interview with him, Rumbelow stated that Don Rubin, the organiser, had invited Grotowski to bring *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* to the event. However, since the Teatr Laboratorium no longer performed the piece, Rubin asked Grotowski to recommend a company that might be close in spirit to his own work. According to Rumberlow, Grotowski then suggested Triple Action. Whether this was the case or not, this visit to Canada marked the start of the company's relationship with North America, where they returned for three years and presented various new pieces until the group disbanded in 1983.

Triple Action's plans to arrange a visit by the Teatr Laboratorium, which would have included a performance of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, were finally abandoned in 1981. A note in the company's minutes on 24th January that year stated: "It now seemed unlikely that Grotowski would be visiting Britain." (Triple Action Theatre, 1981)

5. LATER WORK

I have already given some indication of how Triple Action was affected by their contact with the Teatr Laboratorium. In this section I will focus on some specific aspects of the company's later work which demonstrate the ways in which their practice was influenced by Grotowski.

5.1 In rehearsal

Firstly, I would like to briefly discuss the notes produced by Frances Clarke, throughout September 1979, when she attended Triple Action's work on a new piece,

[57] Evidence of this misfortune can be found in the minutes of one of Triple Action's company meetings on 21st July 1980. Antoni Jaholkowski eventually died in September 1981.

Solaris[58]. My focus will particularly be on the week of intense training which preceded the rehearsals *per se*. At first glance, what is striking is the way in which the company's ethos had developed and refined since its early work. This was manifested in the way Rumbelow conducted these training sessions: one exercise would lead seamlessly into the next, explanations were sparse, and there was no intellectualisation of the work. The extreme physical effort required by the exercises, Rumbelow now understood, served a specific purpose in allowing no time for self-conscious reflection. To this end, the sessions would last many long hours, often into the night, and the company would occasionally live (eat and sleep) in a studio environment (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:38). As Rumbelow explained:

> fatigue is quite a good mechanic here, because fatigue helps to stop us thinking too hard about the processes involved, about working retrospectively, analysing our work after we've done it as opposed to pre-determining the exercise. If we are going to learn something from ourselves which is bordering on the subconscious we must allow the body freedom to surprise the head and the brain. (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:38)

Moreover, he had gained an awareness of the dangers of sliding into improvisation and self-indulgence. Demanding absolute commitment and concentration from his actors, Rumbelow would tell them "to be wary of anything that is coming too easily." (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:11) This attitude was intrinsically linked to Triple Action's new approach to physical work. Having moved away from an over-stylised, grotesque and expressionistic technique, the company was now aiming to create movement that was more alive: following an impulse, originating from a sense of centre, and performing according to an organic realignment of the body. This development can be illustrated by a simple exercise whereby Rumbelow asked the cast to throw a punch; they were then asked to repeat it again following the movement's natural flow by starting at the shoulder (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:7). What is more, Triple Action's practice now went beyond the merely physical. Clarke gives evidence several times when the group's work on gesture and movement was complemented by an ongoing and 'inward' investigation. In an exercise which is too lengthy to be described here, Rumbelow asked his actors to consider the ways in which they use various ploys to mask their true emotions, and to use this as a starting point to explore their movements and relationships to each other (Rumbelow &

[58] These notes were published in Rumbelow's and Clarke's *The Training of Triple Action Theatre*, ed. Peter Hulton, *Theatre Papers*, Dartington College of Arts, 1982, Dartington.

Clarke, 1982:10). In a further exercise, the actors were instructed to carry out a series of full body gestures and movement cycles whilst, at the same time, quietly reciting a prayer of their choice; Rumbelow then encouraged them to find 'emotional feedback' within themselves (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:13). This work, at the intersection between text, physicality, and personal associations, suggests that Triple Action had developed a psychophysical understanding of the training and creative process. Clarke's summary of Rumbelow's objectives in carrying out this training with the company corroborated this. Besides improving the actors' stamina and strength, Clarke notes a desire to develop in them an awareness of each other's presence. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, Clarke states that Rumbelow wanted to instil in them "a process of self-analysis, a scrupulous search for honesty, which would be, via the work, the source of a process of psychological development" (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:15-16)

Though I have not been able to find any reviews of *Solaris*, it is mentioned in an internal memo from the Arts Council. The author, only identified as S.E., questions Triple Action's outcome: not only did the company only produce one piece in the 1979-80 season, but he or she stated that the production was "esoteric in appeal and has been accused of pretentiousness and certainly of an inability to communicate – even to people with knowledge of Grotowski and Performance Art" (S.E., 19th March 1980).

5.2 Towards paratheatre

Secondly, I would like to briefly discuss Triple Action's activities which were on the borders of performance[59]. The move beyond physical work which I have just talked about was accompanied by an exploration of territories beyond traditional theatre practice. These practices were developed by Rumbelow and the company during the late 1970s as part of their own creative process. Some of them, such as spending prolonged periods of time blindfolded and conducting candle-lit vigils, were described by Clarke as being the culmination of the week leading up to the rehearsals for *Solaris*

[59] Of course, since this development in the company's practice was heavily influenced by the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatre, it might have been more appropriate to discuss it in the following chapter which will focus directly on Grotowski's new practice. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity and to provide an unbroken analysis of Triple Action's work, I have chosen to discuss this here.

(Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:15-23); others, such as the exercises designed to reveal in which ways the performers 'cover-up' their selves[60] played a more integral part in the company's training. In 1979, Triple Action opened up this process to a wider number of participants by organising sessions titled *Leap in the Dark*. As Rumbelow explains, these workshops grew out of his field trips to Mexico where he came into contact with shamans (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:36). The aims behind *Leap in the Dark* were to translate the shamanic experience into a 'modern psychological role' while at the same time decrying the West's 'destructive logic' and overindustrialisation, helping "people to have a glimpse of a first hand experience in what Meyerhold might call an innate capacity for reflex activity." (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:36) Even though Triple Action always kept a foot in the world of theatre, it is clear that the Teatr Laboratorium's own journey into paratheatre influenced Rumbelow's group. Rumbelow's aims in 'tapping a creative energy source' were certainly ambitious. The exercises carried out, he said, would give the participants "something which is akin to enlightenment (…) This enlightenment firstly is important for the person who is participating for himself, and secondly is important for the creative artist." (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:43) These sessions approximated the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical activities not only in their length and structure, but also because they did not distinguish between spectators and participants. Rumbelow considered that even if there was no way of putting this work on stage it was just as valid carried out with a small group of people in private (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:43). Nonetheless, as I mentioned earlier, *Leap in the Dark* was only relatively paratheatrical because it was still concerned in a large part with questions of dramatic craft. For instance, participants were introduced to the exercise which I have already discussed, where a piece of text – a poem or a prayer – is used as a means to explore the intersections between movement, speech, and personal associations (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:29). The one part of *Leap in the Dark* which can be said to be less related to theatre and closer to the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical activities was 'The Flow'[61]. Participants were blindfolded for several hours, and after a frantically physical movement session indoors they were then taken to the countryside where the exploration continued by moonlight (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:33-34).

[60] For Rumbelow's description of 'The Cover Up' see Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:39-40. Interestingly, this exercise does bear some resemblance to the one carried our by Grotowski with the RSC cast of *US* in 1966 (see chapter II, subsection 3.4).
[61] I have to emphasise that this is not 'The Flow' which had been developed by the Teatr Laboratorium and which Triple Action learnt during their work exchanges with the Polish company; it just happens that Rumbelow chose the same name for the exercise.

My analysis of *Leap in the Dark*, it should be said, is based on Simon Coulton's account[62]. His log was written during the five days of intense work; breaks were few and participants were allowed to use a number of theoretical seminars as periods for rest (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:26)[63]. As Coulton acknowledges, his description of *Leap in the Dark* is highly subjective and is limited by fatigue, excitement, and the experiential nature of the sessions (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:25)[64]. Coulton begins by recounting how, at the start of the first day, the participants were asked to take a vow of silence and engage with total honesty (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:26). He then presents us with a series of personal notes that follow the work day by day. Roughly speaking, the exercises carried out during *Leap in the Dark* fall within two broad categories. On the one hand, there were those which, working physically with different energies, focused on generating a stream of movement and impulses. 'The Horse', 'The God Exercise' and the culmination of the workshop, 'The Flow', can all be said to belong to this category. On the other hand, there were those exercises which were more directly aimed at uncovering the participants' emotional processes, clichés and psycho-sociological make up. These inwardly-directed exercises were 'The Cover Up', 'The Slap', and the exercise where participants were instructed to perform a private act in front of the group[65]. Nevertheless such a distinction is entirely artificial, as the physically orientated exercises always involved a degree of inward exploration[66]. This combination of 'inner' and 'exterior' work can be illustrated by the following example. During one of the first sessions the participants walked around a room. Slowly, and always responding to each other as if each person was a current in a river, they would begin to explore their capability for moving freely and without thought for hours. Coulton's notes describe Rumbelow's instructions to the participants and it is these that I find most interesting: they were asked to try and identify, at all points, the origins of their movements in their own past; they were warned of the inevitability of clichés but encouraged to develop an awareness of these

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[62] Coulton participated in *Leap in the Dark* between 14th and 19th December 1980. His notes were published in Rumbelow and Clarke's *The Training of Triple Action Theatre*, ed. Peter Hulton, *Theatre Papers*, Dartington College of Arts, 1982, Dartington.

[63] There were three such seminars throughout the five days: one on Meyerhold, one on Grotowski, and one on Artaud. Presumably these were all delivered by Rumbelow himself.

[64] This point is emphasised by the fact that his log was published in handwritten form rather than being typed.

[65] A brief description of all the exercises I mention here, and which were carried out as part of *Leap in the Dark* can be found, in the order in which they were performed, in Rumbelow's closing section. See Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:36-44.

[66] If I have used such a crude distinction here it is only to give a sense of the various aspects of the work that was carried out.

in order to surpass them. Moreover, and this is rather telling, Rumbelow stressed that participants should aim towards a sense of 'emptiness' and, without ego, they should no longer be working for a spectator[67]. In particular, Coulton notes that whilst participants should remain open to the changing rhythms in the group, such changes should not be imposed forcefully as this would be "contrary to the idea of emptiness/egolessness" (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:27). Rumbelow's emphasis on achieving such a state of passive readiness could be said to echo the Teatr Laboratorium's aspirations. Though of course Rumbelow talked in different terms and approached the issue from a different angle, similarly curious parallels can be seen between Grotowski's notion of the 'social mask' and Triple Action's attempt to develop a self-awareness of each participant's social clichés.

Considering the experiential nature of *Leap in the Dark*, it seems to be fitting that I end this section with one of Coulton's accounts. This is how he described his experience of the third day of physical work:

> I began for the first time in my life to enter a state of pure ecstasy through movement. I do not know if the state I entered could be called trance, but I feel I entered an unknown. My body moved totally independently of any other influence – vigorously – I do not know for how long. (...) There was a force inside me, an energy, a power, a closeness to something divine. (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:31)

The similarities between Coulton's account and the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical activities will become even clearer when I focus on the latter in the next chapter. For now it will suffice to emphasise four words: ecstasy, trance, energy, and divine.

6. THE SCORPION'S STING

I am aware that so far my analysis of Triple Action's practice has not been overtly critical. This is primarily due to a lack of original sources which provide a deeper

[67] Coulton quotes Rumbelow: "There is nothing to prove to anyone but yourself: it is to yourself that you have to be honest." (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:27)

assessment of the company's shortcomings. Moreover, I have not considered it appropriate to pass judgement on their work simply on the scant information I have been able to gather. Nevertheless, there is one primary document which presents a critical view of Rumbelow's final phase of work. I am referring to the interview given by Carole Pluckrose[68] on 11th June 1986[69]. She had joined the company in 1979, after her studies at Exeter University, when she was just 21 years old, as part of the new cast assembled by Rumbelow for *Solaris*. Though Pluckrose must have only worked with Triple Action for approximately four years[70], her comments are certainly insightful because she casts a retrospective glance on her time with the company. Of course that is not to say that I will base my entire argument on her words, but rather I am using them to put into perspective what I have discussed so far. I have ordered the criticisms she levels against Rumbelow into four categories: those concerning him as a director, his approach to theatre craft, the company's set-up, and Rumbelow's relationship to Grotowski.

First of all it has to be stated that Pluckrose deeply respected Rumbelow as an artist and a mentor. She said: "it's a very complicated thing to talk about my relationship with Steve because there are some incredibly positive things that have made me much more a creative person." (Pluckrose, 1986: 16) For instance, having worked with both, she considered that Rumbelow was more successful in imparting practical knowledge than Cieslak (Pluckrose, 1986:5). Her ambivalent relationship with Rumbelow is probably best illustrated with the following anecdote. Pluckrose recalled that despite his relentless attitude, there came a point where the actors would naturally 'cut-off', something he considered totally dishonest. Then she said, he would "call a double bluff" (Pluckrose, 1986:3). Saying that "nobody knows when the shaman is shamming and when the shaman is for real" (Pluckrose, 1986:3), he would encourage actors to keep on going, even if their hearts were not in it. "If you can't give me the emotional commitment that I'm trying to work you up into" he would say, "give it to me physically" (Pluckrose, 1986:3). As she then goes on to recognise,

[68] Pluckrose would later found the Arc Theatre in Barking with Clifford Oliver in 1984. She is now the company's Chief Executive Officer and Artistic Director. www.arctheatre.com

[69] The transcript of this interview is part of the Triple Action archive at the University of Leeds. The document is riddled with spelling mistakes. For the sake of clarity, when quoting from it, I have decided to correct these. The interviewer's name is only referred to as PC in the transcript, but Pluckrose later confirmed in our email correspondence (Pluckrose, 2008b), that she had been interviewed by Paul Cowan, a lecturer at Bretton Hall University.

[70] I was able to deduce that Pluckrose worked with Triple Action until 1982 because she describes *Bridal Polonaise*, a piece which was created that same year. She confirmed this in our later email correspondence (Pluckrose, 2008a).

Rumbelow was merely bypassing the actors' defence mechanisms because, in the end, he would achieve the same effect. From this we can gauge that Pluckrose held Rumbelow in high regard; and yet with time she came to be sceptical of some of his methods.

With regards to him as a director of a theatre company, Pluckrose said that Rumbelow was "not interested in relationships" (Pluckrose, 1986: 1). Rather than allowing his performers to make true contact with each other, he would maintain "a sort of web-like relationship" (Pluckrose, 1986: 1) whereby individuals had connections with him, but not amongst themselves: "we weren't allowed to live autonomously on stage without him, he was there, holding the reins" (Pluckrose, 1986: 1). Along similar lines, Pluckrose goes on to criticise the way in which Rumbelow led some of the company's exercises involving psychological and emotional explorations, which contradicts what Rumbelow himself had written on this topic. Talking about exercises which induced a trance-like state, he had stated that "the motivator needs to present a non egotistical view of the work, to see the work as something separate from the motivator, because if the motivator doesn't do that the student shaman is going to end up beating his brains out on the floor, with the motivator geeing him on" (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:43). Some of the exercises developed by Triple Action in the late 1970s – particularly 'The Cover Up' and 'The Slap'[71] – would certainly require a gentle and trusting relationship between the work leader and the participants. Though Rumbelow seemed to acknowledge this in his writing, Pluckrose's recollections would indicate that this was not always the case. An example would be 'The God Exercise', part of *Leap in the Dark*[72], which required participants to bring 'God' into the room and aimed to induce a trance-like state[73]. In one particular instance, Pluckrose recalled that this exercise became almost dangerous: a girl went into a severe fit, people started hurting themselves, and "the whole room turned into something completely violent, it was a sort of war"

[71] These exercises are described by Rumbelow himself elsewhere. For 'The Cover Up' see Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:439-40. For 'The Slap' see Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:40-41. Nevertheless, for the sake of my argument, I will briefly outline the latter as an example. Two participants face one another and are told that the exercise will finish when one person slaps the other across the face as hard as he or she can. At the same time they are instructed to analyse their own emotional processes. As Rumbelow himself recognised "it is a very heavy exercise and people have been known to stand opposite one another going through emotional turmoil (...) for five or six hours" (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:40).
[72] In regards to *Leap in the Dark*, Pluckrose said that these workshops were conceived merely as a money-making scheme, which did indeed prove to be rather lucrative. With time the workshops lost their exploratory and experimental drive and became a repetitive pattern. (Pluckrose, 1986: 10)
[73] For Rumbelow's description of this exercise see Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:42.

(Pluckrose, 1986:11). Whilst things got progressively out of hand Rumbelow just sat, smiled, and observed with gratification; "he pushed it, and the more it got crazy, the more he pushed it, and pushed it, and pushed it" (Pluckrose, 1986:11). It was at this point that Pluckrose concluded that although such work was very interesting and did not necessarily have to be detrimental, it could potentially cause psychological damage because participants in such a vulnerable state could be easily manipulated and misled (Pluckrose, 1986:12).

With regards to some basic elements of theatre craft, Pluckrose criticised Rumbelow's attitude towards the audience, text, and Stanislavski. When asked by her interviewer whether Triple Action attempted to create a kind of communion between the performers and the audience, she states that this was only true on an intellectual level. In actuality, she said, Rumbelow viewed audiences with contempt. "His notion of theatre was the same as art to the painter, a purist, who does his work and then presents it." (Pluckrose, 1986:13) Whilst he did not respect the audience, Rumbelow "cared about what the press thought, or who was going to book it next" (Pluckrose, 1986:13). This was something which had already been noted by Irving Wardle in his 1970 review of *The Deformed Transformed* where he berated Triple Action for their shameless self-promotion and Rumbelow's 'personality cult' (Taborski, 1972:376). Not only did Rumbelow not care about the audience, but Pluckrose goes on to question the extent to which he was concerned with the experience of the actors. Comparing him to Gordon Craig, she stated that Rumbelow's primary concern was still visual composition and 'painting with people'. This resonates with one of her first comments at the start of the interview with regards to text. "What Triple Action was aiming to do was to actually externalise the internal through image, to find a large grotesque physicality and, with a complete disrespect for language." (Pluckrose, 1986:1) Since any work on the text was left for the performers to carry out on their own, Pluckrose concluded, there was an inevitable lack of clarity in their productions. This overt emphasis on the visual aspect of the work meant that Rumbelow had a tendency to work "outside-in" (Pluckrose, 1986:2). Whilst the company's productions were astonishing visual compositions, there was "no heart in it" (Pluckrose, 1986:1). Expanding upon this criticism, Pluckrose goes on to say that during the workshop and rehearsal period there was a focus on emotion, but once a piece reached its production stage this shifted sharply towards technique and being able to recreate an emotion without necessarily any kind of psychological background. These issues stemmed

from Rumbelow's intense dislike of anything which approximated naturalism. As I have demonstrated previously, in the early 1970s Rumbelow completely disregarded Stanislavski and failed to see a link between him, Meyerhold, and Grotowski. Though it is unclear from Pluckrose's account whether this was still the case in the company's later work, she did make this connection herself and talked about it as a generative process whereby one creative development leads to the next. Not only this but:

> it's a process you can't just pick up and plum out and take it out of context, which is where I think finally Triple Action's work falls down. Because it doesn't realise itself within the context of a greater tradition. (Pluckrose, 1986:6)

If Pluckrose would have been talking in the early 1970s, many of these comments would not seem unusual. As previously discussed, Triple Action's work up to 1973 was over-stylised, anti-textual, and decried any connection with Stanislavski. Since Pluckrose only joined the company in 1979 this would therefore imply that some of Rumbelow's shortcomings had not improved. What is surprising is that this had been the case despite the passage of time or even the contact with the Teatr Laboratorium. For now, I can only state that Grotowski's influence upon Rumbelow is clearly not as straightforward as it may have appeared.

Pluckrose's criticism of the way in which Triple Action operated concerns, firstly, Rumbelow's leadership of the company. When she entered the company she thought she was joining the Teatr Laboratorium, and allegedly Rumbelow "played it like that too, because of all the connections with Poland." (Pluckrose, 1986:4) When asked by the interviewer whether there was a typical Triple Action performer, Pluckrose said that members would normally be quite young, under twenty-five, eager and devoted. "They wanted a monastic kind of training. They wanted to be ultimately fit, ultimately extended physically, emotionally, vocally. They wanted to be taken." (Pluckrose, 1986:19) Becoming a member was for Pluckrose like entering a nunnery. Rumbelow disapproved of members going home during the weekends, and so there was very little room for a private life (Pluckrose, 1986:14). As a result, whilst the company did have a very creative quality, at other points it could be quite oppressive (Pluckrose, 1986:15). Secondly, Pluckrose problematised Rumbelow's dogmatic attitude. Not only did Rumbelow make his actors believe that this was the only acceptable way of working, but he could not cope with being challenged: "if you challenged Steve you

were told that you weren't committed. Like religion." (Pluckrose, 1986:16) Moreover, she went so far as describing his relationship with the members of the company as being slightly vampiric in nature; taking on board young members and exploiting their enthusiasm, Rumbelow would slowly drain them of their energy for the benefit of the work (Pluckrose, 1986:15-16). As she said in her own words: "It was exhilarating and you push yourself through self-punitive things in order to achieve this kind of Nirvana (...) the ultimate *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* sort of experience, and I believed it, I bought it hook, line and sinker." (Pluckrose, 1986:4)

Finally, some of Pluckrose's criticisms towards Rumbelow have interesting implications with regards to his relationship with Grotowski because she suggests that Rumbelow had a tendency to over-emphasise his working association with the Teatr Laboratorium. Though I have not been able to find any hard evidence that Rumbelow did indeed exaggerate the extent of this relationship with the Polish company, it is curious that in a press release Triple Action defines itself as an active 'representative' of the Teatr Laboratorium in the UK, going on to say that it was also involved in distributing *On the Road to Active Culture* (Triple Action Theatre, 1979). As I will discuss in the next chapter, this text, translated into English by Taborski, had been edited by Leszek Kolankiewicz and outlined Grotowski's paratheatrical activities. In contrast to Triple Action's suggestion, the document was meant for internal purposes only and not for publication. Perhaps more worryingly, Pluckrose believed that Rumbelow was modelling himself on Grotowski, or at least according to his own skewed understanding of Grotowski's role within the Teatr Laboratorium. This can be deduced in part from her criticisms of Rumbelow's dictatorial, axiomatic, and all-controlling attitude towards his company. According to Pluckrose, he did cultivate a certain guru-like status (Pluckrose, 1986:4). At the same time, the fact that Triple Action's set up as a 'research centre' in Mansfield was a direct attempt to emulate the Teatr Laboratorium would also suggest this. Furthermore, a particular anecdote gives us a sense of how Rumbelow was indeed portraying himself as a Grotowski-like figure. In the late 1970s, as I have already explained, he developed an interest in shamanism. This became manifest in some of the exercises created for *Leap in the Dark*. For reasons Pluckrose does not explain, Rumbelow apparently invented stories about "meeting a Shaman in Mexico, who saved his life from a bite from a scorpion" (Pluckrose, 1986:10). According to the tale, Rumbelow had gone to Mexico in early 1978. During his travels there he was stung by a deadly scorpion and saved by a man

with shamanic knowledge, Raoul, who extracted the poison from his body by singing and dancing all night (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:2-4). As Pluckrose goes on to say, she heard the story change and develop over time. "We all embellish stories, (...) I'm not critical of someone who lies in that sense if it's for a genuine purpose" because people listen much more attentively (Pluckrose, 1986:10). However, "what was frightening was that he began to believe in it himself" to the point where he denied that the story was fictional (Pluckrose, 1986:10). From an academic point of view this is a rather worrying prospect, because Rumbelow's allegedly fabricated story serves as an opening for *The Training of Triple Action Theatre* (Rumbelow & Clarke, 1982:2-4). I am unable to reconcile these conflicting accounts: Pluckrose's criticisms and Rumbelow's story[74]. Clearly this portrayal of himself and his company may have been beneficial in terms of gaining acclaim and recognition, whilst Pluckrose would seem to have no particular reason to level false accusations against him. In view of this, I can only conclude that Rumbelow's statements, whether referring to Triple Action being 'representatives' of the Teatr Laboratorium or his story about the scorpion's sting, cannot be taken at face value.

7. CONCLUSION

In January 1981, Triple Action was amongst one of sixty subsidised theatres to have its funding drastically cut. The company left its home in Mansfield and set up base with the Drama Department at Bretton Hall University. Increasingly performances and other projects begun to take them to the USA and Canada, but the group seemed to be running out of steam. By the end of 1982 Triple Action had folded. This rather unceremonious end does not seem to do justice to a venture which not only was an important contribution to alternative British theatre in its own right, but was an important step in the history of Grotowski's influence in the UK.

In comparison to other case studies, Triple Action is a more difficult to evaluate in general terms because of the company's longevity. Moreover, Rumbelow and his

[74] I only came across the transcript of Pluckrose's interview after I had talked to Rumbelow. For ethical reasons I deliberately chose not to confront Rumbelow about Pluckrose's criticisms.

group were affected by Grotowski in various ways at different stages of their creative development. Though crude, a distinction could be made between their work prior to 1973 and after. During the first phase, the company's knowledge of Grotowski was reduced to readings of *Towards a Poor Theatre*. This was possibly what led Triple Action to share some of the Teatr Laboratorium's concerns and attitudes. However, since there are also marked differences between the methodologies of both groups it might be more appropriate to talk of this early work as an example of inspiration, as indeed Rumbelow and Taborski suggested in their writings. Nonetheless, though this influence was only vaguely manifested, it is interesting to remember that several reviewers at the time, for better or worse, did make a connection between Triple Action's practice and Grotowski's[75]. As Taborski summarised: "it may be seen that Triple Action Theatre is akin to Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory in its emphasis on the classics, as well as in the acting technique, which approaches that of the 'poor theatre'." (Taborski, 1972:370) Therefore, even without evidence of genuine influence, it can be stated that already at this early stage Rumbelow's company was travelling down paths cleared by Grotowski.

The key moment came, as I have discussed, in 1973. After the company's visits to Poland and Rumbelow's meeting with Barba, what had only been general resemblances up to that point evolved into an influence which was more deeply and extensively felt, as well as being more outwardly manifest. That is to say their contact with Grotowski and his collaborators not only had a traceable effect upon Rumbelow's group, but it actually produced changes in their work. At the same time it is important to recognise that Grotowski's influence on Triple Action after 1973 took place through both direct and indirect contact with him. Since the shift in their practice did in part arise from a direct relationship with the Teatr Laboratorium, this could be used as further proof that the type of channel through which influence takes place has a direct correlation with the nature and extent of that influence. What I am suggesting is that the vague inspiration that Triple Action drew from Grotowski during its early phase was predetermined, at least partially, by the fact that during this period the company only had access to a tool of horizontal dissemination: *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Consequently, when Rumbelow and his group developed an actual relationship with the Teatr Laboratorium, initially with an indirect connection through Barba, it is not surprising to see that the previous vagueness was replaced by genuine

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[75] I am referring to the reviews by Robert Page,Ted Whiteread, David Leigh, and Gary O'Connor which I mentioned in subsection 2.2 in this chapter.

influence. Though it may sound relatively simple when formulated in this way, this was still a very complex process and the extent to which it was cumulative is impossible to say.

This is further complicated because the mechanisms involving influence are highly dependant on interpretation and assimilation. By this I mean that although after 1973 Grotowski's effect upon Triple Action was more extensive, the group still retained its own idiosyncrasies. Evidence of this can be found in the differences between them which remained after this turning point. Furthermore, some of the criticisms levelled at Rumbelow by Pluckrose remind us that influence does not always have to be a positive development: being influenced by the Teatr Laboratorium does not automatically equate to better performances and a more advanced practice. Whilst the contact with Grotowski benefited Rumbelow's work in some aspects, such as a more psychophysical approach, in other areas this had some negative effects, in particular the way in which Rumbelow attempted to model and present himself as a Grotowski-like figure. This point relates to what I have already said about 'interpretation' and 'assimilation'. In Rumbelow's case, interestingly, this may have been due to his slightly misconstrued view of Grotowski, and what could be described as a 'magpie attitude'. For instance Pluckrose considered that, although a genius, Rumbelow was somewhat derivative. Moreover she goes on to say that "if he'd followed his own thought process through to its conclusion he might still be a great artist." (Pluckrose, 1986:4) With this, Pluckrose seems to suggest that Rumbelow's attempt to emulate Grotowski, echoing his discourse and using the Teatr Laboratorium as a model, may in fact have been a hindrance to his own creative development. During the early stages of Triple Action's history, the company aimed to "produce a polished and professional form of *British* experimental theatre."[76] (Triple Action Theatre, 1971a:3). However, that focus and sense of direction seemed to have been completely lost after 1973. This was not only problematic because in a way it signalled a certain loss of identity, but it also had wider implications regarding the context in which Triple Action worked. Pluckrose came to realise this retrospectively:

> You can't just transport another culture into your own culture and make large Polish theatre in England, because it's not relevant. What you have to do is to find something that is equally as startling, but that is rooted in where you are coming from. You can't just graft it on, and what Steve wanted to do was graft on,

[76] Original emphasis.

> you know, Grotowski and Kantor-type of work in England (Pluckrose, 1986:7)

Of course the type of work developed by Rumbelow and his group was never aimed at becoming part of the mainstream but occupied the territory of alternative explorations. Nevertheless, after the changes during the company's later stage of work, the gap between their practice and the realities of 1970s Britain widened. I would not go so far as to suggest that there is such a thing as correct and incorrect influence. Nevertheless, my analysis has led me to conclude that the way in which Rumbelow interpreted and assimilated Grotowski's influence was not as sensitive as perhaps it should have been. As a result, Triple Action became increasingly isolated from their surrounding cultural climate. This can be illustrated by Tempest's 'Drama Department Show Report' on *Titus Andronicus* for the Arts Council:

> Rumbelow is so well aware that his work is unfashionable and that people in England are suspicious of it, or insensitive to it, or treat it as a precious joke, that he has become accustomed to depression about the reception he is given in England. (Tempest, 30th March 1979)

In conclusion I can only state that the process through which Triple Action was influenced by Grotowski was clearly a tumultuous one. However, I would like to stress that the complexities I have discussed here do not negate the artistic value and quality of Rumbelow's and his group's practice and outcomes; neither do such difficulties deny their rightful place within the history of Grotowski's contact with Britain and his effect on theatrical life in this country.

Chapter VI

BEYOND THEATRE

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter differs from the previous case studies in this thesis because I will not focus on a single company but rather investigate a number of disparate individuals. I will also not be discussing theatre *per se*, but the second phase in Grotowski's career, paratheatre.

1.1 Defining a new territory

On 25th February 1970, two months after the Teatr Laboratorium's return from a successful tour of the USA, Grotowski arranged a meeting with Polish journalists in Wroclaw. Announcing that the company's numerous tours interrupted its work and that trips would thus have to be shorter, he went on to state:

> We live in a *post-theatre* age. What is coming is not a new wave of theatre but something that will take the place occupied by it. Too many phenomena exist by sheer habit, because it has been generally accepted that they should exist... I feel that *Apocalypsis cum figuris* is a new stage for me in my research. We have crossed a certain barrier. (Osinski, 1985:120)

With these words Grotowski was taking his first public steps beyond theatre. In September 1970, during a public meeting at the International Theatre Festival of Manizales (Colombia), he reaffirmed his new position by saying: "This is a dual moment in my life. That which is theatre, 'technique', and methodology is behind me." (Osinski, 1986:123) However, it is usually considered that Grotowski's official announcement about his exit from theatre was made in New York. On 13th December 1970, during a talk at New York University, clearly stated that he considered 'performance', 'theatre' and 'spectator' to be dead words (Grotowski, 1973a:113).

> I am not interested in the theatre anymore, only in what I can do leaving theatre behind. (...) Many of us present here face the problem: to pursue the profession, or to do something else? As far as I am concerned, it's better to do something else. (Grotowski, 1973a:116)

The territory that the Teatr Laboratorium was now moving into would come to be defined by Grotowski as paratheatre or active culture. This new practice "emerged almost seamlessly from *Apocalypsis cum figuris*." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:207) In a sense, as Schechner goes on to state, this was a theatre production "desiring to be a paratheatrical work" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:207)[1]. Therefore, this departure was not so much a radical break with the company's past as a development of their research. In fact, Grotowski's exit from theatre did not alter the essence of what he had been searching for up to this point: "the potential for an authentic and revelatory encounter between individuals." (Kumiega, 1985:144)

Throughout the early 1970s, Grotowski's primary concern was twofold. Whilst he was taking practical steps in this new paratheatrical direction with his company, he was also attempting to map out this new area of enquiry. Between December 1970 and October 1972 he made a series of pronouncements which were collated under the title 'Holiday' (Grotowski, 1973a:113-135)[2]. Reading it retrospectively one can identify all the details and attitudes that were to shape paratheatre. However, at the time, Grotowski's groping and sometimes abstract statements were not fully understood by everybody (Osinski, 1985:121). It is easier to begin to define paratheatre in negative terms by specifying what it is not: this new practice would not be based on the division between actors and spectators, narration or the creation of signs (Kolankiewicz, 1979:6). Instead paratheatre would offer experiences to participants, who would become directly involved in the work without any distinction between members of the Teatr Laboratorium and those coming from outside the

[1] With this statement, Schechner is hinting at the process by which *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* was gradually refined, shedding its theatrical trappings: in June 1971 the benches where the audience sat were removed from the performance and spectators had to sit on the floor or stand against the walls thereafter; in June 1972 the white costumes worn by the cast were replaced by their everyday clothes; and in autumn 1974 the black plaster was removed from the company's main studio, exposing the bare brickwork. Schechner's suggestion echoes comments made by members of the Teatr Laboratorium. Teo Spychalski stated that these changes were "associated with entering the paratheatrical phase" (Spychalski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010). Antoni Jaholkowski, however in an interview with *Gazeta Robotnicza* in 1979, stated that although *Apocalypsis cum figuris* was considered a piece of theatre, for the company it had "an altogether different quality" (Jaholkowski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010)

[2] These talks took place on 12th and 13th December 1970 at New York's Town Hall and New York University respectively, on 23rd October 1971 in Wroclaw, and on 11th October 1972 in Royaumount (France).

group. In doing so, it both attempted to enable what were considered 'authentic' encounters amongst individuals, and democratise culture by opening up creative, psychophysical, and transformative processes.

This brief sketch of paratheatre will suffice for now. There are numerous primary and secondary sources which have informed this chapter and thus there is no need to replicate this information here. Instead I will focus on five individuals who are now based in Britain: Rachel Fensham[3], Anna Furse, Jill Greenhalgh, Jennifer Kumiega[4], and Sandra Reeve[5]. I will discuss their involvement in paratheatre and assess to what extent these experiences influenced them. For my investigation I will be primarily drawing upon a series of interviews I conducted with these individuals between 2008 and 2009, as well as some of their contributions to conferences dedicated to Grotowski which took place in 2009[6]. That said, I am not disregarding existing scholarship on paratheatre, but using it as a means to contextualise and support my discussion. My initial point of reference has been *On the Road to Active Culture* (Kolankiewicz, 1979). This document, prepared by the company for internal purposes only and not for publication, outlines events and developments within and around paratheatre between 1970 and 1977. I have also referred to *Grotowski's Laboratory* (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979), and *Grotowski and his Laboratory* (Osinski, 1985). However, even these works do not fully cover the period that concerns me here. Therefore I have complemented their omissions by referring to *The Theatre of Grotowski* (Kumiega, 1985) as well as a number of articles. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasise that my aim is not to provide a full analysis of paratheatre, but to focus on the experiences of the individuals listed above. As a result I will only be discussing paratheatre as a context for, and in specific relation, to their accounts.

[3] Though Rachel Fensham was born and grew up in Australia, she has been living permanently in the UK since 2006.
[4] Although I have met Kumiega a few times, I have not interviewed her because her writings and public statements at two conferences provided me with enough material to discuss how her experiences with paratheatre influenced her.
[5] I also had a number of conversations with Nick Sales, who participated in paratheatre in the mid 1970s. However, I will not be discussing his experiences here because the individuals mentioned above already provided me with a wide range of accounts.
[6] 2009 was designated as the 'Grotowski Year' by UNESCO, and a variety of events took place across the globe. On 14th January 2009, Kumiega gave a paper titled *Reflections* at the conference organised by the Grotowski Institute in Wroclaw, 'Grotowski: what was, what is, and what is to be done'. On 13th June 2009, she joined Furse and Greenhalgh for a panel discussion on paratheatre during 'Grotowski: Theatre and Beyond', a conference at the University of Kent organised by the British Grotowski Project. Sandra Reeve had also been invited to this event but unfortunately could not attend.

1.2 Encountering Grotowski and paratheatre

By the early 1970s, Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium had reached their apogee of fame and acclaim. Perhaps as a consequence of their successful reception abroad they were finally being recognised within Poland where the authorities and thus the cultural scene began to regard Grotowski, at the very least, as a major force in contemporary theatre. This change is illustrated, for instance, by the company's increased presence in publications such as *Dialog*[7], and through the work of commentators like Tadeusz Burzynski. It was through these articles that the news about Grotowski's change of direction was spread. In the UK, the situation at that moment was rather different since, as already explained, British media did not maintain an ongoing engagement with the Teatr Laboratorium. Therefore there were no published reports about the company's recent developments. That is to say, for all intents and purposes, paratheatre remained unannounced in Britain. As I will discuss shortly, the individuals whom I am focusing on came to learn about it through other means, but it is relevant to first investigate how they encountered Grotowski.

It is not surprising that the Teatr Laboratorium was better received within the British alternative theatre scene, but it is peculiar to note that the company did have a presence within the British educational system. Whilst Grotowski had not yet become part of the taught curriculum or a subject for academic research, throughout the 1970s a generation of university students across the UK were encountering his work, or at least traces of it. As mentioned earlier[8], in 1969 Freehold delivered a training workshop at the National Student Drama Festival in Manchester where Nancy Meckler demonstrated Grotowski's 'the Cat'. Nevertheless, the Teatr Laboratorium's increasing presence within British Higher Education was not due to this single event. Rather, the Teatr Laboratorium's exposure to British university students was mainly facilitated by the distribution of *Towards a Poor Theatre*, something which has been corroborated by the account of those individuals whom I interviewed for this chapter. For instance, Jill Greenhalgh 'discovered' the book whilst at Dartington College in 1974; and in Australia, Rachel Fensham had it listed as part of her recommended reading. Sandra Reeve too, heard about Grotowski during her studies at Bristol University in the late 1970s. These could therefore be considered, according to the

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[7] *Dialog* is a monthly cultural journal focusing on theatre.
[8] See chapter IV, section 1.

reasoning outlined in my methodological chapter[9], as instances of horizontal dissemination. At the same time, this did not mean that vertical dissemination, from individual to individual, was not also taking place. In the 1970s, Poland was still relatively 'remote' from Britain, primarily because of the political climate, and yet travel to the other side of the Iron Curtain had become easier than in previous decades. Anna Furse's and Jennifer Kumiega's accounts of how they came to know about the Teatr Laboratorium serve as examples. Furse described herself to me as already being a dissident[10] by the time she heard about Grotowski during her studies at Bristol University, but she specifically recalled how in 1973 she first learned of the Teatr Laboratorium through a postgraduate student who had been to Poland, and who spread the news of Grotowski's work informally[11]. Kumiega's experience was even more direct than the word of mouth illustrated by Furse. In 1972, while a theatre student at Manchester University, she herself had travelled to Poland. What originally drove her to visit her father's country of birth was a desire to explore her family roots. Once there, it was her uncle, who lived in Wroclaw, who introduced her to Grotowski by securing a ticket for her to see *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*[12]. This relatively small event led Kumiega to develop an ongoing relationship with the Teatr Laboratorium which lasted until the 1980s[13].

I have just identified some of the channels through which these individuals first came into contact with the Teatr Laboratorium's practice, so it is now useful to explore how they came to know of paratheatre itself. As briefly mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, paratheatre reflected Grotowski's emphasis on relationship and encounter as the essence of performance, and thus it aimed to open up the creative process. Kolankiewicz noted that paratheatre was a response to "an urgent need for an activity which would be another pole in the democratization of

[9] See chapter I, subsection 3.2.

[10] She confessed to already having an interest in Artaud and Genet, and having spent a year in Paris as an apprentice with Brook before she attended university.

[11] This might actually have been Jennifer Kumiega. When I queried Furse about this via email (Furse, 2010), she said it might indeed have been Kumiega, but she also recalled there was another postgraduate student at Bristol University who had also been to Poland, a certain John (surname unknown).

[12] Kumiega described this as a performance work of astonishing power and unique brilliance. More importantly perhaps, she talked about being overwhelmed by her first experience of witnessing *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* because it seemed to subvert everything she understood about theatre and culture. Indeed it seemed to subvert her "very soul" (Kumiega, 2009a). She saw every performance whenever she had a chance between then and the final public showing in 1980.

[13] Kumiega participated in many different kinds of paratheatrical activity between 1975 and 1981 – including the University of Research of the Theatre of Nations in the summer of 1975, the *Mountain Project*, and *Tree of People* in 1981.

culture, the pole of 'active culture'" (Kolankiewicz, 1979: 11)[14]. In practical terms, this desire translated into a deliberate attempt to widen the demographic of those who would experience the work. In September 1970, seven months after the first statement which signalled his exit from theatre, and ahead of the talks which would come to form 'Holiday', Grotowski put this plan into action. The Teatr Laboratorium published an appeal to young people in several newspapers[15]. This open letter was titled 'A Proposal for Working Together' and addressed those "who – simply because they need it, should leave private comfort, look for the chance to reveal themselves in work, in encounters, in movement and freedom" (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:110). These statements aimed to ensure that potential participants would not be restricted to the theatre world or its established audience. Whilst in Poland this strategy was successful and paratheatre did indeed attract people who had had no previous connection to theatre or the Teatr Laboratorium, in Britain this was not the case. This is illustrated by the fact that all those individuals whom I interviewed were already involved in theatre, studying it as a subject at university. Inevitably, Grotowski's initial open call for participants was reduced to the Polish media, and as later paratheatrical projects began to travel abroad, they were only advertised in those countries. In those cases, individuals lacking a theatre background could chance upon the opportunity to work with the Teatr Laboratorium by accident and so learn about Grotowski's move beyond theatre. On the contrary, the individuals I am focusing on here all made this journey of discovery in reverse. Already involved in theatre and having heard or read about Grotowski, they then actively sought to find out more about his practice, and so came to know about paratheatre itself. Without access to the calls for participants that would have been advertised with posters and appeared in local media, in most cases these individuals' actual involvement in paratheatre was enabled through word of mouth. In 1976, Furse found out about the Teatr Laboratorium's activities in Saintes (Charente-Maritime, France) because two of her friends had been at the Venice Biennale the previous year[16] where they had seen *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* and participated in a paratheatrical session. Another example would be Greenhalgh, who participated in the first presentation of *Tree of People* in

[14] His need, Kolankiewicz went on to specify, did not arise from a desire to reject 'passive culture' but rather from a desire to restore a certain equilibrium (Kolankiewicz, 1979:11).

[15] These newspapers were *Słowo Polskie*, *Sztandar Młodych*, and *Przekroj*. The appeal was also announced on a radio programme titled "Afternoon with Youth" (Kolankiewicz, 2002:28).

[16] In later email correspondence (Furse, 2009c), Furse mentioned that these two friends were Shay Cunliffe – who became a costume designer, working in theatre and cinema –, and John-Paul Davidson – who published an article on Grotowski (see Davidson, 1976:20), and later became a film director.

1979 after she heard about this opportunity following a workshop with Odin Teatret. However there were some exceptions. Besides Kumiega, whom as I have mentioned had a more direct connection with Poland, the other person whose practical involvement in one of the Teatr Laboratorium's projects did not directly depend upon word of mouth was Fensham. Although she first learned about paratheatre whilst still living in Australia, a country Grotowski visited with his company between March and May 1974[17], her first paratheatrical experience came much later. In 1979, whilst she was living in Bologna (Italy) and working with Teatro Mazzini, she found out that *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* was having its last performances in Milan. It was there, after watching the piece, that she picked up a leaflet about the *Mountain Project* that was going to take place in the countryside nearby.

I have briefly mentioned these details because I believe they tell us something quite important. These accounts illustrate the long and sometimes accidental chain of events that led these individuals to discover and be involved in paratheatre; they exemplify the complex roads that lead to influence. Moreover, they suggest a similarity among the individuals I am discussing in this chapter: the fact that all were moved by a personal desire to push themselves and explore new creative territories. Kumiega referred to this as being something beyond mere curiosity and described it rather as an actual 'need' (Kumiega, 2009a). The fact that they went on something akin to a pilgrimage seeking these experiences, sometimes launching themselves into the adventure of crossing the Iron Curtain[18], is significant for two reasons. Firstly, I would argue that the act of travelling abroad to participate in paratheatre served as a sort of frame, priming some of these individuals to have a meaningful experience of the work[19]. Secondly, their motivation chimes with Grotowski's original call for participants, and his desire to attract individuals who were moved by a 'need'. The point at which they differ from Grotowski's original intention was the fact that they already had a theatrical background. Surprisingly, as I will go on to explore later, this

[17] Throughout their stay, Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium delivered lectures and performances in Sydney, as well as running two week-long projects in Armadale, *Large Special Project* and *Narrow Special Project*. Rachel Fensham did not attend any of these events but she was wholly aware of them. During our interview she said there was a 'sort of Grotowski timing'. "Grotowski was more than just a book at this point. It was beginning to be this kind of immersive actor experience that then began to really percolate into the culture, into the alternative theatre scene, quite strongly." (Fensham, 2009)

[18] In my interview with Greenhalgh she shared several anecdotes of crossing Europe by train during a particularly hard winter.

[19] That said, it is important to recognise that these 'pilgrimages' took place before the current workshop-culture, where 'training experiences' have become institutionalised, marketed and packaged. In his article 'Of Pounds of Flesh and Trojan Horses' Frank Camilleri offers an interesting examination of what he defines as a paradigm shift between 'ethical' and 'ideological' approaches to training. See Camilleri, 2009:26-34.

was generally not a hindrance to their participation in paratheatre. Therefore, acknowledging the nature of this shared sense of drive is the starting point to understanding how these individuals were influenced by their encounters with paratheatre.

The importance of this drive is further emphasised if we take into account how little these individuals actually knew about the work before participating. During the initial stages of paratheatre, Grotowski had not verbalised what it involved; and it would not be until the mid 1970s that the first participant accounts were published in academic journals and newspapers, primarily across Europe and America. As a result, it is almost certain that the individuals I am discussing here did not have a real sense of the work they were joining. They all had, of course, come across *Towards a Poor Theatre*, but this only offered them an idea of Grotowski's theatrical practice. Therefore their experiences of paratheatre were also a journey into the unknown.

1.3 A necessary diversion

As part of this introduction and its contextual work, a slight digression is necessary. The reason for this is that the differences between the various accounts of the experiences these individuals had can only be fully understood within the wider developments of paratheatre. Therefore this section briefly outlines changes in the number of participants and the processes by which they were able to join the work.

Burzynski identifies three general phases within paratheatre: during the first one, the core paratheatrical group was created by enlarging the Teatr Laboratorium as a company; during the second phase, this group carried out explorations behind closed doors; and the third phase consisted of an "opening up to others" (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:110). This final stage, as I will explain, could be further subdivided according to the degree of 'openness', with regards to the number of participants accepted into the work. Nevertheless, the complexity inherent in these developments can already be found in the first phase. Whilst Grotowski was clearly moving towards a democratisation of creative processes, he was aware that the work at such an early stage would be quite vulnerable and therefore could not immediately be made public. More importantly, he must have known that a prerequisite to achieve his aims would

be a strong and capable group to initiate and steer the activities. The open call for participants which was published in the Polish media signalled the practical beginning of paratheatre, but it should not be confused with paratheatre's later opening up. This public announcement was not aimed at offering an experience to participants, but intended to seek and establish a relationship with individuals who might become part of the company on a more permanent basis. In her seminal book, Kumiega tells us that out of the 300 responses to the group's proposal for collaboration, 70 individuals were invited to a meeting in November 1970 which lasted four days and nights. From among the participants in this improvisational event a group of ten was formed that worked with Grotowski and then Zbigniew Spychalski for a year. (Kumiega, 1985:165) By the end of 1971, only four remained[20] and after some further comings and goings, in 1974, the new 'paratheatrical generation' finally totalled six members[21] (Kumiega, 1985:168). There is literally no information available on how these various selections to enlarge the company were made[22]. Nevertheless, during an interview with Andrzej Bonarski in 1975 which was published in *Kultura*[23], Grotowski clearly stated that this work did not require artistic or acting skills on the part of the candidate, but a human readiness and suitable predisposition (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:109; and Kolankiewicz, 1979:116). Therefore, in a sense, the selection process was not unilateral but demanded what Kolankiewicz called a 'mutual recognition'. Besides this principle, "also taken into account were the readiness to abandon the convention of hiding behind a mask and the courage to question what is cut off from the sources of life, what is dried up, and what is barren." (Kolankiewicz, 1979:16) Although when mentioning these 'criteria' Grotowski was referring to the process by which participants were accepted, it gives an indication of the possible principles which were used when deciding upon the core group's makeup.

[20] These four were Irena Rycyk, Wieslaw Hoszowski, Zbigniew Kozlowski, and Alexander Lidtke. They were then joined by Teresa Nawrot, Jerzy Bogajewicz and Wlodzimierz Staniewski. In June 1973 two members left: Wieslaw Hoszowski and Jerzy Bogajewicz. But after the *Special Project* that had taken place that month, Jacek Zmyslowski was invited to stay and formally joined the company on 1st January 1974. (These details are taken from various points throughout Kolankiewicz's *On the Road to Active Culture*.)

[21] These were Irena Rycyk, Zbigniew Kozlowski, Aleksander Lidtke, Teresa Nawrot, Wlodzimierz Staniewski and Jacek Zmyslowski.

[22] It is of course known that prospective collaborators had to send a letter outlining their interest in joining the work (see Rycyk-Brill in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010). However there is no information on how further selections were carried out.

[23] *Kultura* was a leading Polish-émigré journal. It was published on a monthly basis from 1947 to 2000, initially in Rome, then in Paris.

During the beginning stage of enlarging the core group, the focus lay on work conducted in total isolation among the company. It would not be until 1973 that the Teatr Laboratorium slowly began to open up, and for two years only selected or invited participants were invited to join the work[24]. The next milestone in this gradual process came in spring 1974 with the projects that took place in New South Wales (Australia). There, for the first time, people from outside the company were admitted to the work in larger numbers. These events were regarded by Kolankiewicz as "the preliminary approaches to wider undertakings." (Kolankiewicz, 1979:17) Indeed, in summer 1975 there was an unprecedented uptake of participants during the University of Research of the Theatre of Nations[25] in Wroclaw, with the number of active participants rising to over 4500 (Kolankiewicz, 1979:31). This major event "was a public summation of previous work and, at the same time the first trial of strength on such a large scale, a serious test of the existence of a real need for such undertakings." (Kolankiewicz, 1979:31) The University of Research consisted of a complex programme of activities, from open conferences to film screenings, from talks and classes delivered by invited guests[26] to paratheatrical sessions. There was a 'general programme' which consisted of talks, screenings, practical sessions led by the invited guests that were organised in 'beehives', and 'consultative workshops' led by some members of the Teatr Laboratorium[27] (Kumiega, 1985:178). These events were attended by any number of participants, from three to 200. There was also a 'specialised programme' which consisted of more intense sessions which took place in specific isolated locations, lasted no more than 48 hours, and were exclusively led by members of the Teatr Laboratorium. The number of those involved in these paratheatrical activities totalled 1625 (Kolankiewicz, 1979:62). The distinction between these two programmes was, primarily, their degree of openness. Whilst the 'general programme' was open to anybody, participation in the 'specialised programme' "resulted from direct consultation with Grotowski." (Kumiega, 1985:1979)[28].

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[24] The first of these events took place in 1973 near Wrocław under the title *Holiday*. Later on this same project became known as *Special Project*. It was presented in summer 1973 in Philadelphia (United States), and in autumn that year in Sainte-Chapelle (Brittany, France).

[25] I shall refer to this event as University of Research hereafter.

[26] Invited guests included Eugenio Barba, Jean Louis Barrault, Peter Brook, Joseph Chaikin, Andre Gregory, and Luca Ronconi. The magnitude of this collective theatrical experiment led Robert Findlay to describe it as "the theatrical equivalent of the Bohr Institute for advanced physicists in Copenhagen, about which Grotowski had spoken a number of years earlier" (Findlay in Osinski, 1985:166).

[27] These were Stanislaw Scierski, Ludwik Flaszen and Zygmunt Molik.

[28] There are no concrete indications of the nature of these consultations. One can only assume that these consultations might have involved a personal conversation with Grotowski, through which he might

Between September and November 1976, the Teatr Laboratorium participated in the Venice Biennale. Taking up residence in four different locations across the city[29], the company presented a programme modelled on the University of Research: diverse activities offered to a large number of participants. The degree of openness was almost absolute and even larger in scale than in Wroclaw (Kumiega, 1985:183). In just two years of public paratheatrical activities, the Teatr Laboratorium had undergone a dramatic transformation. After selecting only a small group to join *Holiday/Special Project* in 1973, between autumn 1974 and spring 1975 the number of participants at any one time doubled from 35 to 68 (Kolankiewicz, 1979:26). This process of involving a wider demographic reached its peak with the programmes, later in 1975, which took place in Wroclaw and Venice. However, there are indications that opening the work to such vast numbers might have compromised its integrity and intensity[30], and it is interesting to note that after the Venice Biennale the Teatr Laboratorium did not attempt activities on a similar scale[31]. However, as Mennen suggested, programmes like the University of Research were an important experiment to "find out what is and what is not possible" with a large number of people (Mennen, 1975:62). From a practical point of view, the increase in scale and participants necessarily had an effect on the process by which individuals were selected to join. What is even more important to recognise is the international exposure and recognition that such large undertakings gave to paratheatre. This is exemplified not only by the notable increase in published commentaries and articles on the work, but by the way in which it was presented. It is telling that in summer 1976 the Teatr Laboratorium undertook its first exclusively paratheatrical enterprise. With an invitation from the French Secretary of State for Culture, the Teatr Laboratorium conducted two concurrent programmes near Saintes between 30th May and 20th June 1976[32]. Up to that point, when the company travelled abroad, their new work had

have decided what particular activity would be more suitable for that individual. Furse's testimony does suggest something like this (see subsection 1.4 in this chapter).

[29] See Kumiega, 1985:183.

[30] Indeed Mennen recalls that Spychalski was unimpressed by some of the experiences during the University of Research because, dealing with such numbers, participants were not challenged as intended. As Craney specified, with 200 participants working in a small indoors space "it was possible to be carried along without personal commitment. There were no obstacles to overcome, no personal need to take action." (Kay Craney, in Kolankiewicz, 1979:83)

[31] More importantly perhaps, around this time Grotowski slowly began to develop his independent research, away from the company's core, towards what he would later call Theatre of Sources. This issue is discussed more fully in the final section of this chapter.

[32] Sandra Reeve and Anna Furse participated in these respective programmes. I will be discussing their experiences later.

always been accompanied by performances of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (Kumiega, 1985:187). This new model, with a complete independence from Grotowski's previous theatre practice, would set the trend for paratheatrical activities in the following years. Moreover, it is important to note that the activities in France marked a more crucial development, not only in regards to the context within which paratheatre was presented but in the very makeup of the Teatr Laboratorium's practice.

During the conference 'The Solitude of Theatre' in Krakow (March 2009), Spychalski stated that the projects which had taken place at La Tenaille near Saintes were a significant turning point. Later, in a conversation with Grzegorz Ziolkowski he expanded on this by specifying that paratheatre "had already revealed all its limits and mirages: its excessive playfulness, the general *getting together* and fraternisation, the burnout of energies."[33] (Spychalski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010)[34] What happened through the projects in 1976 is that the Teatr Laboratorium "started to discover new possibilities based on a specific understanding of presence and movement, on a kind of non-habitual spontaneity." (Spychalski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010) His comments echo those made by Zmyslowski in 1978 during an interview with Burzynski:

> That place and the extremely well-chosen group made this experience one of the fullest in which I have participated. Suddenly, it turned out that any special preparation of the location wasn't needed and that 'props', although they could have suggested and inspired the actions, did not have any meaning; too many objects and too much calculation. To keep only that which is indispensable, literally indispensable, for life. It became possible to eliminate everything artificial, and what remained was the simplest relationship: the person-space, or more specifically, a person in the space and us in relation to each other. (Zmyslowski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010)

As Kumiega has pointed out, there is a cunning similarity between these developments in paratheatre, and the changes that had taken place in the Teatr Laboratorium's theatre practice (Kumiega, 1985:193). That is to say, paratheatre was subjected to the same process of distillation and refinement. As a result, projects which took place after 1976 were stripped down to the bare essentials: participants

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[33] Original emphasis.

[34] *Voices from Within: Grotowski's Polish Collaborators* is a collection of articles by and interviews with Grotowski's Polish associates throughout the theatrical and paratheatrical phases of his work. It has been edited by Paul Allain and Grzegorz Ziolkowsi. I have had access to proofs of this volume thanks to Allain. However, since it had not been published before the completion of this thesis, I am unable to give page numbers for the quotes I use. The book will appear October 2010.

coming together in a specific location. It is relevant to mention this here because most of the individuals whom I will be focusing on experienced paratheatre in this 'purified' form.

1.4 Into paratheatre

As already suggested, the key issue throughout this chapter is difference: different contexts, different experiences, and different individuals. Earlier I discussed how they came to know about paratheatre itself. I would now like to focus on the selection processes through which they became active participants. Again, I am not mentioning these details just for the sake of being anecdotal but because they further contextualise these individuals' experiences, providing a more comprehensive background which will later help me to analyse them more accurately and fairly.

Early in 1975, Kumiega had taken part in a session by Flaszen that was referred to as a 'theoretical workshop', meaning it consisted of group discussions on reading material provided by Flaszen. However, she increasingly felt that she was in the wrong group (Kumiega, 2009a). There was another parallel workshop taking place where international students undertook physically-based activities with Spychalski. As Kumiega said herself, although she had already given up aspirations to become an actress, her experiences witnessing the regular performances of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* and what she was beginning to learn about Spychalski's group were "powerfully seductive" (Kumiega, 2009a). She tried both making overt approaches to Spychalski, begging him to let her join, and more covert attempts to infiltrate the work[35], but her requests were rejected. Unable to fully experience the work then, Kumiega would have to wait until the University of Research to participate practically. This first paratheatrical experience was highly personal and memorable for Kumiega. She vividly recalled standing outside the doorway and hearing the sound of the paratheatrical participants in one of the upstairs rooms. "At that point, nobody had said I could participate in this work, but nobody had said I couldn't. I felt

[35] In her paper Kumiega recalled attempting such strategies as "tagging along with some of the other students for early morning runs through the frozen terrain of the Polish countryside. I can also remember joining the other students on one occasion when they were doing physical acrobatic training, and the profound and unexpected joy I felt when I found myself able to do a running somersault over another student, and balance in a headstand and a shoulderstand." (Kumiega, 2009a)

inhibited because of my previous sense of rejection, but at the same time I felt a deep physical calling to join the work" (Kumiega, 2009a). Eventually it felt impossible to deny this need, so she simply walked up the stairs and joined in. Kumiega had overcome her feelings of inadequacy and embarked on a journey of self discovery which I will discuss later.

Reeve underwent a less troubled though more complex process when she joined the Teatr Laboratorium's work. Her first experience of paratheatre came with *Acting Therapy* between May and June 1976[36], as part of the company's activities in Saintes. Her selection process consisted of a meeting with Grotowski, which took place at La Cartoucherie in Paris (the space used for rehearsals and performances by Théâtre du Soleil). Reeves had to wait with others for a long time as individuals were called into a room one at a time. "It was all very mysterious, and we were never exactly told what was going to happen. But that was quite exciting." (Reeves, 2009) This view is echoed by Furse's experience shortly afterwards as she was 'applying' to participate in *Vers un Mont Parallèle* (which was part of the same programme delivered in Saintes in June 1976)[37]. Even though her selection also just consisted of a personal meeting with Grotowski, the way in which this was set up gave Furse the feeling that she was entering an underground movement. "It was very mystified, probably over-mystified. The process of being recruited was very dramatic (...) which did appeal to one's dramatic sense. And made you feel that by the time you had to wait hours and hours, and hours that you were already in some sort of magical circle." (Furse, 2009a) After meeting a string of nameless people in cafés she finally came face to face with Grotowski. However what she had thought would be an 'interview' turned out to be a simple conversation. Even though the process of reaching this point made her think that there were "slight cultish overtones" (Furse, 2009a), she does now recognise that this must have been a way of ensuring that participants were fully committed. That said, during this "beautiful meeting" (Furse, 2009a) she openly talked to Grotowski about her uncertainties in participating, emphasising that she did not know what she was looking for and that she definitely was not a cult follower. In response to this, Grotowski said: "Doubt before, doubt after, but do not doubt during" (Furse, 2009a). This, Furse told me, came to be one of the principles that guided and still guides her practice. In a sense, even before actively taking part, she was already being influenced

[36] Between 30th May and 6th June 1976. The work was led by Molik and took place in an old abbey at La Tenaille.
[37] *Vers un Mont Parallèle* took place between 16th and 20th June 1976. The work took place in the same location.

by Grotowski. From Furse's point of view, it is important to acknowledge the degree of openness that these experiences demanded. From Grotowski's angle, it is interesting to note that he was not afraid of doubt and actually encouraged a dialectical process; something which goes some way to dispel the mysticism usually associated with paratheatre.

Fensham's experience of 'selection' couldn't be more different to the ones I have already mentioned. For her to participate in the *Mountain Project* that took place outside Milan in 1978 all she had to do was write a letter outlining her interest in joining. As I will discuss later, Fensham's encounter with paratheatre left her somewhat cold and ambivalent. It is easy to speculate that this might have been due, at least to some small degree, to the less 'elaborate' selection process she underwent. Writing a letter cannot be compared to a personal conversation both from the angle of the 'applicant' – in that a lower level of commitment is required – and from the Teatr Laboratorium's perspective – in that potential participants cannot be selected as thoroughly. Of course, these can only remain speculations because other individuals who were also chosen on the basis of a letter did have full and enriching paratheatrical experiences. For instance, Greenhalgh who participated in the first presentation of *Tree of People* in 1979 in Wroclaw, also underwent this type of selection. I cannot help but wonder about the importance that key differences in their experiences might have had. I am not referring to the fact that they participated in different activities, which in itself could explain any disparities, but to the details of their approach to or journeys into paratheatre. They both simply had to write a letter to participate, but beyond this the similarities end. Whilst Fensham only had to travel from Bologna to Milan, Greenhalgh had abandoned the theatre group she had been working with[38] and crossed the Iron Curtain with absolute resolve to experience paratheatre. Nevertheless, any stricter comparison between these two experiences, other than laying them side by side, would be too simplistic.

Throughout this subsection I have talked of selection processes. I have deliberately used the plural because the Teatr Laboratorium did not have a single standardised way of accepting individuals into paratheatre. As the company's practice developed, the selection of participants naturally changed. I emphasise this because even though this was technically not part of the paratheatrical activities undertaken, it was an integral

[38] Between 1977 and 1978 Jill Greenhalgh worked as a performer with the group Kiss, based in Belgium. She had participated in a workshop with Odin Teatret and had been trying to attend one of the paratheatrical events for a while. When she asked her director for some time off to attend *Tree of People* he gave her an ultimatum saying that if she went she would have to leave the company. Full of resolve to experience the work she did just that and embarked on a two day train journey to Wroclaw.

part of these individuals' experiences. The selection process was, after all, the first contact they had with paratheatre. The importance in how it shaped their encounter can be seen, in the case of Reeves and Furse in particular.

1.5 Lost for words: attempting to articulate the paratheatrical experience

From my discussion thus far, it has already become clear that I am facing a number of challenges; for instance, the fact that this paratheatre evolved over time, and that it involved various members of the Teatr Laboratorium. However, the most important challenge I must address before discussing the work itself and these individuals' specific experiences, is the difficulty and perhaps impossibility to articulate them. First and foremost, I have to acknowledge that the experiences I am talking about are highly personal moments in these individuals' lives. They are therefore inevitably subjective[39]. Partly as a result of this realisation, I knew I could not have a prying attitude when interviewing these individuals. For example Furse began our conversation by gently refusing to share any specific details or to describe what her experiences were "because they are very precious" (Furse, 2009a); instead, all she could give me were 'thumbnails'. Whilst Furse was outspoken about this desire for privacy, other individuals whom I interviewed were not able to give a full account of their involvement in paratheatre due to the difficulties in recalling the events of 30 years ago. At any rate, the very nature of paratheatre poses a series of challenges to anybody wanting to articulate what participants experienced; a closer examination of these will also clarify my methodological approach to the subject.

The difficulties in articulating paratheatrical experiences do not just apply to the individuals I will be focusing on but also to the commentators, academics and practitioners who published their accounts of paratheatre throughout the late 1970s. Many of these difficulties stem from the work itself. As Burzynski stated, "it is questionable whether a comprehensive account is at all possible." (Burzynski, 1976:11) To fully appreciate the reasons for this, it is necessary to start at the

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[39] This is something which Kumiega emphasised in the paper she delivered at the conference organised by the Grotowski Institute in Wroclaw, 'Grotowski: what was, what is, and what is to be done' (January 2009). In her introduction she clearly stated that she was not interested in attempting to take an objective approach, but would rather focus on those aspects which in time felt to her as Grotowski's "purely personal message" (Kumiega quoting Grotowski, 2009a).

beginning. Paratheatre, as previously discussed, is founded on the premise that there should be no divide between audience and performers. Since all those involved were active participants there was no possibility for an outside eye, thus not stable position from which the work could be objectively observed. In 1978, during a talk at the Kosciuszki Foundation in New York, Grotowski addressed this issue. He explained that, unlike in the case of theatre productions, paratheatrical activities could not be described, from the outside, in an attempt to grasp what was happening and why. Since the process can only be experienced by a person actively involved in it, "only a description 'from within' is possible" (Kumiega, 1985:185). Nevertheless, even such descriptions have a number of limitations.

If paratheatre could only involve active participants and demanded that these give themselves fully to the work, writing or keeping notes during the experience was impossible. Consequently any account of it, even a description 'from within', will be based on recollections. This might be obvious, but it is telling that Burzynski made significant mention of it. Whilst reflecting upon his first paratheatrical experience[40] and discussing the difficulties in committing it to paper, he stated that to write "from a distance of time, means writing about something else" (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:113). Something, he went on to say, which has been inevitably processed. Later still he would write that "every journalistic account (...), no matter what the author's intentions are, must be corrupt. A record is a return to convention, and so it must be deformed." (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:137) Burzynski's frustration seems to arise from the impossibility of immediacy and authenticity when recounting paratheatrical experiences.

At the same time there is a more fundamental problem in articulating these experiences that goes beyond difficulties posed by subjectivity or recollection. During my interview with Greenhalgh she pointed out that, since these experiences were built on physical embodiment, it is almost impossible to rationalise or even fully verbalise them (Greenhalgh, 2009a). Of course one could describe the activities involved – we made a fire, we ran up a hill, we danced in the dark – but the work went far beyond these and was aimed at something deeper. This was something which Flaszen had already identified in a conversation with Marek Miller in 1978: "Certainly I can describe an external course of events, but the most important thing, the flow of life which runs through it, is something that cannot be described." (Flaszen, 2010:155)

[40] Burzynski took part in paratheatre for the first time in spring 1975, when he joined the *Special Project*.

The external details that can be described are an inaccurate and inadequate representation of the experience. Burzynski also wrestled with this issue. The complication is that "putting into words, naming something that belongs to very fleeting and intimate phenomena which can come to exist among men, almost always will be, to a larger or lesser degree, false." (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:113) When tackling paratheatre one is inevitably attempting to encompass something which was directly lived-through. "You look for metaphors, which do not necessary make good literature, or analogies, which may cause misunderstanding." (Burzynski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010) In this instance, language proves to be an imperfect tool, it fails us. Jacek Zmyslowski shed further light on this dilemma when he stated: "Everyone talks about their own experience using appropriate words, but they don't speak about the experience which is engraved in them non-verbally and which stays beyond them." (Zmyslowski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010)

Finally, I have to address the issue of analysis and evaluation. This is without doubt, for me, the most important challenge because it has direct methodological implications. Some commentators were cautious in their writing and humble in their approach such as Burzynski and Findlay – who openly questioned the legitimacy of evaluating paratheatrical experiences (Findlay, 1980:352). Nevertheless, others who published their recollections could not help but make value judgements. Whether positive, such as Croyden's[41], or negative, such as Cashman's[42], these analyses were based on a misconception and could only lead to 'intellectual evasion'. The problem, Kumiega suggested, was that these commentators were applying artistic criteria which "only serve to confuse unnecessarily the profundity of simple precepts underlying the work. Grotowski, in stepping outside the confines of theatre, is assessed as having taken the accoutrements of art with him." (Kumiega in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:185) Since this was not the case, Kumiega concludes that the role of theatre critic had become redundant because paratheatre lay beyond the realm of art. Commentators could, of course, respond to the work in a philosophical, sociological or political capacity, but not an artistic one (Kumiega, 1985:186).

I am aware that throughout this subsection I have merely pointed out problems in discussing paratheatrical experiences. Although this academic research has informed my thinking, methodologically speaking I cannot offer any clear solutions. In the discussion that follows I have embraced the evasive and complex nature of my

[41] See Croyden, 1975:196-197.
[42] See Cashman, 1979: 460-66.

subject. As Flaszen stated, "the basic testimony remains inside the human being". (Flaszen, 2010:156) Therefore, firstly, I have chosen to avoid superficiality by deliberately not focusing on the work's extraneous details. That is to say, I have not attempt to provide a full account of the activities these individuals participated in. If anyone would like a sense of what paratheatre entailed I would refer them to the existing reports which were published closer to the time. As will become clearer later, my discussion is primarily based on the impressions and certain fragmentary details which these individuals were able to recall and willing to share with me. Secondly, in order to provide a balanced view that remains as factual as possible, I have attempted to overcome the inevitable distortions of their recollections by placing their statements in relation to established primary sources and timelines. Thirdly, I have welcomed subjectivity and acknowledged the value of personal impressions over objective observations. Finally, I have rejected formal criticism and have thus not applied cultural or artistic criteria in my analysis. Instead I have stayed within the realm of paratheatre by discussing the statements made by these specific individuals in relation to Grotowski's paratheatrical aims, the Teatr Laboratorium's practice and other existing accounts.

2. THE WORK ITSELF

In order to begin my analysis of how Fensham, Furse, Greenhalgh, Kumiega and Reeve were influenced by paratheatre, I will start by discussing some glimpses of their experiences. Rather than discussing them independently or following a chronological order, I have chosen to order my investigation along thematic lines. However, I do not intend to talk about their experiences comparatively, which would be an impossible and fruitless exercise. Rather I am simply discussing them side by side and allowing them to speak for themselves. In a sense, I am both a transcriber and a collage-maker. For the sake of clarity I will firstly address their positive experiences, then their negative impressions and criticisms, before finally analysing the extent of how, as I perceive it, they were influenced by paratheatre.

2.1 Context(s)

I will briefly outline some similarities among the various contexts within which these individuals participated in the Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical activities. I do this both in order to set the scene for my later discussion, and because some of my interviewees made specific mention of the importance these aspects had in shaping their experiences and perceptions of paratheatre. The first similarity arises from the settings chosen by the Teatr Laboratorium to carry out these activities. As already mentioned, these individuals participated in different projects, thus the particular locations changed from one to another[43]: urban or rural, indoors or outdoors. Whilst these settings varied, conceptually speaking, paratheatre always occupied a liminal space. As Fensham stated "You were completely outside of the ordinary, which is the whole point of the paratheatrical, extracting people from the everyday." (Fensham, 2009) It is easy to see how this could be achieved when the activities took place in a natural environment because this already implied exiting one territory and entering another[44]. When the work was located in urban centres, the activities took place indoors in spaces that had been blacked out so that no natural light was allowed in[45]. These practical details, travelling to the countryside or confining oneself to a sealed-off space, emphasise that the importance was placed not so much on the locations themselves but on the way in which they helped to disturb the participants' daily routines and habits. Since paratheatre aimed to make people interact beyond conventional social roles it required a situation, which as already suggested, could be defined as liminal. As Mennen pointed out, the work of the Teatr Laboratorium was an attempt to provide a springboard, a launch pad, for the participants to "enter into a relation with the elemental, primitive connections between man and his body, man and his imagination, man and the natural world, man and another man." (Mennen, 1975:69) Furse, for instance, recalled an incredible and positive disorientation: "For me, what was really brilliant about the work was this opportunity to disrupt all one's habits, and all one's social habits and timing and timetables. (...) It was a magical moment." (Furse, 2009a) The link between this 'special context' and the participants'

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[43] The only exceptions are Sandra Reeve and Anna Furse. Although they were involved in different projects, *Acting Therapy* and *Vers un Mont Parallèle* respectively, the location was the same for both: an old abbey at La Tenaille, near Saintes (France).

[44] Of course the work was not just aimed at urbanites, who would find themselves out of their habitual environment. However, even those more familiar with the countryside had a similarly liminal experience because the activities tended to happen in hidden and off the map locations.

[45] This was also the case with indoor spaces located in the countryside (i.e. a mill, a castle, a barn).

experiences can be seen even more clearly in Greenhalgh's statement: "We didn't know what time of day or night it was. The work continued in the room throughout, just whatever happened, happened. It became very trance-like, you go into another state: you don't know if its day or night; you slept when you slept; you ate when you ate." (Greenhalgh, 2009a)

The following similarities relate less directly to the practical context yet were equally important aspects of the work in shaping their experiences. Whilst paratheatre rejected a division between actors and audience, the members of the Teatr Laboratorium were still, in a sense, guiding the activities. However, it is important to emphasise the particular ways in which they did this. Furse primarily remembers the feeling of being supported by Spychalski, who would help her 'to find even more' when she thought she had 'come to the end of something' (Furse, 2009a). Therefore it could be said that the company members did not 'direct' the participants in any obvious way but rather took on assisting roles. The subtlety of their approach can be more clearly understood if we take into account that across the various projects there was a common resistance to verbal communication. This was an expression of a desire to avoid intellectualising the work, but it also had practical implications. In the early stages of paratheatre, such as *Special Project* or the 'Beehives', verbal communication was reduced to instructions given to the participants to guide them from one activity to the next. However, as the company's paratheatrical practice developed, such verbal instructions became fewer and fewer[46]. By the time that Greenhalgh participated in *Tree of People*, the only directions she was given for seven days and nights were: this is where to sleep, this is where to eat, and this is where to work (Greenhalgh, 2009a)[47]. Other rules were not verbalised but implied, and as participants engaged with the work, they themselves developed a series of unspoken agreements (Findlay, 1980:351).This reduction of verbal instructions went hand in hand with a shift in the leadership of the work. Whilst in earlier projects the Teatr Laboratorium members functioned most clearly as guides, after 1976 they progressively retreated from these roles and participants were increasingly encouraged to take the lead. When Fensham joined *Mountain Project*, she recalls that the company members would simply "initiate a kind of impulse towards something", and by allowing the group to pay attention to it and take ownership of it, they would "precipitate a certain kind of extension of that movement" (Fensham, 2009). In the

[46] Robert Findlay emphasised this as a key distinction between the early, 'primitive' work and later more 'elaborate' paratheatrical projects. (Findlay in Osinski, 1985:168)

[47] With this she echoes Findlay's written account of the same project (Findlay, 1980:351).

next project, *Tree of People*, Greenhalgh noted that she generally did not have an awareness of being guided but rather responded to impulses within the group without knowing specifically where these came from (Greenhalgh, 2009a).

The liminal setting I discussed earlier, the cautious and decreasing use of verbal instructions, and the increasing importance of the participants' input should not be seen as irrelevant, practical details. Rather, they were intrinsically linked to the nature of the work, something which will become clearer shortly. Moreover, they shaped the 'special context' within which paratheatre took place and therefore had a direct bearing on these individuals' experiences.

2.2 Positive experiences

When I say 'positive experiences', this is just a shorthand. I am myself not making any value judgements about these experiences, but simply reflecting the viewpoints expressed by the individuals in question. That is to say, they considered the following aspects of their experiences with paratheatre to be 'positive'. Roughly speaking, these could be organised into three categories: communion, energy, and surpassing the self.

When he first began to define his new practice, Grotowski stated that his interest lay in crossing the frontiers between individuals, to come forward and meet one another "so that we do not get lost in the crowd – or among words, or in declarations, or among the beautifully precise thoughts." (Grotowski, 1973a:133) This desire to "find a place where communion becomes possible" (Grotowski, 1973b:6) is at the heart of the paratheatrical enterprise. It is therefore not surprising that this emphasis on 'togetherness' was something which most of the individuals I am focusing on felt particularly strongly. As Kumiega stated:

> In some sense, it felt as though we lost our identities, certainly our social identities by which we position ourselves in relation to others in the world. We became at times like a pack of animals, or atoms dancing in light. This sense, of letting go of our socially conditioned identities, felt like a joyful and energetic liberation. (Kumiega, 2009a)

Furse too noted that the work "was very much about realising that you were working with each other, you were helping each other, you were taking care of each other, you

were playing with each other." (Furse, 2009a) In her experience, this was best illustrated by one of the 'tasks' set by Spychalski[48] during *Vers un Mont Parallèle.* During this five-day project he instructed the participants that one of the lawns outside the abbey should never be empty. As a result, in order to keep this space manned at all points the participants had to work together so that if somebody was there on their own, one would be moved to go and assist them (Furse, 2009a). This sense of supporting each other, she went on to say, was also present in other aspects of the work such as long movement improvisations. "In a situation like that you become like wolves, and the pack started to sort itself out. There were lazy ones, who became invisible, and there were people who were there and not there, and then there was a small group of us who were very there. And the alphas would take care of the ones who were weaker. You would help people run further." (Furse, 2009a) The power of the group's dynamics in helping the individual push through his or her limits can be also seen in Fensham's account. During the *Mountain Project* which she attended in Italy, she recalls that Cieslak and Molik initiated one of the main activities at the start of the project: simply to run together, en masse, in an indoor space. As she pointed out, "because you are running in a group this picks up energy and goes faster and you just keep on running with the energy of the group. (...) The energy of the group propelled you, pulling you through your own stopping point and you went onto another level." (Fensham, 2009) Therefore it could be said that the group work, as well as being aimed at enabling communion, had direct repercussions on the individuals themselves. Even though it does not belong to one of my interviewees, I think it is relevant to quote Carney's account of the work carried out with Cieslak and Jaholkowski during the University of Research:

> Because of the stress of the work, I found my resistances, vulnerabilities and fears exposed for all to see. There was nothing to do but acknowledge them. In doing so, something positive happened which is hard to explain, but which felt very simple. There was nothing to do but just be there. Why try to hide from others who were going through the same stresses struggling with their feelings of inadequacy? We first grew open enough to acknowledge our cowardices and our needs, to accept each other's inadequacies, and finally, to want to help one another. (...) We had to meet and trust one another, despite our reservations. (Carney, 1976:3-10)

[48] The name Furse kept mentioning in relation to this project was Spychalski; however it is known that *Vers un Mont Parallèle* was a project directed by Zmyslowski. Nonetheless, various company members would often collaborate on paratheatrical projects, and it is in fact known that Spychalski was indeed present during the activities in France. Therefore it is probable that Furse was correct in her recollection.

This fragment articulates, perhaps more clearly, two crucial issues. On the one hand it outlines that paratheatrical activities could have psychological as well as physical repercussions for the participants. On the other hand, it crucially emphasises the intimate connection between these two areas (body and mind), serving as a reminder that Grotowski's practice was always of a psychophysical nature. Therefore, Carney's account complements and, to an extent might clarify, Furse's and Fensham's statements.

The two other areas which had a positive impact on some of the individuals I am focusing on have already been hinted at in my discussion of the work's emphasis on communion, and relate to energy and surpassing oneself. These are inextricably linked, because they reflect the psychophysical nature of the processes undertaken by participants. It is therefore impossible to explore them separately. Grotowski himself said that to talk about "something purely spiritual is absurd" (Grotowski, 1973a:119). His reticence to discuss work in exclusively psychic terms has to be reconciled with the fact that from the outset, paratheatre practice implicated this complex area. Throughout the 1970s, starting with his 'Holiday' texts, Grotowski identified disarmament and revealing oneself as some of the key issues at the core of his new enterprise[49]. As he stated, "one can say that the 'work' is a movement towards the surpassing of the self, of what one knows of one's physical limits, or even, if we insist on using a vague and superfluous word, 'spiritual' limits." (Godard, 1976:15) It is important to note that Grotowski includes the physical as an integral part of this equation.

Even though paratheatre's 'higher' aims could be said to belong to the realm of the psychic, we must remember that Grotowski rejected the notion of a divided human being. For him the separation between body and mind was not only artificial but harmful, and the elimination of this split was implicit in disarming and revealing oneself. If the 'spiritual' or psychic was to be accessed at all, it would be through somatic means. If the 'soul' was to be opened up and the ego broken down, it would be by working with/through the body. On the one hand this physical approach would manifest in explorations of raw impulse and fatigue. For Furse, this was one of the cornerstones of her experiences: a personal research on energy and finding its

[49] Later, in 'Wandering towards a Theatre of Sources', he defined them as a process of de-conditioning. See Grotowski in Kumiega, 1985:228-230.

continual flow. This clearly resonated with her background in ballet and her interest in endurance; having been trained in a strong work ethic, the idea of driving oneself further and further must certainly have been familiar to her. In our interview, Furse said that although not conscious of it at the time, she was pushing herself to the limits, and that after being awake and active for five days and nights she felt "very high" (Furse, 2009a). On the other hand, paratheatrical projects did not just involve dance-like free-movement sessions. Physicality was also explored through more sensorial means in that the work often included task-based activities such as running, climbing trees, or digging in earth with bare hands[50]. One of the specific experiences which Furse shared with me belongs to this second type of activity. She recalled how Spychalski would come in the middle of the night and take a few participants for a long run. Then they would lie down on a nearby road and when a vehicle's headlights approached, see how long they dared to stay on the road. "It was real and it was exciting and it was unspoken. It was fantastic because you knew you were not going to get run over but it was about seeing how far you would go and where your fear buttons were. It was a silly, silly game but it made you feel so alive". (Furse, 2009a)

The connection between the physical and the psychic, and how the exploration of one led to the other, can be seen even more clearly in Greenhalgh's account. As part of her contribution to the conference at the University of Kent[51] she remembered that during *Tree of People* Cynkutis, with a whisper, invited her to fight him. She sprang at him and without actual violence fought him until, breathless, he backed away. At that point another of the male participants took his place, the first of a series of replacements. Tapping into an inner source of energy, Greenhalgh exhausted them all one after another. "Whatever had happened, mysterious or mundane, I now had an irreversible cognisance of my power and tirelessness. This experience remains one of the most significant milestones in my life. It was an intense physical realisation of the wells of potential, possibility and strength that I had as a human female." (Greenhalgh, 2009b) In our interview, Greenhalgh suggested that the Teatr Laboratorium members would subtly and skilfully release something in the participants which made them tireless, meaning they could carry on working for hours and thus enter a trance-like state. Although she remained wary of people who approached the work from an almost religious angle, she was aware that her intensely physical experience of paratheatre had led her to a deep "understanding of self and the

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[50] This can be seen in many of the accounts published by participants, particularly in those describing events that had taken place entirely or partly outdoors.

[51] See footnote 6 in this chapter.

power of self" (Greenhalgh, 2009a). Kumiega too experienced a transgression of physical boundaries which guided her both to a new relationship to her physical being, and an understanding of her self (Kumiega, 2009a). Indeed, this direct implication of the self in the Teatr Laboratorium's work was a result of Grotowski's "departure from his interest in the actor as craftsman, in favour of interest in him as a human being" (Kolankiewicz, 1979:97) As Furse suggested, through their involvement, participants could learn "how to be a bigger human being" (Furse, 2009a).

That said, Grotowski clearly stated that paratheatre had "nothing to do with group therapy, with sociodrama, nor with unorderly 'letting loose' or the clichés of 'collective spontaneity'" (Godard, 1976:15) Just as the work was not intended for those who were simply looking to improve their acting techniques he went on to specify that it was not addressed to those in need of some kind of psychological healing either (Godard, 1976:15). As Greenhalgh pointed out, even though on the surface paratheatre might have seemed to tip into psychotherapy, with individuals breaking into tears, "its principle was not about that. It wasn't that self-conscious." (Greenhalgh, 2009a) Whilst the Teatr Laboratorium could set up the conditions for a deeply personal process to take place within each participant, "the actual step towards 'disarming' was the sole responsibility of the individual. It was their free choice and could not be enforced externally (by the leaders of the events) or internally (by feelings of submitting to the pressure of the group, or through mental command)." (Kumiega, 1985:196) What is crucial is that the people involved in these activities were, in principle, not led to this psychic terrain and forced to explore the deep recesses of their selves. However, as I will discuss in the following subsection, the extent to which participants were pushed in this direction is questionable. This area of psychic exploration could therefore also give rise to a number of criticisms.

2.3 Negative experiences and criticisms

Even though paratheatre could offer profound and positive experiences to those joining the work, it is important to understand that it could sometimes have negative effects. 'Negative' here is shorthand for any elements, conditions or approaches within the activities which might have resulted in the participants' resistance, doubt,

cynicism, or lack of engagement. There are in fact many accounts, published by commentators at the time, which criticise paratheatre: from its validity as artistic practice, to its often pastoral settings[52]. However, throughout this subsection I will be focusing on the negative experiences of the individuals that concern me here. Again, I am not making these value judgements myself but simply recounting the viewpoints expressed by them.

The first issue that arises when investigating the participants' criticisms is the role played by their expectations and preconceptions of the work. The case which illustrates this most clearly is Furse. So far I have only talked about her involvement in *Vers un Mont Parallèle* in 1976, but the following year she had a second paratheatrical experience. She thinks of them as her "heaven and hell" (Furse, 2009a). In 1977 she received a letter from Spychalski[53] asking her to join what she thought to be an unofficial project in Wroclaw. The work took place during ten days in March that year, with six participants, and involved activities both in the countryside and in an indoor urban space. Furse herself described this second experience as being "very negative" (Furse, 2009a). To an extent she recognises that this might have been due to the state she was in at that point in her life. But more crucially, she went on to acknowledge that her adverse impressions were also the result of "some kind of expectation" (Furse, 2009a) Perhaps crucially, she was the only one among the group who had any previous experience of paratheatre. At the beginning of the project, Spychalski asked the participants what they had come looking for. Whilst other participants genuinely did not know and approached the project with a more open mind, Furse remembers saying that she was "looking for the roots of dance and theatre." (Furse, 2009a) Her answer had been informed by her experiences in France the previous summer. During *Vers un Mont Parallèle* she had 'touched' "something very primitive about our reasons to dance and our reasons to tell stories, our reasons to interact with each other." (Furse, 2009a) Though she couldn't quite put her finger on it, "it was some authenticity." (Furse, 2009a) So Furse embarked on her second paratheatrical project attempting to replicate and further her previous experiences. Therefore, as she herself recognised, her answer to Spychalski's question was too

[52] Paratheatre's frequent location in natural settings was seen by some commentators as signalling an evasive or escapist attitude. See Kolankiewicz, 1979:27.

[53] Furse stated that this invitation had been made by Spychalski, whom she said had led most of the activities in France during *Vers un Mont Parallèle*. As I explained in footnote 47 in this chapter, the leader of this project was in fact Zmyslowski. However, as Spychalski was also present during the project in France it is probable that this invitation to come to Poland was indeed made by Spychalski.

specific, she "had come with an agenda that was too precise." (Furse, 2009a) This, together with a number of other factors I will discuss later, goes some way to explaining why she had such negative impressions.

In 1978, Grotowski himself would warn of the dangers involved in having expectations, and the way in which these could become obstacles in truly engaging with the work. "The most critical moment arrives at that point where those participating cease to hope that something will happen. As long as they still have hope, they still have their notions of what is to happen. They are heading towards the goal, they are not – being." (Grotowski in Kumiega, 1985:227) Later, in '*Tu es le fils de quelqu'un*', Grotowski would retrospectively write about the clichés that could appear in participatory work: "acting the part of 'savages', imitating trances, using hands too much, creating processions, carrying a person in a procession, simulating the difference between a scapegoat and his persecutors, consoling the martyr..." (Grotowski, 1987:32)[54] What is important to recognise is that these two statements made by Grotowski are connected; the banalities are a result of the participants' misplaced preconceptions that they must 'do' something. Not only could the individual's expectations block and hinder a true engagement with the work – as in Furse's second experience – but they could also produce artificial and false behaviours that merely served as a mask. Of course, the fact that paratheatre could have these negative effects does not mean that Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium members were exclusively at fault[55]. That said, to talk about failings and attempt to identify who was responsible for them is not at all appropriate. I mention this here because this complication is a feature throughout this whole subsection, and I need to acknowledge the complex nature of the territory I am now moving into.

The second area of criticism relates to one of paratheatre's cornerstones. Although the work aimed to achieve a sense of communion amongst its participants, for some individuals this was not always successful. Reeve's first experience of paratheatre in 1976 had been a positive one, but her later involvement in another project left her with more negative impressions. In 1979 she participated in an all night event, *Vigil*[56],

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[54] In her first paratheatrical experience Furse observed some of these clichés and referred to them as "cute (...) faux-tribal" (Furse, 2009a).

[55] As I have already mentioned, the work demanded that the participants have a certain predisposition towards it. Therefore, in some cases, their negative impressions could be said to originate in themselves rather than just being caused by the work itself.

[56] Originally, in my interview with Reeve, she referred to this event as a 'beehive'. Having carried out contextual research I believe that the project was in fact *Vigil*. In later e-mail correspondence I queried Reeve about the name of the event and she did confirm that it had indeed been *Vigil* (Reeve, 2010).

which took place in Milan, coinciding with the conference *La Frontera del Teatro* (The Frontier of Theatre)[57]. Reeve talked about being 'disorientated' and 'confused' by this experience. With the outdoor activities she had joined in France in 1976 she could 'understand her position', that is to say she knew how the dynamics between participants worked. Even though roles were flexible and could change, in France it was always clear who was instigating and who was responding. However, working indoors during *Vigil* she was "bothered by not really knowing who was initiating the work" (Reeve, 2009). What was problematic for Reeve was that fellow participants would 'come grab her by the hand' and want to 'do things'. This, she felt was "a bit manipulative" (Reeve, 2009) because one could not just reject them. Whereas in *Acting Therapy* she felt that she could respond or not respond, during *Vigil* she felt obliged to participate and constantly accept other participants' propositions. As she said, "I think that's when I first got a sense of at what cost, encounter?" (Reeve, 2009) Furse came across a similar problem in her second paratheatrical experience which contributed to her being increasingly blocked. She recalls how during the first part of the project, which took place indoors, one of the male participants "who was very into physical therapy, spent a lot of the workshop climbing all over me but in a very sort of sexual way" (Furse, 2009a). Even though he was sent away by the organisers, this set Furse off badly and gave her "a very uncomfortable starting point" (Furse, 2009a). The issue seems to be that, since paratheatre encouraged people to come together and work as equals, there were no real ways in which this contact could be managed or regulated. The participants' experiences were therefore open to inconsistencies, with both positive and negative repercussions, which depended entirely on the make up of the group. Grotowski would retrospectively write, again in '*Tu es le fils de quelqu'un*'[58], about the difficulty of making contact without imposing oneself:

> Two people are involved in an improvisation, and a third comes along and destroys everything. (...) So if we seek connection we must begin with disconnection. Rather than trying to make contact with someone we should start, simply, by arranging the space in such a way that both individuals can both work without getting in each other's way. If this is possible then, a delicate contact might begin to arise, by the simple fact that both individuals will have to work

[57] This was the same conference, organised by the *Centro di ricerca per il teatro* (Centre for Theatre Research), which I mentioned earlier and which was attended by Triple Action Theatre (see chapter IV, subsection 4.1).

[58] At this point in his practice Grotowski had already left paratheatre behind and was concerned with his research on Theatre of Sources. This degree of critical distance from his previous paratheatrical practice is reflected in how he tackles this issue.

> alongside each other harmoniously. (...) You can see quite well that in order to do this you need to be extremely well trained (...) which means that you need an enormous professional credibility in order to begin with disconnection without touching on the problem of connection. (Grotowski, 1987:33)

This statement does throw light onto the challenges of contact. In a sense, the problems encountered by Reeve and Furse in the sometimes forceful relationships between participants could be connected with the misplaced expectations held by some individuals. As Grotowski had said in 1978, if those taking part have the preconception that they will be involved in an 'amicable meeting', they will display crude and problematic forms of contact which in the worse cases could result in staring or even fondling (Grotowski in Kumiega, 1985:227). These problems therefore lead to questions about paratheatre's effectiveness in engendering authentic communion amongst a group of people.

On a more individual level, some of the participants I interviewed also critiqued paratheatre for what they perceived to be its emphasis on endurance. As I have discussed in the previous section, this practical approach to physical activity was crucial to the work's aims. Nonetheless, Fensham found this relentlessness to be somewhat troublesome. When she participated in *Mountain Project* in 1978, Fensham observed that whilst the activities could become 'tender' they "tended to go towards violence" (Fensham, 2009). With this she did not mean that participants were hurting each other but rather that the work had a strong competitive drive and was characterised by a "muscular energy, not an organic one" (Fensham, 2009). This was one of the elements which alienated her, giving her both the feeling that the work leaders "were looking for the exemplary actor" (Fensham, 2009) and the impression that the event could have been "a sort of audition" (Fensham, 2009)[59]. It was not until the third day into the project that another smaller space opened up which Fensham defined as more 'feminine' and 'poetic'. There, in candlelight, Mirecka led work which was calmer and focused on storytelling. After engaging in this 'quieter' activity Fensham remembers going back into the larger room being "much more fully present" (Fensham, 2009). Talking about her involvement in paratheatre more broadly, Reeve

[59] This is similar to what Cashman mentioned in his scathing account of *Tree of People* in 1979: "I had the impression during the first few days that some were trying to impersonate their idea of 'Grotowski actors. They appeared to be emulating behaviour I had seen in Grotowski's production of *Akropolis*." (Cashman, 1979:462) Whilst some of the participants appeared to be 'performing to attract attention' Cashman recognises that they were "discouraged from doing so by Lab members" (Cashman, 1979:462).

also identified this feature of the work as potentially negative. The way in which participants were 'encouraged' to push themselves further could be, she said, quite 'gruelling'. Instead she felt that this 'relentless endurance' "needed to be balanced, from a health point of view, to just letting be, and digesting, and receiving the plateaux one is in." (Reeve, 2009) Since this is an 'invisible' part of the process and has 'no status', Reeve went on to recognise that it is easily forgotten. In particular, she was overwhelmed by this constant sense of high energy during her involvement in *Vigil.* In the outdoor work she had previously participated in, she said this relentlessness was 'grounded' and 'dissipated'; but in an indoor setting it "was all a bit much" (Reeve, 2009). Nevertheless it is important to recognise that these criticism stem from personal experiences. Even though Fensham and Reeve responded negatively to the work's emphasis on physical endurance, this same aspect left a positive impression on Furse and Greenhalgh. Similarly, the problems I mentioned earlier which were experienced by Furse and Reeve in relation to contact with other participants do not seem to be a feature of other accounts. These disparities therefore highlight the extent to which the criticisms I am currently discussing are subjective. The same, of course, could be said of the constructive comments I explored in the previous subsection.

So far I have discussed some of the work's practical elements which resulted in negative experiences from the participants' point of view. The area I will now explore is richer and more interesting, both because it tackles paratheatre from a more conceptual angle, meaning that these criticisms are more far reaching, and because it concerns the work's more problematic 'inner' or psychic aspects.

Throughout the mid and late 1970s a polemic raged, primarily in the Polish media, about the direction Grotowski's practice had taken. Some commentators talked about his "'pseudo-ideology', sometimes attributing to it a metaphysical character, or even imputed him as having a desire to create a new religion; while Grotowski himself was called a 'prophet'. Some even called it socially harmful phenomenon which – from an artistic point of view – fostered escapism." (Kolankiewicz, 1979:89)[60] As Kolankiewicz went on to point out, many of these critics had not had direct experience of the work. It is therefore interesting that the accounts of some of the individuals whom I interviewed chime, to an extent, with these critiques. Fensham, for instance, stated that the work was based on the premise that everyday reality "is a

[60] For a selection of these negative commentaries see Kolankiewicz, 1979:89.

world of illusion, and that there is some other kind of essentialness." (Fensham, 2009) In this, she echoes Schechner's suggestion that paratheatre asserted "the purity of 'nature' as opposed to the 'falseness' of 'society'" (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:211)[61]. What Fensham understood as a "desire for some pure and absolute sense of truth" (Fensham, 2009) was very problematic for her. On the one hand this was because it contradicted her personal beliefs: "I don't think there is an inner truth of the self, or of the life of the body. I think there is a material body. (...) So I don't think in any Grotowskian sense that truth, the true, exists in the 'inner' of the actor." (Fensham, 2009) As she went on to explain, in her view this 'inner life of the body' only becomes meaningful as a form of truth when it is made visible, so that the actor who seems to be true is the one who has a "calibrated sense of the visible and the invisible on the surface of their skin, and is aware of how that is for the watcher as much as the performer." (Fensham, 2009) That is to say, Fensham could be said to be rejecting a practice that is essentially, in all senses of the word, concerned with inner processes or exclusively geared towards personal psychic exploration. On the other hand, Fensham was suspicious of this search for truth because it could only result in a reductive world view. This essentialist approach, she said, was exemplified in the divide between the male and the female spaces she experienced during *Mountain Project*, or by her impression that there was a "hierarchy of authenticity, as if Cieslak was more holy than other people" (Fensham, 2009). Moreover, confessing that her stance is more 'Brechtian', Fensham recognised that what the work crucially lacked for her was 'context':

> What seemed to be there was continuous action without situation (...) I think it's actually situation that produces action. Without a situation, a world, a context, a set of people who have something to say to each other or something they need from each other, nothing happens, nothing actually happens, it's just continuous movement. (Fensham, 2009)

In Fensham's view, the experience was 'unproductive' and did not amount to anything but a 'spiritual retreat', as she believes some participants did in fact approach the project. Reeve too had a fundamental problem with the work's resistance to acknowledge the personal circumstances of those taking part. This is something she thought was felt even more strongly during her involvement in Theatre of Sources in

[61] Schechner goes on to suggest that "given Grotowski's iron intellect, this sentimental program was not destined to endure long." (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:211)

1980. Talking about that particular experience she suggested that there was no interest in her as a person or as a performer[62]: "If my context isn't important, if the context of me, Sandra, and my life and what I bring isn't important, but somehow my experience is important as a kind of laboratory, then what is it that people want to find out?" (Reeve, 2009) In the case of paratheatre, this could be answered by my earlier discussion of Grotowski's aim to offer participants an opportunity to cast off their social masks and 'reveal' their selves. Reeve's rhetorical question is, of course, specifically addressed to the work she experienced in Theatre of Sources. Nonetheless, it does have a bearing on paratheatre as well, since this practice demanded that participants temporarily leave behind their personal 'context'; what Kumiega recalled as losing one's 'social identity' (Kumiega, 2009a). Fensham and Reeve were suspicious about this abandonment on a conceptual level and therefore questioned the validity of the intended 'disarmament'. However, their criticisms do not necessarily negate the possibility of such a process. Rather, they highlight the extent to which the individual was responsible for his or her own experience. This becomes clearer if their comments are viewed in relation to Furse's negative account of her second paratheatrical project. As Furse said herself, her state of mind at that point in her life was one of the hindrances to her engagement with the work: she could not successfully accomplish the temporary abandonment of her personal 'context' required by paratheatre. Moreover, in my interview with her she did acknowledge that she had to take responsibility for having had a negative impression.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the work leaders were not also, in part, accountable for the participants' experiences. In fact there is evidence that members of the Teatr Laboratorium recognised this. Zmyslowski acknowledged that the failure by some participants to fully engage with the experience did not necessarily mean that they hadn't given enough of themselves, but could be an indication that the work leaders had not been able "to go out and meet this person" (Zmyslowski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010). Yet whilst discussing the work he carried out during his *Meditations Aloud*, Flaszen wrote: "There was only one thing onto which I clung tightly: the awareness that I was responsible for people; for their security. Risks have

[62] Reeve recognised that Theatre of Sources was of the same 'family' as the paratheatrical work she had experienced in France. However it differed from it because "it seemed the interest was in what happened to our perception." (Reeve, 2009) In the Theatre of Sources, she went on to say, she "felt like a guinea pig, a willing guinea pig" (Reeve, 2009). As such, she was part of Grotowski's exploration of what Reeve referred to as 'objective perceptual changes'. She had the distinct impression that his interest was to study the effect that certain physical activities could have on people.

clear limits, despite Faustic temptations that draw us to some fascinating areas." (Flaszen, 2010:137) What is interesting, as will become evident later, is that Flaszen acknowledges that work leaders could sometimes push the participants, perhaps too far. Though he stated that the risk was not 'incalculable' Flaszen's apparent solution to this was that he would also be testing himself, 'experimenting on himself', one step ahead of the participants, thus paving the way for them (Flaszen, 2010:137).

The issue of 'disarmament' and the participants' role and responsibility within this process is clearly a delicate one. It is further complicated by some of their negative impressions. Kumiega stated that the participants were ultimately accountable for their experience, and that its inner aspects could not be enforced externally. As I have previously mentioned, Grotowski, in principle, was not interested in leading individuals towards overt psychic exploration. However, this has to be reconciled with some accounts which, to a degree, contradict both Kumiega's views and Grotowski's intentions. Furse remembers having a conversation with Spychalski after her second paratheatrical experience. She was troubled by the fact it had 'all gone wrong' and yet had had the feeling that he had invited her to participate in order to 'take her somewhere'. In response to her questions Spychalski said: "'You flew too high before. I think you had to land.'" (Furse, 2009a) This left Furse with the feeling she had somehow been manipulated. Even though she recognised that it might not have been as calculated as that, "it was hurtful and at the time, very difficult. Somebody had taken me up and then thought, let's bring her here and smash her into the ground." (Furse, 2009a) Fensham also recalls the impression that she was being 'pushed' against her wishes. During *Mountain Project*, Cieslak had said to her "something like 'you are not going to get out of it what you should get out of it' or 'you are not prepared to get out of it what you should be getting out of it', 'you are not going at it hard enough'" (Fensham, 2009). Of course this sits rather uncomfortably with the statements made by Zmyslowski and Flaszen which I referenced above. It therefore highlights the extent to which paratheatrical activities and the approaches of different work leaders were, inevitably, not homogeneous[63]. The fact remains that Fensham's resistance to follow in the directions she was being led or pushed into meant that by the fourth day she had "had enough and just wanted to go home." (Fensham, 2009)

[63] A further example of this can be found in Flaszen's comment: "I was witness to Teo's [Spychalski's] vehement interventions towards the participants in his workshop. I hadn't expected him, one of the pillars of paratheatre, to perform such violent acts." (Flaszen, 2010:304)

Fensham's recollections to an extent echo Cashman's scathing account of *Tree of People*. To fully explore this connection it is necessary that I take a brief detour. As well as criticising the value of paratheatre and what he defined as its 'anti-rational' approach, Cashman talked about the feeling of being manipulated by the members of the Teatr Laboratorium (Cashman, 1979:464-5). I mention this here not to substantiate Fensham's account, but to emphasise that her negative impressions should not be seen as an isolated case. Nonetheless, when investigating Cashman's criticisms, Findlay's commentary on the same project should also be taken into consideration. In an article which he published in response to Cashman's, Findlay states that he never felt manipulated into something he did not choose himself (Findlay, 1980:351). Moreover, he mentions that Cashman acted against the Teatr Laboratorium's requests by discussing the work evaluatively with other participants and refusing to take off his watch. According to Findlay, Cashman "seemingly refused to enter the paratheatrical framework or 'given circumstances' of *Tree of People*. (...) Rather than joining the culture being formed, he chose to separate himself from it." (Findlay, 1980:356) Of course Findlay goes on to acknowledge that Cashman had every right to do so, but suspects that this may at least have played a part in his negative experience[64]. As Fensham said herself: "I went to the *Mountain* and there was an opportunity to abandon myself to the work, and I decided not to." (Fensham, 2009)

What has now become clear is the extent to which the participants' predisposition – what Grotowski defined as a 'human readiness' (Burzynski & Osinski, 1979:109; and Kolankiewicz, 1979:116) – was a crucial prerequisite in their full engagement with the work. It is also clear that some participants did not have such an inclination. In some cases, like Fensham's, this was due to their personal worldviews and beliefs; in other cases, like Reeve's and Furse's, it was the result of their negative responses to particular elements within the work. Kumiega and Greenhalgh seemed to welcome the 'inner' aspects of their experience as a positive by-product of their involvement, but among the other individuals I am focusing on, there was a generalised resistance to engage in psychic exploration. Furse spoke of her lack of interest in 'soul searching',

[64] Findlay said this with some personal sense of experiencing the same project negatively. Between 12th and 13th January 1980 he participated in his third *Tree of People*. The previous week he had been involved in the same project and had "felt a measure of physical and mental catharsis and euphoria" (Findlay, 1980:356). However, participating in the project again was a negative experience for him. His feet ached, he 'knew the ropes' and was not able to connect with other participants. As he said retrospectively, he was "functioning in bad faith." (Findlay, 1980:356) This meant that he was not within the 'frame' that had been prepared and therefore could not fully enter the work. I mention this here not to debunk Fensham's criticisms, nor am I suggesting that she had deliberately acted 'in bad faith', but because it helps to contextualise her impressions.

or what she described as "digging around in your entrails" (Furse, 2009a). Her weariness came from her understanding of the difficult and complex nature of this terrain. As Furse stated, she is aware of the overlap between the psychophysical processes of certain theatre-making principles and 'journeys of self improvement' with 'spiritual' implications. However, in her view, this can be very problematic. Earlier, I explored the extent to which the individuals taking part in these events were responsible for their experiences. Furse's comments essentially reopen this debate and turn it on its head, pointing out that the work leaders also had to take responsibility for the participants. "Either because people were looking for a psychotherapeutic experience or because the work would brings things up" (Furse, 2009a), Furse is sure that there must have been times where personal material would arise for the participants which was difficult to handle. As she went on to explain: "that's why, as a director, I don't want to take anybody to somewhere I wouldn't go myself. I will take them to certain places but (...) I don't want to have the responsibility of somebody else's heart and soul" (Furse, 2009a). The work leaders' accountability towards the participants is complicated further because, in a sense, it extended beyond the experiences themselves. I say this in relation to Reeve's observation that after the event "there was no sense of landing, digestion, or return to reality." (Reeve, 2009) This issue in fact was one of Schechner's main criticisms of paratheatre:

> People are drawn very deeply into highly personal work – into the 'break-down' phase of workshop, or the 'separation/ordeal' phase of initiation – but they are not then 'reconstructed' either by being integrated into a society or by being given specific roles to play in a performance. (...) Training needs to be a fully realized three-stage process: separation, deconstruction, reconstruction. Grotowski's paratheatrical work is all separation and deconstruction. (Schechner, 1985:255)

To conclude, the roots of the problems explored thus far are twofold. As discussed earlier, the preconceptions and expectations held by participants before they joined the work could sometimes become obstacles to their experience. In the most problematic cases "some people did approach Grotowski and this work from an almost religious angle" (Greenhalgh, 2009a)[65]. Yet, there were a number of aspects pertaining to the work itself and the conditions within which it took place which were

[65] Anecdotally this is illustrated by Furse's recollection that when Grotowski visited Cardiff in July 1981 and spent a month in residence at Chapter Arts Centre, he was approached by some requesting advice on their love life. In a sense he had been unwillingly elevated to the status of guru or prophet.

perceived as problematic by some participants. The Teatr Laboratorium did offer complex experiences to individuals which, to an extent, encouraged 'inner' or psychic processes. Taking the various accounts I have discussed as a point of departure, it is arguable whether this encouragement might at some points have been somewhat forceful, whether the work leaders were taking on too great a responsibility, whether the paratheatrical structure was successful in engendering communion, or whether it appropriately reintroduced participants into the everyday. Nevertheless, it is impossible to determine to what degree the Teatr Laboratorium and its practice were responsible for the participants' criticisms of paratheatre, and to what extent these individuals' were accountable for their own adverse experiences. At any rate, as I stated previously, my intention is not to pass judgement on paratheatre in itself.

3. INFLUENCES

Throughout this chapter I have examined the ways in which these five individuals came to know about Grotowski and paratheatre, the different means by which they were selected to become participants, the contexts within which the practice took place, as well as some of their positive and negative impressions. My analysis of influence in this instance differs from the previous chapters for two main reasons. Firstly, I do not have a single subject or company but a collection of disparate individuals. Secondly, I am unable to examine tangible examples of practice or specific theatre pieces produced by them. Therefore my investigation will primarily be based on their individual statements about how *they* felt paratheatre influenced them. On the basis of this I will identify the key areas of influence and the ways in which it took place. Of course, much of what I will say throughout this section will resonate with these individuals' positive and negative impressions. Since I have already discussed these it is thus not necessary to replicate them here. What I would suggest however is that the following, more overt investigation of influence should be read in relation to the specific experiences I have outlined earlier.

3.1 Post-paratheatre

Before going on to tackle the issue of influence directly, I would like to briefly outline what the individuals at the centre of this chapter went on to do after their involvement in paratheatre. To do this now and not at the end might seem counterintuitive, contradicting chronological conventions. However, this is part of my methodological approach and its emphasis on context. My reasoning for outlining what these individuals did after paratheatre at this point is that the statements about influence I will discuss shortly were made by these individuals in a series of interviews that took place throughout 2009. Therefore it is helpful for these to be seen through the prism of the experiences these individuals had after paratheatre. Whilst I make no claims that I am offering an exhaustive biographical record, I will provide a summary of their later professional careers[66].

In early 1980, Rachel Fensham came to London for a few months and worked as a front of house and production assistant with a company producing Shakespeare[67]. More importantly, it was at that point that she became actively involved in postmodern dance through the London Contemporary Dance Centre. This embodied practice, and not only theatre, would later become her specialised field of research. She then decided to return to Australia to complete her suspended honours degree in history. Whilst in her home country Fensham also reconnected with various theatre groups and began her career as an academic. In 2006 she returned to the UK where she took a post at the University of Surrey as Professor of Dance Studies. She is now Head of the Department of Dance, Film, and Theatre Studies at the same institution.

After her second paratheatrical experience, Anna Furse returned to Britain and worked as a freelance performer. She took her first permanent job in the late 1970s with Red Light then renamed Reflex Action Theatre, an experimental company directed by David Hughes based at Chapter Arts Centre (Cardiff). In our interview, Furse confessed that she initially lacked the confidence to become a director, primarily because there were no female role models. Like Fensham, she too became involved in postmodern dance, and in 1981 she was one of the founding members of Chisenhale Dance Space (London), an artist-driven collective working in a laboratory

[66] Since there is no obvious logic which might benefit my discussion, I will follow an alphabetical order.
[67] She could not recall the name but remembers the company was based at the Roundhouse, London.

setting, where she worked for three years. Throughout the 1980s she worked as a performer and artistic director with various companies: Bloodgroup (1980-86), The Performance Group[68] (1986-87), and Freefall (1988-89). At the same time she taught at various institutions: as Head of Movement at Rose Bruford College (1980-84), the Drama Studio (1987-1990) and London Metropolitan University (1997-2000). In 2001 she began to teach at Goldsmiths University, where she now directs the MA in Performance Making. Furse also continues her artistic practice and is the director of her own company, Athletes of the Heart[69].

Jill Greenhalgh returned to Britain in 1979 with the resolve to join Cardiff Laboratory Theatre. After a year of "bullying Richard Gough and Mike Pearson" (Greenhalgh, 2009a), she was finally given a position. In November 1982 she was amongst the participants of the Teatr Laboratorium's workshops in Cardiff[70]. In September 1983[71], Greenhalgh attended a theatre festival in Trevignano (Italy) with the company, which would be the seed for her own endeavour. During this event, a group of women from different European companies discussed, over coffee, the predominance of male directors and writers. This prompted Greenhalgh to notice that each company seemed to have a woman who was "almost a vessel for the director" (Greenhalgh, 2009a), and the question came up as to what might happen if all these women would come together to work. In 1985, Greenhalgh organised a pilot event titled 'Captive Waves', and the following year set up the first International Festival of Women in Contemporary Theatre in Cardiff. This event served to launch what became know as the Magdalena Project[72]. This network was founded to provide female performance-makers with opportunities to meet each other, share work and skills, and collaborate artistically. In 1987, she left Cardiff Laboratory and dedicated herself entirely to this project. Greenhalgh has continued to offer workshops, lectures and papers at a variety of events across the world; she has carried on her own practice as a theatre director as well as her involvement in the Magdalena Project to this day. She is also a lecturer at Aberystwyth University.

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[68] It is important to clarify that this was not Schechner's company, but an experimental youth theatre company based at Riverside Studios, London.
[69] For more information see www.athletesoftheheart.org
[70] For a brief discussion of this event, see chapter VII, subsection 2.1.
[71] In my interview with her Greenhalgh said that this festival had taken place in 1984. However, on the project's on website this date is indeed September 1983.
[72] For more information about the Magdalena Project see www.themagdalenaproject.org and Susan Bassnett's *Magdalena: International Women's Experimental Theatre*, (1989).

Jennifer Kumiega returned to Britain in 1981, having left Poland just before the imposition of martial law. She spent the next three years collating her PhD research and developing it into a book which today is one of the seminal volumes on the Teatr Laboratorium in the English language. At that point in her life she "had no appetite to continue research into, or involvement with the work of Grotowski." (Kumiega, 2009a) This change of direction was not a rejection of this line of practice, which she respected and admired, but was motivated by her desire to find her own path. For some time Kumiega taught at Exeter University and Herefordshire College of Art, leading workshops in physical and vocal training. However, following the publication of *The Theatre of Grotowski* in 1985, she left theatre behind. Between 1984 and 1999 Kumiega pursued the principle of 'active culture' in her own way[73], working towards the democratisation of culture within different professional contexts, notably cultural development in rural areas and 'community arts'. In the 1990s she retrained as a counsellor, and since 2001 has continued to work in this area, both contracted by the NHS and at her own practice. Interestingly, Kumiega does not see this as a radical departure but as a continuation of her previous practice[74].

After her paratheatrical experiences in France and Milan, in the summer of 1980 Sandra Reeve travelled to Wroclaw to participate in the conclusion of the first phase of Grotowski's Theatre of Sources. For a week she became "a willing guinea pig" (Reeve, 2009), undertaking activities led by various members of Grotowski's new international team: Huichol Indians, Haitians, and Bauls. Although her experiences as part of this project are certainly interesting, I have chosen not to delve further into them because to do so would mean too great a departure from my discussion of paratheatre[75]. When the Theatre of Sources project came to an end Reeve returned briefly to Lausanne (Switzerland) where she had been working with Theatre Onze. As the group disbanded in the early 1980s, she returned to the UK. At that point in her life she had doubts about what she might be able to 'say': "I was very young, I had

[73] As Kumiega stated in later correspondence: "This was about creating opportunities for groups of people without any background or training in the arts to experience the creative process, and to create their own cultural products (in any and all of the art forms). There was an element of political/social inclusion in this approach - it was seen as giving a voice to marginalised sections of the community. (...)I saw it as a means of pursuing the principles of 'active culture' I had previously experienced working with the Lab Theatre." (Kumiega, 2010)

[74] "It also feels like incredibly creative work. To be effective I need to work with presence, in an embodied way, and in relationship. I need to be able to provide the security and stability of structure and a safe environment to those who may feel psychologically uncontained and lost, whilst being able to respond spontaneously, in the moment, and in a way that is clear and honest. I listen to stories. I help the other person to create new stories." (Kumiega, 2009a)

[75] Findlay gives a brief account of this project (Findlay, 1982:52).

been in a very intense process for six years and I felt almost that I had nothing left to say until I had experienced life a bit more." (Reeve, 2009) Therefore, Reeve began to teach as a freelancer at various universities (i.e. Hull, Warwick, Manchester, Bristol) offering classes on technical and physical work. At the University of Exeter she connected with Nick Sales, who had also been in Grotowski's orbit and participated in some paratheatrical activities. Together they created a paratheatrically-inspired project which took university students to Dartmoor[76]. In 1987, Reeve's interest in the relationship between movement and health led her to qualify as a Shiatsu practitioner. That same year she returned to Bristol University to complete the degree she had left unfinished before going to Switzerland. Shortly afterwards, Reeve met Suprapto Suryodarmo, a Javanese movement artist and teacher with whom she studied for ten years. When she returned from Java, Reeve felt that she had to find a different context for her physical practice and began to train as a movement psychotherapist. In 2001 she qualified as a Senior Registered Dance Movement Therapist. Two years after this, Reeve received an AHRC grant for a research PhD at the University of Exeter and submitted her thesis in July 2008, *The Ecological Body*[77]. Throughout this later part of her career she developed 'Move Into Life', her own dynamic approach to movement education and practice[78]. Reeve now offers training, workshops and, occasionally, performances.

There are a number of telling features which repeat amongst these five biographical sketches. Upon returning to Britain most of these individuals felt disillusioned with the state of the theatre scene. Furse said she found a lot of alternative theatre "quite banal" (Furse, 2009a), and Reeve stated that she felt 'completely at sea' and that there was nothing that she "could connect with or relate to" (Reeve, 2009). On the one hand these impressions came from the industry's lack of support for the kind of psychophysically-orientated practice they had recently experienced. It is therefore not surprising that for a significant amount of time these individuals worked as freelancers, often offering their skills within educational institutions. It is also interesting to note that most of them eventually abandoned performance-making altogether. On the other hand, as Schechner argues in *Between Theater and Anthropology*, the disillusionment and frustration these individuals felt

[76] Coincidentally Professor Paul Allain, my supervisor, who would become director of the British Grotowski Project in 2006, was one of the young students taught by Nick Sales.
[77] For an abstract see: http://eric.exeter.ac.uk/exeter/handle/10036/90315 The central ideas of her thesis are explored here: www.moveintolife.co.uk/EcologicalBody/
[78] See www.moveintolife.co.uk/

upon returning to Britain might be because paratheatre did not successfully 'reintroduce' its participants into society. In fact he goes as far as to state: "ex-Grotowskiites have been surprisingly unsuccessful in starting their own theaters or feeding what they've done with Grotowski into their own theater work. Paratheater seemed to disable rather than invigorate them." (Schechner, 1985:106) Indeed, some of the individuals on whom I have focused throughout this chapter did leave theatre behind. However, it also is important to recognise the impossibility of determining to what extent paratheatre might have been the root cause for this. What is more, considering the evidence discussed so far and the concluding explorations in the following subsections, leads me to strongly disagree with Schechner and instead argue that paratheatre was an invigorating experience in these individuals' lives[79].

3.2 Mapping positive influences

At the start of this chapter I mentioned that all five individuals had an interest in theatre, had studied it at university, and had gained some sense of Grotowski's theatrical practice by reading *Towards a Poor Theatre*. With this as a common background, at quite a young age they felt a need which drove them to seek further understanding. The journeys they undertook were journeys of discovery in more sense than one. Moreover, their active engagement with the Teatr Laboratorium would take them beyond theatre. Taking this into account, and the fact that their contact with the company was generally limited to a few weeks at most[80], it is interesting to note the degree to which most of these individuals valued their paratheatrical experiences:

> "The impact on my life continues today". (Reeve, 2009)
>
> "I would say that that work never left me." (Greenhalgh, 2009a)
>
> "So much of what I learnt at that time has permeated my life since then." (Kumiega, 2009b) "I can say that it was the very bedrock on

[79] Moreover Schechner's criticism fails to recognise the work of two ex-members of the Teatr Laboratorium who, after participating in paratheatre and leading some of its projects for a significant period, did go on to work with major theatre companies: a year after he ended his association with Grotowski, 1977, Staniewski formed Gardzienice Theatre Association; and two years before the Teatr Laboratorium folded, in 1982, Spychalski joined the already existing Le Groupe de le Veillée in Montreal, and became its artistic director. www.laveillee.qc.ca/en/index.html

[80] The only exception to this is of course Kumiega, who maintained a close relationship with the Teatr Laboratorium until the early 1980s.

> which I built subsequent active research and development in my life, and has been the driving force that set me on my path to this present moment." (Kumiega, 2009a)
>
> "Grotowski touched my life very deeply, even though I spent only weeks in his orbit." (Furse, 2009b) "My awareness and interest have remained, my 'translation' of some of that work into my own methodology has continued." (Furse, 2009a)

The first effect that paratheatre had on these individuals can already be seen in Kumiega's and Furse's comments. Grotowski had always spoken of the dangers of becoming a disciple and emphasised the need to follow one's own route. As he stated during the Polish-French seminar at Royaumount in October 1972, "one must not imitate anyone. One must be as one is." (Grotowski, 1973b:6) Of course this was something which Grotowski applied first and foremost to his own practice. In an interview printed in *Trybuna Ludu*[81] he affirmed: "I shall stop working, I shall stop my activity the moment I become my own follower." (Grotowski, 1972:8) His refusal to repeat himself and his need for continual 'auto-reform' was the driving force behind this move beyond theatre. Since it was an integral part of the work, it is therefore not surprising that this attitude permeates the way in which these individuals were influenced by paratheatre. Indeed Kumiega identified 'creative renewal' as one of the key values which influenced her most deeply. By this she meant "the desire not to stand still in the face of what is known and familiar, but to allow oneself to be drawn always towards that which is unknown, and which fills us with curiosity." (Kumiega, 2009a) With her comment, Kumiega echoes Carney's concluding words to her account of the activities at the University of Research:

> As an artist I have had to face the fact that Grotowski's work no longer pertains to me as a theatre person as it did before. (...) Through this new direction his work has taken, he has once again helped me to re-define myself in realizing that my source is different from his. The most meaningful way for me to follow him is for me to follow my own deeper impulses and be true to my own sources. (Carney, 1976:10)

Similarly, Furse's statement that her 'translation' of that work has continued to feed into her own methodology chimes with Grimes' assertion that in order to be faithful to Grotowski one must not imitate him but transform him (Grimes in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:248). As Furse went on to say, she feels unhappy and disconnected

[81] This is a daily newspaper.

with the sense that Grotowski's legacy has to be pure. This 'unorthodox' approach is particularly interesting if we relate it to my previous two chapters. Whilst some young companies working within the experimental theatre scene displayed a tendency to emulate the Teatr Laboratorium, both aesthetically and in regards to specific training approaches, that was not the case amongst the individuals I am focusing on now. Naturally this could be due to their specific personalities, but I would argue that in fact it was due to the very nature of paratheatrical work. Since it was not observed from the outside but only experienced from within, paratheatre cultivated the subjective. Therefore these individuals' participation, first and foremost, made them understand the importance of searching for their own paths. Moreover, since paratheatre operated outside the boundaries of theatre it offered no 'aesthetic recipes', ready-made methods, or practical exercises that could easily be copied. That is to say it had no direct, technical application to performance-making. Therefore, paratheatre's influence upon these individuals was primarily manifest with regards to values. When I asked Greenhalgh if her involvement in *Tree of People* had an effect on her artistic practice she answered by saying that it was in terms of 'ethics', because the work she had participated in was "about a way of being, a way of maybe being an artist, and the profundity of search into roots, and into sources, and into self." (Greenhalgh, 2009a) Nonetheless, this does not mean that these individuals were affected by paratheatre in purely abstract terms. As I have already mentioned, the nature of these multiple case studies means I am unable to assess specific examples in every case of how this influence became outwardly manifest. That said, and even though my discussion will continue to be situated in an ethical realm, such values always had practical implications. To clarify this issue further I have thus organised paratheatre's positive influences upon these individuals into three main areas.

The first area refers to the work's physical aspects. As Greenhalgh has stated, what probably influenced her most was the commitment and rigour she had experienced, "this tapping of an extraordinary, extra-human power that you touch very rarely in your life." (Greenhalgh, 2009a) Kumiega also talked about this and stated that from the moment she first saw a performance of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* through to her involvement in paratheatre, the work's emphasis on 'embodiment and presence' had been one of its key influences on her (Kumiega, 2009a). For Reeve, what was most important about this area was the constant eradication of blocks and the work's emphasis on a sense of surrender rather than an accumulation of tricks (Reeve, 2009).

The second area concerns paratheatre's aim to engender communion. Kumiega articulated this in terms of 'relationship' (Kumiega, 2009a), specifying that what she learned from these experiences "was how to be more fully in connection with other people, without hesitation, without games, without manipulation, without shame." (Kumiega, 2009a) For Greenhalgh, this principle of 'encounter' had a particular influence on the Magdalena Project. Paratheatre, she said, "influenced the way that we come together." (Greenhalgh, 2009a) Of course there are thousands of festivals around Europe where people come together, share work, and then disperse. However, as she went on to explain, the Magdalena Project "is much more about creating a network and a family, and a very broad possibility for contact, and communication and sharing." (Greenhalgh, 2009a)

Thirdly, paratheatre also influenced these individuals in other methodological terms. I have already discussed how their involvement in these projects had the effect of driving them to search for their own paths, but it also had further implications. For instance, Grotowski's suggestion that one should 'doubt before, doubt after, but not doubt during' has remained one of Furse's creative mantras ever since she first met him. Moreover, her involvement in paratheatre was a "live-changing experience" which she often draws on when directing, teaching, or faced with challenges (Furse, 2009a). Mentioning that her mother had lived through the Second World War, Furse acknowledges the importance and benefit of "just to remember that you have done that" (Furse, 2009a). In a sense, her paratheatrical experiences have become a kind of benchmark. As she said, "if you have survived something, in a certain way you know when you are being lazy and when you are being weak, feeble mentally and physically" (Furse, 2009a). Even Fensham, who remained sceptical about paratheatre, stated: "it probably does shape who I am now, and probably shapes some of the ways in which I teach." (Fensham, 2009) As her practice now primarily consists of teaching, it is in her pedagogical approach that paratheatre's influence on her can be found. In particular, her experience made her recognise that one does not always need to know what the outcomes of a given activity will be. Whilst she observed that there was a certain degree of absolutism attached to paratheatrical practice, she acknowledged that sometimes it is good to be absolute. Wishing that young people today could have similar experiences, the specific effect that this "sense of abandoning yourself to the unknown" (Fensham, 2009) has had on her teaching is that

sometimes she leaves things ambiguous: "living in a condition of ambiguity is actually interesting and creates an interesting tension for people." (Fensham, 2009)

3.3 Moving away from paratheatre, negative influences

So far I have outlined some of the ways in which paratheatre positively influenced these individuals; that is to say, how its attitudes and approaches were taken on by them and personalised in a way which meant that their practice developed in similar directions. However, as explained in the introduction to this thesis, there is also such a thing as negative influence[82]. This can be observed in some of the departures away from paratheatre and the Teatr Laboratorium's practice which were explicitly referred to by Reeve, Fensham, and Furse.

There are a number of paratheatrical themes which Reeves has carried through to her own practice, such as the "lost ritual function of the theatre" (Reeve, 2009). Although these similarities outnumber the differences, there is a crucial diversion from paratheatre in Reeve's work, and it partly stems from some of the negative experiences she had with it. Today, as she says, she strongly comes from a "systemic point of view where environment, context and ecology are all vital" (Reeve, 2009). Therefore, although it still has certain therapeutic aims and is concerned with transformation, her practice now does not attempt to remove individuals from their everyday context. Rather, it is firmly set within their personal realities. As she said, she has lost her interest in the "psychodynamic interpretation of self" (Reeve, 2009) and has come to question this premise on which paratheatre was built.

Similarly, Furse does not make theatre with "any conscious spiritual search" (Furse, 2009a). After her paratheatrical experiences she observed that "there were a lot of young men at the time who really wanted to be Grotowski and would set themselves up in guru-authoritative roles (...) There was this idea that somehow you could *lead* people to these places." (Furse, 2009a). This manipulative attitude was

[82] See chapter I, subsection 3.2.

something she vehemently rejected[83]. More importantly, even though her practice always takes the physical as a starting point, she does not see herself as part of "that Grotowski heritage camp" (Furse, 2009a). This is primarily because her approach is not essentialist but unashamedly eclectic, encompassing practices such as capoeira, tai-chi, aikido, postmodern dance, and yoga. Grotowski, and what she learned through her experiences in paratheatre, are simply part of this heterogeneous mix. Therefore, Furse doesn't "think we can *be* Grotowskians. We can just make theatre. Borrow from it... But we have to find our own contemporary language and ways." (Furse, 2009a) For her, making art is a very eclectic process; "it's not a pure, spiritual process" (Furse, 2009a). A more specific departure can be seen in the way in which she approaches the body. As she stated, "there was a lot of machismo around" (Furse, 2009a), which resulted in a competitive attitude where bruises were seen as badges of honour. Reacting against this somewhat masochistic attitude she instead wanted to "take care of the body (...) take it to extremes but healthily" (Furse, 2009a). Therefore her practice became aimed towards "trying to find that incredible quality that the body can have, that the performer can have, without feeling that you had to jump into a void or smash into a wall in order to produce that." (Furse, 2009a)

Finally, Fensham could be said to be the clearest example of negative influence. As I have examined previously, for the most part her experiences during *Mountain Project* were not positive. As she said herself: "I failed basically. I am never very good at these guru-extreme things." (Fensham, 2009) Whilst she "never really used the experience of the workshop" or "didn't really take anything from it" (Fensham, 2009), her involvement in paratheatre should be understood as a key turning point in her life. This is something she acknowledged when stating: "I had not been in a singular pursuit of Grotowski, but if you like he had been the 'partner' from 1975 to 1980 of a kind of research I was interested in, in terms of the life of the actor or the performance culture that I wanted to be part of. He was an absolute underpinning." (Fensham, 2009) After her involvement in paratheatre this would change.

[83] This can be exemplified by her work with Red Light, in Cardiff. In my interview with her she recalled that, after talking to the company's director about her paratheatrical experiences, he organised various evenings inspired by the work as part of their physical research (i.e. spontaneous work, candlelit spaces). One evening she was working alone with the director and was told to move non-stop whilst reciting a poem. "I would do anything in those days, I was very kamikaze" (Furse, 2009a). At 4 am he went out to buy cigarettes and came back with a Penthouse magazine and asked her: 'who is going to keep me awake longer, the girl in the magazine or you?' That for her was a decisive moment which spurred her to leave the company and decide that she "did not want to be involved any longer in these guru-esque activities." (Furse, 2009a)

Consequently, the primary influence this experience had on Fensham was that from this point onwards she became disinterested in Grotowski. As discussed earlier, her resolute departure had been fuelled by the feeling that "there was something autocratic and hierarchical" (Fensham, 2009) as well as something essentialist and reductive about the Teatr Laboratorium's work. Therefore, even though her focus continued to be on physical practices and the articulated body, Fensham moved into the territory of postmodern dance.

3.4 Towards a conclusion: Grotowski? British theatre?

The aim of this thesis is to assess Grotowski's influence on British theatre. In respect of this, two important questions arise out of this current chapter. Firstly, to what extent could it be said that these individuals were actually influenced by Grotowski?

I previously discussed some of the developments that paratheatre underwent with regards to participant numbers[84], but there was a further, perhaps more crucial change between 1974 and 1975. At that point, the Teatr Laboratorium changed its name to the Laboratory Institute[85]. This formally relegated theatre to the company's past, but it also signalled a change in its structure and organisation. As Grotowski stopped being the only leader (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:211), there was a steady diversification of activities, with different members of the company setting up their own projects. At first these were subsidiary to the main company's *Special Project*, which was led by Cieslak. Kolankiewicz outlines some of these splinter activities, which were presented throughout the 1974/1975 season: Molik's *Acting Therapy*, Flaszen's *Meditations Aloud*, Cynkutis' *Event*, Scierski's *Workshop Meetings*, and Spychalski's *Song of Myself* (Kolankiewicz, 1979:18-21). The tendency of member-led activities continued the following year, yet by this time they were no longer seen as subsidiary to *Special Project*. Rather, various company members were truly coming of age in creative terms as three new projects were developed: Staniewski's *Meeting*, Zmyslowski's *Vers un Mont Parallèle*, Cieslak's *Acting Search*, and the mixed programme *Openings*, led by different members of the company (Kolankiewicz, 1979:86-87). Of course, Furse's

[84] See subsection 1.3 in this chapter.
[85] For the sake of clarity and coherence I have referred to the company by their former name throughout this chapter, and will continue to do so.

second paratheatrical experience, in what she recalled to be an 'unofficial' project led by Spychalski makes sense within this new context of independence from Grotowski. Throughout autumn 1976 and summer 1977 preparations began, under the direction of Zmyslowski, towards *Mountain Project* (Kumiega, 1985:188), and, in autumn that year, a group led by him began to work on *Vigil* (Kumiega, 1985:203). In 1979, under the leadership of Cynkutis, *Tree of People* was presented for the first time (Kumiega, 1985:204). Even though I have identified just one person as leader or director for each of these projects, it was often the case that various company members would collaborate on these activities. Moreover, as I will discuss in more detail later, the fact that each project was nominally attached to one of the company members did not mean that Grotowski himself was excluded from their conception, preparation and creation. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that by the time that Kumiega published her account of having participated in *Mountain Project* in 1978, she would write:

> Over the past few years there has been a gradual move on the part of the actors towards independence – they now no longer necessarily conduct the paratheatrical work as a group, but may travel abroad alone or in smaller groups to undertake personal work sessions. Each actor has a personal project in the paratheatrical field, which is the product of his or her own research and preoccupations. (Kumiega in Schechner & Wolford, 2001:241)

In contrast to this, it is worth remembering that, in 1975, whilst the company was both beginning to diversify its activities and take on larger numbers of participants, Grotowski had deliberately emphasised the unified nature of the work's direction, stating that "the Group is not a portion of land to be divided out, each individual having their own part. It is basically a communal affair and consists of one common impulse" (Grotowski in Kumiega, 1985:199) Three years later, in 1978, "Zmyslowski was still stressing the communal direction of the researches being undertaken at the Institute, but this time with a more natural emphasis on the inherently different approaches used." (Kumiega, 1985:199) With this, he clarified that although the company's aims remained the same, a differentiation had taken place between the older and the younger members of the company; whilst the former tended to base their research on methodologies developed during the theatrical phase, the latter took a different, more task-based approach (Zmyslowski in Kumiega, 1985:199). That same year, in 1978, Cynkutis would be even more explicit about these developments by

talking about the specialisation of the various company members (Cynkutis in Kumiega, 1985:201).

As the Teatr Laboratorium members were enjoying an increasing level of independence, Grotowski gradually moved towards Theatre of Sources. Flaszen recalls that during the activities at the Venice Biennale in 1975 the company experienced a challenging moment. After some heated disagreements between Grotowski and Wlodzimierz Staniewski, one of the young work leaders, the latter left the Teatr Laboratorium (Flaszen, 2010:301-2)[86]. Whilst Flaszen does not quite establish a direct causal relationship between this incident and the origin of Grotowski's new research period, he does signal it as a relevant turning point: "The Venetian episode was, as soon became clear, the end of paratheatre." (Flaszen, 2010:301) Such a strong statement has to be understood in connection to the fact that soon after the Teatr Laboratorium's activities in Venice, towards the end of 1976, Grotowski's focus shifted and he dedicated himself primarily to his new project, Theatre of Sources (Flaszen, 2010:304). However, Grotowski did not fully abandon paratheatre in the same way that he had turned his back on theatrical practices seven years earlier. Instead, he maintained an ongoing role in its development because he kept on clarifying this practice through public statements and interviews. Moreover he continued to have an active though subtle involvement in the company's practical work. When in 1978 Zmyslowski was asked by Burzynski whether *Mountain Project* had been a creation by Grotowski or himself, Zmyslowski replied by saying:

> Everything that happened at the *Mountain* was the creation (if we want to use this term) of all the participants, but the idea of *Mountain Project* itself was born quite a long time ago. Grotowski's text about it was published in *Odra* in 1975. (...) Grotowski trusted us to penetrate this field, so we worked on our own, but – as the person overseeing all the Laboratorium's work – he had permanent access to what we were doing. He participated in the whole *Mountain Project* in its decisive phase. (Zmyslowski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010)

This particular project was clearly Grotowski's initiative and stemmed directly from him. Whilst Zmyslowski's statement reveals that it was left up to the company members to realise it, he also suggests that Grotowski continued to support them.

[86] As I have already mentioned, the following year, in 1977, Staniewski went on to form Gardzienice Theatre Association.

Molik would corroborate this in a later interview with Burzynski, in 1990, by dispelling the notion that the company might have been abandoned by Grotowski and emphasising that he had prepared them for his 'departure' and helped them on their increasingly independent and individual new paths (Molik in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010). Further evidence is provided by Flaszen, who mentions that even after Grotowski appointed Cynkutis as the company's manager 'by proxy', "the master still tried to take care of every project" (Flaszen, 2010:304)[87] There is nonetheless some question about Grotowski's role and involvement within the company's last paratheatrical project, *Tree of People*. Flaszen stated that this event had been designed by Grotowski with the help of Cynkutis, the project's nominal director (Flaszen, 2010:304). Yet Molik stated that the members of the Teatr Laboratorium, having reached their full maturity, carried out *Tree of People* as if they were already beyond Grotowski (Molik in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010). At any rate, it is beyond doubt that Grotowski had singlehandedly opened the door to paratheatre. Over time the company members went from exploring this territory as a unified group under his direct leadership to doing it more independently with varying degrees of support from him.

The individuals on whom I have focused throughout this chapter participated in work which had been led or directed by different members of the Teatr Laboratorium[88]. The degree to which Grotowski might have had input into these projects, and thus into these individuals' various experiences is difficult, if not impossible, to measure accurately. The fact that in practical terms Grotowski had not been part of their actual paratheatrical experiences is beside the point. Of course, his relative 'distance' and the fact that the work was led by members of the Teatr Laboratorium means that, technically speaking, these were primarily instances of indirect influence. However, I believe that in this case the term fails to qualify the extent to which these individuals were influenced by Grotowski. I say this because it does not do justice to the close, intense, and deep relationship that Grotowski had with the members of his company during the paratheatrical period. Whilst the various work leaders gained increasing autonomy and the work was in part determined by their

[87] When Grotowski could not do this directly he sometimes entrusted this role to Flaszen. As he goes on to explain, this is how be came to be an observer and advisor on various enterprises undertaken by members of the company (Flaszen, 2010:304).

[88] Kumiega had of course been involved in a variety of projects; Reeve had participated in Molik's *Acting Therapy* and later Zmyslowski's *Vigil*; Furse had been involved in Zmyslowski's *Vers un Mont Parallèle* and an unknown project possibly led by Spychalski; Greenhalgh had participated in Cynkutis' *Tree of People*; and Fensham in Zmyslowski's *Mountain Project*.

idiosyncrasies, they were not only in close contact with Grotowski but could be said to have been imbued with him. This is exemplified by a statement made by Spychalski during an interview with Grzegorz Ziółkowski:

> G. Z.: Throughout the whole paratheatrical period, Grotowski's and your own work developed simultaneously, alongside one another. How did you know what you were supposed to do?
> T. S.: Did I know? Or did he know? If I knew, I knew it in my bones, through induction. Of course we had contact with each other and he was probably pleased that what we did somehow functioned, that people were eager to come in large numbers and take part in what we called 'active culture', and that it gave them something. And this lightened Grotowski's load. Yes, it happened through induction. He imposed nothing. It was like rubbing against each other at a distance. (Spychalski in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010)

Therefore, from what I have discussed throughout this section, there should be no question that the individuals whom I have focused on in this chapter were indeed influenced by Grotowski. This, I would argue, applies to all individuals, including those who only had short meetings with him, like Reeve and Furse, and even those who did not have any contact with him. Looking at the evidence quantitatively might suggest that these were instances of indirect influence. Crucially though, due to the nature of the work, one also has to approach the evidence qualitatively. It is this which leads me to conclude that they were actually cases of a particularly complex type of influence which is difficult to define, but which is both indirect and direct at the same time, even if more direct than indirect.

As mentioned earlier, there is a second question which arises out of the convergence between this chapter and the overall aims of this thesis. That is to say, in attempting to assess Grotowski's influence on British theatre it is relevant that I explore to what extent the subjects of this chapter might have had any effect on British theatre as a whole. This issue was something which some of them were aware of themselves. For instance, as I began my interview with Fensham she started by saying that she did not know how significant her contribution to my thesis would be because she "could hardly claim to have had any impact on British theatre." (Fensham, 2009) The case studies I have explored in previous chapters could certainly be said to have had such an impact because they were clearly positioned within the British theatre scene. Within this context, which was readily accessible to both audiences and fellow artists, they directly pertained to the making of performance and so could be said to have

been a conduit for Grotowski's methodological and aesthetic propositions. However, the nature of the work I have been discussing throughout this chapter as well as the personal life stories of those individuals who experienced it, pose some challenges in answering the question given above.

As I have already established, paratheatre was positioned beyond theatre: it did not seek specific tangible outcomes, and it offered participants immersive experiences rather than a codified system of techniques and exercises. Therefore there could be some question as to what applications this practice might have for theatre, if understood as a formal event, attended by an audience, in purpose-built spaces[89]. At the same time, a further complication arises from the fact that most of these individuals' careers moved away from performance-making[90]. To conclude, all these complications mean that there are too many variables in accurately charting the specific ways in which the experiences these individuals had with paratheatre might have had an impact on British theatre. In a sense, what I have discussed throughout this chapter is, primarily, a subterranean history composed of a series of disparate personal stories. I say subterranean because, lacking explicit or measurable outcomes, it might not have been immediately visible on the theatre scene. Therefore, the effects all this might have had on British theatre could be said to be almost intangible; intangible perhaps, but certainly not negligible. It is undeniable that their involvement in paratheatre touched these individuals very deeply. Thus, through a series of private connections – whether friendships, collaborations, workshops, or ongoing teaching –, the influences that the Teatr Laboratorium's practice had on them could certainly be said to have continued to transmit to other individuals. Even though they have a personal character, these stories have an important place in this thesis both from a historiographical point of view, and because they illustrate some of the complex ways in which Grotowski's influence has reached Britain.

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[89] In the previous subsection I mentioned a number of ethical approaches which influenced the individuals I have been focusing on, and it could be said that these could be extrapolated to theatre methodologies. To determine this clearly would requite a close examination of Furse's and Greenhalgh's theatre work, something which, unfortunately, I am unable to do here.

[90] That said, it is important to recognise that most of the individuals I have discussed in this chapter did take on various teaching positions. Perhaps, in a sense, the nature of paratheatre meant it was better suited to pedagogical models; I say this because it was not concerned with aesthetics or specific techniques, and it placed a great emphasis on process over product. The teaching context could thus be said to have been better suited to channel some of the principles governing paratheatre, better that is, than theatre productions themselves.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

Primarily, as explained in my introductory chapter, the case studies I have investigated follow a timeline that stops at the beginning of the 1980s[1]. However, from a historiographical point of view, I am drawn to point out that Grotowski's and the Teatr Laboratorium's contact with Britain did not come to a sudden halt. Therefore, even though there is nothing more distant than the recent past, I will begin by outlining a series of key events which Grotowski and members of his company undertook in the UK throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, as well as pointing out some British connections with Grotowski's final phase of work, Art as Vehicle. My reason for doing this is that, whilst this thesis does not intend to be exhaustive, I feel it is pertinent to point the way for possible further research.

The fact that, since I have already drawn conclusions about each of the case studies at the end of each chapter, begs the question: what is left to be done from an analytical point of view? This has methodological implications. Whilst I am not sure that making axiomatic pronouncements based on the supposed transferability of my findings would be suitable or correct, I will go on to discuss some general questions which have directly arisen from my discussion. I am avoiding the temptation to talk comparatively about the various case studies tackled in this thesis because this would run contrary to my argument that each case should be investigated for its own sake[2]. As a result, though I am honouring their uniqueness, as part of this concluding chapter I will distil certain abstract issues which relate to both artistic influence as a phenomenon and Grotowski's influence on British theatre in particular.

[1] I have already explained the reasons for this chronological focus. See chapter I, subsection 4.1.

[2] Of course you, the reader, are free to draw your own conclusions by taking into account the findings expounded at the end of each chapter. As already mentioned, "readers of case study reports must themselves determine whether the findings are applicable to other cases than those which the researcher has studied." (Gomm, Foster & Hammersley, 2000:100). I would, however, suggest that this would be a purely intellectual exercise with little relevance to the model of artistic influence for which I have argued.

2. TO BE CON TINUED...

2.1 1980s

Grotowski visited Britain one last time in July 1981, when he was hosted for a month by Cardiff Laboratory Theatre[3] at their base in Chapter Arts Centre. His residency in began with 'Encounters with Grotowski', a weekend symposium where individuals not only heard him talk in public but were also able to have a short personal encounter with him[4]. Even though unfortunately no records of this event survive, and there is no indication that it involved practical workshops, it is clear that its open nature would have facilitated a large number of individuals to come into direct contact with Grotowski.

Though a somewhat anecdotal account, it is worth outlining how Grotowski came to be in Cardiff for several reasons which will become apparent. Earlier in 1981, Grotowski had been staying with Barba at Holstebro, but as Odin Teatret was due to go on a tour, Barba sought an alternative place to stay for Grotowski. He contacted Richard Gough, who he had first met as director of CLT in 1976 and with whom he had established a productive working relationship[5]; and so arranged for Grotowski to spend a month in Cardiff[6]. This not only emphasises the extent to which certain events are caused by chance, but that Odin Teatret and CLT were part of a complex constellation of companies and individuals circling around and linked by Grotowski's practice. Moreover, though geographically located in the periphery of British theatre

[3] From this point onwards I will refer to this company simply as CLT.

[4] Anna Furse mentioned in passing these one-to-one meetings with Grotowski during our interview. See chapter VI, footnote 54.

[5] CLT's relationship with Odin Teatret was based on their shared ethos and artistic interests (some of which could certainly be said to hark back to Grotowski's work). In August 1976, CLT was amongst the companies taking part in Odin Teatret's summer seminar (which involved demonstrations, presentations, discussions and workshops). In July 1979, one of Barba's actors, Tom Fjordefalk, travelled to Cardiff to be part of CLT's 'Summer School'. The following year, in August 1980, Odin Teatret undertook a month residency at CLT (including streetwork, outdoor performances, formal indoor productions, workshops, films, exhibitions and a conference). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, their relationship continued to develop and Odin Teatret became yearly visitors to CLT, not only to deliver performances and workshops but also leading to collaborative projects. I have taken these dates from the chronology provided in *A Performance Cosmology: Testimony from the Future, Evidence from the Past*. See Christie, Gough, & Watt: 2006:290-316.

[6] During the event 'Tribute to Grotowski' organised by the Centre for Performance Research on 20th and 21st February 1999, Barba stated that Grotowski's trip to Denmark – and therefore his visit to Cardiff – had been the indirect result of Grotowski's self-imposed exile (Barba, 1999b). However, Barba's recollection is just partly accurate since Grotowski only formally decided not to return to Poland in January 1982, after Martial Law had been declared on 13th December 1981.

life, throughout the 1980s and 1990s CLT became a destination in its own right[7] for performances, symposia, and workshops, championing not only Grotowski's work but also of his line of practice.

Even though Grotowski did not return to Britain again, members of the Teatr Laboratorium did visit several times throughout the early 1980s to deliver practical workshops and training sessions. What is notable, in regards to what I have said thus far, is that most of these events were organised by CLT. In fact, this brief mention at the end of my thesis does not do justice to the extent to which CLT were one of the most (if not *the* most) important advocates of Grotowski and his line of practice. Between November and December 1981, Molik was part of the company's 'Autumn School'. This trip seems to have been a reconnaissance mission[8] which led to the sessions delivered by a larger group of the Teatr Laboratorium's members the following year. Between 12th and 20th November 1982, Ludwik Flaszen, Rena Mirecka, Zygmunt Molik, Irena Rycyk and Stanislaw Scierski delivered a series of separate practical sessions at Chapter Arts Centre[9]; and once the work had come to an end, on 21st November, Flaszen agreed to talk informally to the participants. Although there are no audiovisual records of the event or Flaszen's talk, they were both written about by Paul Roylance. Roylance observed several of the work sessions and documented his impressions in a private record not mean for publication, but simply intended for CLT's archive[10]. From his description and some of the participants' comments, it seems that the work undertaken straddled theatre and paratheatre. Whilst some sessions were more clearly 'led' workshops concerned with training and theatrical craft (such as Molik's 'body alphabet'), others were closer in spirit to the

[7] Indeed, away from London's mainstream and alternative scene, CLT perhaps felt a closer affinity to the Teatr Laboratorium and Odin Teatret.

[8] In June 1982, Paul Roylance, who was associated with CLT, was in Aarhus for the summer workshops led by the Teatr Laboratorium which were hosted by the Aarhus Teater Akademi. There he talked to someone named Bent, who ran the institution. They both compared their experiences of inviting the Teatr Laboratorium to deliver workshops, and the process was uncannily similar. As Roylance explains: Bent "invited them all eighteen months ago. So did the Cardiff Lab [CLT]. They [the Teatr Laboratorium] said no, just one of us will come. Same as they said to us. He got Rena [Mirecka]. We got Zygmunt [Molik]. Six months later, they told him O.K. we're all coming. Same to us. 'Do you get the feeling we've passed some sort of test, Ben?' 'Something like that, I think.'" (Roylance, 1982:1)

[9] As can be seen on the original poster advertising this series of events, Ryszard Cieslak and Teresa Nawrot were meant to travel to Cardiff to deliver practical workshops, but Cieslak was unable to leave Poland for 'personal reasons' and Nawrot was taken ill as soon as the company arrived in Cardiff (Roylance, 1982:10). Instead Irena Rycyk, who was not part of the announced 'line up', was part of the Teatr Laboratorium's residency with CLT. See illustration no.10.

[10] Roylance states that he was "not interested in theory, analysis, or in any way amplifying the library of academic response to Grotowski's work." (Roylance, 1982:11) For an outline of his intentions and the process by which he asked Flaszen for permission to observe and record the work see Roylance, 1982:12.

Teatr Laboratorium's paratheatrical activities because they consisted mainly of loose improvisations without much guidance from the work leader. Moreover these similarities with paratheatre extended to certain practical issues. For instance, Flaszen mentioned that the company would prefer to "come and work with people as an anonymous group" (Flaszen in Roylance, 1982:3). In doing so he stressed the non-exclusivity of the workshops in terms of the participants' backgrounds, although he acknowledged that the majority of them would come from people with theatrical experience[11]. At the same time, on the first day of the event, Flaszen and Molik met the participants and held a consultation process in order to assign them to the workshop which best suited their needs (Roylance, 1982:10). This, of course, was a similar process that the Teatr Laboratorium had used during the University of Research in 1975. Over the nine day period, 96 participants, in groups varying between 14 and 24 individuals, experienced the intensity and demands of the Polish company's practice. One of those attending the sessions was Helen Chadwick. In 1985 Franc Chamberlain saw her new solo performance, *A Gift for Burning*, and remarked that it "drew on her experiences with Molik, not in a narrative sense but in terms of performance qualities." (Yarrow & Chamberlain, 2007:1969)[12] When I asked Chadwick about this she stated: "I was already working as a performer and a creator of theatre but from that workshop a door opened and I began to have my own 'voice' as an artist. My literal voice also opened up and I began to write poetry which became lyrics and then to write more songs." (Chadwick, 2008a)[13] Although I am unable at this stage to fully investigate the influence that this event might have had on the participants, Chadwick's account serves as a brief glimpse of its potential effects. On an anecdotal note it is interesting to observe that the Teatr Laboratorium's last group visit to the UK did not attract much attention from the British media[14], and no reports were published about their activities in Cardiff. Yet again, it seems, Grotowski – via his company – was exhorting his influence on a very individual and personal level.

[11] Roylance does mention that at least one individual, a female psychotherapist who had no previous theatrical experience or knowledge of Grotowski, did take part in the work. She had found out about the opportunity by picking up a leaflet at the ICA in London (Roylance, 1982:13).

[12] In fact Chadwick mentioned in an email to me that she had not worked with Molik but with Flaszen, in autumn 1983 (Chadwick, 2008a) – though she did later confirm that she meant the workshops in November 1982 delivered by members of the Teatr Laboratorium in Cardiff (Chadwick, 2008b).

[13] Chadwick then went on to specialize in voice work and though she continues to give live performances, she is also a recorded artist. See www.helenchadwick.com.

[14] Interestingly, the only exception was the BBC. Although it approached Flaszen with the intention to "record a big program" about the company and its current work, this did not take place for political reasons. Flaszen explains that at the time, the Teatr Laboratorium almost tended to avoid publicity because it wanted to avoid being used as an "advertisement of the military regime's 'liberal' façade." (Flaszen, 2010:316) Therefore, even though the BBC had offered a fee of over £10,000, after discussing the proposal with Molik, Flaszen politely rejected the BBC (Flaszen, 2010:316).

GROTOWSKI'S TEATR LABORATORIUM

WORKSHOPS

November 12th – 20th 1982

Over the eight days, Friday 12th November to Saturday 20th, inclusive, eight members of Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium, from Wroclaw, Poland, will lead a series of workshops in Cardiff.
The Cardiff Laboratory Theatre is host to this visit, the first to this country in ten years, by the single most influential theatre group of our time.

Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium

This group has been in existence for 23 years. During this time, it has been responsible for a series of revolutionary changes in our way of thinking about 'theatre'. For instance, Grotowski initiated a fundamental revision of the relationship between actor and director, establishing a working system in which each individual actor assumes a large responsibility for the development of his or her role. Also, he dismantled the notion of the spectator being simply a passive recipient of the theatrical experience, and explored the principle of 'theatre' being an activity in which both actor and spectator is actively engaged. He developed the idea of 'paratheatrical activies' as one stage in this exploratory process: these were unstructured events, sometimes lasting for months, in which both actors and participants worked together in exploring the essential nature of their different 'roles' in conditions of virtual monastic isolation and vigour. All this was rooted in a unique system of physical training, one which has become profoundly influential in the theatre world, whose emphasis consists largely in working towards removing the behavioural blocks that inhibit 'free' action, whether this be in terms of movement or vocalisation.

The Laboratorium continues to evolve. The group has now returned to a re-evaluation of the formal 'workshop' structure. The work they will lead in Cardiff combines their experience in both the training discipline and the paratheatrical questioning into a series of short-term adventures whose outcome – as the following brief descriptions suggest – depends entirely on the individual participants' openmindedness.

The Workshops

A 'Workshop', as understood by a practitioner in the arts, is an intensive period of short-term study (a weekend, a week, or sometimes longer) aimed at extending the practitioner's skills under the guidance of a more experienced practitioner.
As developed by Grotowski's group, a 'workshop' is a much less specific activity, something which, as well as being of value to theatre practitioners, or those who aspire to theatre, is actually enriched by the participation of people whose experience is quite outside theatre: other artists, for example – painters, sculptors, musicians – or doctors, teachers, social workers – anyone, in fact, whose work involves them in making contact with other people. They stipulate neither an age-limit nor any qualification in terms of background, experience, or particular capability. There will be no other selection procedure, therefore, than to try to establish this balance between theatre practitioners and non-practitioners.

"That which interests us in our work is how to reject all that is dead in us, as through it's a negative work, which means that we never say how to do, but how not to do. It's like finding an instant in which our skin comes alive, in which our eyes become alive, in which our entire being is filled with life. A moment in which we are a sense of life, a living plasma, where we perceive life, everything around us, in a sort of innocence, as if seeing it for the first time."

(Ludwik Flaszen)

Cardiff Laboratory Theatre

Cardiff Laboratory Theatre was founded in 1974. It initiates research projects and experiments which, drawing on a variety of disciplines, examine and illuminate the essential processes of theatre.

The work of the Laboratory can be divided into three broad areas: Performance Projects, Collaborative Projects, and the Resource Centre.

Performance Projects are developed in a variety of ways. There are 'formal' rehearsed pieces and structured outdoor shows for presentation at Welsh venues and abroad. There are also the informal, more immediate pieces – Special Events, Feasts, Celebrations, and Outings.

Collaborative Projects involve the arranging of visits by foreign companies and individual specialists both in order to make their work available to Welsh audiences and to provide opportunities for members of the Laboratory and others to work with them. Recent developments in this area have led to cross-disciplinary research-based and educative projects linking with the Resource Centre.

The basis of the Resource Centre is a collection of books and journals relating to various aspects of performance. This collection is being enlarged to encompass music and video recordings.

Although the work and philosophy of Grotowski's Laboratorium has been and will continue to be an important influence on the Cardiff Laboratory Theatre, this direct relationship with the Polish group and its individual members is relatively new, and springs from the work of Project Voice, an international cross-disciplinary collaborative project proposed and prepared for Autumn 1982. It is a fair indication of how the support and dynamic gathered by Project Voice will manifest itself in other ways over the next few years through the whole range of the Cardiff Laboratory Theatre's activities despite the cancellation of the project in Cardiff this year.

Cardiff Laboratory Theatre is associated with Chapter Arts Centre and works with the support of the Welsh Arts Council.

The Work-Leaders

Ryszard Cieslak } *	Rena Mirecka-Kadziolka } *
Zbigniew Kozlowski }	Irena Rycyk }
Ludwik Flaszen	Teresa Nawrot
Zygmunt Molik	Stanislaw Scierski

* these workshops both involve two leaders.

The Descriptions

The Labyrinth – Ryszard Cieslak

'This is a meeting which might be called a 'group adventure', in which discoveries are made, according to individual needs, through movement, exercises, group and individual improvisations (with and without a subject), vocal improvisations, and paratheatrical activities. Its aim is to rediscover the courage to act, and also to look for unknown possibilities of bodily expression and the possibilities of developing the creative sensibility. Sometimes this takes place partly in an enclosed space and partly outdoors.'

Voices – Ludwik Flaszen

'The search for a real human voice in all its vibratory fullness through using simple forms of movement, actions with the body and the voice, vocalisation, improvised song (group and individual, with and without words). The voice and its enormous possibilities, its music. To enlarge the capacity to perceive and react, to re-establish contact with forgotten energies, through active participation, in movement and in stillness, in sound and in silence.'

Voice and Body – Zygmunt Molik

'Through combining some selected body and vocal exercises one reaches the point where the whole organism is engaged whilst speaking or singing. Open vibration as a vehicle of text or song, incorporating the whole richness and complexity of human nature.'

Acting Energy – Rena Mirecka

'During the first few days the work is aimed at surmounting the body's obstacles and resistances. Difficulties may disappear little by little as a result of this training. The next stage of the work leads to open improvisations. Then, out of that inspiration that occurs in direct action in the work-space – individually or collectively – it is possible to reach a period of discovery, a journey, a dance, something resembling an attempt to take flight. We shall try, through this common group experience, through different possibilities that depend on the individual dispositions of the participants, to create a non-habitual reality.'

Training and Opening – Teresa Nawrot

'This is a form of training based in physical and plastic elements which lead to free group actions, using the body and, if needs be, the voice. The work is towards allowing the possibility of being fully *with* someone/something, of being *for* someone/something, of going *towards* someone/something.'

Organic Man – Stanislaw Scierski

'Work which involves body, voice, and movement, in improvisations whic are sometimes structured. A sort of group exploration whose orientation i determined spontaneously in the course of the work according to the need of the participants. Some physical ability might be useful, although it is nc necessary. The most important thing is *presence*, comprising an open-nes to Other. If necessary, this does not preclude the application of elements c exercise – physical, vocal, and relating to the plasticity of the body. All th same, one might describe the essence of this work as the discovery, throug action, of the Common Unknown.'

Times and Place

There will be six workshops running simultaneously over the period **Frida 12th November to Saturday 20th November inclusive.** The starting an finishing times will vary from workshop to workshop as well as from day t day, and, in some cases, might extend late into the evening. Intendin participants should understand that, since this work process involves a organic continuity, a full commitment is expected from the first until th final day. All of the workshops will take place in the Chapter Arts Centr which is the Cardiff Laboratory Theatre's base.

Group Division

On the first day, the eight work-leaders (who prefer not to be thought of a 'teachers') will talk individually to each of the participants in order to assig each person to the workshop best suited to their temperament. It is nc necessary, therefore, to make a choice of workshop in applying for enrol ment, although you may state a preference if you wish.

Fee

£60
A non-refundable deposit of £10 will be payable on confirmation of a plac the remainder to be paid on enrollment.
This fee is exclusive of accommodation. We will be able to supply a accommodation list on request.

Application Deadline

Applications should reach us by **Saturday 25th September.** You will receiv confirmation of a place by Monday 4th October. Please write a bri description of yourself, but **do not send any money** – the £10 deposit will b payable on confirmation.

Applications should be addressed to:

Cardiff Laboratory Theatre
(Grotowski Visit)
The Gym
Market Place
Canton
Cardiff CF5 1QE.

Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

For further information, telephone Cardiff (0222) 45174.

Illustration no.10 Original poster advertising the Teatr Laboratorium's Cardiff workshops in 1982.

After the workshops, also in November 1982, Molik stayed in Cardiff to take part on CLT's 'Project Voice Festival'[15]. Mirecka too would, within a short time span, also deliver further practical sessions in Britain. In 1983, between 5th and 16th November, she led workshops with Mariusz Socha in Holmfirth (Yorkshire), which had been organised by an experimental group: Theatre Babel (Jedrychowski, Osinski,

[15] This was the precursor of the 'Giving Voice' festival organised by CLT in 1990. As I will mention in the following subsection, Molik was also invited to participate in this event.

& Ziolkowski, 2005:158). The following year, in 1984, she returned to deliver more sessions. The first of these ran between 20th and 24th March and was organised and hosted by the University of East Anglia Drama Department. Molik also ran a session with a separate group. Although I have been unable to find any record of his workshop, Franc Chamberlain gives a general description of the work undertaken by Mirecka, as well as fragments from his original journal entries (Yarrow & Chamberlain, 2007:167-9). As in Cardiff, he gives the impression that this was not a 'typical' theatre workshop, yet it was clear to him "how this process was useful for the actor and for the theatre" (Yarrow & Chamberlain, 2007:1969). In my email correspondence with him Chamberlain revealed a few, more interesting details. Before Mirecka arrived, some participants were required to undertake a short training session with Paul Bradley (director of Theatre Babel)[16]. As far as Chamberlain recalled, "the exercises consisted of the kinds of actions seen in the Cieslak training video produced by Odin, plus a number of Hatha Yoga exercices. Paul [Bradley] also gave a solo performance to demonstrate how this material led into performance." (Chamberlain, 2010a) Moreover, Chamberlain mentioned that from the initial 20 participants, only ten followed the work till the end (Chamberlain, 2010c). When I asked him about the potential reasons for this, he suggested that one of the work's key aspects was "overcoming the barrier of tiredness and resistance" (Chamberlain, 2010b), and that only a few participants truly understood the need to "'break on through to the other side'" (Chamberlain, 2010b).

Later on that year, from 5th to 16th November 1984, Mirecka led a second workshop in Holmfirth, again hosted by Theatre Babel (Jedrychowski, Osinski, & Ziolkowski, 2005:158). This seems to suggest an ongoing relationship between the Teatr Laboratorium and this British experimental company[17]. Theatre Babel would make an interesting subject of research not only for this, and for the way in which it might have been influenced by the Teatr Laboratorium, but also because it clearly

[16] As Chamberlain explained in further correspondence, he thinks the workshop with Paul Bradley was compulsory but only for student participants – the group was composed of both university students and external practitioners. His memory is that this was something requested by Mirecka to ensure that those participants had some basics. Whilst Chamberlain did not think this was a 'test' that had to be passed, he thought "it might have been an opportunity for those who didn't feel a resonance with the work to drop out before Rena arrived." (Chamberlain 2010b)

[17] Although I have not been able to contact Paul Bradley, I did have an informal telephone conversation with two of his collaborators: Charlotte Diefenthal, who formed the company with him in 1980; and Chris Squire, who joined the company the following year. Diefenthal stated that when her and Paul Bradley graduated from Bretton Hall University they immediately formed Theatre Babel. In 1981, between March and July, they undertook extensive workshops led by Cynkutis and Molik which had been organised by the Theaterhaus in West Berlin. In 1984, as Theatre Babel disbanded, Diefenthal and Squire set up Impossible Theatre, and have been working together since. See www.impossible.org.uk In 1984 they were invited to perform at Odin Teatret's base in Holstebro.

exemplifies the extent to which this kind of practice connected individuals in a kind of British-Grotowski network. I say this, for instance, because Chris Squire, whilst studying at Leicester University, had gone to participate in one of Triple Action's *Leap in the Dark* events[18]. Further examples would be the fact that members of Theatre Babel attended events not only with Odin Teatret[19] but also the 1982 workshops in Cardiff mentioned earlier; or that, in 1983, they invited Sandra Reeve to work with them for a short period. The picture this paints emphasises what I have already investigated throughout this thesis: a series of personal stories which reveal an interconnected web of individuals, all sharing a common interest in Grotowski's practice.

So far I have only mentioned connections between Britain and the Teatr Laboratorium's members. Of course it is important to remember that by the early 1980s Grotowski's work had developed independently from his former collaborators. This was further compounded by the fact that, in January 1983, he sought asylum in the USA, where he began his Objective Drama research. On 20th January 1984, the Teatr Laboratorium officially folded, with an announcement in the Wroclaw-based newspaper *Gazeta Robotnicza*[20]. As already mentioned, some ex-members of the company (such as Mirecka and Molik) continued to deliver work in Britain. Moreover, when in 1986 Grotowski embarked on Art as Vehicle, a further avenue was opened for British practitioners to come into contact with his practice. The first of these was a young British actor of Indian descent, Nitin Ganatra, who in 1989 spent a year at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski in Pontedera (Italy). Whilst there, he participated fully in Grotowski's research, and even appeared in Mercedes Gregory's film of *Downstairs Action, Art as Vehicle*. When Ganatra returned to the UK a year later, he began working with Spiral Theatre[21].

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[18] For my discussion of Triple Action's *Leap in the Dark*, see chapter V, subsection 5.2.

[19] When the company travelled to Holstebro in 1982 its members not only took part in Odin Teatret's workshops, but they performed one of their own pieces, *Memorial*.

[20] For a transcript of this announcement see Kumiega, 1985:214-215.

[21] Although Ganatra started by working in the experimental theatre scene, he went on to become a mainstream actor and increasingly involved in film and television. Since 2007 he has made regular appearances in the BBC soap opera *Eastenders* as the postman Masood Ahmed.

2.2 1990s – 2000s

Throughout the 1990s, British practitioners continued to come into contact with Grotowski's practice, primarily through the work of ex-members of the Teatr Laboratorium. In April 1990, Molik was again invited to Cardiff by the Centre for Performance Research[22] (formerly CLT), this time to take part in the first edition of the festival and symposium 'Giving Voice'. On his return to Poland, on 12th May, he was interviewed by Burzynski for *Gazeta Robotnicza*. When asked how his work was received during the festival, and whether Grotowski's ideas were still influential in the West, Molik modestly replied by saying: "the trend that I represent (...) – it dominated the symposium. It is a trend initiated by Grotowski that relies on drawing the voice from the body, on engaging the whole organism in action. Cardiff is not the only place where you can see how Grotowski's ideas are still alive, current, and inspiring around the world." (Molik in Allain & Ziolkowsi, 2010) Clearly, Molik seems to suggest, although Grotowski's influence was not explicitly present in the work shown and demonstrated at 'Giving Voice', some of the guiding principles of his practice did permeate the festival. In January 1992, Molik returned to Cardiff one last time, again invited by CPR, to deliver a 'Voice and Body Workshop'.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, I have chosen to focus exclusively on activities carried out in the UK by Grotowski and members of the Teatr Laboratorium, and on some British connections with Grotowski's Art as Vehicle. From what I have outlined thus far it is noticeable that, in comparison to the previous decade, the number of events or workshops delivered by former members of the company decreased significantly. That is however not to say that interest in Grotowski had waned. It is worth remembering that throughout the 1990s scholarship tackling his various phases of work blossomed, perhaps culminating in the publication of *The Grotowski Sourcebook* in 1997. By this point Grotowski was firmly established across university curricula in the UK, and *Towards a Poor Theatre* was now a compulsory read for many students. At the same time of course, many of the individuals who had been paratheatrical participants in the 1970s were now actively teaching at higher education institutions. And although Grotowski and his former associates no longer

[22] In April 1988 CLT morphed into the Centre for Performance Research. From this point onwards I will refer to the company's new official title as CPR.

visited Britain, companies such as Odin Teatret or Gardzienice Theatre Association continued to tour the country and deliver workshops on a more regular basis[23].

Whilst this wide ranging dissemination of Grotowski's theatrical practice and methodological approaches continued, through various indirect channels, he continued his closed research on Art as Vehicle. In 1992, Ian Morgan, a Welsh actor, moved to Pontedera and worked with the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski for three years[24]. He was the last British connection with Art as Vehicle within Grotowski's lifetime. It would not be until 2002 that a number of companies and practitioners from the UK came into direct contact with this strand of his practice. The pan-European project 'Tracing Roads Across'[25], which started in 2003 and lasted until 2006, saw an unprecedented opening-up of what was now the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. As part of a complex programme of activities, Anna Fenemore and Pigeon Theatre, Jade Maravala and Jonathan Grieve of Para-Active, and Simon Godwin[26], participated in a series of work exchanges and open sessions in Pontedera and elsewhere. During these events each group would observe "the practical work of the other, opuses and exercises included, without active participation in the works of the other group, creating the circumstances in which the works and creative processes of participating groups can be analyzed from the point of view of performance craft." (Tracing Roads Across, 2004) 'Tracing Roads Across' also included the first formal visit to Britain of the Workcenter's leaders, Thomas Richards and Mario Biagini. The

[23] In September 1990 Odin Teatret undertook a second residency in Wales, organised by CPR, and involving a complex programme of workshops, performances, film screenings, and demonstrations. They performed in Wales again in 1992 and toured England in 1994. After a first British-wide tour in 1989, Gardzienice Theatre Association returned in 1992 to perform in London, Nottingham, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Cardiff. The following year Staniewski and his company were amongst the main contributors towards 'Giving Voice #3: A Geography of the Voice', delivering both performances and workshops. Of course, as already mentioned at the end of the second chapter in this thesis, the Gardzienice Theatre Association had worked with the RSC in 1991 and 1992.

[24] When he left Pontedera Morgan returned to Wales, where he continued his performance work, becoming particularly involved in the Welsh 'physical theatre' scene. This included: *Sound House* (directed by Meredith Monk and produced by CPR), work with Brith Gof, and forming Theatr Adlais with Menna Price. He then moved to Aberystwyth where, as well as continuing his performance work, he began to teach at the university's drama department. In 2000 he moved to London to help form Mkultra (led by Peader Kirk), and teach at E15, Rose Bruford and Brunel. In 2004 he joined Teatr Piesn Kozla, a company founded in 1996 by Grzegorz Bral and Anna Zubrzycki (who had been one of the founding members of Gardzienice Theatre Association). See http www.piesnkozla.pl/index.en.html

[25] The University of Kent, representing Britain, was one of the many partners involved in this project. See www.tracingroadsacross.info I was amongst a group of students from the University of Kent who travelled to Vienna in June 2003 to attend the opening events of the project at the Theater des Augenblicks. Before the official programme of activities began, which included documentary projections and an international symposium, the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards offered us an opportunity to witness a closed presentation of *Action*, an private rehearsal of *One breath left – Dies Irae*, and the new piece in the domain of Art as Vehicle *The Twin: an Action in creation*.

[26] Godwin is now associate director at the Bristol Old Vic.

event 'Intervention in Great Britain', which took place at the University of Kent between 6th and 7th January 2005, involved public discussions on Art as Vehicle and the screening of the documentary films *Art as Vehicle* (1989) and *A film documentation of Action* (2000). As mentioned in the preface to this thesis, in 2006 Professor Paul Allain began the British Grotowski Project at the University of Kent. Of course this is not the place to list the many events that were part of the project, which involved screenings, symposia, and practical workshops – including Molik's and Mirecka's return to Britain in June 2007. Naturally, it is too soon to be able to even begin to glimpse what the effects or influences of these different events throughout the 1990s and 2000s might have been. What is clear nonetheless is that even though Grotowski never entered into the British theatrical mainstream, his practice has continued to be relevant and of interest.

3. WIDER CONCLUSIONS

In the introductory chapter to this thesis I stated that, on a basic level, I have sought to demonstrate that influence in theatre and performance is a measurable phenomenon that can be substantiated with evidence. On a specific level, I have also demonstrated that Grotowski's influence on British theatre was relatively palpable, to varying degrees, in the time period I have focused on. I have also argued at several points that the channels through which an individual or company came into contact with Grotowski's practice tended to have an effect on the way in which that influence became manifest. All these are issues which have already become clear throughout the previous chapters. I also stated that I have selected 'telling' cases for my study[27], so the question now remains: what do these tell us, as a whole, about influence and about Grotowski's relationship with the UK? Throughout the following subsections I will address these issues, going from the particular to the general. Finally, taking my investigation as a point of departure, I will touch upon some of the wider and current questions about the future of Grotowski's legacy.

[27] See chapter I, subsection 4.1.

3.1 Britain and Grotowski

The research I have carried out, and which informs this thesis, has clearly not been quantitative, but qualitative. It could thus be suggested that the companies and individuals I have investigated do not necessarily represent a significant sample to make any broad statements about Grotowski's influence on British theatre. Whilst I cannot categorically argue that this phenomenon was pervasive, because it did not enter the cultural mainstream, I have demonstrated that within certain sectors of the theatre scene, from Brook to alternative companies and university students, Grotowski's work had a degree of currency. As I have proven, between 1966 and the 1980s, some British theatre makers recognised the Teatr Laboratorium as an important benchmark and valuable source of inspiration, taking the company as a model or point of departure. It is therefore beyond doubt that Grotowski's influence did, to varying extents, become manifest in the UK.

At the same time, I have to acknowledge that various aspects of the case studies I have discussed indicate certain British resistances to his practice. The RSC cast's initial difficulties in embracing the work carried out by Grotowski and Cieslak, the ambivalent reviews the Teatr Laboratorium received in 1969, the mixed reception of Freehold's and Triple Action's productions, and the challenges encountered upon their return by the individuals who had participated in paratheatre all point to a complex relationship between Britain and Grotowski. For example, whilst the cultural establishment was at first intrigued and in awe of the Teatr Laboratorium when it performed at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1968, these feelings seem to have been soon replaced by a degree of uncertainty and scepticism[28]. In my introductory chapter I discussed how artistic influence could be understood as a virus[29]. Extending this metaphor, without passing judgement, I would like to suggest that some aspects of the British character could be said to have operated as antibodies. Preventing Grotowski from being more readily embraced, these national traits could perhaps be partly understood as the causes for why his influence was not felt more deeply or widely. I refer here to the UK's great literary tradition, which conceives theatre primarily in terms of spoken text; the British suspicion of transcendental and

[28] As I explored in my second chapter, this can be exemplified by the discrepancies between the reviews of *Akropolis* in 1968, and those written about *The Constant Prince* and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* the following year. See chapter II, subsections 1.1 and 1.3.

[29] See chapter I, subsection 2.2

metaphysical elements within the Teatr Laboratorium's work, exemplified by a desire to rationalise and question its processes; the typically British dispassionate attitude, expressed in a hesitance to take things too seriously; or the desire to undermine and dismantle acclaimed or guru-esque figures[30]. These characteristics would imply there might have been an embedded discrepancy or clash between the national temperament and Grotowski, which resulted in the ambiguous and overtly cautious reception of his practice. Moreover, it seems that members of the Teatr Laboratorium were aware of this. When in June 1982 Paul Roylance was at the Arhus Teater Akademi, he shared a room with Molik. One evening Roylance asked him why it had been such a long time since the Teatr Laboratorium had been to England. Molik replied:

> I tell you something now. When we came to England, in 1969, this was a time when we were, I should say, at the height of our fame, of our popularity. In Paris, New York, we were treated like kings. It was extraordinary. Unforgettable. But in England there was something, I would say, of difficulty. It was not a happy time for us. And so we were thinking, 'England is not for us, and we are not for England'. (Roylance, 1982:1)

Of course this should not distract from the effects that Grotowski did have on British theatre. As previously explained, his influence mainly took place through direct and indirect personal connections. It therefore did not become explicitly manifest in the wider theatrical context, but was only significant within confined pockets. Nonetheless, some aspects of Grotowski's practice did filter through, perhaps in a

[30] It is the last three of these characteristics which could be considered as most important, in particular the resistance to transcendental and metaphysical aspects. I say this in relation to the work of Jacques Lecoq, which shares with Grotowski's its under-reliance on dramatic literature and emphasis on physical action, has indeed been steadily welcomed into the British establishment. To this day there are major companies in the UK's theatrical scene grounded on the French mater's line of work, and which have celebrated – if not necessarily promulgated - his practice. The clearest example of this trend would be Simon McBurney's Theatre Complicite. Of course, the comparison between both practitioners is more complex than that. An interesting point of departure for this would be Chamberlain and Yarrow's 2002 book, published by Routledge, *Jacques Lecoq and the British Theatre*. From its preface it is clear that Lecoq's work also found a certain resistance in Britain; Chamberlin laments that "Lecoq never received the recognition that he deserved in the English-speaking world" (Chamberlain & Yarrow, 2002:xi). As both authors go on to state in their introduction, Lecoq's influence on Britain has not become manifest in the connection between an 'authentic' company and a guru figure, primarily because there is no 'pure' Lecoq form and therefore his work cannot be 'diluted' or 'polluted' (Chamberlain & Yarrowm 2002:4) Lecoq's influence on British theatre is, on the surface, certainly as 'diffuse' as Grotowski's. However it is difficult to deny that it is also more pervasive. This, in no small part, is due to the fact that Lecoq was – as well as a director and researcher – a pedagogue and that he operated a school in Paris which was attended by many British students (such as McBurney). Moreover, I do believe that the transcendental and metaphysical nature of key aspects of Grotowski's work was an equally important reason which explains why his work has not been accepted as readily as Lecoq's. All that said, this is merely a footnote, and not the place for an in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences of how British theatre has responded to both practitioners.

diluted form, to permeate the UK's theatrical landscape. As I will discuss in the following subsection, it is worth emphasising that this did not always take place through Grotowski himself, or the Teatr Laboratorium, but thanks to the activities of those individuals and companies that had been influenced by them in a more significant way. On a specific level, concepts such as 'poor theatre' and 'holy actor' have entered the theatre's vernacular, and scenographic experimentations which depart from the traditional proscenium arrangement are nowadays commonplace. Furthermore, as Molik's statement after his trip to Cardiff in 1990 suggests, Grotowski's revolutionary voice work is still relevant. In a wider sense, pedagogical approaches in conservatoires and universities have changed radically over the last thirty years, and an appreciation of rigorous physical training has fully entered the British theatre establishment. Whilst Grotowski and Grotowskian practices were not solely responsible for these developments, he certainly contributed towards them and his contact with the UK could be seen as a marked turning point. Even though Grotowski's influence on Britain was particularly apparent in the 1970s, its echoes still resonate today.

3.2 Model of influence

It is pertinent to return to some of the questions raised in my introductory chapter, and take into account my later investigations. Throughout this subsection I will primarily take issue with Schechner's way of understanding Grotowski's influence because, I would argue, my findings point towards the need to redefine the model of influence suggested by him. As previously mentioned[31], Schechner initially illustrated the way in which Grotowski's ideas and practices have circulated using the image of a rock dropped into water (Schechner & Wolford, 2001:xxvii). Later on, he emphasised this concentric model by stating that there are various lines of individuals who have been influenced by Grotowski, and which could be ordered according to the channels and processes through which that influence took place (Schechner, 2008:10). In doing so, Schechner ranks those individuals who worked directly with Grotowski above those who only had indirect contact with him, either by working with people who worked with Grotowski or by encountering documents such as *Towards a Poor Theatre*.

[31] See chapter I, subsection 5.3.

Schechner's concentric model is certainly accurate from a chronological point of view, in that one instance of influence necessarily takes place after another if they were all to be arranged in a neat timeline. Nevertheless, his suggestion that Grotowski's influence has spread in a series of waves that expand outwards in ever-widening circles fails to acknowledge the complexity of artistic influence as a phenomenon. Whilst Grotowski certainly is at the centre and is the origin of this web of influence, Schechner only accounts for this one centre and thus does not take into consideration multiplicity and simultaneity.

When I began my research I contemplated whether Grotowski's influence could be represented in a quasi-genealogical manner: he would be the trunk, his close associates would be branches, and third parties to his influence could be twigs or even leaves[32]. Grotowski's emphasis on transmission during the last phase of his work has, perhaps indirectly, resulted in an emphasis on lineage. Lineage is inevitably hierarchical, something which is implicit in the model proposed by Schechner. However, my investigations displace such a simplistic notion of influence. Instead, taking into account my findings, I can only conclude that Grotowski's ideas and practices were not divulged in such a linear way. The model of his influence does not resemble a tree, nor even a rock dropped into water, but a rhizome or a network[33]. That is to say, whilst Grotowski remains the centre, there are a number of secondary and tertiary nodes/hubs which have continued to spread his influence: whether close associates like Barba, written and audiovisual material produced by Grotowski, or groups which have themselves been indirectly influenced by him. Therefore, the model I am proposing acknowledges that ideas and practices continue to percolate beyond the confines of direct influence[34]. In doing so it reconciles the apparently contradictory positions of Schechner on the one hand, who tends to emphasise direct personal contact, and Barba on the other, who highlights that Grotowski's legacy is plural and that his heirs will be the anonymous generations that come in his wake[35]

[32] This idea might have been, to an extent, prompted by my recollections of a visit to the Moscow Art Theatre School. In May 2006 I was amongst a group of theatre undergraduates from the University of Kent that took part in an exchange with this Russian institution. Whilst there, I was deeply impressed by a large framed poster which hung outside the school's director's office. It represented the lineage stemming from Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko, and extending to later directors of the Moscow Art Theatre.

[33] See illustration no.11

[34] For instance, as discussed in the fourth and fifth chapters respectively, the work of Freehold and Triple Action Theatre served as an 'introduction' for a younger generation to a certain ethos and methodologies that stemmed from Grotowski.

[35] See chapter I, subsection 5.4.

(Barba, 1999b). As a result, this model softens the value judgements that are often implicit when distinctions between direct and indirect contact/influence are made, at the same time honouring the fact that some nodes/hubs are more 'important' than others due to the number of further connections attached to them.

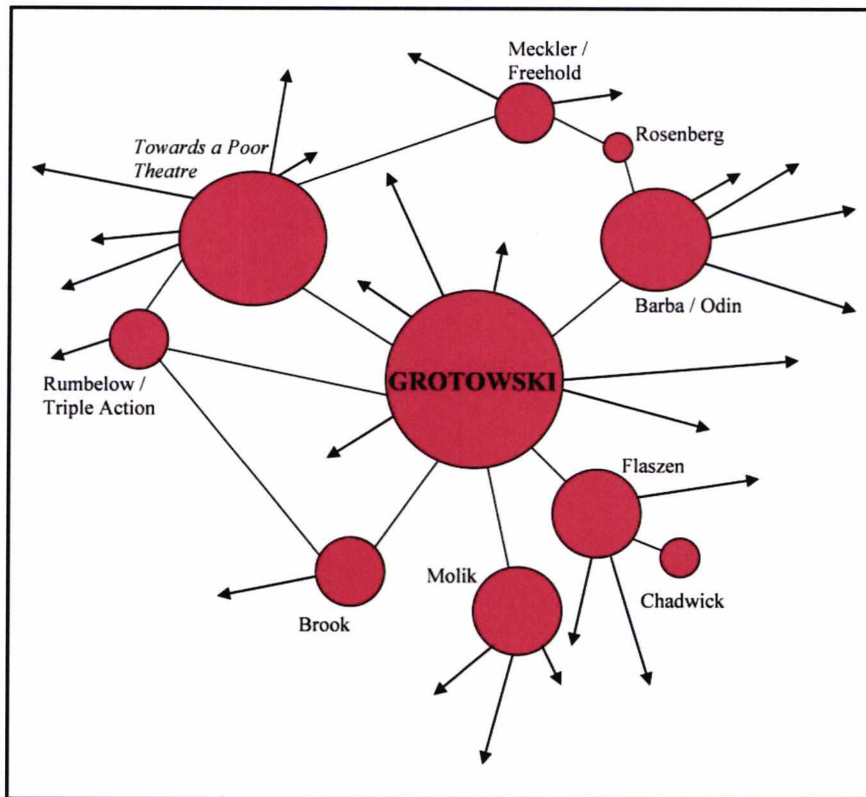

Illustration no.11 An approximate representation of Grotowski's influence and how it has spread.[36]

Above all, unlike the tree or the rock dropped in water, the rhizome/network model I propose helps us appreciate practitioners and their work in their own right, free from hierarchical preconceptions, whilst simultaneously considering them in relation to one another. I have, as best as possible, attempted to illustrate my argument in the diagram above. Nonetheless, to accurately represent the complexity of Grotowski's influence would possibly require a three dimensional medium, of the type that has been used to map the internet according to the connections between websites and user numbers[37]. Therefore I would like to emphasise that my diagram does not intend to be finite or extensive, but is just a sketch using some of the case studies tackled in this thesis.

[36] The different sizes of the red circles relate to an approximate representation of the number of further connections, which are signalled by the arrows.

[37] For instance, the 3D graphics used throughout the BBC1 documentary series *The Virtual Revolution*. This four part programme, presented by Dr Aleksandra Krotoski, was broadcast between 30th January and 20th February 2010. The series was awarded with the TV Bafta for New Media that year. See www.bbc.co.uk/virtualrevolution

This kind of visual representation is helpful to illustrate the connections between different nodes/hubs, but each one should be analysed separately to determine the degree and extent of the influence.

3.3 What is to be done?

Whilst is has not been one of the primary concerns of this thesis, I do feel it is important to position my study in relation to the current scholarly discussion about the future of Grotowski's legacy. Maybe my findings have something to contribute because, on a fundamental basis, this debate is concerned with a re-evaluation of the channels and processes through which Grotowski's influence is continuing to be spread today. In that respect, I am aware that the model of influence I have outlined in the previous subsection is not without its challenges. Before his death, Grotowski transmitted the 'inner aspects' of his last phase of work to Richards, and since then the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards has continued to develop this practice. This direct and 'official' inheritance has to be somehow reconciled with the multiplicity I have argued for earlier. It is here that, for some scholars, difficulties arise.

Over the past ten years an academic camp has emerged which lays claim to "special places at the Grotowski high table" (Allain, 2008:39), seemingly concerned with safeguarding Grotowski's legacy, particularly when it comes to the continuity of Art as Vehicle. Wolford clearly exemplifies this school of thought and throughout the remains of this subsection I will focus on her pronouncements. Whilst she displayed hints of this tendency as early as 1996[38], it is most explicit in her 2008 article 'Living Tradition: Continuity of Research at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards' (Wolford, 2008:126-149). Wolford does not hold back on her criticisms. In the space of just thirty lines she chastises Boston-based Pilgrim Theatre's website and Wroclaw-based Theatre ZAR's 2007 pre-tour publicity for asserting their indirect connection to Grotowski, she complains that Slowiak's and Cuesta's book *Jerzy Grotowski* includes exercises developed by them alongside those deriving from

[38] I am referring to her article "Seminal Teachings: The Grotowski Influence: A Reassessment'. See Wolford, 1996:38-43.

Grotowski, and she sides with Schechner's view that the work of Teatr Piesn Kozla is 'pretentious and incoherent'. Moreover she also reprimands the British Grotowski Project for extending an open invitation to those who consider themselves to have been influenced by Grotowski to engage with the project, because she fears this "erases the distinction between those who self-nominate as Grotowskian and those whose knowledge is rooted in firsthand engagement with Grotowski's practice" (Wolford, 2008:128).[39] Before continuing, I have to point out that I am not opposed to everything Wolford says. For instance, I acknowledge the problems inherent in some artists' inclination to promote their work by emphasising a linkage to Grotowski[40]. However, I would argue that plucking a sentence out of a single website or brochure is not enough to determine the severity of the situation, and that a deeper investigation into each case in necessary[41]. I have myself also recognised that 'Grotowskian', as a label, should be used with care and is not without shortcomings. Nonetheless, citing Schechner, Wolford goes on to emphasise that Grotowski's effects on theatre will primarily – if not exclusively – take place through the individuals with whom he worked for a prolonged time. Her views are highlighted by her reminder that "Richards and Biagini were named in Grotowski's will as heirs of his intellectual property" (Wolford, 2008:131). As I explained in the previous subsection, this hierarchical and linear understanding of influence is not the kind of model which my study would indicate.

Clearly Wolford is mainly worried about the misrepresentation of Grotowski's practice and the misuse of his name, something which – she suggests – could potentially damage his reputation[42]. Nonetheless, the subtext I detect in her arguments does not differ greatly from the criticisms she voiced in 1996[43]; Wolford, it seems, is

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[39] What is particularly insulting about this is the fact that Wolford seems to imply that the British Grotowski Project might lack academic rigour. I hope that this thesis will be one of the many pieces of evidence to disprove her reductive point of view.

[40] The 'dangers' involved in this is something which Wolford already warned against in her 1996 article (Wolford, 1996:41). See chapter I, subsection 5.4.

[41] The level of analysis I have carried out throughout this thesis, paying particular attention to contexts and details, has been my resolute attempt to avoid such misreadings.

[42] This becomes apparent in the way that Wolford refers to Brecht as a comparative example. Because he left behind a theatre company that still survives as an institution, as well as an array of various practical and theoretical documents, Wolford suggests that it is "relatively simple to distinguish between that which pertains directly to his practice and that which represents an expropriation of his ideas" (Wolford, 2008:129). She therefore goes on to suggest that "a bad piece of agit prop (...) poses no real danger to Brecht's reputation" (Wolford, 2008:129). The challenge in Grotowski's case, Wolford states, is posed by the relative scarcity of reliable knowledge about his work.

[43] As I briefly mentioned in my introductory chapter, in her 1996 article Wolford talked against the 'bastardization' of Grotowski's work. See chapter I, subsection 5.5.

still concerned with identifying and denouncing 'unskilled expropriations' of Grotowski's practice. It is this somewhat 'purist' attitude which my research has led me to question[44]. My disagreements with Wolford and the camp she exemplifies stem from the fact that they are concerned with the continuation of Grotowski's work and thus tend to use Grotowski's notion of transmission as a model and measure for all his influences. This approach is clearly problematic since it is predicated on a singularity. Contrary to this, my interested is broader and relates to Grotowski's influences as a whole. I say this because, as suggested in my first chapter, to be influenced by Grotowski does not necessarily mean that one will follow in his footsteps. In the case studies I have investigated, Grotowski's ideas have in turn been adapted, borrowed, misunderstood, and used as a catalyst. I am sure that Wolford would be relieved to find that the companies and individuals I have focused on did not publicly overemphasise their connections to Grotowski as a means to legitimise their own practice. However I can only imagine that she would probably disregard them as 'bastardisations' of his practice because they do not easily fit within the orthodoxy that she appears to uphold. By disagreeing with Wolford's approach, I am not implying that the various ways in which Grotowski has been adapted/borrowed/misunderstood/used have always been 'successful', or in concordance with his own practice and thinking. Rather, as already mentioned in my introductory chapter, I have taken into consideration Barba's suggestion that mistakes and misunderstandings are best understood as opportunities for creative development[45]. At any rate, in particular relation to Grotowski's legacy, Osinski has pointed out that "no one can claim the right to a monopoly" (Osinski in Allain, 2008:39). Therefore I believe that, in response to the question 'what is to be done?', it might not be conducive for academics to place themselves as zealous custodians of Grotowski's legacy, or police the way in which it is today being approached by artists. Instead I would suggest that what might be required is a more dispassionate analysis of this process, embracing the complexity of artistic influence and accepting the fecundity of misunderstandings.

I am aware that such a suggestion could be seen to counter Grotowski's own efforts. Whilst he was not himself a purist, except for the rigour and inner logic of his work, he clearly resisted the dilution and commodification of his work. For instance,

[44] This is yet another reason why throughout this discussion I have refused to discuss comparatively the various examples of Grotowski's influence on British theatre I have analysed in this thesis.
[45] See chapter I, subsection 5.4.

he openly disregarded the idea of 'composite' or 'eclectic' training which combined various disciplines in order to develop the actor's craft[46]. Of course I am not denying the relative feasibility of applying 'Grotowski' in a theatre with different aesthetics and ideological aims to his own, nor do I intend to silence questions about the value that using his methodologies might have if it lacks the rigour he always exercised. I am simply highlighting the inevitability that, despite the existence of official heirs or protective academics, the future of Grotowski's legacy rests with generations who never saw or experienced his work. All we can do is ensure that they are as informed as possible. Ultimately though, Grotowski is now of the world and the world will do with him as it may.

> I think I will be here among you as a ghost. As someone seemingly present, but who is no longer present.
>
> (Grotowski, 2008a:19)

[46] In his article 'Exercises' Grotowski wrote: "I don't agree with the kind of training in which it is believed that various disciplines, applied to the actor, can develop his totality; that an actor should, on one hand, take diction lessons, and on the other hand voice lessons and acrobatics or gymnastics, fencing, classical and modern dance, and also elements of pantomime, and all of that put together will give him an abundance of expression." (Grotowski, 1979:7) His rejection of this approach was based on the conviction that the actor should not simply repeat techniques he has learnt, but engage in a genuine and personal creative act.

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For the sake of clarity I have ordered my bibliography into four sections: texts authored by Grotowski and films by the Teatr Laboratorium; texts about Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium; materials on other topics; and interviews and key correspondence I have carried out. Each of these sections is in turn subdivided according to types of source: unpublished materials, books and chapters, academic articles, newspaper articles and reviews, films and television, online sources, and public events.

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- **<u>Correspondence</u>**
  I maintained email and written correspondence with many of the individuals whom I interviewed, particularly after our interviews in order to clarify details such as dates, etc. Nonetheless, this bibliography includes only those communications that I have quoted or referenced as part of my discussion. All correspondence is held at the British Grotowski Archive at the University of Kent.

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