Richard Schechner

SCHECHNER PLAYS

Introduction by Márta Minier

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From Poetic Realism to Postdramatic Metaperformance: An Introduction to *Schechner Plays*

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It is a remarkable and summative volume that the reader holds in their hands. While publications associated with Richard Schechner's name—either about his work or written by him—are many, until now we have not yet had a volume that anthologizes a selection of Schechner's plays from all major stages of his career. On the one hand, the volume is the tangible result of a retrospective exercise, an attempt to leave a set of carefully selected and curated texts to posterity—no mean feat from an artist and critic known for his focus on process and his predilection for rewriting, revising, refining rather than "fixing." Indeed, as Schechner himself ponders in "The Crash of Performative Circumstances,"

> Process itself is performance. Rehearsals can be more informative/performative than finished work. The whole structure of finishedness is called into question. If the world is unfinished, by what process are the works of people finished? Why should these works be finished? The world is a reality we are making and changing as we go along.
>
> (Schechner 1982: 124)

Yes, the collection may offer snapshots in time: the plays are what they are at the time of editing and publishing; yet they have all been matured over time (some may have been revisited more over time than others). From another, complementary, perspective, this is a unique volume through which we can follow, via the *oeuvre* of one theatre artist, the most dominant trends in western theatre writing and making from the decades following World War II (WW2) well into the twenty-first century.

Richard Schechner (born 1934) is internationally known as one of the founding figures of performance studies as a(n inter)disciplinary field. With significant academic publications such as *Public Domain: Essays on the Theater* (1969), *Environmental Theatre* (1973), *Essays on Performance Theory: 1970–1976* (1977), *The End of Humanism: Writings on Performance* (1982), *Performative Circumstances from the Avant Garde to Ramlila* (1983), *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985), *Performance Theory* (1988), *The Future of Ritual* (1993), *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2002, 2006, 2013, 2020), *Over, Under, and Around: Essays on Performance and Culture* (2004), and *Performed Imaginaries* (2015), he has worked tirelessly to shape the field of performance studies (and adjacent areas) as one of its most vocal and influential figures. Schechner is also an accomplished journal editor, having led the prominent journal *TDR: Tulane Drama Review*, from 1962 to 1967 and then, following Schechner's

relocation to New York University in 1967, *The Drama Review* until 1969 and from 1986 onward to the present. The role of *TDR* has been crucial as a "clearing-house for [. . .] new ideas, seeking out, encouraging, and publicizing new work and new artists" (Carlson 2000: 271). Beyond his remarkable research career and impactful work as an educator, Schechner is also acclaimed as a theatre director—of a particularly wide range of works created and presented in many contexts across the globe in the United States, India, Europe, South Africa, China, and Taiwan.

One creative label we may not often associate with Schechner is that of a playwright or dramatist—something this volume addresses. Reading, thinking about, perhaps even considering to workshop or perform any of the scripts included in this volume will enrich and nuance our understanding of Schechner's work alongside inspiring our thinking about countless processes within theatre and performance including ensemble, dramaturgy, and adaptation. These plays—let us stick to this tried and tested word for a theatre script—make us reconsider our views on how we may (verbally) capture theatre texts emerging from collective (even if directed, facilitated) rehearsal processes, how we may revisit existing works for performance or respond to contemporary concerns and events through theatre-making.

With its important contributions to the history of physical and devised theatre, the theatrical avant-garde, and off-off Broadway, Schechner's *oeuvre* as a writer/wrighter-director for the theatre offers perspectives and scripts for historians or students of drama and theatre, fellow practitioners, adaptation experts, cultural historians, and general educated enthusiasts of global theatre and performance. Those well versed in performance studies—where much of Schechner's work as a scholar and critic falls—are undoubtedly able to identify many points of connection between his creative (or critical-creative) practice and theoretical output. For those who are not performance studies scholars, it may be the approaches to adapting classics, using contemporary political events and aspects of *Weltanschauung* as dramaturgical stimuli, experimenting with the performer-audience relationship, working across cultures, or interweaving art forms dramaturgically that piques our interest. Important, too, is the social/political commentary concerning humanity and the environment at large that is present in almost all of Schechner's theatre texts, although not in a doctrinaire manner. Schechner's attention to people of color, which has always been part of his theatre practice (including casting or ensemble formation), can also be discerned by the keen eye in the plays of the collection, which document production work as much as they offer scripts for further artistic experimentation and study. Giving many creative opportunities to women is something that stands out, and the many roles created for women are easy to see in the gamut of plays included in the collection.

Among the many students, scholars, and practitioners who are inspired by Schechner, the performance studies pioneer or Schechner the experimental director, few may be aware that he started out by writing more "straightforward"—we might say dramatic (rather than postdramatic) plays. Unlike Schechner's mature scripts, these plays were not necessarily derived from ensemble practices and co-creation but were authored in a more traditional, albeit exploratory, way. The collection, thankfully and most excitingly, includes several of these early pieces as well: "The Last Day of FK," "Lot's Daughters," *The Blessing of the Fleet*, and *Briseis and the Sergeant*. We would call these plays "new writing" today—I use that phrase cautiously due to its variable connotations (in the United Kingdom, it refers to writer-driven theatre-making). For our purposes, "new writing" may be a helpful phrase to distinguish between likewise problematic categories such as "original" work (typically Schechner's early career output) on the one hand, and, on the other, adaptation or indeed postdramatic and/or postmodern stock that has benefited from collective

workshopping (typically since the mid-to-late 1960s onward). Even though such categories facilitate the discussion of the plays to a certain extent, adaptation and "own" or "new" work are barely distinct categories and Schechner has been praised for the originality of his public, more visible theatrical output (problematic as the idea of originality might be in our era), including his bold and radical adaptations, from The Performance Group (TPG) years onward. Brooks McNamara calls him "one of the great originals in the history of American theatre" (1993: 92). An innovative, and often iconoclastic or startling adapter, Schechner leaves his signature on his adaptations as he leaves his signature on any of his creative output.

There is, then, after the early plays a batch of plays that emerged from the TPG era: *Dionysus in 69*, *Makbeth*, and *Commune*—all adapted and partially devised texts but in very idiosyncratic and distinct ways (*Commune*, the least typically so). The productions that engendered the three written plays we read here were important events of the mature avant-garde just as much as they heralded postmodernism in the theatre. *Richard's Lear* seems to be a bridge stylistically between the TPG plays and the most recent cluster of texts which evolved from work with East Coast Artists (ECA), an ensemble Schechner founded in 1992 to "boldly reinvent" classics, present cutting-edge international work, and move "beyond conventional notions of contemporary theatre and performer training." ECA is reputed for its productions of *Faust/gastronome*, *Amerika after Kafka* (directed by Maria Vail Guevara), *Hamlet* (two productions), Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, *YokastaS*, Lian Amaris's *Swimming to Spalding*, and *Imagining O*. In these mature plays, Schechner experiments with "Rasaesthetics" (Schechner 2001, revised 2023) utilizing Rasaboxes, a performer training method based on Sanskrit Indian rasa theory combined with western ideas (see also Bowditch et al. 2023). The theatre scripts of the ECA era were conceived in a postmodern vein and share postdramatic traits. The aleatoric playfulness characterizing the postmodern have a strong presence in the mature plays, for example in the permutationally based parallel scenes of *Imagining O*. These instances are a close continuation of similar (raw and visceral) aleatoric ludicity in the dramaturgical backbone of earlier Schechner plays such as *Dionysus in 69*, *Makbeth*, and *Commune*. These ECA plays (and the respective productions with which they are intertwined and from which they have been distilled for this book) may be seen as synthesis pieces. They consolidate, even finesse (with routine but with enough of a sense of artistic risk), the challenging strategies for audiences groundbreakingly experimented with in the TPG plays. This group of plays demonstrates an erudite and confident handling of theatrical forms and conventions that were already visible in the early more dramatic plays.

Schechner's relationship to text has been complex, perhaps even problematic over the years, which is not surprising for somebody famous for provocative performances such as *Dionysus in 69*. Schechner has been critiqued for his dismissal of the authority of the playwright (see Bottoms 2011), with the playtext being almost hidden as one form of proto-performance or proto-p (in other words, a starting point) leading to performance (Schechner 2020 [2002]: 39). The assortment of theatre scripts freshly collated here suggests otherwise—the texts draw attention to the Schechner for whom dramatic and postdramatic theatre texts matter. This is also underlined by the fact that several of the playtexts were already published around the time of the original performances—something Schechner found important to do over the years. In a mid-career piece of academic writing, "Drama, Script, Theatre, and Performance" (1988 [1973]), Schechner uses a diagram of four circles enveloping each other Russian doll style, with "drama" representing the most intense middle circle followed by the "script" which requires person-to-person transmission by someone who knows it. While I am using these terms in the introduction interchangeably,

I find Schechner's engagement with this set of distinctions an important contribution to the discussion of what drama is in relation to theatre, which is enlightening to read alongside the set of metaphors about the dramatic text identified by Worthen (2010): the score, the blueprint, information, and software.

Numerous plays in Schechner's body of work revisit classics. The collection includes two takes on Shakespeare—*Makbeth* and *Richard's Lear*—while *Dionysus in 69*, *The Prometheus Project*, and *YokastaS* revise ancient Greek tragedies and *Faust/gastronome* responds to theatrical and other versions of the legendary figure of Faust. *Imagining O* combines the worlds of Pauline Réage's novel, *Story of O*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; *Richard's Lear* is a mashup, a "recombinant appropriation," to use Eckart Voigts's term (Voigts 2018), of *Richard III* and *King Lear*. *Commune*, despite not having a single discrete source text (not that the other plays follow their sources in a servile manner), creatively reimagines and self-consciously replays actual historical events from recent American history as well as Marlowe's *Edward II*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and selections from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Coterminously, *Commune* ironically addresses myths about the nation in almost a state-of-the-nation play (one not done in a realist manner, needless to say). Characters drawn and adapted from history (including contemporary life) occur elsewhere in the Schechner *oeuvre* as well (e.g., Hitler and Albert Speer, the architect who served the Third Reich, in *Faust/gastronome*). Schechner experiments with this kind of borrowing to the extent of having real-life persons play themselves—in good Schechner manner, a version of themselves (or both themselves and not themselves) in a play, such as the Annie Sprinkle play-within-the-play in *The Prometheus Project*. Or, in the same play, women performers relating when they were raped and/or abused. In *Commune*, Spalding Gray plays the character "Spalding." Talking back to classics, arguing with tired interpretations, is a given in the adaptations, as opposed to any "slavish adherence to a set text" (Harbeck 1998: 116). "[R]egarding progeny all things are possible," Rebecca Schneider recalls hearing from Schechner in 1981. As she elaborates further, "any personal properties of progeny and progenitors are ours to see change if […] we remain open to question, again, and again, and again" (Schneider 2011: 148). The transmitter is "not a mere messenger," asserts Schechner (1988 [1973]: 71) in his above-mentioned definition of the script, and this conviction also permeates his approach to existing texts and existing cultural material, which can function as raw material and stimulus in the hands of a director/rewriter/adapter.

Contemporizing classic genres is an integral part of the Schechnerian approach to the canon, as we can see for instance in *Faust/gastronome*, which brings the medieval genre of the morality into the era of the postmodern and into a postdramatic modality. Of course, Marlowe brought the morality play into the Elizabethan theatre and Goethe into the Romantic. In *Faust/gastronome*, Schechner jumps off from these. Mixing comic and tragic modes and genres as well as "high" and "popular" culture forms in a postmodern manner is part and parcel of Schechner's adaptive process, as demonstrated by *YokastaS* (which imbues a tragic plot structure with comic touches) and *The Prometheus Project* (which dissects the dramaturgical template of ancient Greek drama fusing it with a postmodern performance lecture by a woman astro-physicist and the sci-fi musings of Doris Lessing—these in a play that also incorporates a burlesque performance by Annie Sprinkle and first-hand recountings of sexual abuse and of being tortured in Iran). In addition to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of *Faust/gastronome* (a play fusing the dramatic, the lyric, the epic, and even the opera), *Imagining O* aptly demonstrates the hybridity of expressive modes in its combination of theatre, dance, and visual art installation—something that undoubtedly

makes the turning of the material into a (verbal) playtext or script a challenge. Folding together languages also appears often in the plays (not only in the adaptations), whether it is a case of bringing together different natural languages (English and French in *Imagining O* and English and German in *Faust/gastronome*, a touch of ancient Greek in *YokastaS*), historical versions of a language (*Makbeth*), or embracing a register such as scientific language (*The Prometheus Project*), academic language and conventions (the "quote […] unquote" formula in *YokastaS*), or dialect (*The Blessing of the Fleet*). In several performances (and their concomitant plays), hybridizing and remixing are fine-tuned into a collage or bricolage. *Commune* as a case in point brings together numerous fragments and both *Richard's Lear* and *Imagining O* bring the braiding of two (or more) radically pared down texts to a level of experimental mastery.

Several of the plays address the contemporary phenomenon of retrograde remediation (Bolter and Grusin 1999: 147) by melding newer forms of media (typically television) integrally into the fabric of the (post)drama, enriching the older cultural forms but also challenging possible audience perceptions of what the older media are capable of or how they might respond to the changing world. The (television) interview (or talk show) scenario is a recurring media-on-stage trope for Schechner. By way of beautifully showcasing remediation in the theatre, these instances also exemplify the metaperformative aspect of much of Schechner's work. The presence of an interviewer character in *The Prometheus Project*, more specifically, contributes greatly to how the play treats agency, as the stripped, tied, and gagged Prometheus's story is amplified—"reported"—to the audience by the Interviewer. Earlier, in *Richard's Lear* (1981), the performance featured "microphonists," performers whose only task was to make sure a microphone was in the face of performers. This not only amplified/mediatized their voices but also reminded audiences that contemporary reality comes wrapped in media. *YokastaS* features a character called Media who conducts "live" interviews with different Yokastas. *Imagining O* features a filmed interview projected on large screens over the spectators who are standing on stage looking up, an interview where Shakespeare's Ophelia converses with Pauline Réage,[1] the author of *Story of O*. In the text published here, the names of the performers are used: Agape as Ophelia and Krodman as Réage. This is a profoundly metatheatrical, self-referential gesture within a theatre text that, on one level, takes aim at the complex intertwining of fiction and life and how that can be thrown into doubt. Yet another articulation of the staged interview is a particularly liminal version in *Faust/gastronome.* Here, the performer playing Faust is interviewed as a performer by another cast member in the Prologue and the Epilogue—in a liminal space between what is the theatre and what is before and beyond the theatre. This metaperformative device that also brings remediation to the fore frames the play, the drama, signaling its "make-believe" and cyclicality. It thus reminds us of the ongoing longevity and malleability of the Faust myth.

Regarding the evocation of the televisual talk show genre in particular, the "Tragedy's Baddest Mamas" scene in *YokastaS* highlights a sense of sorority almost against the odds amongst a set of mythical female heroes—Medea, Phaedra, and Yokasta (with a mention afforded to the otherwise engaged Clytemnestra)—who all wage their own individual fights against patriarchy. *Faust/gastronome* has its own embedded tv talk show, too. In the unidentified post-WW2 moment where the play takes us—which we can rightly associate with the early 1990s as well as "today," an always moving "now"—television is the key vehicle for communicating with "the masses" and clearly a vehicle for demagogy, too. The theatre spectators are indeed turned into an "emplotted" television studio audience of the fictitious Vernice Minsky Miller Show (performed by theatre-maker Vernice Miller) in a scene set in a television studio (scene 16). In this playful metatheatrical scene,

the spectators in the theatre are told when and how to applaud or laugh as if they were a tv talk show audience. The inclusion of media enriches these plays and contributes to "suggest[ing] interpretive approaches" in a manner similar to what Greg Giesekam describes as multimedia theatre (2007: 8). The experimental, at times interactive, and always metatheatrical embrace of media in these recent postdramatic plays is foreshadowed by Schechner's probing into the use of media within drama as early as *Briseis and the Sergeant* (1958). In the third act of *Briseis*, the court hearing of the Sergeant is broadcast as the "trial of the century" with a busybody director—a master of ceremonies of sorts—making arrangements on the scene, scantily dressed cheerleaders igniting the public, and the heavily pregnant titular Briseis being spotlit as a media celebrity with an apparent duty toward her followers. There is also a brief interview with the press about the My Lai massacre of the Vietnam War at the end of the mid-career *Commune*. With its presence throughout the *oeuvre*, both thematically and formally, the incorporation of media has been a recurring feature that adds more than social criticism—it has enriched Schechner's performance language as well.

The weaving of media in the fabric of performances (and their concomitant formalized "play" versions) is just one aspect of how Schechner's theatre centralizes the reflexivity of live performance itself, of how *Schechner Plays* tackle the concept and experience of performing—for artists and audiences alike. The TPG plays, for example, abound in metaperformative elements, which also vividly reflect Schechner's thinking about human behavior itself being performance and hence, theatrical performance is twice twice-behaving, with the performers themselves being both themselves as in everyday life and not (or, as Schechner puts it, their being "not themselves" and also simultaneously "not not themselves").[2] In the burgeoning field of performance studies, the pioneering of which is one of Schechner's major career achievements, this problematic became predominant in the 1960s–1970s. It was theorized by Michael Kirby in his 1972 "On Acting and Not-Acting." Using layered or multiframed identities including the real-life names of performers inside the plays is one notable manifestation of this experimentation. *Dionysus in 69* has many metatheatrical references to The Performance Group. These are further refined in *Commune*, where several metatheatrical postmodern self-references, beyond being TPG in-jokes, draw attention to the process, to the piece always being in-the-making, always being negotiated by the ensemble. As Clementine says in the play: "I'm so fucking tired of environmental, experimental theatre! I want to make a movie with Arthur Penn and star opposite Dustin Hoffman." Also, *Makbeth*, TPG's production just before *Commune,* is mentioned in *Commune*, and so is The Performance Group per se.

I have come with fresh (and perhaps too much of a reader's) eyes to all of the plays. I have not seen any of the performances live, neither had I read the scripts until I started working on this introduction. Those with memories of performances—as makers or as spectators—will most probably have different (and of course individually defined) thoughts, impressions, reactions. The purpose of this independent introduction is to offer a critical annotation, providing potential interpretive contexts or avenues to the plays and the theatre-making *oeuvre* they showcase. It is not the intention of the introduction to reiterate or affirm Schechner's own perspectives on the plays, which are fully and amply clarified and illustrated in the writer/wrighter's individual introductions to the plays. There are multiple points of views in the plays themselves, especially in the mid-career and mature plays. We encounter disparate voices rather than one single dominant vision or authorial mouthpiece. This introduction is designed to simply add to the multiplicity of perspectives already there within and on the plays. My viewpoint is, of course, sharpened by what I have gained from Schechner's own introductions to the plays, from talking to Schechner himself (in the late stages of the work) as well as from the extremely rich secondary

literature about the playtexts (and the productions that the plays accompany). My reading and point of view is by no means intended to come across as anything definitive and is bound to be different from those of Schechner the theatre artist himself, whose editorial revisiting of the plays and whose interpretation of them in the individual introductions is documentation and archiving at the same time, with Schechner being both critic and maker. In fact, Schechner, in whose life-work these areas of creative and/or critical work are so consummately interconnected, is, understandably, "opposed to the division between doers, critics, and theorists" (Schechner 1982: 15). My own takes on the plays are those of an adaptation, translation, and dramaturgy researcher and of a practitioner of higher-education pedagogy, with both the advantages and the limitations of these aspects of professional identity. While Schechner's own introductions shed light on the creative-critical processes behind the plays, my own work cannot reproduce these processes (that I was not part of myself); I am writing on the plays themselves but unavoidably (and happily) engage with what I find about the processes through which these (post)dramatic texts have come about.

Imagining O

Imagining O (2014) is Schechner's concept realized by individual and group devised scenes enacted in multiple spaces at the Alexander Kasser Theatre at Montclair State University. This East Coast Artists production was co-directed by Schechner and Benjamin Mosse, with significant input from movement director Roanna Mitchell. A preliminary version of *Imagining O* was staged in 2011 at the University of Kent, UK, where Schechner was in residence as a Leverhulme Fellow. This version then travelled to the International Theatre Festival of Kerala in 2012. *Imagining O* builds on Pauline Réage's 1954 French erotic novel *Histoire d'O* (*Story of O*) and Ophelia's part in *Hamlet* plus other borrowings and devised scenes. For example, the chorus, "Desolate, desolate […]" coming near the end of the performance is a collage of the final words of all the women characters who die in Shakespeare: Cleopatra, Juliet, Cordelia, Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, Desdemona, Gertrude, Constance, and Lavinia. The text published here could be further developed if *Imagining O* were staged with different performers. In that sense, *Imagining O* is permanently in-process.

By turning to Shakespeare's Ophelia, Schechner once again, as in *Briseis and the Sergeant* and *YokastaS*, gives voice to a female character who says relatively little about herself in the canonical source text. Extracting Ophelia's lines from *Hamlet* and reconceiving the character for a new play, Schechner wanted to find out what she would "look like if there were no men responding to her, and if it was only her voice" (Ivie 2014). In yet another mashup somewhat like *Richard's Lear*, Schechner braids Ophelia with Réage's O, a complex character (and for many feminists, especially second-wave feminists such as Kate Millett, undoubtedly a problematic and troubling one)[3] from a story of "willing sexual slavery" as Schechner and his collaborators engage in an "exploration of power dynamics in both sex and theater" (Collins-Hughes 2014). An intriguing juxtaposition at first sight: a sexually highly experienced modern character brought to the same "stage" (here, numerous spaces made into performance spaces in and around the Kasser Theatre) with a sheltered, early modern young woman character who may or may not have had any sexual experiences, though from her utterances in her moments of madness we see that she must have been at least unconsciously (if not physically) engaged in this dimension of life.

For Schechner, the two characters meet in different ways and profoundly so: not only through their shared suicidal fate but also through various motifs. For instance, as he explains in an interview, O sounds like "*eau*" (the French for water), which brings to mind Ophelia's drowning. Water is an important motif in the production (and accompanying play); among other things, the powerful finale is set in a "river," literally water; a shower is where one of the "dispersal" scenes takes place; and several times during the performance spectators are sprayed or sprinkled. The vowel *o*, of course, which links the characters by typography and sound, has been associated with zero, a lack, nothing, the female sexual organ, both perfection and annihilation (Pallister 1985: 7). In Schechner's text: "zero, nothing, everything, a multiplier." In psychoanalytic terms, let it suffice to refer to Lacan's identification of "0 phallos" in Ophelia's name (Lacan 1982: 20). All this has long influenced interpretations of both *Hamlet* and *Story of O*. The motif of the owl also blends the worlds of the two texts. In addition to being a harbinger of death and an emblem of wisdom in some cultures, it reminds the reader or spectator (who did their homework) of the final costume of Réage's character as well as of the famous line uttered by Ophelia: "They say the owl was a baker's daughter" (act IV scene 5). O is originally a fashion photographer in the novel, and models and photography remain important in this braided stage adaptation as well. O and Ophelia become foils to each other (mirrors or foils are another important motif in both *Hamlet* and *Story of O*).

Not unusually for a postdramatic play, different performers play Ophelia, O, and the author-character Desclos-Aury-Réage. In addition to the amphitheatre and river of the final scene, the production utilized the lobbies, the backstage area and lawns, guiding the audience around as a whole or divided into smaller groups. It also used screens. In a postmodern fashion—and in Schechner's fashion of blurring divisions between performers and audience as well as between performing space and auditorium—spectators were invited to interact with the performers and the immersive environment in various instances. For example, at a certain moment in the play, they were invited to perform one of a selection of specific activities at "imagination stations" to signal their ongoing investment in the performance and receive a map of where to find "dispersed imaginings"—scenes devised by the performers. Interestingly, the punishment for failing this test (or for not playing along) is to be "banished to dramaturgy exile under the discipline of our strict dramaturg" (and that is actual dramaturg Carrie Lee O'Dell). It is frequently a feature of postmodern works that they contain their own interpretation(s), reading patterns, and metatextually reference their own artifice. In a "dispersed" (parallel or simultaneously running) scene called "Dramaturgy," *Imagining O* does exactly this, and playfully so, as Professor O'Dell (the first ever dramatized dramaturg in a Schechner play) is ready to talk to audience members entering her designated space about source texts, the rehearsal process, and other important referential frameworks. But this, of course, is a rather cerebral section where spectators are sent as a punishment (or may wander there of their own will). Other places abound in sensual visual and aural experiences. The various instances of reading and reciting from physically tangible texts (involving the spectators) also foreground metatheatrically the artifice elsewhere in the play (and so does the coaching of audience members to act in "The Mousetrap" scene). "This is all imagination," we hear in one scene, following an emphasis on Réage's fiction being full of "honest imaginings."

In a similar vein, the extremely erudite play features an interview imagined between Ophelia and Réage. In this film scene, Schechner interpolates Ophelia's lines with extracts from an article in *The New Yorker* about Réage, and some lines of his own invention. There is something playfully metatheatrical and Pirandellian about a character talking to an author and, by doing so, making us think about agency. Intercutting theatre and everyday life—both abounding in performances of sorts—is, of course, also a Schechner trademark. But Ophelia does not altercate with Shakespeare,

her "original" author. She may be interpreted to be indirectly talking back to the Bard, an arch-author of the western canon, but directly she engages in dialog with a female author who may be sympathetic, to whom she may be able to say, "I do not know what I should think." When they talk about origins, beginnings, this post-Pirandellian Ophelia declares, "I was not born. I was written." Jean Paulhan, Réage's employer and lover who challenged her to write erotica *à la* Marquis de Sade as a woman is also woven into this interview. Réage talks about the process of writing; Ophelia comments on her ontological state, on having been written as a character. They talk both to each other and aside from each other, almost on the same wavelength in certain moments but not quite. In the layering together of the two worlds—of Ophelia's and Réage's (and indirectly, O's)—Sir Stephen, O's captor to whom she is given by René (the man she loves), is mentioned in the same context with Hamlet when Ophelia assumes Réage would have had her own "Lord Hamlet." There are comic effects emerging from how the different epochs and fictional (or fictionalized) life-journeys (treated here as documentary material) associate different connotations with words and phrases (such as "the war"). The layering together of different eras has long intrigued Schechner, at least since *Briseis and the Sergeant*. Author and character are, of course, equally characters and talk on equal terms as if there were no ontological differences separating them. Yet, of course, they unwittingly emphasize that there are such differences. The conversation makes us ponder on agency for women generally beyond the question of a theatrical character. After this character-author interview, the audience is divided into six segments and in a mode that references aleatoric postmodern playfulness, the play emphatically thematizes being a different experience depending on the permutation each spectator partakes of (let alone depending on what spectators themselves all bring to it).

The "dispersals," different spectators are literally dispersed into different spaces where they see or interact with the performers who have made short scenes working closely with Schechner, co-director Benjamin Mosse, and movement director Roanna Mitchell. These scenes remind us of current gamified approaches in longer-established art forms such as theatre. So the dispersals are probably very familiar from other walks of life and for many arts and culture consumers. This is obviously a rapidly changing area of creative industries innovation with interactive new media influencing theatre. But we should remember that Schechner and other avant-garde theatre-makers were offering audience participation long before video games emerged. Schechner's work in this is trailblazing.

Imagining O is described by reviewers as a combination of theatre, dance, and installation art. The performance included moments of one-to-one interaction between performer and spectator. With a strongly site-specific and even immersive ethos, the production harks back to Schechner's TPG era experiments with environmental theatre and offers a late-style articulation of it. As in *Faust/gastronome*, bilingualism is an important aesthetic feature in *Imagining O.* We hear an extensive extract in French from *Histoire d'O.* Additionally, one of the performers sings a ballad in French and Ophelia utters a few French words in her mad scene.

YokastaS

YokastaS (2005) is a play in twelve scenes authored jointly with US-based Romanian playwright and poet Saviana Stanescu and directed by Schechner at La MaMa in New York. It was an East Coast Artists production. Schechner's introduction to the play details aspects of the collaborative writing. Using the lexicon and grammar of postdramatic theatre, Stanescu and Schechner re-interrogate the story of Yokasta (Jocasta), an undeservedly marginal figure from the Theban cycle of Greek

mythology, who is here now "to set the record straight." Playing with intermedia and commenting on overbearing television and celebrity culture, *YokastaS* places center stage the character of Yokasta, who in Sophocles's *Oedipus* famously goes offstage to commit suicide. *YokastaS* rehabilitates Oedipus's mother-wife very much in a feminist vein, presenting her as extremely complex, (re)imagining her as a woman (or rather, three women and one girl) with desires, drives, and feelings separate from those of Laius and Oedipus. Stanescu and Schechner split Yokasta into four interconnected characters—"a little like sisters"—who each bring to the fore different phases of Yokasta's life: an early teen, action-movie and superhero obsessed Yoyo, a young Yoko "with a big chip on her shoulder," the glowing Yono, who "in a state of perpetual bliss" is always pregnant with one or another of Oedipus's four children, and the mature, perhaps most "Sophoclean" Yokasta who synthesizes the experience of all the Yokastas. There is also the Understudy, a character who is given small actions at various points of the play as she gets ready to play any one of the Yokastas. The Understudy soaks up a lot of the Yokastas' discourse and the play's final speech is hers. She bundles lines into a vehement monolog which is a montage of the feistiest and most hopeful assertions of the Yokastas' discourse. The Yokastas—the plurality of whom is emphasized in the capital S of the title—often argue among themselves (dramatizing the layeredness of self). They also interact with other important female characters from ancient Greek tragedy but very importantly, in a playful metatheatrical and postmodern way. They speak up against their prior (canonized and ossified) theatrical representation by a male playwright (Sophocles) and a male psychoanalyst (Freud). "Tragedy's Baddest Mamas" is a scene that brings Euripides and Seneca onto the stage by juxtaposing Yokasta, Medea, and Phaedra in a television studio where a Jerry Springer style talk show host, Media, asks them to debate "Who is tragedy's baddest mama?" Aeschylus's candidate, Clytemnestra, is absent because she is "under contract to another network and can't be here." There is plenty of catfighting as the three tragic mothers try to outdo each other as bad mamas. They hold paperback books of Greek tragedies from which they cite and read their tragic lines. Medea plays a recording of Medea declaiming in ancient Greek. Each time a Yokasta recites her lines, she announces, "quote […] unquote"—a by now well-known way to underline reflexivity: frames within frames. The farce turns serious when Yokasta—quoting from Ted Hughes's magisterial translation of *Seneca's Oedipus*—delivers Jocasta's monolog describing giving birth to Oedipus. And then Yono calmly recites Andrea Yates's confession describing how she drowned in a bathtub her five children.[4]

YokastaS is ironic, with many comic moments, even with the Yates confession and other very serious episodes which, taken together, give the play a grave undertone and a deeper intertextual dimension of a postmodern kind. It is not unusual for the profoundly tragic mythical story of Jocasta and Oedipus (with its almost ridiculously implausible turns of fate) to elicit a more comic tone from adapters (take e.g., Spymonkey's 2012 *Oedipussy*). *YokastaS* is ultimately preoccupied with the profoundly philosophical themes of the story. The Yokastas seem to be closed into a cycle of action that they cannot break out of—there are so many warning signs for what should be avoided, all of which are, of course, obvious to the spectator familiar with various iterations of the myth, but not to the Yokastas. The play undoubtedly addresses blind spots as part of human life. Each Yokasta carries in her the other three. Yoko, who is disgusted by Laius's leg, is, as Yono, obsessed with Oedipus's foot. Are the Yokastas predestined to keep acting out the same story arc with minor or not so minor "restorative" and feminist-tinted details added, such as the experience of sexual pleasure? It is for us, spectators and readers to ponder that, but thanks to kick-ass Yoyo's determination to take her life into her own hands and the Understudy's exuberant sampling of snippets from the play that amplify empowerment, *YokastaS* may well leave spectators and readers

with a note of hope. Even just having the Yokastas as central characters of a play and letting them talk about their lives (sex and more) suggests that a page has been turned in the creative-critical afterlife of this character. The production was also particularly progressive for its opening up of this heavily deconstructed classic role to non-white performers: three of the ensemble in 2005 were women of color, as opposed to the 2003 Yokastas, where only one actor was a person of color.[5]

Faust/gastronome

Faust/gastronome (1993) was Schechner's first production with East Coast Artists. The play revisits the Faust myth and uses it as a cultural blueprint to look at the consumer culture fostered by late capitalism. A widely adapted myth with a "polymorphic structure" (Singer 1998: 158) and with several famous renditions across art forms and genres, the Faust myth molds in Schechner's hands into a theatrical extravaganza for the senses that makes the temptation Faust gave in to a palpably exhilarating and enticing one. *Faust/gastronome* is a snapshot of contemporary western culture in the form of a post-Brechtian morality, where the medieval genre's conventions are creatively recycled to make us think about the state of humanity.

In this unidentified post-WW2 era which we can suppose is the early 1990s, television is the key mass communications vehicle and clearly a vehicle for demagogy, too. In scene 16, the spectators are the "emplotted" television studio audience of the fictitious Vernice Minsky Miller Show (performed by theatre-maker Vernice Miller). Spectators are told when and how to applaud or laugh—a playful, again somewhat metatheatrical device. To start with, the play shows and narrates Faust's life, the man who mortgages his soul in exchange for the power to satisfy his desires. *Faust/gastronome*'s first fifteen scenes emphasize Faust's "education," how he amuses himself with the power conferred on him by Mephistopheles, his affair with Gretchen: the *wanderjahre* or journeyman part of Faust's story (if we may use this word from Goethe's third Wilhelm Meister book). Scene 16 features a Faust who brags about his capitalist, racist, and colonialist accomplishments. Faust as CEO of the "Fist Group" of corporations (Faust is German for fist) is the arch producer-consumer. But finally, after being fed, and then force-fed, his last supper, Faust is thrown into his own giant cauldron, finally again a cook in his kitchen. These later scenes, like Goethe's *Faust Part Two*, explore broad philosophical and ethical issues. Just as in Goethe, the first part of *Faust/gastronome* focuses on the microcosm and the second part on the macrocosm. At one point, Schechner broke *Faust/gastronome* into two parts with scene 15—Gretchen in prison waiting for her execution—ending part one. Later, Schechner decided to perform the text with no interval. Scene 15 shows Faust being drawn to staying loyal to Gretchen and trying to save her but the pull of the devil is stronger. The main plot structure of *Faust/gastronome* is linear, but the Prologue and the Epilogue where the performer playing Faust is interviewed as a performer by another cast member about performing the role of Faust is a metatheatrical frame. As it signals cyclicality, it reminds us of the longevity of the myth in various iterations.

Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* is another core source text for *Faust/gastronome.* Of course, Marlowe borrowed and adapted.[6] Schechner takes from Marlowe allegorical "minor" characters (Bad Angel, Good Angel, the seven deadly sins personified). But these are also connected to the world of *Everyman* and other morality plays. These connections and borrowings remind us that on one level *Faust/gastronome* is out to educate

(although also, perhaps, thrill). It does not educate however in a cheap, overt or intrusive way but by asking us how much we take part in the apparently omnipresent consumer society that intends to colonize—in the world of the play—not only the less developed (i.e., historically previously already colonized and exploited) parts of the world but, according to Schechner's "super-industrialist" (Mazer 1994: 132), the whole planet and even the solar system. Furthermore, Professor John Faust—or Dr. Fist—seems to be as well versed in philosophy as in culinary matters. Yet, he does everything to avoid confirming to Gretchen that he believes in God. Faust's hubris is most explicit in his act of believing—or at least suggesting to Gretchen—that love is enough and God does not matter (whatever/whoever God stands for here). The devil, however, is tangibly and alluringly present in Mephistopheles's androgynous ebullience, supported by a dedicated entourage including Adolf Hitler. Mephistopheles is a strong presence on the stage, performed by a woman in a man's suit, with angel wings, and an erect penis at the end of their tail. Gretchen is present in *Faust/gastronome* (as in other iterations of the legend) to remind Faust of godly options until it is too late for him. She is able to save herself after her execution for murdering her and Faust's new-born. The (fictitious) characters representing the Catholic Church—including the priest who hears Gretchen's confession, Gretchen's mother, and her churchgoing but corrupt friend, Martha (based on Goethe's Marthe)—epitomize hypocrisy. Gretchen, in contrast, is genuinely pure and pious, but ultimately fallible as a human. She is a composite Eve/(almost)Mary character, who—with a postmodern and feminist twist—survives (or gets a new lease on life after her hanging) and arrives at the end to mock Faust: "What avails all thy riches, pleasures, and pomps?"

The Narrator appears as moderately impartial at first, but that façade starts coming away gradually until he reveals himself as Lucifer. Noting that, we might be prompted to consider how much we may have been sucked into consumer society ourselves. It corresponds to the (at least initially) bridging, objective role of the Narrator that it is he who acts as interpreter for those who do not understand German—there is much German in the text. But how much can we trust the translations of the Narrator, who turns out to be a seemingly omnipresent Lucifer? Is this a case of *traduttore traditore*?

Amidst all the fictional characters are two real people: Hitler (Mephistopheles's assistant) and Albert Speer, the Führer's architect. After serving a full twenty years' prison term for war crimes, Speer attempted to rehabilitate the public's perception of him. He wanted to be seen as an artist and political innocent not fully aware of what the Nazis were doing, including the Holocaust. This perception received intense scrutiny and criticism in the 1990s, with ample proof of his involvement in the regime. At the same time, Speer made many public appearances in order to burnish his reputation. He wanted to be known as the "good Nazi." The characters of Hitler and Speer are given substantial room in the Vernice Minsky Miller Show. They fit into the post-modern, highly intertextual *dramatis personae* who stand for certain things rather than coming across as rounded biographical characters such as might be in many contemporary biographical or historical plays. In *Faust/gastronome*, they are caricatures not dissimilar to the allegorical Angels, Devils, and Seven Deadly Sins. Hitler's brainwashing clearly works on Faust, whose cruelty, racism, and neo-Nazism are spine-chilling.

We may see Goethe's *Faust* as a manifestation of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* as it fuses genres or modes of artistic expression: dramatic, lyric, epic; even opera and ballet. *Faust/gastronome* is an intermedial performance *tour-de-force* that follows this tradition while also being a "metacommentary" (Singer 1998: 163) on other iterations of the myth. Gounod's *Faust* is evoked, for instance, when "Biere et Vin" is sung by the cows Faust controls and is reprised in the final scene.

The language is also experimental as it engages with different eras. There is the odd "thou," "thy," "wilt," "art," and similar linguistic markers that give the text a mock Marlovian feel and contribute to the macaroni language that traverses both epochs and natural languages. While the play is predominantly in English, there is strategic use of German texts by Goethe and Hitler. Several characters speak in German at times, offering a lingual abundance complementing the culinary one. The cultural references that span canons of high and popular culture alike include Helen of Troy (in Marlowe and Goethe), Lothario, Don Juan, Shylock, Schwarzenegger, OJ Simpson, and Woody Allen. *Faust/gastronome* is a remarkable (post-)humanity-poem for our time.[7]

The Prometheus Project

The Prometheus Project (1985), performed at the Performing Garage as part of the Wooster Group Visiting Artists Series in December 1985, is yet another experiment with ancient Greek mythology and its translatability to contemporary sensibilities and issues. The play primarily concentrates on the mythical figures of Prometheus, the titan who gave humankind fire (and much else as a result), and Io, Zeus's mortal lover whom he (or, in another version of the myth, Hera) turned into a cow. Schechner takes as a starting point the canonical work on Prometheus by Aeschylus, "the father of western dramaturgy" (Schechner 1986: 9), in *Prometheus Bound* (ca. 460 BCE). Schechner (1986: 9) emphasizes that as Aeschylus replaced the dancer with the actor, his play reinstates the figure of the dancer while not abandoning the actor. Indeed, dance and choreographed movement appear crucial to *The Prometheus Project* (with mostly the cow-masked Ios as the dancers). The playscript understandably is only able to give an impression of this dimension of the performance. There is a "proliferation" of Ios on the stage. They are responsible for enacting the mythical story of Io (with an emphasis on Io as a "prototype of the sexually abused woman" (Goodman 1985) as well as telling their personal—or presented as personal, as authentic—narratives of rape and assault. Their presence, which also gently echoes the chorus of the daughters of Oceanus in the Aeschylean play, prefigures the abundance of Yokastas in the previously discussed play. The only male in *The Prometheus Project* to speak, Prometheus, tells his story of being tortured in Iran. In both cases, the intent is to link a narrative that is at least 2500 years old to events that happen *now.* Perhaps more overtly political than most of his other plays, *The Prometheus Project* ("slightly modified" for the present collection) presents us with Schechner the pacifist, a Schechner who is concerned with global politics and who we will see at work in *Commune* and to some degree in *Dionysus in 69*, albeit by no means in a cheaply didactic way. Here, too, Schechner interrogates the fate of humanity in our technologically advanced age when the threat of nuclear obliteration haunts us. But he does not spell out a lesson. Still, the choice of the word "project" (as in the Manhattan Project[8]) reminds us of education, research, and science where there are lectures, slides, demonstrations, as well as problems to be explored and perhaps solved in the framework of "projects." Schechner's metaphoric encapsulation of the intention of the experiment in an accompanying piece of academic writing—"vaccination rather than catharsis"—(Schechner 1986: 7) also suggests that the theatre-maker engages with post-Brechtian dilemmas: the challenge of being political and didactic but not by treating the spectator as an empty vessel. Schechner himself calls *The Prometheus Project* "an active meditation on nuclear wars past and future" (Schechner 1986: 7). Thus, *The Prometheus Project* could be a problem play, but it is more intricate than that.

With its fragmentary structure (like Heiner Müller's 1977 *Hamlet/machine*), *The Prometheus Project*'s text is a scenario or blueprint for what may happen to performers who enact a non-Aristotelian sense of character. *The Prometheus Project* is postdramatic theatre exhibiting postmodern textual and intermedial hybridity and bricolage. The play—or performance—brings together a range of discourses and relishes the postmodern zeal for citation and reference (inviting connotative reception) without worrying about overly homogenizing the fabric, the material of the piece. In his introduction to the piece, Schechner calls the play a collage. In addition to text from astrophysicist E. Margaret Burbidge and a soft-porn/burlesque performance-within-the-performance by Annie Sprinkle, *The Prometheus Project* features images from Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita's animé, *Pica Don* (1978), scenes that parallel Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, lines from Shakespeare's sonnets, and paragraphs from Doris Lessing's 1979 sci-fi novel, *Shikasta*. This technique of using fragments of existing sources fused with texts and actions devised by the performers is a strategy often used by Schechner, as we will also see in *Dionysus in 69* and *Commune*. But it is not only textual fragments that are merged into a performance text. Schechner invites a variety of discourses to enter into conversation. Slides of images from *Pica Don* are followed by sharp criticism of the world depicted in the anime by Japanese Professor Tomoko Kusuhara whose perspective on Japan during WW2 is very different from what is evoked by the Kinoshitas' visual narrative. In *The Prometheus Project*, we see *Pica Don* while listening to Kusuhara. The integral use of projection and tape recording give the performance an intermediality captured in the text.

Easing the audience into the performance are two slides, each showing the same paragraph from Burbidge's 1983 presidential lecture to the annual meeting of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. Burbidge poses the question this unorthodox problem play will attempt to answer. If life is so common in the universe, why haven't we found it yet? Later in the play, Prometheus answers laconically, "They got the light wrong." Along the way toward that reply, performance artist and porn activist Annie Sprinkle gives an over-the-top, playful, and parodistic sex education class, an interactive and emancipatory lecture in the vein of the titular "project" mode. Sprinkle is perhaps a kind of Io, constantly on the move, restless. As Schechner writes in his introduction to the play, she "masters those who would master her." Perhaps more on a quest than persecuted, Sprinkle aptly talks back to Aeschylus, "the source of our theatrical patriarchy" (Schechner 1986: 9). Schechner's Io, the arch-Io who speaks to Prometheus later in the play, is on a quest. She doubts what some have tried to make her believe: that she has arrived. "They said to me, That's love, yes, yes, not a doubt about it, now you see how—." She recalls being told the same about finding friendship, "the place," beauty, order, "all becom[ing] clear." The MC, who announces Annie and later interrupts her ushering her off stage, can be seen as a post-Brechtian distancing ploy inserting screen media into the world of theatre. There are numerous slides, audio on loudspeakers, and an interviewer interacting with Prometheus: a recurring media-on-stage trope of Schechner's. The scene with Annie Sprinkle is followed by a scene performed by three Ios—one relating (a version of) the myth following Aeschylus and two telling their personal stories of sexual abuse associated with what happens to Io. These, importantly, are not in the published script because they must be told fresh depending on the experiences of specific performers. Then we see the stripped, tied down, and gagged Prometheus, a prisoner in late twentieth century Iran parallel to the "Prometheus bound" of ancient mythology. His muffled, hard to understand story is amplified—"interpreted," "reported"—by the Interviewer. Prometheus testifies about torture, humiliation, and loss. It is only at this point—and in this thoroughly intertextual and mediatized setting—that Prometheus and Io have a dialog. As in

Aeschylus, Prometheus predicts Io's fate, but unlike Aeschylus, the emphasis is on "[i]nfinite emptiness" rather than a happy ending. In Aeschylus, Io is restored to her human form and one of her descendants liberates Prometheus. In the next to last scene of *The Prometheus Project*, Prometheus asks Io for "A few words, to enter my heart." Io can say nothing to ease him. Finally, she utters more to herself than to Prometheus: "For never-resting time leads summer on to hideous winter. When I fall, I'll weep for happiness."

In *The Prometheus Project*'s final scene, the ensemble is revealed upstage as they are changing from costumes to ordinary clothes. They come forward to the front of the stage as "they are at the moment." The performers both individually and in chorus recite lines from Doris Lessing's *Shikasta* (1981). "It is the nursery of life itself that is poisoned, the seeds of life, the springs that feed the well." But maybe there is hope drawn from knowing that humans are but "temporary manifestations" of the universe's "roaring engine of creativity." In a previous version of the script, the final word, uttered by all the performers—"patience"—foregrounds that the earth and its populations are still here, though it very much remains a question whether that gives us humans ground for hope. Reading the 2023 script, involving ecosexual Annie Sprinkle in this performance seems much less random than it may first appear. And when read in the context of the anthropocene, *The Prometheus Project* addresses more than the survival of humankind.

Richard's Lear

In *Richard's Lear* (1981), a text montage of Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *King Lear*, Schechner had the opportunity to delve into a large-scale experiment with theatrical collage of a particular kind: one that braids, actually merges two plays intricately together while also referencing other texts. Schechner had been drawn to this technique for some time, having already considered collage as the dramaturgical principle for what eventually became *Makbeth.* Staged at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as part of *The Other Side of Shakespeare* season, *Richard's Lear* was "a stripped-down Lear story/play within the control of Richard III as would-be king and prime mover of the new piece" (Zarrilli 1981: 92). The two sets of characters were streamlined, merged into an ensemble that also included character splits: a young Richard accompanied the adult Richard; a Fool and a Young Fool. Lear was played by Deborah Holmes. This unorthodox casting was concealed from audiences browsing the program which used first name initials rather than full names (D. Holmes as King Lear). At one point, Holmes removes the mask and holds it next to her face, asking the spectators, "Does any here know me? This is not Lear!"

Richard's Lear was Schechner's first show[9] after he left The Performance Group in 1980.[10] It was developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison at the invitation of Phillip Zarrilli (a practitioner-scholar who Schechner met in India in the mid-1970s where both men were studying South Asian performance). The play was performed by university-affiliated performers. After several performances in Madison, the show toured to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. Zarrilli, like Schechner, sought ways of learning and incorporating non-western performance techniques. He was a strong advocate, teacher, and scholar of psychophysical performer training. Under Zarrilli's guidance, the production featured fight scenes using *kalaripayattu*, a martial art from Kerala, South India.

Beyond probing further into adaptation as a creative and critical practice, *Richard's Lear* can also be seen as a contribution to intercultural theatre at a time when this was a growing practice in the work of Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, and others. It was a considerable

challenge how to learn from the performance traditions of non-western cultures without neo-colonialism or neo-liberal exploitation. Schechner himself sees *Richard's Lear* as significantly influenced by his trips to India (see Schechner 1984). *Richard's Lear* also featured punk music, dance, and costuming. The B-52's and Dead Kennedys were heard "at ear-splitting levels […] between scenes, for the heath scenes and Gloucester's blinding, provid[ing] a harsh underscore for the action" (Zarrilli 1981: 94). Lear's daughter Regan was "a Soho mod-punker in red and black" (Zarrilli 1981: 93).

The text is derived primarily from *King Lear* and *Richard III* but—in a manner characteristic of Schechner's composition techniques—it also has a tonic of Shakespearean curses from a range of his plays launched at Richard by Lear's daughters. If we look at the text closely, we find that Richard's quest for power and control is grafted onto *King Lear*, itself considerably pared down. Grafting, a horticultural metaphor for adaptation used by Julie Sanders (2015) (taking inspiration in part from Genette's 1997 [1982] definition of hypertextuality), is a particularly apt one here. In graftage the tissues of two different plants are joined together so that the two grow together and morph into a new plant where the plant portion newly inserted into the stock (the scion) is typically dominant in shaping the outcome of the new plant. *Richard's Lear* also owes its existence to the conjoining of the tissues of two, otherwise often adapted, questioned and challenged Shakespearean classics problematising in between them themes such as kingdom, power, and loyalty. Here *Richard III* is grafted onto *King Lear*, as Richard tries to control and almost hijack *King Lear*. Of course, the metaphor almost functions the other way around as well: the Lear narrative is grafted onto Richard's story to enrich it and let it grow. Without the richness of the characters grafted on from *King Lear*, Richard would have a monodrama to perform cyclically, at best.

From *Richard III* we have only Richard himself but as a doubled character. Young Richard described in the stage directions as a "pre-teen boy" speaks as a twelve-year-old who acts as "'big' Richard's clone, alter-ego, sidekick, and big-Richard-to-be" (1981: 92). Young Richard is bossy, ambitious, unbridled, and altogether more-Richard-than-Richard. Young Richard's first move is locking his adult counterpart into a cage. Yet, Richard is the only character (if we may use this word with moderate caution and certainly beyond the framework of dramatic theatre), who "had the freedom to stop the action at any point—he was the onstage director" (Zarrilli 1981: 93). Because there are no other characters from *Richard III* in *Richard's Lear* save a few lines of Lady Anne spoken by Cordelia, it really is a case of Richard forcing his way into *King Lear* as he tries to fulfill his ambitions. Richard can also be read dramaturgically as an Edmund character—a ruthless, self-centered and lustful manipulator. The title itself allows us to think playfully of the script (and accompanying production) as Richard Schechner's *Lear*—his take on *Lear* is clearly one soaked in *Richard III*, and the experiment features a Richard who is a caged *metteur en scène*—"imprisoned" by society, by the conventions of orthodox theatre.

Commune

A largely postdramatic devised performance without a single main source, the 1970–72 *Commune*, the first TPG play to be discussed here, "explored metaphorically the concept of the American dream, and the questions of violence, dropping out, and ownership" (Lichti 1986: 154). The intention was to delve into the concept of community—in all its complexity—in America. Great importance is afforded to the foundational myths of America spotlighting their supremacism and imperialism. "In the beginning all the world was America!," proclaims the character Bruce, referencing both the Bible

and American hubris. Particularly targeted are the history of and ideologies associated with the early settlers, with emphasis on how Protestant evangelism and problematic conjectures about racial hierarchies shaped the early thinking about America and its place in the world. *Commune* intricately weaves into its fabric of story and song, myths of America as the "promised land" and the "City upon a Hill." It asks what is wrong with America and what "community" means to contemporary Americans. The contemplation of these themes takes an apocalyptic and post humanist tone at times. For example, in the second version of the opening, we read that "American history ended last night. We in this room are all that's left." Needless to say, the play does not offer answers or definite ways forward but sheds light on deep-rooted hypocrisies, self-deceits, and issues with responsibility.

Death Valley is presented as a legendary place where Jesus on the cross meets the coyote in the desert. The "Big Rock Candy Mountain," sung near the performance's start, reminds spectators and characters of a mythical if bogus perfect land full of "lemonade springs," "cigarette trees," and "soda-water fountains":

> In the Big Rock Candy Mountain
> The pigs [police] have wooden legs
> The bulldogs all have rubber teeth
> And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs.
> The farmers' trees are full of fruit
> The barns are full of hay
> Oh, I'm gonna go where there ain't no snow
> Where the winds don't blow
> Where the sleet don't go
> In the Big Rock Candy Mountain!

This song is followed immediately by the hymn, "Bound for the Promised Land" (America). But this America is also the Tate-Polanski home (as will be explained later). Vocal music was very important in *Commune*—both traditional and newly composed by Paul Epstein who worked with Schechner in the New Orleans Group (NOG)[11] and who composed the complex sound score of The Performance Group's *Makbeth. Commune* is punctuated by songs, hymns, and ballads in a Brechtian manner.

Commune's ironic subtitle—"Being Several Well-Known Scenes Enacted After Supper by the Youth of Our Nation"—points not only to the Vietnam War but also to "the Manson Family" who on August 8, 1969 invaded the Hollywood home of movie director Roman Polanski murdering his pregnant wife, actress Sharon Tate, and four others. Neither Polanski nor Manson were there. The murder spree of the Manson Family was tv and tabloid heaven. As Clementine brags, "Hey, Spalding, now that we're famous we're going to do this hour-long TV special. It'll be just us—eating, singing, killing, being together." The ensemble performs both the Manson gang and its victims in an act of collective remembering. The Vietnam War itself was dubbed "the living room war"[12] because so much of it could be seen on nightly network tv, including reports of atrocities committed by American troops, especially the My Lai massacre of March 16, 1968. In *Commune*, the group designates fifteen spectators who are asked to sit in a circle at the center of the theatre "to represent the villagers at My Lai." *Commune* distils real-life content into non-realist performance[13] as some actions on stage re-enact (in a distanced way) what "happened last night," i.e., the Manson murders and the My Lai massacre. Fragments of these are enacted or referred to throughout *Commune* and

then the Tate murders are staged in detail near the play's end. The last scene of *Commune* is a newscaster interviewing Polanski. Similar media-evoking scenes are in *Briseis and the Sergeant* and *YokastaS.*

Commune was also about community. The Performance Group was a community, if not a commune, with its own problems and challenges. The performance intertwined troubling events from American history with what "community" means, exploring these connections using classic American and European texts. The throughline of the mosaic-like script is "the American experience" as it might be imagined by Charles Manson. The text is heterogeneous, drawing on a broad range of sources: both Testaments of the Bible, hymns, folk songs, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, *Richard III*, Marlowe's *Edward II*, Melville, Thoreau, Locke, Emma Lazarus's poem on the Statue of Liberty, contemporary advertisements, congressional and courtroom testimony, newspaper articles, and original material devised by the performers and Schechner. But *Commune* is neither a string of quotations nor documentary theatre. The emphasis is on reimagining events and texts as the *Weltanschauung* of "Americanness," weaving these into the lives of the performers. This technique points toward *The Prometheus Project* and *Imagining O*. The real-time interactions with spectators are to some degree like in *Dionysus in 69*.

In terms of its narrative dramatic arc, *Commune* is episodic and loosely structured. The story, such as it is, concerns the Europeans coming to the "new world" and "settling" it—with the production being very aware of the ironies and contradictions embedded in those phrases. There is something aleatoric about the development of the play's themes, including participatory interactions with the audience. Not only are the Manson murders enacted among and between the spectators, but also, as mentioned, fifteen spectators are selected at random to sit in the middle of the playing space to represent My Lai villagers. This is participation at a different level than in *Dionysus in 69*. At this point, how or even if the performance continues depends on how audience members respond to a request to interact. The published text gives three different versions of the My Lai massacre. The published script may benefit from a more aleatoric, hypertextual, almost "gamified" presentation so that the reader or reader-participant can begin to experience what the play offers. Even a fully linear presentation gives a sufficient taste of *Commune*'s sometimes convivial and playful, but deeply serious, treatment of its audiences. It is hard to think of a better example of this conviviality than requiring spectators to take their shoes off, leaving them at the entrance to The Performing Garage. The performers wear some of those shoes as they "murder." At least, by costume-inference, the spectators are implicated. After the performance is over, all the shoes are dumped in the dip of the "wave" in the center of the space—the place where spectators representing My Lai villagers were. Preparing to leave the theatre, spectators sort through the remains in order to claim their property.

Commune is more preoccupied with themes than with rendering a straightforward story and in this sense it is postdramatic, before there was such a term. If *Dionysus in 69* is the thesis and *Makbeth* the antithesis, *Commune* is the synthesis: the keystone.

Makbeth, After Shakespeare

With the 1969 production of *Makbeth, After Shakespeare*, Schechner and The Performance Group turned to Shakespeare, who presented a very different challenge than did Euripides. Shakespeare's English sounds comprehensible, but in fact much of it is hard for today's people to understand. It is easy to miss many nuances, even if one gets the poetry and the overall meaning. In *Makbeth*, Schechner did not come from a place of veneration. Unsurprisingly, his intention was to explore using rather

than simply staging a dramatic text which of course already had a huge stage and adaptation history globally. Experiences from The Performance Group's first production, *Dionysus in* 69, were woven into the fabric of *Makbeth*. This fluid approach to generating the text treats Shakespeare's play as inspiration for creative ensemble work rather than as a prestigious and untouchable literary text. Shakespeare is himself perceived in this context "not so much [as] the author of *Macbeth* as […] the provider of basic material out of which that production was made." The Shakespearean play hence functioned as "a collection of words" at the disposal of the creative team. Shakespeare's tragedy was thoroughly rewritten for *Makbeth*—"reconstructed," in Esther Sundell Lichti's term (1986). The play was indeed reconstituted from micro-level elements "upwards" through workshops and writing (or indeed, "wrighting"). It is reworded in an intriguing idiom that I might think of (without any disrespect) as a kind of adaptationese, which is neither fully Shakespeare nor fully contemporary but somewhere in between: a predominantly prosaic text with poetic elements and a strong music and sound score (included in this volume), peppered with recognizable words, phrases, sentences from the Scottish play itself. In fact, as Schechner explains in his introduction to the play in this volume, every word in *Makbeth* is in *Macbeth*, sometimes radically rearranged. Many motifs and turns of phrase are indeed recognizable from Shakespeare, even if they have been recontextualized in a dramaturgically very much reshaped—we might even say, deconstructed—play. *Makbeth* contains vocabulary that is choice, in some instances even literary or archaizing (with "'tis," "thy" and other Shakespearean linguistic staples), but these words and expressions are often surrounded by sentences that tilt toward the contemporary in their syntax and feel even if each word is from *Macbeth.* The overall effect is include rather than alienate the spectator.

Schechner admits in his foreword to the published version of *Makbeth* that the ensemble was unprepared for the challenge of speaking poetry and dealing with "the feelings evoked by the physics of language-speaking." As Lichti notes,

> The basic breathing and articulation work done in workshops laid a sound base for freeing the voice, but it did not go far enough. Shakespeare's poetry compounded the problem. The beauty of the language, and the very fact that it was Shakespeare, became a barrier that prevented the actors from getting through the words to the action beneath.
>
> (1986: 134–35)

It became clear to Schechner that the ensemble needed more refined verbo-physical work in addition to psycho-physical ones, but it is illuminating that the power of Shakespeare's language, the problems it presents (including ossified ways of directing and performing it), and perhaps even its iconic status, startled the already experienced director and writer-scholar, who later recalled this overwhelming feeling as "To stop short of 'doing' Shakespeare was something I couldn't do" (1978: xi).

To borrow Schechner's own fitting musical metaphor, the play is "something like a Haydn variation on a theme of Mozart" (Schechner 1978: xix). The text was built up from the ground, in an experimental regime led by Schechner. The developmental workshop series started with association exercises[14] centered on physicalizing in the moment sentences and single words from the play (evolving into what Schechner calls the "antiphonal Makbeth" exercise, where ensemble members took turns in leading the extended association exercise around a fragment or rhythm of their choice, resulting in "very personal roadmap[s]" (Schechner 1978: ix). In Schechner's facilitation, the actors used the Shakespearean text as "raw material" (Schechner 1978: x) and merged it with their own fantasies and psycho-physical responses.

Schechner identified four character types in *Macbeth* (in the process of transposing it to *Makbeth*), and the production used this typology and the actions identified and generated (or in a sense reconceived) by these character groups as a dramaturgical skeleton for the play. These archetypal character groups were: Doers (Makbeth, Lady Makbeth), Victims/Founders (Duncan, Banquo), Avengers (Malcolm and Macduff), and the constantly present and ultimately triumphant manipulators, Dark Powers (the witches and the commoners). These characters' movements in the environment as well as their costumes reflected what they stood for. "The Doers wore wine; the Founders, off-white; the Avengers, light brown; and the Dark Powers, midnite blue. Everyone wore boxing shoes" (Lichti 1986: 133). The groups occupied various spaces in the environment and also fought for spaces as part of the power struggle. At the center of the action was a huge table where spectators sit and many actions happen. This was where Makbeth and Lady Makbeth entertain Duncan when he first arrives to their castle; this was where the second banquet takes place; and this was where the major encounters in the drama take place. Around this central table-stage were cubic structures on and under which scenes take place and also spectators sit. This environment resonated with the cardinal themes as identified by Schechner (love, fame, power, and money). The production was minimalist. The only prop was "a heavy, archaic crown of solid brass passed from Duncan to Makbeth to Malcolm […] but fitting none of them" (Clark cited in Schechner 1978: xxv).

Even though the initial plan was to script collectively, the members of the group could not agree on the dramaturgical structure, so Schechner took it upon himself as director-wrighter to deliver the script. He laments that out of the dramaturgical avenues presented by the developmental process (the antiphonal *Makbeth*, "the playing of scenes in random order as thrown up nightly by the performers, and the 9-movement *Makbeth*"), he opted for "the most orderly and traditional" structuring principle (Schechner 1978: xvi). Still, the performance gave the impression of open-endedness, with "no chance for redemption in the metaphysical sense or for catharsis in the Aristotelian sense" (Hallberg 2001: 202)—undoubtedly a feature shared with *Dionysus in 69*, as we shall see. Less radical in its dramaturgical and even linguistic alterations than some Restoration Shakespeares or Enlightenment-era or Romanticist takes on Shakespeare from Europe, the novelty here is in the beautiful (even if, according to Schechner's own admission, at times disharmonious) *Gesamtkunstwerk* of embodied performance, with its sweeping, often simultaneous action, music, and design.

Schechner emphasizes that although the adaptation was clearly scripted by him, it emerged from extensive workshops, the collective efforts of the ensemble. The performers brought their own fantasies, emotions, and interpretations to the table. In Schechner's 1978 recollection, the process was far too *Macbeth*-like, steeped in internal fights for ensemble leadership and authority. In Schechner's pithy reflection, "*Makbeth* began playing us" (1978: viii). But despite Schechner's judgment that the Scottish play got the better of the Group, *Makbeth* is a significant experiment in adapting a well-known classic whose idiom is far from contemporary into a production that is immersive and physical. *Makbeth* re-interprets the canonical drama by dissecting and rearranging its components boldly yet coming up with a play whose themes and actions do not diverge significantly from more conventional readings of the tragedy.

Dionysus in 69

Dionysus in 69—Schechner's most famous work—was performed from June 1968 to July 1969 in The Performing Garage, a small converted metal works factory at 33 Wooster Street in what

became SoHo in lower Manhattan. *D69* (as it is nicknamed by many) toured to the US midwest and the Belgrade International Theatre Festival. A free and radical adaptation of Euripides's *The Bacchae*, the production gained international acclaim as a highly experimental provocative performance, earning Schechner the reputation as an *enfant terrible* of alternative theatre who wanted to break both commercial and psychological restraints by bonding spectator and actor (Zeitlin 2004: 53). The production opened on June 6, 1968, the day Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated, barely two months after the murder of Martin Luther King and five months before the election of Richard Nixon as US President. The same year saw the publication of *Towards a Poor Theatre* by Jerzy Grotowski, the Polish theatre director who had a significant influence on Schechner and whose workshop exercises found their way into the developmental rehearsals for *Dionysus in 69*. *D69* closed shortly before the Woodstock Festival, "an event that has assumed legendary status in the annals of hippie utopia" (Zeitlin 2004: 51). The final two days of the production were filmed by Brian De Palma, Robert Fiore, and Bruce Rubin.[15] The *D69* script remains an intriguing theatre text that not only contributes to the documentation of the "mythologiz[ed]" (Sampatakakis 2014: 391), iconic (and, for many, iconoclastic) performance but also continues to inspire new work and invite discussion about theatre and its audiences. The production has famously played a part in ushering in a particular mode of theatre-making that Schechner terms "environmental theatre" (Schechner 1968b, 1973). Vastly experimental in its focus on (or return to) ritual and negotiating the intricate processes of devising physically from a (classic) dramatic text in an ensemble setting that is intended to be democratic, Schechner practiced environmental theatre throughout his years founding and leading The Performance Group (1968–80).

Schechner—a seasoned adapter—had, unsurprisingly, demonstrated a persistent interest in *The Bacchae*, an elusive and complex play which has generated a range of ideologically, thematically, and artistically disparate interpretations over time. The "structural typicality" of the play—"destruction of order/rebirth of new order"—has been "readily available for scholars and artists to [use] as a political metaphor" (Sampatakakis 2014: 389). As James Harbeck (1998: 27–28) highlights, Schechner had been working on the subject for years before. "Young King, Jealous God" (Schechner n.d.) was an early dramatized version of the subject, while "*The Bacchae*: A City Sacrificed to a Jealous God" (1961) is Schechner's first published scholarship. "In Warm Blood" (1968a) is a second essay about the play. Before working on *D69*, Schechner experimented making adaptations, including a draft set in rural Louisiana where he was stationed as a soldier at Fort Polk.

For *D69*, rather than opting for free improvisations leading to a wholesale rewording of the play in the workshop process, Schechner and The Performance Group retained—or should we say, utilized—almost 600 lines from William Arrowsmith's translation. In some instances, these lines were used more than once. In a slight mashup prefiguring *Richard's Lear* and *Imagining O*, there were also sixteen lines from Sophocles's *Antigone* (659–80) as well as a little borrowing from Euripides's *Hippolytus* (215–21). As Froma I. Zeitlin explains:

> The rest of the text was composed by the group, some on their own at home and some in the workshops. The textual montage, arrangements and variations, as well as repetitions, particularly in the use of the chorus, were worked out during rehearsals and throughout the run. The performers wrote their own dialogue in a spirit that respected Euripides' text, even if it was altered, paraphrased, or otherwise personalized. Schechner wanted as much individual expression as possible in a play that deals so effectively with the liberation of personal energy.
>
> (Zeitlin 2004: 64)

The directorial principle about the use of the Euripidean text was that the actor playing king Pentheus—the character who is undermined and scapegoated in the play—should adhere to the source text as closely as possible, whereas the actor performing the god Dionysus—the character who succeeds in humiliating and destroying Pentheus by introducing Dionysian ecstasy into Thebes—is free to infuse Euripides's dialog with his/her own wording cast in a very contemporary idiom. Schechner in titling the play intended it to refer to both the year after the 1968 presidential election—"A vote for Finley [Dionysus] in 68 brings Dionysus in 69!"—and the sexual position. In the script, staging, and other writing from this period, Schechner makes clear his ambivalence and skepticism about a Dionysian revolution.[16]

What the Dionysus of *D69* brings divided commentators at the time and continues to be debated, with sophisticated readings emphasizing a decidedly "pro-hip" fable on the one hand, and one foregrounding a potentially dangerous "ecstatic fascism" (Schechner's own wording) on the other, and positions in between. Schechner emphasizes that it is a tragedy. With its tragic qualities, *D69* is (in Schechner's words again) a cautionary tale, a parable or fable for (post) modern times. The main themes and possible intentions of the production have been discussed voluminously by the makers themselves, including Schechner and other members of the collective (e.g., Shephard 1991), and by a variety of critics who either saw the production themselves or relied on archival material including the frequently shown split-screen De Palma film, famous on its own. There is an ever-growing literature surrounding the performance. Wherever on the broad spectrum one's interpretation sits, it appears that with this production—and the intense workshops and training that led up to it—Schechner and his collaborators sought ways to create community and capture and relish a sense of communality, much in the vein of ancient Greek theatre. Lamenting the predominance of individualism in modern western culture, Schechner is (here and elsewhere) in search of modes of integrating the individual with the communal. As Erika Fischer-Lichte points out in *Dionysus Resurrected: Performances of Euripides'* The Bacchae *in a Globalising World* (2014), Schechner takes inspiration from David Cooper's definition of "commune" as a "viable dialectic between solitude and being with others" (Cooper 1970 cited in Fischer-Lichte 35).

Fischer-Lichte discusses the performance as part of a group of plays that concentrate on the liberating power of Dionysus, "the god of wine—or LSD—of ecstasy, of communality and the theatre" (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 28). Indeed, with its preoccupation with "shared ecstasy and a cultural revolution" (Foley 2015: 163), the production aimed to considerably narrow and, at times, eliminate the distance between performers and audience, giving opportunities to spectators to physically engage with the performers and immerse themselves in the purpose-built and symbolic environment. Stage manager Vicki May Strang welcomed the audience by encouraging them to

> Take your time to explore the environment. It's a very interesting space with many different kinds of places to sit or stand or even lay down. We recommend going up high on the towers and platforms, or down underneath them. The password is, "Go up over or take cover."
>
> (The Performance Group 1970)

With an underlying commitment to giving a degree of carefully negotiated agency to the spectator, this approach pioneered what we now call immersive theatre, alongside being an early form of the contemporary site-specific theatre. Some scholars, including Fischer-Lichte, "[question] whether the production came closer to manipulating than liberating the audience" (Foley 2015:

163). How much freedom even the performers themselves may have had in choices about body exposure from performance to performance would probably be impossible (and perhaps even futile) to try to understand, even with access to Schechner's own annotation of the process as well as some detailed performer accounts, such as Shephard's, who, in S. E. Wilmer's reading, suggests that the performance at certain moments "ran the risk of turning […] into a voyeuristic sex show or alternative form of prostitution" (Wilmer 1992: 170). In a post-Me Too historical moment—and in the era of intimacy directors—one can see that *Dionysus in 69* represents a very different kind of performance-making. As Martin Puchner succinctly puts it, "In our post-revolutionary world, we do not make theatre like that anymore" (2009: 141). A "monumental" (Sampatakakis 2014: 391), "path-breaking and influential" (Foley 2015: 163) artistic product of its time, *D69* is canonized as bold in terms of performance mode and subject matter alike, celebrating "the American movement for sexual liberation and freedom of speech" (Sampatakakis 2014: 391) in "a year in which seismic global shifts in political consciousness took place" (Hall 2004: 7), while it also revisited the ritualistic roots of theatre. With regard to the performance's mounting of a "festival of liberation" (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 25), some of its critical reception is undoubtedly imbued with praise. For instance, Sampatakakis (2014: 391) asserts that *Dionysus in 69*

> remains a revolution in itself as it was the first one to feel the sexual suggestions latent in the text. Only after Schechner's production did a 'gay' Dionysus and the exposure of the naked body become fashionable, almost mainstream, for *The Bacchae*.

Acting as a trend-setter of sorts, the production did not only foreground taboo themes but also introduced certain performance patterns for some modern takes on Euripides's classic that it pioneered: "the violence […] and cruelty that the *D69* brought forward […] became a typical feature of the post '69 productions of *The Bacchae*" (Sampatakakis 2014: 392).

The emphatic metatheatricality of the play is not an aspect I often see in discussions of *D69* (or at least discussions touching on these features are not couched in these terms), but there is a ludic and multistranded self-referentiality apparent in the script that is worthy of attention. Scholars routinely associate this adaptation with the "Performative Turn" in theatre (Hall 2004: 27) but comments on modes of metaperformativity in the performance (and play) are surprisingly scarce. The layering of the empirical experience (and identities) of everyday life and theatrically performed identities feel both a bit "raw" (in the sense of fresh and experimental) and quasi-Pirandellian. The way the script deals with character names and actor names is enlightening. There is a constant fluctuation between performing persona and performed role—in this sense, too, *D69* is a profoundly Schechnerian piece drawing attention to the complexity and multilayeredness of performance and performativity. Fischer-Lichte discusses the in-betweenness of identities in some depth in relation to this production, though she does not perceive it as metadrama. *Commune*, another intricately metatheatrical piece, further experiments with this kind of layering of identity within the performance.

The script reads intricately and challengingly hypertextual to me—in fact, it is a testing task to persevere with a linear reading of the text, since it branches out from the stem at several points to offer variations on scenes. Some scenes have as many as four different versions, and there might even be further alternative routes within a version, due to who is playing the roles—during *D69*'s year-long run at The Performing Garage, roles were always being exchanged—with little regard for matching the gender of the performer to that of the character. The text meanders inside the

environment in which it breathes. In this sense, there is a touch of postdramatic theatre here in addition to a quasi-aleatoric (almost) postmodern playfulness. Some of the quasi-aleatoric ramifications were determined by audience participation.

In her thorough study of Dionysus in performance between 1968 and 2008, Fischer-Lichte argues with regard to *The Bacchae* that performance "cannot capture the original and must perform a sacrifice or *sparagmos* of the text" (Fischer-Lichte 2014: 21). She seems to suggest that alteration, or to reflect the intensity of *sparagmos*, dismembering, mangling, or tearing apart, is inevitable when re-performing or adapting the play—as if it were the fate of the play to enact its own dismemberment as part of telling the story of Pentheus's dismemberment. It is not possible to make a straightforward "ordinary" production, only to show a process of consecutive acts of tearing, all leading to death (and perhaps rebirth). The Hemispheric Institute's archival web page holding the re-rendered De Palma film aptly describes the performance as a "free-wheeling adaptation and distortion" of Euripides's play.

The adapturgy of the play, to use Jane Barnette's term (2017), involved having lots of performers playing different roles at different times, as previously noted. Four actors, including a woman, Joan MacIntosh, alternated in the role of Dionysus—each with their own script variations—, and there were always two Agaves. Other roles, too, had different performers. Everyone, at one time or another, was Chorus. The dramaturgical fabric of the play is ritualistic; the time is not pinned to any historical moment until the final section of the play, when the triumphant Dionysus gives a chillingly tyrannic and vindictive pre-presidential election speech, with variations across the four actors, cursing the character/ actors and the whole Performance Group community, and inciting riot and violence in the streets, in the country, and the world. The god's curse targets specific individuals by name, for example, "Upon you, Agave, Ciel [Smith] and Joan [MacIntosh], I pronounce this doom. […] You shall live out your wretched lives never knowing which of you played Agave," says Finley as Dionysus to the two actors. The parallel, purposefully unresolved use of both character name and actor name marks the concluding part of the play: "And upon you, Remi, Agave, this doom"; "And you, Cadmus, Bill Shephard." This is more than a playful postmodern tool, although it is delectable as a postmodern strategy; it ties in deeply with how Schechner thinks about the ontology of theatre: a reality alongside and interacting with other realities, not imitating other realities or merely "representing" other realities. The metatheatrical in-jokes do not spare the director either: "The royal house is overthrown. Schechner will go to South America and never see what happens to this play." With this statement, the actor-Dionysus hints at the power struggles within the group that Schechner himself also addresses in his "Notes on *Makbeth*" (1978). By attempting to relativize the significance of the director and directorial presence in an element of the script clearly authorized by the director, Schechner also paradoxically ends up highlighting the director's contribution, bringing his name to the fore, which rarely happens in theatre. Euripides, too, as the author of the source text is blamed for the harshness of the punishments: "I'm sorry. Long ago Euripides wrote these things." Here Dionysus speaks about the one who brought his theatrical being into being. These are delightful and powerful moments of metatheatre and meta-adaptation. Yet, Dionysus's curse also relates to the macrocosm outside the performance environment, and the campaign Dionysus begins for presidential power is nothing short of a disruptive insurgency. Several of these pronouncements by the alternating Dionysuses refer to pressing environmental concerns, "You will get thousands of bulldozers and push all that plastic shit into the Pacific Ocean." Social justice issues, including gender inequalities, are also addressed in a way that now reads deeply ironic about American

politics, "I condemn you to see to it that a woman is made President of the United States within the next fifty years." America, its politics and its place in the world, concerns for the American present and future are an important component of these quasi-prophetic speeches. The ensemble kept this section fresh by incorporating new commentary on politics, for instance after the election of Nixon as president: "Nixon is tired of the Presidency and is going to be the first President to commit assassination by suicide." Little did that Dionysus know that in 1974 Nixon would resign his presidency. As the increasingly dictatorial and "Power Power" hungry Dionysus orates, spectators are leaving the environment.

Briseis and the Sergeant

The early plays in this volume show a different side to Schechner. As an early career theatre-maker, he is learning, perfecting different styles, allowing them to rub off individually or in interestingly hybridized ways. These early gems demonstrate that before Schechner made his huge contribution to the launching and development of performance studies, he studied the contemporary and historical theatre landscape thoroughly and wrote several plays in a traditional playwriting mode.

Before joining the army for a couple of years as an enlisted man and widening his experience by encountering significantly new settings and people to those of his upper middle class upbringing, Schechner wrote an intriguing war-themed play, *Briseis and the Sergeant*, as his 1958 MA in English thesis at the University of Iowa where he was a member of Paul Engle's Iowa Writers' Workshop. He reworked the play after leaving the army, drawing on some of his army experiences. In 1962, *Briseis* was staged at Tulane University, directed by Professor George W. Hendrickson. Schechner was at Tulane studying for his PhD. In three acts and a prologue, the play revisits ancient Greek mythology, elaborating on an episode of *The Iliad*, namely the story of Briseis whom Achilles wins in battle only to have Agamemnon seize for himself. Offended, Achilles refuses to fight, thus making it impossible for the Greeks to defeat the Trojans. But Homer's Achilles is not in *Briseis and the Sergeant*, and Agamemnon is a minor character. Helen of Troy is only mentioned as a "leading socialite." Homer gives Briseis scant attention with few spoken lines, but Schechner fleshes her out as a Brechtian character. In Harbeck's words, *Briseis and the Sergeant* is "a play about a girl from *The Iliad* being chronotopically displaced, making a presentation of war, past, present, and future" (1998: 25). With its ironical take on war and its focus on the impossibility of maintaining a core personality, the play strongly echoes Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, a play that Schechner directed almost twenty years later in 1975 with The Performance Group. There are affinities also with the theatre of the absurd—Schechner's PhD dissertation is about Eugène Ionesco.

In *Briseis*, the Mother Courage-like figure is the vendor Woman pushing her wheelbarrow of flowers through war after war, unrelentingly attending to her business and her survival regardless of the regimes or political systems she finds herself in. "I've found the funeral market by far the steadiest and most lucrative," she says in act one. Her living off war clearly evokes Anna Fierling, Mother Courage. The Woman's approach to life is largely pragmatic: she stokes or feeds conflict for the sake of survival. Schechner's play projects a deep disillusionment about any chance for world peace. The Woman lends a degree of support to clueless, less streetwise Briseis. To a lesser degree and, in the interest of her own survival, the Woman also takes the Sergeant under her wing. Thus, the play presents to us an unnamed, almost archetypal and quasi-Brechtian figure who cannot change

the course of history but has a wise enough head on her shoulders to know the boundaries of her agency while, like Lot's daughters in Schechner's 1957 one-act play, makes carefully premeditated compromises in order to survive. As Mother Courage sums up in her "The Song of the Grand Capitulation," "You have to cut your coat according to your cloth." While the Woman in *Briseis* sells flowers, she is just as implicated in the business of war as Mother Courage—the Woman's best sales come from funerals.

Determined to find and marry her husband's killer, Briseis insists on living out her fate (something very important in *YokastaS* as well). "I've got children to get born and a household to start. You might be in this world to go around killing people. That may be your job. But it's not mine," she says as she attaches herself to a random guy called Achilles, the titular sergeant bearing the same name as her husband's killer, according to the flower Woman's book of wars. But this Achilles is not Homer's sulking hero, but a simple Sergeant in any one of the world's myriad armies. Bewildered by "[t]he illogical way all this is happening," the Sergeant is understandably reluctant and even suspects Briseis to be a spy. Yet, he consents to an unlikely alliance with Briseis, despite misgivings about matrimony: he has had experiences with women but has not loved any of them. Briseis has her own ideas: "Even if you're not the real Achilles, I could make sure you get a whole army to obey you. Otherwise my father'd never let me marry you. We're very class conscious." The theme of interchangeability, the haphazard nature of events and their purely forged interconnections and rationalizations, all indicate the influence of the theatre of the absurd. The Sergeant and Briseis move through time appearing in different wars where the uniforms and the means of making war change but human patterns of behavior and weaknesses of character are the same. The very cyclicality of warfare—although it is clearly a case of juxtaposing different wars here—again reminds us of *Mother Courage*. The language of the play draws our attention to the conceit of the layering of time periods by mixing some very contemporary phrases into the idiom of the time-traveling central characters. There are comic effects emerging from the misunderstandings between figures from different eras, so the epoch-traversing play is never somber.

What *Briseis* might say about human nature, consistency of character, manipulation, or even the time-tested thematic topos of the battle of the sexes is not in any way spelled out. This early play has both subtlety and punch, as do other early plays in the Schechner canon. *Briseis and the Sergeant* may come across as merely a robust companion to *Mother Courage*, but it is also a solid item in the Schechner play catalog. It deserves further stagings by theatre-makers and discussions by scholars.

The Blessing of the Fleet

The traditionally structured five-scene (five-act) *The Blessing of the Fleet* is set in Provincetown, Massachusetts, before, during, and after a hurricane. The young Schechner's confident steering of an even-handed assembly of characters does not only foreshadow the iconic large-scale ensemble productions of his mid-career and later years with The Performance Group and East Coast Artists, but it also seems to be recalling some of the finest pieces of ensemble realism on the global stage. Gerhart Hauptmann's 1892 *Weavers* seemed an obvious (and admittedly loose) connection to me when I first read the play. On subsequent readings, the play has become Schechner's "Russian play" for me—and by that I mean Chekhovian—though the Hauptmann reference has not lost its relevance entirely.

And surely also the ghost of Eugene O'Neill is smiling. Schechner remembers devouring O'Neill's plays in the summer of 1957 in Provincetown where he was working as a short order cook and participating in a theatre group. That summer Schechner began writing *The Blessing of the Fleet* setting it in Provincetown. As a young man, O'Neill was one of the Provincetown Players who in 1916 staged two of O'Neill's early plays, *Bound East for Cardiff* and *Thirst*. The end of the summer of 1957 was also when Schechner started East End Players with a staged reading of his "Lot's Daughters." In the summer of 1958, East End Players mounted a full summer season in Provincetown. That's when Schechner completed *The Blessing of the Fleet* which has a "distinctly O'Neillian flavor" (Harbeck 1998: 26).

The *dramatis personae* of *The Blessing of the Fleet* are thrown together when they take shelter from an approaching hurricane. Although they appear to be forming an unlikely community already at the start of the play, the storm strengthens their convivial bond helping us understand them better. Several of the characters carry wounds or at least some kind of baggage. (In that respect, the drama is more Chekhov than Hauptmann.) The memory of a 1938 hurricane casts its shadow on the present of the action—a disastrous event in which former fisherman John Gaspé lost his wife and some of his fellow fishermen, and which led to him abandoning his career. John, a character subtly reminiscent of Conrad's Lord Jim, is deeply traumatized—today he might be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Around halfway into the drama, the invitation to tell their stories in a situation similar to the frame story of Boccaccio's *The Decameron*—being confined with a small familiar company for long hours in a house boarded up against the storm—is impossible to decline. "We've become quite a little society, haven't we?," says Mrs. Vrondi, a socially conservative, half-educated but opinionated lady, who beneath the veneer of superficiality is still trying to come to terms with having been abandoned by her husband, the "Count." Mrs. Vrondi is preparing for her death from cancer, something the resident philosopher-writer of the collective, Gene, claims to envy. The formal and florid idiolect of Mrs. Vrondi, one of whose *leitmotifs* is reading newspapers, also provides us with numerous intertextual clues in the form of mis-identified plays and books that make us ponder interpretive contexts for *Blessing*.

The play's use of chronotopes, to use this Bakhtinian concept, is important, as the spaces carry metaphorical meaning. The Wharfside Tavern is itself referred to—by Ed, its generous, caring, and sober-headed owner—as a ship where those on board spend a certain but limited amount of time in each other's company. With the hurricane working as a catalyst that foregrounds character traits, some of the male characters question each other about how they will relate to the storm. Shooler, the intrepid Portuguese fisherman who speaks a broken English, is out at sea in the middle of the gale, first among the fishermen—and, we gather, the first to be blessed by the bishop at the titular Blessing of the Fleet. The play's title refers to the ritual about to happen offstage as the play ends. This blessing-to-be suggests a restoration of order, a progress toward healing. It also already indicates Schechner's keen interest in ritual.

Shaped by a childhood memory of a major hurricane in 1938, and also by Schechner's lifelong fascination with meteorology (see Harbeck 1998), *The Blessing of the Fleet* has the urgency of nineteenth- and twentieth-century realist plays. The metaphor of the storm as an immeasurably strong panther "with claws of wind" aligns *Blessing* with the symbolism of lyrical-realist plays by Ibsen and Chekhov, not to mention the symbolism proper of Maeterlinck. The interactions among the group held captive by the storm in the Wharfside Tavern suggest a connection with the social drama of Hauptmann as well as Gorky (*The Lower Depths* and *Summerfolk* in particular). The out-of-season Provincetown atmosphere is reminiscent of the small peripheral town of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* whose characters are stuck in a way similar to those in *Blessing*. The Chekhovian reference point

of an idealized (and out-of-reach) Moscow presents itself here as Mrs. Vrondi's much-missed New York, which she looks forward to returning to once "the check come from the Manufacturer's Trust," as she repeatedly tells us, but from where even out-of-date newspapers are hard to come by in this *ultima Thule*. Instead of Chekhov's tea made in the samovar, we have sandwiches, American cheese, stiff coffee (with Carnation on offer), and schooners of beer. Yet—perhaps due to an American cultural filter—the play is more celebratory than any of Chekhov's masterpieces.

The Blessing of the Fleet draws from the well of these classics of world drama but with a slight whiff of youthful American optimism. Mrs. Vrondi's much-awaited check arrives, as opposed to the unreachable dreams of Chekhov's three sisters. Even the solipsistic and nihilist philosopher-poet, Gene (O'Neill?), makes haste as the play ends not to miss the blessing ceremony.

"Lot's Daughters"

The next to earliest work in *Schechner Plays* is "Lot's Daughters," a one-act play in three scenes (as if a short three-act drama) telling the startling biblical story of Lot's two daughters' incest with their father (Genesis 19). In the Bible the women are unnamed, designated only "firstborn" and "younger." The daughters arrange the incest by getting their father drunk on two successive nights. They each give birth to sons, scions of families.

"Lot's Daughters" was performed at the end of the summer of 1957 as a staged reading directed by Schechner in Provincetown's Yacht and Tennis Club. The play is Schechner's earliest revisiting of a classic text, a practice that became one of his trademarks. With only three characters and a close focus on the plot rather than a psychological profile of the characters, "Lot's Daughters" is more Sophocles than Stanislavsky. This early career play foreshadows future explorations of personal freedom versus predetermination which are at the center of *Dionysus in 69* and *YokastaS*. "Lot's Daughters" also shows the formative impact of Judaism on Schechner. Beyond going to "Hebrew school" where he obtained an extracurricular education in Judaism, and living in an observant home, Schechner also engaged in intense study with Samuel Schwarz, his maternal grandfather who was the son of a rabbi and a scholar of the Hebrew Bible and Talmud. While Schechner may be a self-proclaimed "Jewish atheist," he is very much a Jewish intellectual well versed in the dialectical cornucopia of the Talmudic tradition. This has left a clear mark on his work, emphatically so in "Lot's Daughters." Indeed, throughout his career, even when his focus shifted from playwriting to directing, co-creating, and scholarship, Jewish culture offered deep inspiration.

In "Lot's Daughters," the First Daughter is 32 years old and the Second Daughter is 23. In biblical times, those ages would put them well past their prime in terms of child-bearing. In other words, from their perspective, it is now or never. Lot and his daughters have lived in complete isolation in a cave since they left Sodom nineteen years before the play's action begins. Schechner's calling the sisters First Daughter and Second Daughter replicates the Bible's erasure. This designation also recalls the existentialist leanings of the theatre of the absurd and highlights the suppression of personhood which these mythical figures lived. In "Lot's Daughters" the sisters have diverging memories of their childhood and conflicting perceptions about how they have ended up in seclusion. First Daughter shares with her sister some nostalgic memories of an Edenic Sodom where the now dour Lot took part in the merrymaking. They assert that the story of their mother turning into a pillar of salt is a fairy tale. First Daughter's apocryphal story is that Abraham (Lot's uncle) took

their mother with him as a wife—she was sacrificed for the survival of the rest of the family. In this alternative version of the narrative, Lot betrayed both his wife by handing her over for the sake of his own and his daughters' survival and his community: Sodom and Gomorrah were taken over by Abraham and "the rulers in Jerusalem" in a "trade" that "has eaten [Lot's] soul away." We might see a prefiguring of Faust here. The Second Daughter has been brought up with the official version about their mother's demise—something that the play's Lot tries to stand by to the point of raging.

In their canonical iteration, only the elder daughter speaks, and she only strategizes the seduction of Lot in order that the sisters "may preserve the seed of our father" (Genesis 19:32, 34). In "Lot's Daughters," the women offer a counter-narrative. They speak up, even if we are told that their freedom of choice is very limited. The dramaturgical decision of foregrounding these women is in line with Schechner's support for various social liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. In giving the sisters a chance to tell their own stories, "Lot's Daughters" prefigures *YokastaS.* In "Lot's Daughters," Schechner allows us to see them as individualized sisters with their own personal priorities and at times conflicting opinions. Schechner, well versed in Talmudic disquisition, invites us to see this troubling biblical episode from a less patriarchal perspective. "What if," Schechner asks, "these otherwise silenced women could speak?" Who were they and what did they really want? Could they have wanted something different from the act of incest they are famous for?

It is implied that there is something suspicious about how Lot sobs in their bosoms in his sadness over the loss of his wife. To leave or not to leave for the unknown city, to make or not to make a change, appears to be the central question for these women who are ossified in a particular social position within a rigid patriarchal system. The alternative to leaving is to have children by their father. The First Daughter, who is very worried about becoming too old to find a man and have children and thus lead a more bearable life, opts to lay with her aging and confused father, tricking him into behaving as if she were his long-lost wife. The First Daughter pushes her more attractive and naive sister in front of her, deciding her fate as well. The story is not a full-scale liberation narrative; yet there is a degree of agency taken by a female character within a limited and emotionally and intellectually impoverished set of exilic circumstances. In Schechner's take on the story, the daughters are not "acquitted" but seen more fully fleshed out than in the Bible. As one sister takes the freedom of the other one away—her hope for a different, non-endogamous future—the play remains a perturbing tale of family doom. Harbeck considers "Lot's Daughters" "somewhat existentialist and moderately revisionist (even vaguely Shavian)" and "arguably one of [Schechner's] best plays" (1998: 26).

"The Last Day of FK"

Another one-act play, the first surviving Schechner drama, "The Last Day of FK," can be seen in the light of the theatre of the absurd and existentialism. Schechner had just finished his PhD dissertation on Eugène Ionesco when he wrote "The Last Day of FK." The titular character, "FK," unmistakably refers to Franz Kafka. In the typescript of an early draft, the title character is "Franz." In Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1912), Gregor Samsa is turned into a large bug—and dies from exhaustion and abuse by his family. In "The Last Day of FK," the protagonist is misunderstood (in varied degrees) by his family up to being dehumanized and annihilated.

With characters defined by their respective relations to F—Visitor, Mother, Sister, Father—rather than having names, the drama tells what happens on F's last day, just as the

play's title promises. In true absurdist and existential fashion, the titular anti-hero questions the meaningfulness of existence and the ultimate goodness of humanity. The mysterious Visitor, who appears to be a character urging us to acknowledge the significance of a the messianic F, announces that F's constipation is "a cipher for the general clogging in [his] soul." The metaphor of warping is also alluded to and there seems to be a need for (an unachievable) cohesion, "[a]n imposed unity of the whole" in the world of the play. According to the Visitor, F as a Hamletic or messianic, but also Gregor Samsa-like, figure, ought to set himself on his right path rather than "drive new divisive wedges into [his] already fragmented and tottering machine." Ironically, of course, F hardly mends the warping of this out-of-joint time (or machine) through his death, about which his animalistic, egotistic, misogynistic, and cruel father seems indifferent. If "Lot's Daughters" sheds light on the problematic aspects of the archetypal father-daughter relationship, "The Last Day of FK" centralizes a dysfunctional patriarchal family where an anxious son is destroyed by a domineering megalomaniac *paterfamilias* who provides the very opposite of the paternal support that may be expected of him. Kafka himself had a fraught relationship with his domineering and not well-educated father. The play however is more than a drama *à clef*. In K, Schechner made an early attempt at writing an almost biographical character. The mistreatment of women by Father foreshadows *The Prometheus Project*.

Now anthologized, I hope that the theatre of the absurd would welcome "The Last Day of FK" to its global canon as an option in seminars alongside the giants of this mode. This is sheer conjecture, but had Schechner continued along the lines set out in his earliest drama, he could have developed an American *oeuvre* equivalent to Harold Pinter, bringing a strong and lasting absurdist voice to the stage, an alternative to Edward Albee in the States.

In Conclusion of an Introduction

Performance giant Richard Schechner's plays have invited me to ponder my own relationship with theatre—with plays, performances, rehearsal processes—in my capacity mostly as audience member or scholar but also as occasional performer, director, dramaturg, translator, and adapter, from my earliest childhood experiences up to now. I felt my theatrical organs scanned. As a researcher of adaptation and dramaturgy, I found Schechner's adaptive choices in the "versions/interventions/explosions" (Rosenthal 2024: 59) as well as the general text composition strategies fascinating. As Schechner brilliantly sums up in his introduction to *The Prometheus Project*:

> I find things; the performers bring in things; we invent; we steal, we adapt. […] [O]nce 'material' is dumped into the process, it is grist for the mill. On the printed page, the words are concrete, specific. But in the workshop-rehearsal room, they are fluid, played with, passed back-and-forth, joining gesture, song, and dance.

The frequently used collage technique—a metacritical, reflexive "germinal" aesthetic strategy involving "radical juxtaposition" (Harding 2011: 23) and resulting in a heterogeneous "adaptationese" or simply a heterogeneous performance-language—challenged me in particular and will invite me back for more reflection, after I have wrestled here with a wealth of terminology ranging from mashup to grafting.

When thinking any time about a Schechner play (or more), or about how Schechner plays, I also always think about something else—something in theatre or performance history (or in my personal theatrical memory bank) that the play or plays zoom in on for me. So far so Schechnerian. My writing about the plays has been considerably guided by these undercurrents—connections with theatre history, with personal memories of reading/spectating experiences—with the internal maps of theatrical veins—although I have also sampled works both by and about Schechner throughout the process. Some of these more tailored readings found their way into the introduction, but I wanted to avoid reading the Schechner plays almost as illustrations of the *auteur*-author's theoretical thinking. That would be possible perhaps but also reductive. Hence, I write more about metaperformance or metatheatre, one of my own critical hobbyhorses, than about restored behavior, for example.

Without doubt, Schechner's experimental performances—as we can see from their distillations as plays—have contributed hugely to the emergence of a theatre that Elinor Fuchs describes as "avant-garde, experimental, alternative, deconstructive, postmodern, 'new'" (1996: 9). Importantly, Hans-Thiess Lehmann (2006: 26) also acknowledges Schechner's pioneering use of the term "postdramatic" with reference to both happenings and the theatre of Beckett, Genet, and Ionesco, with a move away from story and toward the "game" becoming the "generative matrix" in the case of the latter playwrights. Much of Schechner's work, especially the recent work with East Coast Artists from the wrighter's mature years, itself shares features of what Lehmann defines as postdramatic theatre: "a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time 'after' the authority of the dramatic paradigm," a theatre in which "the limbs or branches of a dramatic organism, even if they are withered material, are still present and form the space of a memory" (Lehmann 2006: 27).

Producing significant work in the postdramatic mode and under the aegis of the postmodern is, in Schechner's *oeuvre*, complemented by experimenting with both intercultural and intermedial performance—also key features of Schechner's body of work at least from mid-career onward. So is pioneering, alongside some other avant-garde artists, contemporary site-specific and immersive ways of theatre-making through rigorous and well-documented experiments with environmental theatre. Schechner's earlier pieces, meanwhile, show his confident and creative engagement with modes of realism and modernism.

As for me, I am not parting from these plays any time soon.

NOTES

1. Pauline Réage was the pen name of Anne Desclos who also used the name Dominique Aury.
2. Schechner explores this idea in his "Restoration of Behavior" (1985a).
3. Millett's *Sexual Politics* critiques Freud's perspective on "female personality" as passive, masochist, and narcissist (2000: 194–97). Millett sees *Story of O* as "an extreme statement made upon such assumptions" (2000: 195). This is a powerful and influential interpretation, although the reception of *Story of O* is considerably complex both within and outside feminist contexts. This is in part because of the revelation of the author as a woman (something Kate Millett could not have known in 1970) but it goes beyond the scope of this introduction to go into this matter in more detail.
4. See note 5 of *YokastaS* (this volume).
5. On this, see for instance Stanescu (2012) and Rosenthal (2024).
6. See Schechner's introduction to *Faust/gastronome* (this volume).

7. Humanity-poem (*emberiségköltemény*) is another term in Hungarian literary discourse for dramatic poems such as Goethe's *Faust* and Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*.
8. "The Manhattan Project was an unprecedented, top-secret WW2 government program in which the United States rushed to develop and deploy the world's first atomic weapons before Nazi Germany. The use of these weapons by the United States against Japan in August 1945 ultimately became one of the most important historical events of the twentieth century. The project ushered in the nuclear age and left enduring legacies that echo all around us today. The Manhattan Project took shape at three primary locations across the country: Hanford, Washington; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Oak Ridge, Tennessee." https://www.nps.gov/mapr/learn/manhattan-project.htm. Accessed May 2, 2024.
9. Schechner's 1981 production of Michael McClure's *The Red Snake* closed before opening at New York's Public Theatre. It closed because McClure objected to how Schechner interpreted-directed the play.
10. In 1968, Schechner incorporated his new group as "The Wooster Group, Inc." He could not use "The Performance Group" as a corporate entity because that name was already claimed. In 1980, after Schechner left The Performance Group, those who took over began using "The Wooster Group" as their public name.
11. The NOG was founded in 1966 by co-artistic directors Schechner, Epstein, and painter Frank Adams. They were all professors at Tulane University. The NOG staged happenings and the first "environmental theatre" production, Eugène Ionesco's *Victims of Duty* (1967), directed by Schechner and designed by Jerry Rojo who later worked on many Performance Group productions. Epstein composed the music for *Makbeth.* In one sense, The Performance Group continued the explorations of the NOG.
12. See Patch (2017), "Lyndon Johnson's Living Room War," https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/30/opinion/lyndon-johnson-vietnam-war.html. Accessed May 2, 2024.
13. There is little wonder that such an international trailblazer of documentary and verbatim theatre as Anna Deavere Smith looks up to Schechner greatly (see Smith 2011).
14. Association exercises were so named because in them performers adjusted precise physical movements to whatever associations they were having at the moment of doing the exercises. In other words, their physical work evoked interior images and feelings and these, in turn, affected the movements. The association exercises were taken by Schechner from what he learned in a workshop led by Jerzy Grotowski and Ryszard Cieslak at New York University in 1967—Grotowski's first workshop in the United States.
15. This widely available film was released in 1970. To give a better sense of the production's multifocused presentation, much of the film is split-screen with two images being seen at the same time.
16. See Schechner's "The Politics of Ecstasy" in his *Public Domain* (1969: 209–28), itself a critique of Timothy Leary's 1968 book of the same title.

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