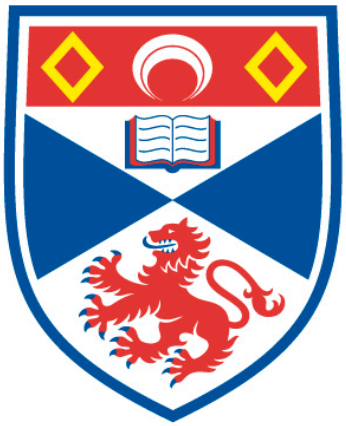
TOWARDS A EUCHARISTIC THEATRE: THE THEATRICAL THEOLOGIES OF THE REDUTA, THE RHAPSODIC THEATRE, AND GROTOWSKI'S LAB

Cole C. E. Matson

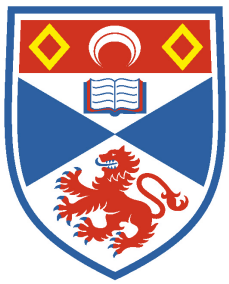
A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



2016

Towards a Eucharistic Theatre:
The Theatrical Theologies of the Reduta, the Rhapsodic Theatre, and Grotowski's Lab

Cole C.E. Matson



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

May 2016

1. Candidate's declarations:

I, Cole Matson, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 79,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2011 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in June 2012; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2011 and 2015.

Date signature of candidate

2. Supervisor's declaration:

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date signature of supervisor

3. Permission for publication: (*to be signed by both candidate and supervisor*) –

In submitting this thesis to the University of St Andrews I understand that I am giving permission for it to be made available for use in accordance with the regulations of the University Library for the time being in force, subject to any copyright vested in the work not being affected thereby. I also understand that the title and the abstract will be published, and that a copy of the work may be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, that my thesis will be electronically accessible for personal or research use unless exempt by award of an embargo as requested below, and that the library has the right to migrate my thesis into new electronic forms as required to ensure continued access to the thesis. I have obtained any third-party copyright permissions that may be required in order to allow such access and migration, or have requested the appropriate embargo below.

The following is an agreed request by candidate and supervisor regarding the publication of this thesis:

PRINTED COPY

a) No embargo on print copy

ELECTRONIC COPY

a) Embargo on all or part of electronic copy for a period of five years (maximum five) on the following ground(s):
    - Publication would be commercially damaging to the researcher, or to the supervisor, or the University
    - Publication would be in breach of law or ethics

Supporting statement for electronic embargo request:

I quote material (by permission) from Prof Darius Kosiński's upcoming book, which is not yet published. An embargo is requested to allow time for his book to be published before the material is easily accessible electronically.

Date signature of candidate signature of supervisor

The electronic embargo request was granted on 31 August 2015 by the Pro Dean of Postgraduate Research for a period of 5 years from the date the thesis was submitted to the University Library.

Please note initial embargos can be requested for a maximum of five years. An embargo on a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Science or Medicine is rarely granted for more than two years in the first instance, without good justification. The Library will not lift an embargo before confirming with the student and supervisor that they do not intend to request a continuation. In the absence of an agreed response from both student and supervisor, the Head of School will be consulted. Please note that the total period of an embargo, including any continuation, is not expected to exceed ten years.

Where part of a thesis is to be embargoed, please specify the part and the reason.

To all those who shine a light in the darkness through the theatre.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the use of eucharistic language in the theatre theories of three different mid-20th-century Polish theatre companies—the Reduta Theatre, the Rhapsodic Theatre, and the Laboratory Theatre—especially as expressed in the writings of their respective primary founders: Juliusz Osterwa, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, and Jerzy Grotowski. The thesis also describes how the Rhapsodic and Laboratory Theatres inherited different elements of the Reduta tradition, and how those two diverging branches of the Reduta's legacy have affected contemporary theatre. In addition, the thesis examines how different 20th-century theatre theorists have related the eucharist to theatre, and evaluates the legitimacy of the claim that religious rituals such as the eucharist can and ought to be replaced by secular theatrical rituals. Special attention is paid to Carl Lavery's three views of the sacred: secular, theological, and a/theological. Alexander Schmemann's conception of the eucharist is used to correct Lavery's presentation of the theological sacred and to argue for the possibility of a Christian sacred theatre, or a *eucharistic theatre*. The thesis defines the concept of a eucharistic theatre, demonstrates the extent to which the Reduta, Rhapsodic, and Laboratory Theatres meet this definition, and suggests some ways in which a eucharistic theatre may be created today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my two supervisors at the University of St Andrews: the Revd Profs Trevor Hart and David Brown. Both men are true pastors as well as academic fathers.

To the School of Divinity, St Mary's College, for helping to fund this PhD.

To my colleagues in the Institute for Theology, Imagination and the Arts, especially David Baird, Chris Brewer, Travis Buchanan, Kathleen Burt, John Dunne, Andrew Kaethler, Sarah Maple, Christoph Mayr, Dave Reinhardt, Sara Schumacher, Mary Stevens, Kj Swanson, Beth Tracy, Wes Vander Lugt, Simon Vaughan, and Jim Watkins. The *Transpositions* team allowed me to work out ideas as an editor and contributor. Sarah Maple and Mary Stevens introduced me to the theatrical writings of John Paul II, a thread which, when pulled, led to the focus of this thesis. Andrew Kaethler provided helpful criticism on my section on Alexander Schmemann.

To Prof Kazimierz Braun for sharing written materials and stories, both via email and in person; Prof Artur Grabowski for sharing thoughts and materials via email; and Prof Dariusz Kosiński for allowing me to read and cite material from his upcoming book. Sr Nicholas Marie Polkowska, OP, helped with Polish translations. Léonie and Tessa Caldecott, Cat Hodge, Artur Rosman, and Linda Nadolny Smith also contributed conversations, written material, and introductions. Debbie Higgens and Michael Ward offered valuable academic encouragement and advice. Their generosity has been without bounds.

Any errors which remain in this work belong to me and not to the above benefactors.

Thanks to my theatrical creative partner, Andrew Illsley, and all our artistic collaborators for keeping my feet in the practice of theatre while my head was in the clouds of theory.

To my church communities of St James, St Malachy's, and the Canmore Catholic Chaplaincy for their spiritual care and companionship, and to the Very Revd Ronald McAinsh CSsR, Fr Simon Bishop SJ, Sr MaryAnne Francalanza fcJ, Fr Dave Nixon msc, Fr Matthew Power SJ, and Fr Ray Salomone SJ for their spiritual guidance.

To Jim and Gwen Coberly for providing a quiet place to write up, and to the Domus Porta Fidei, the Sheen Center, and the Catholic Artist Community of St John Paul the Great for providing residencies and community support in the final stages.

To my sister, Erin Matson, my sister-in-law, Ingrid Korsgard, and my extended family, friends, and colleagues for their encouragement.

Finally, my parents, David and Christine Matson, were the first to model for me a life of academic service lived out as a missionary activity for the healing of bodies and souls in Christ. They are saints whose deep faith and love teach me the truth that 'a theologian is one who prays, and one who prays is a theologian'.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOWARDS A EUCHARISTIC THEATRE

THE THEATRICAL THEOLOGIES OF THE REDUTA, THE RHAPSODIC THEATRE, AND GROTOWSKI'S LAB

I. INTRODUCTION

> *In Coventry... a new cathedral has been built, according to the best recipe for achieving a noble result. Honest, sincere artists, the 'best', have been grouped together to make a civilized stab at celebrating God and Man and Culture and Life through a collective act. So there is a new building, fine ideas, beautiful glass-work—only the ritual is threadbare. Those Ancient and Modern hymns, charming perhaps in a little country church, those numbers on the wall, those dog-collars and the lessons—they are sadly inadequate here. The new place cries out for a new ceremony, but of course it is the new ceremony that should have come first—it is the ceremony in all its meanings that should have dictated the shape of the place, as it did when all the great mosques and cathedrals and temples were built. Goodwill, sincerity, reverence, belief in culture are not quite enough: the outer form can only take on real authority if the ceremony has equal authority—and who today can possibly call the tune?*[1]

This excerpt from Peter Brook's 1968 book *The Empty Space* illustrates a formidable challenge to religion which still exists today – the loss of a shared sense of religious belief, binding the societies of historic Christendom together. The theatre has always had an ambivalent relationship with the Church;[2] what ties should the theatre have to an institution which has seemingly lost its importance to society?

[1] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 45.

[2] See Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), for a comprehensive overview of the historical tensions between the theatre and the Church.

1. Theatre and Religion in Poland

Poland is an example of a country whose theatrical activity was closely aligned with religious belief a century ago, and which is now associated with the questioning of religious and secular authority.

In 1918, at the end of World War I, Poland became an independent nation for the first time since 1795, when the Third Partition of Poland between Russia, Prussia, and Austria erased Poland from the map. Adam Zamoyski points out that what had been a multicultural, multiethnic, and multilingual country before the Partitions, whose citizens practised a variety of religions (including Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestant Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), became during the Partitions an increasingly homogenous nation identified by its language (Polish) and its religion (Roman Catholicism).[3]

In Prussia and Russia, both the Polish language and Polish culture were proscribed in favour of the 'Germanization' or 'Russification' of all residents of those partitioning countries. (Poles residing in Austria did not suffer the 'cultural imperialism' suffered by Poles living elsewhere.)[4] The citizens of the First Polish Republic (i.e., the pre-Partition Republic) and their descendants were identified as 'Polish' by Prussia and Russia based on whether or not they spoke Polish (as opposed to German or Russian) and whether or not they were Roman Catholic (as opposed to Protestant or Orthodox), which led those descendants to increasingly associate the

[3] Adam Zamoyski, *Poland: A History* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2015), 303.
[4] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland: Vol. 2: 1795 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 117-18.

Polish language and Roman Catholic belief with their own identity as Poles.[5] When Poland was restored to the map of Europe in 1918, there was a closer association between Polishness and Roman Catholicism than there had been before Partition, in part because those peoples who had been citizens of Poland before Partition, but who were primarily German- or Russian-speaking, or Protestant or Orthodox, were more likely to become assimilated into their new countries.

During Partition, theatre was a link between the nation-defining elements of the Polish language and the Roman Catholic religion. First, the drama of Polish Romanticism, written in Polish by émigré poets such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Cyprian Norwid, featured a messianic religious vision of Poland as 'the Christ of Nations', bringing salvation to Europe through its crucifixion and suffering.[6] Second, the theatre and the church were the only two 'public institution[s] where the Polish language had shelter and was used'.[7] In the Roman Catholic churches of the Polish Partition:

> The liturgy was traditionally celebrated in Latin, but sermons were delivered in Polish and all the sacraments were administered in Polish; the same applied to singing and devotions (rosary, litanies, prayers and so forth). This fact, the widespread use of Polish language in the churches, established an unusual, perhaps unconscious, connection between the theater and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. Analogically to the role played by the Church during the partitions, theater was perceived as a defender of national values, a guardian of tradition, and a spiritual leader.[8]

For this reason, Juliusz Osterwa, founder of the Reduta Theatre and a subject of this thesis, used the theatre as a national unifying force when he toured productions throughout the newly-resurrected Republic of Poland (a touring practice repeated by

[5] See ibid., 14-17.
[6] Ibid., 162.
[7] Kazimierz Braun, *A Concise History of Polish Theater from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Centuries*, Studies in Theater Arts, vol. 21 (Lampeter, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), 78.
[8] Ibid., 78-79.

both the Rhapsodic and Laboratory Theatres, the other subjects of this thesis, in later years).

During the 21 years of the Second Polish Republic, from 1918-1939, the Roman Catholic Church was strong, operated freely, and was deeply woven into most Poles' daily lives. Norman Davies illustrates the fabric of religious life in much of Poland:

> …traditional devotionalism was still very strong, especially among the peasant masses. Church-going was normal. The entire population of the villages, and of working-class districts in the towns, walked to Mass, and knelt submissively for long periods. The singing was rich and lusty. Religious processions were scrupulously observed. On Catholic feast days, fields and factories were deserted. Annual Pilgrimages, to Częstochowa or to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, attracted hundreds of thousands, if not millions. The Marian Cult flourished as never before. In almost every home, the image of the Holy Mother, Queen of Poland, hung above or beside the crucifix; the rosary was counted, and the *Pasterka* ['Shepherds' Mass'] recited. Traditional authoritarianism was also strong. The parish priest, 'God's deputy', enjoyed great social prestige. He both expected, and was expected, to make clear pronouncements on all issues of public concern.[9]

Davies points out that 'in 1791 Roman Catholics formed 54 per cent of the population of the old Republic. In 1931, in the Second Republic, they represented perhaps 65 per cent'.[10] That percentage would jump to 96.6% Roman Catholic by 1946, at the beginning of Soviet Poland (partly due to the Holocaust's virtual annihilation of the Jewish population),[11] significantly strengthening the power of the Roman Catholic Church as a unifying agent of resistance to Communism.

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland from the West. On 17 September, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the East. Germany and the USSR

[9] Davies, *God's Playground*, 164.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

divided Poland between them in the Nazi-Soviet Pact, beginning the so-called 'Fourth Partition' of Poland.[12]

In both German- and Soviet-governed areas of Poland during World War II, theatrical and religious activities were suppressed or severely controlled. In German-controlled areas, Poles were prohibited from producing their own theatre; a thriving underground theatre sprang up instead.[13] In Soviet-controlled Poland, Polish theatre was replaced by Soviet theatre; Polish drama and Polish companies were banned, and the Soviet government used theatre as a tool to promote Communism. In both areas, artists were subject to forced exile, incarceration, and execution as part of a deliberate effort to 'decapitate'[14] the Polish people by eliminating their artistic, cultural, intellectual, political, and spiritual leaders.[15]

The Church also suffered. While Poles were allowed to continue worshipping, bishops, priests (more than three thousand),[16] members of religious orders, and millions of lay Catholics were killed, and many others sent to concentration camps. Church buildings were confiscated, and the training of clergy restricted.[17]

In January 1945, Kraków was liberated from Germany by the Soviet Army. Unfortunately, Poland's 'liberation' signaled only a transfer of power from one captor to another. From 1944-1947, the USSR solidified its control over Poland. On 22 July 1944, the Soviets, supported by Joseph Stalin, assembled the Polish Committee of

---

[12] See ibid., xxii, and Zamoyski, *Poland*, 312-16.
[13] Linda Nadolny Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny: The Theatre of the Living Word', PhD diss. (University of Kansas, 2003), 54.
[14] Zamoyski, *Poland*, 317.
[15] For a summary of theatrical repression in both German- and Soviet-controlled areas, see Kazimierz Braun, *A History of Polish Theater, 1939-1989: Spheres of Captivity and Freedom*, Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies #64 (London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 13-22.
[16] Davies, *God's Playground*, 164.
[17] George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 69-70.

National Liberation (PKWN). This committee named itself the Provisional Government of the Polish Republic (RTRP) on 1 January 1945. On 21 April 1945 this government signed the Polish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, aligning Poland with the USSR; the Polish Government-in-Exile, the internationally-recognised government of Poland which had existed in London during the war, was not consulted, even though it did not recognize the RTRP as a legitimate governing body. As a result of the February 1945 Yalta Conference's requirement for free and independent elections in Poland, the RTRP became the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN) on 28 June 1945. This government continued until the first 'free' elections of January 1947, which voted in the Communist Polish Workers' Party (PPR), in an election process marred by threats against and the denial of voting rights to eligible voters and a list of candidates and ballot-counting process completely controlled by the Soviet government. After 1947, Moscow firmly controlled Poland.[18]

In 1949, the Soviet government began a clamp-down on theatre when it issued rules requiring that all theatrical productions be in the style of 'Socialist-Realism' (or 'socrealism').[19] 'Socrealism' involved realistic plays that dealt with issues of everyday life, especially economic systems; plays that criticised Western capitalism and promoted Soviet communism; plays that presented a Marxist view of history; and plays by Soviet and Russian authors. Theatres were prohibited from presenting the work of the Polish Romantic authors, as well as the work of other Polish and non-Russian authors whose work did not fit in with Socrealism.[20] One of the results of this clamp-down was the firing of Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, the founder of the Rhapsodic

[18] For a detailed breakdown of the governmental changes from 1944-1947, see Davies, *God's Playground*, 413-27.
[19] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 146.
[20] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 43-44.

Theatre, and the closure of his theatre in 1953 as a result of Kotlarczyk's adherence to Polish Romanticism and his (not unique) refusal to present Socrealist plays.

1953 also saw a crackdown on religious expression, the most visible example of which was the incarceration of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, in response to his denunciation of a government command that all clergy swear allegiance to the Soviet government and accept the government's choice of church leaders. Wyszyński would remain imprisoned until the 'Thaw' of 1956.[21]

The Soviet government intensified its normal techniques of repression, such as the killing, arrest, and attempted control of clergy and religious; seizure of buildings; and restrictions on clerical education and speech. Other techniques which the government used during the era of Soviet Communism were the removal of state recognition of Church marriages and the ability to operate schools.[22] In addition, Soviet officials supported the idea of a 'Polish National Church' in an attempt to split the Catholic population. As the argument went, if the Poles wanted a church, they should have one that used Polish and not Latin in the liturgy, and did not have any ties to a foreign government (i.e., Rome). Davies notes that this idea never gained much traction among Polish Catholics, and that the decision of Vatican II to allow the use of Polish (and other local languages) instead of Latin for the liturgy dissipated what little support existed.[23]

A November 1955 production of *Forefathers' Eve* by Adam Mickiewicz, the first production of this great classic of Polish Romanticism which the Soviet government allowed since World War II, helped signal the beginning of the 1956

[21] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 120.
[22] Davies, *God's Playground*, 460.
[23] Ibid., 163.

'Thaw'.[24] This 'Thaw', the loosening of Moscow's tight control over Poland, was precipitated by Nikita Krushchev's secret denunciation of Stalin at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in Moscow, shortly followed by the mysterious death of the Polish President, Bolesław Bierut, who had been loyal to Moscow during the period of Stalinism. More independent-minded Communist leaders, led by Władysław Gomułka, were able to take power in Poland during the instability which followed. Gomułka's Communist credentials were beyond reproach, and therefore, after some temporary military tension, Moscow respected his October 1956 election, setting a precedent that Soviet satellites could elect leaders without running them by the Central Committee (though those leaders still had to come from within the Party).[25]

One immediate effect of this Thaw was the re-establishment of the Rhapsodic Theatre. In 1956, the Minister of Culture who had shut down the theatre three years earlier was fired.[26] On 29 April 1957, the new administration of the Ministry of Culture and Art resurrected the Rhapsodic Theatre under its new name: Miejski Teatr Rapsodyczny (Municipal Rhapsodic Theatre).[27] Kotlarczyk was re-hired as artistic director on 8 May, and the Rhapsodic Theatre opened its first production under its new name on 27 November 1957 (*Legendy złoty i blekitne*, a selection from Juliusz Słowacki's *King-Spirit*, which had been the original theatre's first production in 1941).[28]

[24] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 74.
[25] Davies, *God's Playground*, 438-40.
[26] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 170.
[27] Ibid., 179.
[28] Ibid., 179, 184, and 245.

Unlike Kotlarczyk, Laboratory Theatre founder Jerzy Grotowski grew up in Communist Poland, and his theatrical formation and major period of artistic work took place entirely under its aegis. As a teenager, Grotowski applied to the Soviet-run State Theatre School in Kraków to study acting. One anecdote demonstrates the effect that working within the system had on Grotowski's ability to pursue his career:

> On the entrance exam [for drama school] [Grotowski] received only 'satisfactory' grades for his practical work, including an 'F' for diction. However, his essay on the topic, 'How can theatre contribute to the development of socialism in Poland?' received an 'A' and he was accepted into the program on probation.[29]

In 1955, just before the October Thaw, Grotowski graduated from drama school and was given a directing scholarship to Moscow's State Institute of Theatre Arts. He spent a year studying at the heart of Soviet Communism, after which he took a tour through Asia, arriving back in Poland just in time for the Thaw. After a brief period of reform-minded political activism, he gave up direct political action to focus entirely on theatre.[30] He directed shows in Kraków during the first two years of the Rhapsodic Theatre's resurrection, and then was approached by Ludwik Flaszen with the idea of taking over the Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole. Grotowski's and Flaszen's theatre, which would become the Laboratory Theatre, opened with a production of *Orpheus* by Jean Cocteau on 8 October 1959, and would become one of the most influential experimental theatres in the world over the next decade.[31]

On 18 June 1961, Grotowski's theatre opened the first production of Mickiewicz' *Forefathers' Eve* allowed in Poland since the 1956 Thaw. Linda Nadolny Smith describes it as 'a most revolutionary and controversial enactment of

[29] James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, Routledge Performance Practitioners (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.
[30] Ibid., 5-8.
[31] Ibid., 11-12.

Dziady (*Forefathers' Eve*), which experimented with the connection of ritual to play…and with the involvement of the spectator in the action of the play'.[32] On 9 September, the Rhapsodic Theatre opened its own production of *Forefathers' Eve* as part of its 20th anniversary celebrations. As Kazimierz Braun describes the production:

> Kotlarczyk staged *The Forefathers' Eve*…as a spiritual, religious, and almost mystical meditation, revealing the cosmic dimensions of the play. He introduced choirs of angels and emphasized the prayer-like monologues. His production, modest in terms of mise-en-scène and based primarily on the text and the actor's recitation, was powerful and thought-provoking.[33]

Flaszen, Grotowski's theatrical co-founder, was aware of the production, and 'criticized the performance as too conservative and religious', as did numerous other commentators.[34]

In a repetition of earlier events, criticism of the Rhapsodic Theatre's religiosity reflected a new wave of Church persecution, which was part of a larger wave of oppression that began in 1959 in reaction to the earlier Thaw. As Adam Zamoyski describes this period:

> The government had already tried repression, which had merely turned priests into martyrs. It had tried subversion, by encouraging a movement of 'patriotic priests' who were to reconcile the teachings of Marx with those of Christ, which, after some initial success, had turned into a fiasco. Thereafter it followed the course of pettifogging obstructionism and judicial harassment, while seducing the young into rival activities. Practising Catholics were banned from holding office within the Party. The security services infiltrated the Church, spying on priests who might reveal foibles so they could be turned into agents and informers. Crosses were removed from schools and hospitals, and a ban was imposed on the building of new churches.[35]

This hostility to the Church gave the final death blow to the Rhapsodic Theatre.

---

[32] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 200.
[33] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 74.
[34] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 201-2.
[35] Zamoyski, *Poland*, 358.

In 1966, the Church prepared to celebrate 1,000 years of Christianity in Poland since the baptism of Prince Mieszko I.[36] The Soviet government launched a counter-celebration of '1,000 Years of the Polish State'. The tensions between the Church and the State were especially high. Kotlarczyk issued a publication celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Rhapsodic Theatre, which mentioned that the current Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła, had been a founding member of the company. Wojtyła was at this time one of the major clerical thorns in the side of the Soviet government, and the Rhapsodic Theatre's association with him turned the government's wrath on the theatre.[37]

Kotlarczyk was harassed and pressured to dissociate himself and the theatre from the Archbishop. Almost all copies of the theatre's 25th anniversary publication were destroyed. Kotlarczyk was finally fired on 11 April 1967. He was also prohibited from further participation in the professional theatre at all, whether as an artist or as a teacher. The company finished their season without him, and performed their final show on 18 July 1967. The theatre was closed by the Soviet government for the last time, and its building given over to another theatre.[38]

From 1962-1965, before Poland's millennial celebrations of Christianity, another major event took place in the Roman Catholic Church: the Second Vatican Council. Bishop Wojtyła (as of 30 December 1963, Archbishop Wojtyła) participated as a Council Father, making several interventions and contributing to the Council

[36] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 88, and Zamoyski, *Poland*, 4.
[37] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 88.
[38] For accounts of the final closure of the Rhapsodic Theatre, see Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 87-89; Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 211-15; and Boleslaw Taborski, introduction to *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, by Karol Wojtyła, trans. and with introductions by Boleslaw Taborski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 13-14.

documents.[39] A major document of the Council was *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, or the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. The key theme of this document was *participation*: the 'fully conscious, and active participation' by 'all the faithful…which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy'.[40] To this end, the liturgy was to be simplified, so that both lay and ordained faithful could understand it and participate in it.[41] Some changes included: amendments to the liturgical guidelines to promote a greater degree of participation by the congregation 'by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes';[42] greater use and variety of Scripture in the liturgy;[43] a marked preference for liturgical and sacramental actions that are public and communal, instead of 'individual and quasi-private' (e.g., private baptisms that take place after Mass with only the family present);[44] and permission for the distribution of communion under both the Body and the Blood to the lay faithful, instead of reserving the chalice only for clergy and religious.[45] In addition, one of the most important changes was allowance for use of the vernacular in place of Latin in the Mass, as well as in other forms of liturgy and the sacraments.[46]

Vatican II's changes to the liturgy were implemented at the tail-end of the Rhapsodic Theatre's tenure, and there is no evidence that these changes affected

[39] A comprehensive account of Wojtyła's time at the Second Vatican Council can be found in Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, Chapter 5, 145-80.
[40] Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,* 4 December 1963, 14, accessed 18 October 2012, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.
[41] Ibid. 34.
[42] Ibid. 30.
[43] Ibid. 35 §1 and 51.
[44] Ibid. 27.
[45] Ibid. 55.
[46] Ibid., 36, 54, 63, 76, 78, and 101.

Kotlarczyk's artistic theories or practice (nor those of Grotowski, who was not a practicing Catholic and did not regularly attend Mass). It is possible, however, that the influence went the other way: that the early theatrical experiences of Archbishop Wojtyła, Council Father, proclaiming the Word of Christ in Polish to gathered assemblies as a young actor had even a small influence on the Council's reinforcement of the liturgy as the action of the entire gathered assembly, not just the clerical class, and on its recognition of the power and importance of a people's own native language to their ability to make the Gospel their own. The Polish Romantic repertoire, with its exaltation of self-sacrifice in the service of Christ's and one's own community, certainly had an influence on the future Pope, and could be seen in his papacy, whatever traces it may or may not have had on his Council participation.

Kotlarczyk died in February 1978. Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope, taking the name John Paul II, in October 1978, and made his first papal pilgrimage to Poland the following year. George Weigel identifies this pilgrimage as the 'moment in which…the world of lies created by communism, simply collapsed',[47] contributing significantly to the avalanchal breakdown of Soviet communism over the next decade.

This pilgrimage was more immediately the impetus for the foundation of the Solidarity movement, which grew in strength over the next 10 years, and eventually forced the first free elections in Poland since before World War II. In 1990, the leader of Solidarity, Lech Wałęsa, became Poland's first independently-elected President. The 'Third Polish Republic' began, and still continues.[48]

[47] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 321.
[48] Davies, *God's Playground*, xxiii.

Ironically, the re-gaining of Poland's freedom decreased the influence of the Church that had been one of the leading champions of that freedom. As Adam Zamoyski puts it:

> The destruction of Poland's intellectual, spiritual and social elites by the Nazis and the Soviets between 1939 and 1956, and their continuing emasculation until 1989, had placed the Church in the position of being the only repository and trustee of the values they held dear. With the mission of upholding them and passing them on came great moral authority. Much of that was dissipated after 1989.[49]

This dissipation of a united front had a parallel in the theatre, where the theatrical community splintered in the experience of a disorienting freedom. Besides the former Communist collaborators and their underground opponents (many, like Kotlarczyk, focused on upholding traditional Polish religion and culture), young theatre artists were coming of age, many of whom 'treated the patriotic and national duties of theater as a burden that had to be discarded as soon as possible'.[50] Some of these young theatre artists followed the path of Grotowski, forming communal ensembles focused on the spiritual relationship between performers and spectators, several of which, such as Włodzimierz Staniewski's Gardzienice and the Theatre of the Eighth Day,[51] have become internationally known. Many others have chosen to engage in more confrontational political theatre, 'part of a culture war…aimed to redefine such terms as freedom, society, homeland, politics, as well as to revise the cultural canons and reveal myths and clichés of Polish society'.[52] This major strain of political theatre

[49] Zamoyski, *Poland*, 408.
[50] Braun, *Concise History*, 379.
[51] The name 'Theatre of the Eighth Day' ('Teatr Osmego Dnia') refers to a statement by Polish poet Konstanty Ildefons Galczynski: 'On the seventh day, the Lord God rested, and on the eighth, He created theater'. 'Theatre of the Eighth Day', Polish Cultural Institute New York, accessed 27 February 2016, http://www.polishculture-nyc.org/?itemcategory=30817&personDetailId=549.
[52] Marta Keil, 'Under Pressure: Polish Theater and the Crisis of Public Theater Institutions', trans. Joanna Kurek, ed. Bartosz Wójcik, *HowlRound Journal*, published 15 December 2014, accessed 28

in today's Poland continues Grotowski's mission of confronting the defining national and religious myths of Poland's identity.

2. Polish Theatre in the 20th Century

The Reduta, Rhapsodic, and Laboratory Theatres fall within two major reforms of theatre within both Poland and the wider European theatre scene. Polish theatre scholar Kazimierz Braun marks the approximate temporal boundaries of these two reforms as follows:

1890-1940: First (Great) Reform
- 1890-1900: 'Beginnings'
- 1900-1925: 'Experimental Phase'
- 1925-1940: 'Mature Phase'

1950-1990: Second Reform
- 1950-1960: 'Beginnings'
- 1960-1975: 'Community Phase'
- 1975-1990: 'New Ritual Phase'[53]

The Reduta Theatre lasted from 1919-39, and was an experiment that grew into maturity during the second half of the First Reform. The Rhapsodic Theatre lasted from 1941-1967 (with an interruption from 1953-1957), and was a bridge between the two Reforms, with roots in the First and branches reaching into the Second. (Juliusz Osterwa [1885-1947], founder of the Reduta Theatre, mentored the Rhapsodic Theatre in its early years, and in its later years, its founder, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk [1908-1978], was contacted by the directing student and future founder of the Laboratory Theatre, Jerzy Grotowski [1933-1999], to learn more about Rhapsodic

January 2016, http://howlround.com/under-pressure-polish-theater-and-the-crisis-of-public-theater-institutions.

[53] Braun, *Concise History*. Braun gives a timeline for the First Reform on p. 120 and a timeline for the Second Reform on p. 318.

theatrical technique.) Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre (originally the Theatre of 13 Rows), which premiered productions from 1959-1969 and was not officially disbanded until 1984,[54] was one of the major leaders of the Second Reform. Grotowski's own artistic journey from a young professional director staging plays for hire, to an experimentalist seeking community between actor and spectator, to a post-theatrical researcher of universal ritual languages, is a paradigm for the movement of this Second Reform, one whose influence has spread throughout the world.

Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), a Russian actor and director, was the greatest influence on the development of acting technique in the 20th century.[55] A founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, Stanislavski worked closely with director Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858-1943) and playwright Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) to create a theatre that communicated natural human emotion and experience, instead of relying on 'stock' mannerisms and gestures (like those advocated by the François Delsarte [1811-1871] system of acting). Stanislavski's name is today most closely associated with the idea of 'Method' acting, which more specifically refers to the interpretation of Stanislavski taught by his student Lee Strasberg (1901-1982). Other interpretations of Stanislavski were taught by students such as Sanford Meisner (1905-1997), Stella Adler (1901-1992), and Michael Chekhov (1891-1955, the nephew of Anton Chekhov).

---

[54] Lisa Wolford, 'Introduction to Part III: Objective Drama, 1983-86', in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, Worlds of Performance (London: Routledge, 2001), 284.

[55] A good introduction to Stanislavski can be found by reading his trilogy on acting: Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 2003); Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character,* trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Constantin Stanislavski, *Creating a Role*, trans. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Routledge, 2003). His autobiography is published as Constantin Stanislavski, *My Life in Art*, trans. J.J. Robbins (New York: Routledge, 2012).

Stanislavski was a significant influence on both Osterwa and Grotowski. Grotowski was trained in Stanislavski's acting method as a student, and said that he was 'obsessed with Stanislavsky'. Eventually, he said, he moved 'from a period of imitation to one of rebellion' so as to find his own approach to acting. He continued to be inspired by Stanislavski's example of commitment to continual discipline, research, and 'self-reform', an example which Grotowski strove to follow and to communicate to his collaborators.[56] Juliusz Osterwa had discussions about the theatre with Stanislavski in Moscow, and was invited by him to join Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre (an invitation which he declined). When Osterwa returned to Poland in 1919, his Reduta Theatre emulated Stanislavski's model of an acting ensemble living and working together to engage in shared research into an acting method based on truly 'experiencing' the character (*przeżywanie* in Polish, *perezhyvanye* in Russian).[57] Osterwa also emulated the Moscow Art Theatre's combination of a producing theatre with an acting school, to enable the research in the school and the testing of that research in production to feed each other.[58] Through his experimentation, inspired by Stanislavski, Osterwa became the lead reformer of acting in Poland during the First

[56] Jennifer Kumiega, *The Theatre of Grotowski* (London: Methuen, 1987), 109-10, quoting from Jerzy Grotowski, 'Odpowiedź Stanisławskiemu' (statement at a meeting with actors and directors at the Brooklyn Academy in New York, 22 Feb 1969), *Dialog* 5 (1980): 111-119, 112.

[57] For the place of 'experiencing' in both Osterwa's and Stanislavski's methods, see Dariusz Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor: Juliusz Osterwa, Mieczysław Limanowski and the Reduta', introduction to manuscript in progress, received from author via e-mail on 1 April 2014, 6. (The 19-page manuscript is not paginated. I have assigned page numbers.) Used with permission from the author. Kosiński has published extensively on Osterwa and the Reduta in Polish, including editing two volumes of Osterwa's writings with Ireneusz Guszpit. This introduction is taken from Kosiński's upcoming edited collection of Juliusz Osterwa's articles translated into English, which is not yet titled, and which is to be published by Richard Gough.

[58] Kazimierz Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa - Polish Theater Reformer', *Balagan: Slavisches Drama, Theater und Kino*, 1:2 (1995), 58.

Reform,[59] a reform which had as one of its characteristics the development of a more naturalistic acting style.[60]

Osterwa's directing style also participated in the First Reform's push for recognition of theatre as a 'total work of art' (in Adolphe Appia's phrase), with the director as the primary artist. The three 'prophets' of this reform, according to Braun, were Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966), Adolphe Appia (1862-1928), and Georg Fuchs (1868-1949). Craig contributed the idea of the director as the one who creates a piece of theatrical art by assembling its various components: the script, the actors, and the design. Appia contributed the idea of theatre as 'an interhuman, communal, artistic process' – an artwork animated by the spirit of the actor, closer to an experience than an object. Fuchs contributed the idea of the 'retheatricalization of theater', making a written text less central to the essence of theatre.[61] Osterwa reflected Craig's ideas by exercising primary creative control over his productions, which, like the spectacles of Max Reinhardt (1873-1943), often took place in non-traditional spaces (such as courtyards and castles).[62] Osterwa reflected Appia's ideas by focusing on the work of the actor as the animator of the production and removing as many obstacles as possible between the actor and the spectator in the design of the space. Fuchs' ideas, which had as their goal the creation of a 'communal orgiastic experience' or 'intoxication (*Rausch*)',[63] were reflected more in the strain of the reform corresponding to Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty than they were in Osterwa's work.

---

[59] Braun, *Concise History*, 153.
[60] Ibid., 116-17.
[61] Ibid, 117.
[62] Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa', 58.
[63] Peter Jelavich, *Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, Playwriting, and Performance, 1890-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 194-95.

The First Reform use of spectacle was an influence on Mieczysław Kotlarczyk and the Rhapsodic Theatre, albeit in an 'oppositional' way. Kotlarczyk wrote about his response to two productions directed by Max Reinhardt:

> In spite of superlatives about the craft of Reinhardt's actors, I brought back to Poland from the Salzburg Festival of 1937 a quiet protest against over-theatricality in theater, against the operatic element, against the preponderance of technical effects in Reinhardt's productions of Goethe's *Faust* and Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann*. In opposition, I conceived even then a different theater, listened to rather than watched for its spectacle, a theater of the *word*.[64]

Kotlarczyk (and his Rhapsodic co-founder Karol Wojtyła [1920-2005]) had a similar reaction to Osterwa: they 'were fascinated by Osterwa and his ideas but were critical of a certain showmanship in him'.[65] As a bridge between the two Reforms, Kotlarczyk's Rhapsodic Theatre was already moving from an emphasis on the director's 'total work of theatre art' to an emphasis on the shared experience between actor and spectator, in their case focused on the spoken word.

This split between word and spectacle leads into another major split in 20th-century theatre, that between the word (or the intellect) and the body (or the senses). Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) and Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) traditionally represent this split. Christopher Innes points out that both Brecht and Artaud developed their theories in opposition to the naturalistic approach to acting espoused by Stanislavski and his disciples, but they responded differently to it.[66] Brecht rejected the approach to acting in which the actor was 'wholly transformed into the character played',

---

[64] Taborski, introduction to *Collected Plays*, 6, quoting Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, *XXV lat Teatru Rapsodycznego w Krakowie, 1941-1966 (25 Years of Rhapsodic Theater in Kraków, 1941-1966)* (Kraków, 1966), 13-14. (All translations of Polish sources quoted by Taborski in his introduction appear to be by Taborski).
[65] Taborski, introduction to *Collected Plays*, 6.
[66] Christopher Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre: 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1996), 92.

instead requiring that the actor 'appears on the stage in a double role', as both himself and as his concept of the character.[67] Brecht called for an entertaining theatre, but one in which the audience is 'entertained with the wisdom that comes from the solution of problems', a phrase similar to the one used by Karol Wojtyła to describe the work of the Rhapsodic actor, who 'does not become a character but carries a problem'.[68] Both Brecht's epic theatre and the Rhapsodic Theatre took the route of 'intellectual theatre'.[69]

Artaud called for a 'Theatre of Cruelty' that would 'break theatre's subjugation to the text' and focus instead on the senses.[70] Artaud's reaction against both naturalism and 'intellectual theatre' can be seen in the following excerpt from his essay 'Theatre and Cruelty':

> Infused with the idea that the masses think with their senses first and foremost and that it is ridiculous to appeal primarily to our understanding as we do in everyday psychological theatre, the Theatre of Cruelty proposes to resort to mass theatre, thereby rediscovering a little of the poetry in the ferment of great, agitated crowds hurled against one another….[71]

Theatre of Cruelty is meant to have a direct effect on the audience member's psychophysical organism, and therefore include visual elements such as bright colours, exaggerated masks, and quick lighting changes; aural elements such as groans or shrieks, nonsense words, and haunting music; and quasi-tactile elements

---

[67] Bertolt Brecht, 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', nos. 48 and 49, in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, by Bertolt Brecht, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), 193-94.

[68] Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', in Wojtyła, *Collected Plays*, 374.

[69] Wojtyła writes about 'Rhapsodic intellectualism', which is the quality of Rhapsodic theatre in which the 'problem itself acts, rouses interest, disturbs, evokes the audience's participation, demands understanding and a solution' – a quality shared by Brecht's epic theatre. Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 373. This quality of intellectualism, however, does not preclude an experience of emotion; for further discussion of this point, see Chapter V, p. 209, note 49, below.

[70] Antonin Artaud, 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto', in *The Theatre and Its Double*, by Antonin Artaud, trans. Victor Corti (Richmond, UK: Oneworld Classics, 2011), 63.

[71] Antonin Artaud, 'Theatre and Cruelty', in Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 60.

such as the beating of drums to generate vibrations or the close, pressing presence of a group of actors.[72] The essential mandate of Theatre of Cruelty is that 'metaphysics must be made to enter the mind through the body'.[73] Although Grotowski claimed that he developed his theatrical theories before he learned about Artaud,[74] Grotowski himself saw parallels between his work and Artaud's, especially their shared emphasis on the power of the body to communicate meaning.[75] The work of Artaud took place during the First Reform of the theatre in the 20th century, but it bore its greatest fruit during the Second Reform, when theorist-practitioners such as Grotowski, Peter Brook (b. 1925), and Richard Schechner (b. 1934) experimented with physical encounters between actors and spectators and the boundaries between theatre and ritual.

The Second Reform focused on experimenting with theatrical structure to create shared communal experiences between performers and spectators (including erasing the distinction between those roles). Kazimierz Braun identifies several 'seeds' of this reform: the Italian futurist focus on process; Appia's 'theater of communion between actors and spectators, united in creating and celebrating beauty'; Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty; Osterwa's sacral language of the actor-priest, spectator-witness, and performance-sacrifice; and the Theatre of the Absurd (represented in Poland by the painter-playwright Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, or 'Witkacy' [1885-1939]).[76] The first phase of this reform was the 'Community' phase, in which

[72] See Artaud, 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto', 66-71 for Artaud's list of the elements of Theatre of Cruelty.
[73] Ibid., 70.
[74] Raymonde Temkine, *Grotowski*, trans. Alex Szogyi (New York: Avon, 1972), 144.
[75] Ibid., 145, and Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself' (1967 article), in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, by Jerzy Grotowski, ed. Eugenio Barba (London: Methuen Drama, 1991), 93.
[76] Braun, *Concise History*, 313-14.

companies not only worked and lived together, but also sought spiritual experiences or engaged in political action together. Examples included not only Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre, which was one of the leading figures in this movement (and was significantly inspired by the communal life of Osterwa's Reduta), but also Richard Schechner's Performance Group, the Living Theatre of Julian Beck (1925-1985) and Judith Malina (1926-2015), and the Odin Teatret of Eugenio Barba (b. 1936).[77] The role of the director in these companies was not that of a general marshalling his troops to create a carefully-crafted work of theatre, but that of a spiritual or creative 'guru', leading his or her ensemble and their audience-guests in a work of personal exploration through the discipline of performance.[78] Grotowski certainly fit this role, especially as he and his company moved closer to paratheatrical experiments with invited participants and further away from a regular schedule of adapting, rehearsing, and mounting public productions.

The free-flowing experiments of the Community phase of the Second Reform generated further experiments in structure, leading to the 'New Ritual' phase. This phase tried to harness the power of actor-spectator encounters through the use of more defined (and often more 'traditional') structures, giving a framework of meaning to these encounters instead of allowing them to devolve into unstructured orgies of emotion and sensation. Braun identifies Peter Brook, Robert Wilson (b. 1941), Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990, a Polish director and contemporary of both Kotlarczyk and Grotowski), Richard Foreman (b. 1937), Lee Breuer (b. 1937), Pina Bausch (1940-2009), and (Polish director) Leszek Mądzik (b. 1945) as examples of this

[77] Ibid., 315.
[78] Ibid., 314.

phase.[79] Peter Brook and the Royal Shakespeare Company, for example, experimented with the concepts of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty to see how the non-verbal tools of the actor could bear fruit, and how various forms of ritual could communicate meaning.[80] The Living Theatre's production of *The Brig* (1963), which confronted the audience with a tightly-choreographed ritual performance of daily life in a U.S. Marine Corps brig, fits into this category as well.[81] Grotowski's own work moved from theatrical performances which attempted to build community between actors and spectators (the Community phase), to paratheatrical 'encounters' between groups of equal participants, to an invitation-only group of Performers (a word which Grotowski capitalised) engaging in a shared daily ritual of personal spiritual and creative exploration using elements of rituals taken from religions and cultures all over the world. By the time Grotowski died in 1999, he had embodied the full progression of the Second Reform.

Over the course of both Reforms, Western theatre-makers were fascinated by theatre's historical connections with and formal similarities to religious ritual. One religious ritual, the eucharist, especially in the form of the Catholic Mass, appeared prominently in 20th-century discussions about ritual in the theatre, often because of the Catholic cultural background of theorists such as Antonin Artaud, Jean Genet (1910-1986), and Jerzy Grotowski.

[79] Ibid., 316.
[80] Brook, *The Empty Space*, 49-52.
[81] *The Brig* was first produced in 1963, and was filmed in 1964. *The Brig*, DVD, directed by Jonas Mekas (1964; Paris: Potemkine, 2012).

3. The Eucharist and Ritual in 20th-Century Theatre Theory

These theorists, as well as directors such as Peter Brook and Richard Schechner, display different approaches to the relationship between ritual and theatre in the 20th century. One can identify three different approaches to the ritual-and-theatre relationship (though the complexity of that relationship in the 20th century is not limited to these three approaches). The first is approaching theatre as a 'dark ritual' that stirs up irrational, sensual forces of human emotion, or actual spirits. Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty' and the 'Black Mass' of Jean Genet's theatre exemplify this approach. The second is approaching theatre as a spiritual activity which can serve as a replacement for religious ritual – almost a 'secular religious ritual' – and is exemplified by Jerzy Grotowski and his search for a 'secular sacrum in the theatre'.[82] (Grotowski is an example of what Peter Brook in *The Empty Space* calls 'holy theatre'.)[83] The third is approaching theatre as an *alternate* form of meaning-making

---

[82] Jerzy Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament' (1964 interview), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre,* 49.

[83] For 'holy theatre', see Brook, *The Empty Space*, 42-64. For Grotowski's theatre as an example of holy theatre, see ibid., 59-60. Brook's own theatre was not 'holy theatre'. In *The Empty Space*, Brook defines four types of theatre: the Deadly Theatre, the Holy Theatre, the Rough Theatre, and the Immediate Theatre. The Deadly Theatre is 'bad theatre' (p. 9): generally, theatre which focuses on erecting a specific theatrical form instead of exploring the living impulse which led to that form (e.g., a Shakespeare production in which the actors speak the verse stiffly and with large gestures because they believe the classics are supposed to be grand). The Holy Theatre is 'The Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible': focused more on the spirit than the body, it is 'what is meant and remembered by those who with feeling and seriousness use big hazy words like nobility, beauty, poetry' (p. 42). The Rough Theatre is 'the popular theatre': focused more on the body than the spirit, it is a theatre of '[s]alt, sweat, noise, smell', and of unscrupulously grabbing whatever bucket, sheet, or haybale is at hand to tell a story (p. 65). The Immediate Theatre, which is the theatre (not a style, but a quality) that Brook seeks, is one which is 'necessary' (p. 133) and vital: the desire to connect with the audience governs the form, and so the form is generated through a complex 'dance…between director, player and text' (p. 124). The 'formula' Brook gives as the necessary (but not sufficient) criterion for an immediate theatre is '*Theatre = R r a*', where *R* equals 'repetition', *r* equals 'representation', and *a* equals 'assistance'. In order for immediate theatre to take place, the actor must re-present an action (that is, make it present, not copy or illustrate) through the technique acquired by repetition (training and rehearsal), with the assistance of the audience's presence and

to religious ritual – not an activity which provides the same function as a religious ritual, but an activity in which meaning can equally be found, and which uses some of the same tools.

Artaud's preferred metaphor for the theatre was that of the 'plague'.[84] A theatrical performance would use raw sound, vibrant colour, and energetic movement to bypass the intellect and go straight for the body, overwhelming the audience member's physical organism through a brutal onslaught of the senses. The goal was to impact head-on the violent evil that he believed to be at the core of reality and of the human being, in order to force an eruption of that violence and cruelty from the person – like putting pressure on a boil to eject the pus. Artaud writes about theatre as a 'victory of dark powers', and claims that 'all theatre must rediscover' 'the darker moments in certain ancient tragedies' which he compares to the 'terrifying apparition of Evil produced in unalloyed form at the Eleusinian Mysteries'.[85] For Artaud, theatre ought to be an irrational ritualistic activity in which the dark forces (literal or metaphorical) which control man are liberated within the theatre so that they do not control him outside the theatre.

The theatre of the playwright Jean Genet is also known for its dark ritualistic element. Martin Esslin and others called this element of Genet's work a 'Black Mass'.[86] As an example, Esslin uses Genet's play *The Maids*, in which two maids each mock their mistress and each other while their mistress is absent from the home:

---

attention. A living theatrical event is never guaranteed, even if these criteria are met, but they must be in place (pp. 137-40).

84 For Artaud's comparison of the theatre to the plague, see Antonin Artaud, 'Theatre and the Plague', in Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 9-22.

85 Ibid., 20.

86 Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen Drama, 2001), 209.

> Each of the maids in turn acts the part of the lady, expressing her longing to be the lady, and each in turn takes it upon herself to act as the other maid, progressing from adoration and servility to abuse and violence – the discharge of all the hatred and envy out of the outcast who sees himself as a rejected lover. This ritual, as Sartre points out, is a kind of Black Mass – the wish to murder the loved and envied object congealed and forever repeated as a ceremonial, stereotyped action. Such a ritual is frustration become flesh....[87]

Esslin defines Genet's ritual as a 'ritual of wish-fulfilment', a ritual which is sterile and ineffective, and which therefore echoes the sterility and ineffectiveness of actions which try to make sense of 'the real world'. He says that the 'concept of the ritual act, the magical repetition of an action deprived of reality, is the key to any understanding of Genet's theatre'.[88] Even though there is an emptiness and absurdity at the heart of Genet's ritual, Genet himself identified 'the sacrifice of the Mass' as the manifestation of 'the highest modern drama'.[89] Nevertheless, he did not see it as a relevant ritual anymore, not only because of the seemingly inevitable replacement of religion by art,[90] but also because he believed that the 'starting point' of the Mass in a shared communal meal had 'disappear[ed] under the profusion of ornaments and symbols'.[91] Yet, Esslin argues, Genet did 'not believe that in our Western world the theatre could ever have the effect of a real communion, a real link between human beings',[92] because there was no longer any shared belief in a meaningful reality. Genet's theatre is a 'Black Mass' because instead of joining its participants together

[87] Ibid. Notice how in this 'Black Mass', it is not love that becomes flesh, or is incarnated, as is the case in the Christian eucharist. Instead, it is 'frustration' which takes flesh.
[88] Ibid., 210.
[89] Jean Genet, letter to Pauvert, in *Les Bonnes-L'Atelier d'Alberto Giacometti*, by Jean Genet (Décines: L'Arbalète, 1958), 145-6, quoted in ibid.
[90] 'No doubt it is one of the functions of art to replace religious faith by the effective ingredient of beauty. At least this beauty must have the power of a poem, that is to say of a crime'. Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Esslin, *Theatre of the Absurd*, 210.

in a shared communion with the divine Ground of reality, it uses repetitive action to reflect the empty centre of reality in an endless 'hall of mirrors'.[93]

Jerzy Grotowski is an example of another approach to the use of ritual in the theatre. Jennifer Kumiega writes that the first part of Grotowski's work with the Theatre of 13 Rows (which became the Laboratory Theatre) was an attempt to find new theatrical rituals which would enable the same kind of communion between performer and spectator that religious rituals had previously been able to provide between participants.[94] As mentioned above, Grotowski saw it as his goal to create a 'secular sacrum in the theatre'.

Finally, theatre-makers such as Peter Brook, Richard Schechner's Performance Group, and the Living Theatre are examples of a third approach to the use of ritual in theatre. This approach does not seek to create some alternate occult spiritual ritual, or treat theatre as a spiritual practice, but incorporates elements of ritual such as formalized sound and movement, the use of myth, and the assignment of an active role to the audience or 'congregation' in order to create more compelling theatre. It also draws a clear distinction between religion and theatre, and does not claim theatre as religion's replacement.

In a 2010 interview, Brook said to his interviewer, 'I must leap on the idea that there's a parallel between theatre and religion.... This was the tragic disaster of the 1960s when hippies rejected society and said: "We can get together a little community and make our own religion"'.[95] One of Brook's most famous productions,

[93] The 'hall of mirrors' is the image that Esslin takes from Genet as the image which exemplifies Genet's theatre. Esslin uses it as the title of his chapter on Genet: 'Jean Genet: A Hall of Mirrors', ibid., 200-33.
[94] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 129.
[95] Claire Allfree, 'Peter Brook Still on a Quest for Transient Truth', *Metro*, 8 February 2010, accessed 2

The Mahabharata (1985), was based on a Hindu epic, but focused on providing a theatrical experience, not a substitute religious experience. Another example is the Performance Group's production of *Dionysius in '69*, which involved theatrical rituals inspired by Greek mythology, such as the ritual rejection of the god Pentheus by an audience member and his ritual sacrifice.[96] Finally, the Living Theatre's production of *The Brig* (1963) built the ritualistic elements of routine life in a Marine Corps brig into a heightened theatrical ritual in which the repetition, noise, movement, and physical assault on the senses provided the dramatic power. Again, this production did not involve using theatre as a replacement for religion, but examined ritualized behaviour in other areas of human life.

These are some examples of the use of ritual, including references to the eucharist, in 20th-century theatre and performance theory. One argument that this thesis makes is that theatre cannot serve as a replacement for religious ritual, especially the eucharist. One reason is because religious ritual is passed down to a religion's adherents as part of a living tradition. It can change or be added to over time, but its essential elements cannot be discarded and replaced by new elements without by that very action unmooring the ritual from its religious tradition, thereby ending its efficacy as a means of communion between that religion's adherents and their object of worship. This is especially true of the eucharist, which is viewed by Christians as a dominical institution, and not subject to change or elimination on a Christian's own authority. Much less can it be replaced by individuals who do not or no longer count themselves as followers of Christ. If one wants to argue, as some of

October 2012, http://www.metro.co.uk/metrolife/812267-peter-brook-still-on-a-quest-for-transient-truth.

[96] Richard Schechner, 'Actuals', in *Performance Theory*, by Richard Schechner, revised and expanded edition (New York: Routledge, 1988), 56-57.

the above theorists do, that no one believes in Christianity anymore, and therefore the eucharist must be replaced with rituals that people can believe in, a Christian can respond that she does believe, and there are millions more like her. Therefore, there is neither need, nor authority, for a non-Christian theatre-maker to attempt to replace the eucharist for Christians. If he is trying to replace it for himself, what is he trying to replace? A shared communal act of belief? How can he do that if, as he claims, there is no longer any shared belief? An experience of transcendence? Such experiences, as will be argued below, are not limited to religious ritual; however, if he is trying to recreate the specifically religious (or spiritual) experience of transcendence peculiar to religious actions, then he needs to be aware that one of the causes of that experience is indeed faith, a belief in a higher reality. He cannot have the experience without the belief. The belief he has will dictate what kind of transcendence he can experience, and to what extent. If he does not share the faith in Christ that is at the heart of the eucharist, then he cannot share the transcendent experience of communion with God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit which is essential to the eucharist and its effects in believers' lives.

4. The Theatre in Contemporary Theology

The past forty years have witnessed a surge of interest in the theatre among theologians. Themes include reading Scripture performatively (Kevin Vanhoozer),[97] using improvisation to explore Christian ethics (Samuel Wells, Wesley Vander

[97] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014) and *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

Lugt),[98] drawing parallels between the embodiment of live theatre and Christ's embodiment and performance in the Incarnation (Max Harris, Trevor Hart),[99] examining how the theatrical metaphor can help and hinder the performance of church (Shannon Craigo-Snell),[100] encouraging the discovery of God's sacramental presence and activity in theatre as well as in other forms of art and culture (David Brown),[101] and critiquing a narrow definition of theatre as only referring to psychological realism and naturalistic settings presented on a proscenium stage, without taking into account more experimental and/or postmodern forms such as immersive theatre, devised performance, and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed[102] (Joshua Edelman, Ivan Khovacs).[103]

Hans Urs von Balthasar looms large as the major figure in the 20th century whose work encouraged the discussion of a relationship between theology and theatre or drama (the latter referring to either a written playscript or to the literary and story

[98] Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004) and Wesley Vander Lugt, *Living Theodrama: Reimagining Theological Ethics*, Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014).
[99] Max Harris, *Theater and Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Trevor Hart, *Making Good: Creation, Creativity and Artistry* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014) and *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature*, Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013); Trevor Hart and Wesley Vander Lugt, eds., *Theatrical Theology: Explorations in Performing the Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); and Trevor Hart and Steven Guthrie, eds., *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition*, Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007).
[100] Shannon Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church: Theater, Theology, and Bodily Hope* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[101] David Brown, *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), *Discipleship and Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), *God and Grace of Body: Sacrament in Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), and *God and Mystery in Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[102] See Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. & Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1979).
[103] Joshua Edelman, 'Can an Act be True? – The Possibilities of the Dramatic Metaphor for Theology within a Post-Stanislavskian Theatre', in Hart and Guthrie, *Faithful Performances*, 51-72, and Ivan Patricio Khovacs, 'A Cautionary Note on the Use of Theatre in Theology', in Hart and Guthrie, *Faithful Performances*, 33-50.

elements of theatre instead of its physical performance). Balthasar's *Theo-Drama* (originally published 1973-1983) presents God's activity as dramatic, that is, acting as a Player among players in the performance of God's story with and among his people.[104] Balthasar casts roles in this action analogous to roles in theatre, both within the Trinity and outside the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the author (playwright), actor, and director who create a play and design its performance.[105] Balthasar calls these roles the 'triad of dramatic creativity', which is a 'metaphor for the economic Trinity'.[106] The 'triad of dramatic realization',[107] which is the '"event" of the economic Trinity',[108] consists of the presentation (performance), the audience, and the 'horizon of all meaning'[109] to which the story points.[110] The Father is the author of the drama, the drama is performed by the Son before (and among) the audience (among whose ranks he is also counted – the incarnational epitome of Augusto Boal's 'spect-actor'),[111] and the Holy Spirit opens up that dramatic and eschatological 'horizon' and empowers the audience to become actors within it.

Balthasar connects both the incarnation and the eucharist to the theatre. Just as the actor 'makes present' the story of the playwright by enacting it in the flesh, so Christ 'makes present' through his incarnation not only the story of the playwright, but the playwright himself, in what Balthasar calls a 'eucharistic existence for others'. This incarnational link that Christ the actor makes between the playwright, the actors,

---

[104] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison, 5 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988-1998).
[105] See Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 1, 268-81 (on the Father as author), 281-97 (on the Son as actor), and 298-305 (on the Holy Spirit as director).
[106] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 3, 532.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 535.
[109] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 1, 314.
[110] See ibid., 305-8 (on the presentation), 308-13 (on the audience), and 314-22 (on the horizon).
[111] For the 'spect-actor', see Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 154-55.

and the audience allows for the eucharistic 'communion' which is necessary 'if the play is to succeed'. Aidan Nichols describes Balthasar's understanding of dramatic performance as '*avant-garde*':

> For in this production, the spectators do not simply participate in the action by empathy as they watch it unfold…. People pass from the auditorium onto the stage. Indeed, as Balthasar puts it, in the last analysis there is no one who can remain a pure spectator. All have some part to play.[112]

Each person is called to be 'both a spectator and an actor in the play of existence',[113] witnessing God's story playing out in the world and among his people, and taking up that person's own role in the story. A theatre in which the same people are both spectators and actors is closer to ritual than to theatre, according to Richard Schechner's ritual-theatre spectrum.[114] In this way, Balthasar's model reflects the mid-20th-century movement in theatre toward ritual and toward the union of actor and spectator in one active community (or in one person, as in Boal's 'spect-actor'), and encourages theologians to see God and humanity as united in one performance.

---

[112] Aidan Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness and Truth* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2011), 52.

[113] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 1, 309.

[114] Schechner identifies a performance as closer to ritual if the 'audience participates' in the performance, and as closer to theatre if the 'audience watches'. Schechner outlines eight criteria which help define a performance's place on the spectrum from ritual (efficacious performance) to theatre (entertaining performance): whether the performance is for 'results' or just for 'fun'; whether there is a 'link to an absent Other' or the performance is just 'for those here'; whether it takes place in 'symbolic time' or focuses on 'now'; whether the 'performer [is] possessed, in trance' or 'knows what s/he's doing'; whether the 'audience participates' or 'the audience watches'; whether the 'audience believes' or the 'audience appreciates'; whether 'criticism [is] discouraged' or 'criticism flourishes'; and whether there is 'collective creativity' or 'individual creativity'. The first characteristic of each pair defines ritual, the second defines theatre. Richard Schechner, 'From Ritual to Theater and Back', in Schechner, *Performance Theory*, 120, Fig. 4.4.

Balthasar was aware that theatre was 'analogous to the realm of cult', although he said that the connection was '*only* an analogy and nothing more'. One difference between the two is that cult requires that the participant pass through the first stage of 'purification' before he can participate in the ritual which leads to the 'perfect vision'. The theatre has no such requirement; anyone can experience the *catharsis*, or '"purificatory" action', of the play, which immediately places the spectator 'before the same horizon as that to which the cult refers'. Cult and theatre can be differentiated, but not completely divorced, because they both bring a person to an experience and consideration of the meaning of things. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 1, 312.

Kevin Vanhoozer takes up Balthasar's use of the *theodrama* in Vanhoozer's own work *The Drama of Doctrine*, which Vanhoozer adapts and builds upon in his newest work *Faith Speaking Understanding*. Vanhoozer's concern is to treat Scripture, and how the church responds to Scripture, as a drama, rather than as a third-person narrative or a list of propositional statements to which the believer merely assents. Neither is Scripture simply a script which dictates the church's lines and blocking. It is rather 'an authoritative record of God's work, an inspired *transcript*' which both *describes* God's dramatic action with and for his people and *prescribes* how his people ought to act in response in order to participate in the *theodrama* which God has initiated, in which he continues to perform with his people and as one of them (the two roles of divine and human joined in the one actor Jesus Christ), and which he will bring to eschatological fulfilment.[115] Scripture testifies to God's story as performed in relationship with Israel and in the person of Christ, and provides the canon that judges the fittingness of the church's own dramatic action. The church improvises in accord with the elements of the theodrama that have been revealed so far (in Scripture and especially in the person of Jesus Christ), and continues her improvisatory action until the theodrama's eschatological fulfilment.

This use of improvisation to describe the church's action is a theatrical analogy which Samuel Wells set forth in his *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*. Wells is concerned to demonstrate that the act of Christian living is not merely 'rehearsing and repeating the same script and story over and over again, albeit on a fresh stage with new players'; instead of a limiting and directive script, Scripture is 'a

[115] Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 24, emphasis added. For more on the ways in which Scripture can and cannot be considered a script, see Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 23-24 and 244-46, as well as Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 133, 147, 152, 168, 198, and 235.

training school that shapes the habits and practices of a community'.[116] Scripture and the traditions of the church (including her worship) shape the believer into the image of Christ and the entire company of players into the company of Christ. Wells defines theatrical improvisation as 'a practice through which actors seek to develop trust in themselves and one another in order that they may conduct unscripted dramas without fear'.[117] Scripture and the church's actions (especially her liturgy) 'shape and empower Christians with the uninhibited freedom sometimes experienced by theatrical improvisers', so that the church is transformed by the Holy Spirit into 'a community of trust in order that it may faithfully encounter the unknown of the future without fear'.[118] The church's ethical action, then, is neither based upon rigid adherence to a foundational natural law (what Wells calls 'universal' ethics), nor upon a disruption or insurrection against law (what Wells calls 'subversive' ethics), but upon formation into a people living out the story of God's action with, for, and among them (what Wells calls 'ecclesial' ethics). In this version of virtue ethics, '[t]he sacred community is the touchstone of virtue. That which builds it up and enables it to be faithful is good and right and true; that which attempts to bypass it or contrives to render it invisible or undermines it from within is dubious, misguided, or dangerous'.[119] Wells primarily uses theatrical improvisation as an analogy to help understand how the church relates to Scripture, God, the world, and herself. Improvisation allows for greater freedom of action than does adherence to a set script and blocking.

[116] Wells, *Improvisation*, 12.
[117] Ibid., 11.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., 37. For the distinction between universal, subversive, and ecclesial ethics, see ibid., 33-41.

Wesley Vander Lugt builds upon the work of Balthasar, Vanhoozer, and Wells in his own *Living Theodrama: Reimagining Theological Ethics*. He links formation in the theodrama to the idea of disponibility, or readiness for action, and links performance of the theodrama to the idea of fittingness, or appropriate action. He also extends the theatrical model by not only examining its trinitarian, scriptural, ecclesial, and traditional aspects, but also adding its missional and contextual aspects. That is, he takes into account not only how the church herself relates to God, Scripture, and church traditions, but also how she relates to the non-believing audience and how she interacts with the world.[120] In addition, Vander Lugt introduces the term 'theatrical theology', a term which 'emphasizes the practical goal of theology as faith seeking *performative* understanding', in contrast to the more common term 'theodrama', which points more to dramatic literature than to live theatrical performance.[121] In performance, the theodrama comes alive, and is enacted by God and his church before and within the world.

Two other 'theatrical theologians' whom Vander Lugt uses are Max Harris and Shannon Craigo-Snell. A central theme in Harris' work is the connaturality of the Incarnation and the theatre, especially as discussed in his book *Theater and Incarnation*. A thesis of his book is 'that the idea of the Incarnation is through and through theatrical'.[122] An example of this connaturality is that 'in both theatre and…in the central act of divine self-revelation [i.e., Christ's Incarnation], *word is made manifest to the senses*'.[123] The 'word is made manifest to the senses' not only

[120] For the importance of the audience in the model, see Vander Lugt, *Living Theodrama*, 10 and Chapter 7.
[121] Ibid., 19.
[122] Harris, *Theater and Incarnation*, viii.
[123] Ibid., 2, emphasis added.

through a scriptural text which bears witness to performance and is meant to be interpreted through performance,[124] but also in the sacraments which use sensuous objects to make Christ present. Through God's use of the physical senses to reveal himself, Harris writes, 'God may be understood to have declared his commitment to a fully theatrical and not merely verbal mode of addressing his people'.[125] Because of this connaturality between the Incarnation and the theatre, the theatre is most fully itself when it is most incarnate, that is, when it most fully honours both the word and the body. Harris echoes Peter Brook's advocacy of a theatre which is simultaneously 'Rough' and 'Holy';[126] this 'mixed style'[127] is the one Harris identifies as most true to the consequences of the Incarnation, and he asks whether a form of theatre which is purely Holy or Rough – or, one might add, intellectual or physical – 'can be fully "Christian" drama'.[128]

Harris, however, is wary of suggestions that God can actually be 'incarnated' in the theatre, and Shannon Craigo-Snell engages with this concern. She writes, 'As I understand Harris, it is not the case that theater deals with humanity and church deals with God, such that theater cannot conjure an incarnation but church can. Rather, incarnation does not come about through human efforts, but only through divine grace'.[129] Her response to this difficulty is to promote a 'discipline of emptiness' – removing the barriers of sin or 'busyness' within each person and within the church community that block the Holy Spirit's action, and inviting the Spirit to make himself present and act in each person's life and in the church's gatherings. This discipline is

[124] See ibid., 12-14.
[125] Ibid., 12.
[126] Ibid., 101.
[127] Ibid., 111.
[128] Ibid., 109.
[129] Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church*, 141.

an ‘act of invocation’, but it ‘does not force the Spirit’s hand’.[130] Instead, the very act of clearing a space for the Spirit is an act of hope, trusting in God’s promises that he will be with his church, and that his Spirit will remain with his people forever.[131] Craigo-Snell writes that ‘as a community, we remember that God has partnered with us in the past and we hope in God’s Spirit for the present and future. This hope is an embodied performance, a discipline that prepares us for partnership with God’.[132] The empty space, the emptiness of the human heart in the hope of God, is the ‘preparation of the altar’, on which the church waits in hope for the flame of the Spirit to descend. Or, to use Craigo-Snell’s poetic metaphor, ‘We are simply turning on the ghost light, asking and hoping for the Spirit to remain, to move again in our midst’.[133] This practice of emptiness leads to an ‘empty church’, a phrase which Craigo-Snell adapts from Peter Brook’s conception of theatre as an ‘empty space’; Craigo-Snell’s 2014 book *The Empty Church* advocates for this church which leaves room for the Spirit to act.[134]

For Vander Lugt, ‘theatrical theology’ is theology conceptualised as ‘faith seeking *performative* understanding’.[135] That is, it is an approach to theology that utilizes the vocabulary and concepts of theatrical performance in order to understand God and the actions of God and God’s people. Theatrical theology, in this case, brings performance to theology. Vander Lugt acknowledges that his own purpose is uni-directional: ‘this book [*Living Theodrama*] is limited to the extent that it will

[130] Ibid.
[131] See Matthew 28:20 and John 14:16-17.
[132] Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church*, 141.
[133] Ibid., 147. A ghost light is a light left burning on a stage after the theatre is closed for the night – primarily for safety, but, according to theatrical tradition, also to keep away any evil spirits or ghosts that might be lingering in the theatre.
[134] See Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church*, and Brook, *The Empty Space*.
[135] Vander Lugt, *Living Theodrama*, 19.

explore Christian theology and practice through the lens of theatre rather than vice versa'.[136]

My purpose is the opposite: to explore the practice of theatre through the lens of Christian theology. For that reason, when I speak of the 'theatrical theologies' of the Reduta, Rhapsodic, and Laboratory Theatres, I am speaking of the theological beliefs and concepts which influenced their theatrical practice. I am also referring to their theatrical performance of those beliefs and concepts – that is, not treating their theatre as an illustration of theological beliefs, but as an actual *performance*, or enactment, of a particular theology. I am exploring the alternative direction inherent in Vander Lugt's term: the move which brings theology to performance. Therefore, it is crucial to understand that when I speak of a 'eucharistic theatre', I am not beginning with a theological concept of eucharist and finding theatre companies whose practice illuminates that concept. I am starting with three related theatre companies who all use some form of eucharistic language in their theatre theory, exploring the concept of eucharist under which they operate, and critiquing the way in which they apply that concept to theatre.

For this reason, this thesis is not going to follow the approach of scholars such as Balthasar, Vanhoozer, Wells, and Vander Lugt, valuable as it is for combining the two worlds of theatre and theology. These scholars and their colleagues are examining the value that theatre has for understanding God, Scripture, and other objects of theological study. I will be travelling in the opposite direction, asking how theology can affect the understanding and practice of theatre. There is a vast chasm between many contemporary theatre theorists, especially those in ritual studies and

[136] Ibid., 26.

performance studies, and believing theologians. Christian and other religious rituals are torn out of context and cannibalized to make theatre, without a proper theological understanding of those rituals' meanings. In addition, discussion about these rituals takes place on the assumption either that they are wholly man-made (i.e., without a divine source or actor), or that they can no longer be engaged in with sincere belief (ignoring the millions of believers who do so engage in their religion's rituals), or both. I would like to provide an alternative point-of-view, and speak about both Christian belief and ritual (especially the eucharist) and theatre-making as someone who believes in Christ, practices the Christian religion and its rituals in this faith, and also is a theatre-maker who has experienced Christ in theatre and seeks to express Christ through theatre. Through bringing theology to theatre, I believe that theologians can engage in a fruitful dialogue with theatre-makers, even those without a religious faith and/or with a secular worldview. This dialogue can also help theologians see where God can be found in theatre, and more effectively share his Gospel with the world.

5. Summary

This first chapter has laid out the theatrical and theological context in which this thesis sits. Chapter II looks at Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre and examines Grotowski's use of eucharistic language in his theatre theory. Chapter III addresses theatre scholar Carl Lavery's tripartite division of the sacred into the secular sacred, theological sacred, and a/theological sacred, and critiques Lavery's presentation of the theological sacred as believing God to be wholly rational and

comprehensible and using only text-based sources to define the holy as adherence to law. The chapter counters Lavery's understanding of the theological sacred with that found in theologian Alexander Schmemann, and also proposes Schmemann's understanding of the eucharist as a corrective to Lavery's view of a Christian understanding of the sacred. Whereas Lavery argues that only a/theology can provide an experience of the sacred, and therefore only a theatre informed by a/theological principles can be a true sacred theatre, this second chapter argues that Christian theology not only can and does provide an experience of the sacred, but that a theatre informed by Christian theological principles can be a sacred theatre in an even more profound way. This Christian sacred theatre may be called a *eucharistic theatre*, and its principles will be based partly on Schmemann's view of the eucharist.

Chapter IV counters Lavery's claim that there can be no theological sacred theatre by providing an example of a theological sacred theatre that existed in early-20th-century Poland, and was claimed by Grotowski as a major influence: Juliusz Osterwa's Reduta Theatre. This chapter will explore the theology and practice of the Reduta Theatre, and how it qualifies as a eucharistic theatre. Chapter V will explore the theology and practice of Mieczysław Kotlarczyk's Rhapsodic Theatre, another Polish theatre that inherited aspects of the Reduta's practice, but which, unlike Grotowski's theatre, was rooted in the same Catholic belief that informed the Reduta. This chapter will also compare the Rhapsodists' emphasis on the word to Grotowski's emphasis on the body, and explore the place of each in a eucharistic theatre, particularly in light of a Christian understanding of the Incarnation as embodied word. Finally, Chapter VI will conclude by summarising how the Laboratory, Reduta, and Rhapsodic Theatres can and cannot be considered eucharistic theatres, listing some

techniques from their work which today's theatre companies may find useful, giving examples of contemporary companies carrying out their legacies, and providing some final thoughts on the spirituality of a eucharistic theatre.

II. GROTOWSKI'S LABORATORY THEATRE – TOWARDS A 'NEW MASS'

Perhaps the most well-known theatre theorist of the 20th century whose theory incorporated the eucharist as a model for theatre performance is Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999). Peter Brook called Grotowski's work the creation of 'a new Mass'.[1] Grotowski's theatre theory incorporated terms such as *communion, sacrifice, atonement,* and *holiness,* and described a *holy actor* sacrificing himself in performance to atone for his own sins and create a bond of communion with the gathered *spectator-witnesses*. Grotowski's 'Mass', however, unlike that of the Roman Catholic Mass, does not reserve a place for a personal God, neither incorporating him as an acting subject (or even passive witness), nor incorporating him as a person with whom the actors and/or spectators can be in relation. Christopher Innes calls it an 'atheist mass'.[2] This chapter will look at Grotowski's use of eucharistic language in his theatre theory, including examining Grotowski's own theological, philosophical, and spiritual beliefs, their influence on his theatre theory, and the kind of quasi-eucharistic 'holy theatre' that he created.

1. Background

Jerzy Grotowski was born in Rzeszow, Poland on August 11, 1933. Although surrounded by the Catholicism of Polish culture, there is no record of Grotowski claiming Catholicism as his own religious faith. James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta write

[1] Peter Brook, preface to Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 12.
[2] Christopher Innes, *Holy Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 181.

in their biography of Grotowski that 'Grotowski's mother introduced her sons to the spectrum of religious thought' after Grotowski's father left the family to serve in the Polish army at the outbreak of World War II, and never returned.[3] Grotowski's mother introduced him to the East through the volume *A Search for Secret India* by Paul Brunton, and, during the same time period, 'the village priest secretly gave the young Grotowski a copy of the Gospels to read alone.... Grotowski first encountered Jesus, by himself, in a hayloft above the pigpen of the farm where he lived'.[4] Slowiak and Cuesta write that the Gospels and *A Search for Secret India*—'along with Renan's *The Life of Jesus*—plus *The Zohar*, *The Koran*, and the writings of Martin Buber and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, served as the foundation for the questions Grotowski pursued' in his creative life; however, 'it was Brunton's book that affected Grotowski most profoundly'.[5] Brunton led Grotowski to Hindu mysticism and other works of Eastern spirituality and philosophy;[6] such writings were to be the primary spiritual influence on his life.

Grotowski moved with his family (lacking its father) to Nienadowka in 1939, and then to Kraków in 1950, where he was accepted into the Soviet-run State Theatre School to study acting. He graduated in 1955, and moved to Moscow to study directing for a year at the State Institute of Theatre Arts. After completing his directing degree in 1956, he went on a two-month tour around Asia to learn more

[3] Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski,* 3.
[4] Ibid., 3-4. Grotowski tells the story of his first reading of the Gospels in Jerzy Grotowski, 'Theatre of Sources', in Schechner and Wolford, *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, 253-54. (The reading was in secret because the local pastor did not approve of laity reading the Gospels directly, so the assistant priest snuck Grotowski a copy.) During this reading, Grotowski experienced Christ not as a 'Divine Hero', but as a 'Friend', the 'friend of the neighbourhood horse who had only one eye and who was beaten by his owner. He was also the friend of me, and of everyone in the village who was in difficulties'. Grotowski, 'Theatre of Sources', 254.
[5] Ibid., 4, bold removed from key terms in original.
[6] Ibid.

about Asian philosophy and theatre. After returning to Kraków, he began teaching and directing. Early productions included his directing thesis production *The Woman is a Devil* by Prosper Mérimée, a radio version of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, and stagings of *The Chairs* by Eugene Ionesco, *Uncle Vanya* by Anton Chekhov, and *The Ill-Fated Family*.[7]

In 1959, Grotowski partnered with theatre manager Ludwik Flaszen and began directing plays under the auspices of the Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole, Poland. The theatre changed names several times, eventually becoming known as the Laboratory Theatre, and also moved from Opole to the larger city of Wrocław. The following chart provides a timeline of the theatre's productions and name changes:[8]

Theatre of 13 Rows, Opole
1959: *Orpheus*, Jean Cocteau (premiere: 8 October)
1960: *Cain*, adapted from Lord Byron's play (premiere: 30 January)[9]
Mystery-Bouffe, adapted from Vladimir Mayakovsky's play (premiere: 31 July)
Shakuntala, adapted from Kalidasa's play (premiere: 13 December)
1961: *The Tourists*, Jerzy Grotowski
The Clay Pigeons, Jerzy Grotowski
Forefathers' Eve (Dziady), adapted from Adam Mickiewicz's poetic drama (premiere: 6/18 June)[10]

[7] Ibid., 3-10. The author of *The Ill-Fated Family* is not given in the source text, and I have not been able to identify him/her.
[8] Information in this chart about the productions and their timeline is taken from the following sources: Kazimierz Braun, *Concise History,* 324; Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 12-27; and Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 2, 17-38, 54-92.
[9] After *Cain*, but before *Mystery-Bouffe*, Grotowski directed a production of *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe for the Polski Theatre, Poznan (premiere: 13 April 1960). This production was not a part of the Theatre of 13 Rows' season. Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 12.
[10] . Slowiak and Cuesta give 6 June 1961 for the premiere, Kumiega 18 June 1961. Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 12, and Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 33. Slowiak and Cuesta indicate that this production was 'Grotowski's first experiment with the Polish Romantic tradition', a tradition which was to become a major theme of his later work. Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 12.

Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows, Opole[11]

1962: *Kordian*, adapted from Juliusz Słowacki's play (premiere: 13 February)
Akropolis, adapted from Stanisław Wyspiański's dramatic poem (premiere: 10 October; five different adaptations performed from 1962-1967)

1963: *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus*, adapted from Christopher Marlowe's play (premiere: 23 April)

1964: *The Hamlet Study*, adapted from Stanisław Wyspiański's rendering of William Shakespeare's play (premiere: 17 March)

Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows, Wrocław[12]

1965: *The Constant Prince*, adapted from Juliusz Słowacki's rendering of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's play (premiere: 25 April; three different adaptations performed from 1965-1968)

Laboratory Theatre Research Institute of Acting Method, Wrocław[13]

1969: *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, adapted from the Gospels and the Apocalypse of St John, *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and texts by T.S. Eliot and Simone Weil, with initial inspiration from Juliusz Słowacki's play *Samuel Zborowski*[14] (premiere: 11 February 1969, following an open rehearsal on 19 July 1968; seven different adaptations performed from 1968-1975/1980)[15]

Jennifer Kumiega lists two more name changes after Grotowski and his team had stopped premiering productions: Actor's Institute – Laboratory Theatre (1 January 1970) and Institute-Laboratory (1 January 1975). This thesis will follow her precedent in using 'Theatre of 13 Rows' to refer to Grotowski's productions in Opole

[11] Slowiak and Cuesta claim that both the new production of *Kordian* and the change of name, which occurred shortly after *Kordian*'s premiere (on 1 March 1962), 'signaled the group's inclination toward disciplined research'. Ibid., 18. Date of the name change given in Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski,* 2.

[12] The move to Wrocław took place on 1 January 1965. Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 20.

[13] The name change took place in September 1966. This name change 'marked the group's interest in pursuing their research aims and the dissemination of their findings concerning actor-training techniques'. Ibid., 24. Kumiega gives two separate name changes in 1966: The Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows – Institute of Research into Acting Method (1 January 1966), and Institute of Research into Acting Method – Laboratory Theatre (1 September 1966); Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 2. Slowiak and Cuesta's version is maintained in the chart for concision.

[14] Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski,* 26.

[15] Braun claims seven adaptations from 1968-1975; Slowiak and Cuesta claim 'several' adaptations from 1968-1980. Braun, *Concise History*, 324; Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 27. Slowiak and Cuesta also claim that *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* was the 'bridge into the next frontier of Grotowski's research: The Theatre of Participation or Paratheatre'. Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 28.

from 1959-1961, and the 'Laboratory Theatre' to refer to the productions from 1962-1969 as well as Grotowski and his team's later work.[16]

This period of Grotowski's work, from 1959-1969, is known as the Theatre of Productions. Grotowski's most famous productions during this time include *Dr Faustus, Akropolis, Apocalypsis cum Figuris,* and *The Constant Prince*, the latter of which will be analysed below. *Dr Faustus* was Grotowski's first work to be seen by the West, after delegates of the Tenth Congress of the International Theatre Institute in Warsaw attended the show, leading to a flood of 'about one hundred reviews, essays and studies [about the show appearing] in Western publications'.[17] Grotowski and his theatre were subsequently invited to present *The Constant Prince* at the Theatre of Nations Festival in 1966, a production which was named 'the "event" of the season'.[18] *Akropolis* was taken to the Edinburgh Festival and put on film in London in 1968, and Grotowski toured *Akropolis, The Constant Prince,* and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* to New York City in 1969.[19]

In 1970, Grotowski announced that he was giving up doing theatre for audiences,[20] and moved into the phase of work called Paratheatre, or the Theatre of Participation. This phase consisted of an exploration of the concepts of *Holiday, contact* and *meeting*, when there was little to no division between 'actor' and 'spectator' – all were equal participants in a moment of encounter,[21] of self-opening

[16] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 2.
[17] Ibid., 42.
[18] Ibid., 42 and 47.
[19] Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 28-29.
[20] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 99-100.
[21] David T. Warner claims that Grotowski's theatre is primarily an ethical action, and that 'Grotowski's thinking about ethics was shaped more by [Martin] Buber than by any other single source'. Warner explores the connections between Buber's thought and Grotowski's artistic practice, focusing especially on the concept of *encounter* between actor and spectator in Grotowski's theatre. Warner argues that Grotowski's theatre is widely misconstrued as attempting to close the distance between

to another person engineered through environmental elements taken from ritual, myth, and performance. An example of a paratheatrical experiment was the Mountain Project, in which Grotowski's team led participants to a mountain castle for three days. During that time, activities included night runs through the forest in order to experience the earth, the water, the air, and the trees, and spontaneous singing and dancing in front of the castle's fireplace. The use of light and dark, physical sensation, and music and sound encouraged participants to free themselves from the boundaries of their everyday selves and connect with others and with the earth. The purpose of Paratheatre was to encourage and equip all participants, not just actors, to experience the 'total act' of performance – the total revealing and giving of oneself to another. Grotowski had found with the Theatre of Productions that no matter how hard he tried to involve the audience in the performance – whether by direct address, placing them within the playing space instead of separating them by a proscenium, or casting them as characters within the story of the play (e.g., as fellow inmates with the actors in a mental hospital in his production of *Kordian*) – the spectators were never able to answer the actors' self-giving with an equal self-giving of their own. Their passivity as *spectators*, watchers of other people's actions, prevented them from acting on an

---

actor and spectator in order to merge them; Warner claims instead that Grotowski's goal was the creation of Buber's 'polar unity' by setting the actors and spectators in opposition to each other, and setting both in opposition to the strangeness of the fictional world of the play. By encountering the Other of the person in the opposing role (actor vs. spectator), and by together encountering the Other-world of the play, a meaningful 'meeting' is created, which makes each person more visible to himself and to the Other, and creates their identities as beings in relationship: 'The distance that harmony requires—two parts separated from one another but sounding as a single whole—is the condition of encounter and the basis of its promise'. In Buber's words, 'One can enter into relation only with [a] being which has been set at a distance, more precisely, has become an independent opposite'. David. T. Warner, 'The Ethical Thought of Jerzy Grotowski as Illuminated by Martin Buber', PhD diss. (Brigham Young University, 2003), 14, 78-79, 99, 110-11, 180-81, and 186. The Buber quote is from Buber's essay 'Distance and Relation', in Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays*, trans. Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1988), 50, quoted in Warner, 'The Ethical Thought of Jerzy Grotowski', 117.

equal footing with the performers. By that point, Grotowski had realised that the acting technique which he and his team of actors had been developing was more of a process of personal spiritual liberation than a process of preparing a commodity for others' consumption. Therefore, a theatre separating the roles of actor and spectator was no longer tenable. He had to find ways to share this process of spiritual discovery with his audience, not just with his professional actors. Thus, Paratheatre was born.[22]

After Paratheatre, Grotowski moved on to three different phases of more intense performance research with a small number of committed participants, who stayed and worked with Grotowski for a longer period of time. These phases include the Theatre of Sources, Objective Drama, and Art as Vehicle (Ritual Arts).[23] Slowiak and Cuesta note that during the Theatre of Sources, 'the principle of **roots** [a term 'synonymous with the words **source** and **origin**'] becomes essential'.[24] This research was devoted to finding the '**movement which is repose**',[25] the psychophysical space that Grotowski believed was at the centre of different 'sources', or means to physical, psychological, and spiritual freedom. (Each of the different spiritual traditions had different means for accessing their spiritual sources, such as prayer, liturgy, or yoga. Grotowski believed that there was a single source behind them all, and he believed that this source could be accessed through theatre, a theatre which used the different

[22] One approachable account of Grotowski's Paratheatre is found in the film *My Dinner with Andre* (1981). In this film, which consists of a dinner conversation between Andre Gregory and Wallace Shawn, Gregory shares his experience of a 'beehive', a paratheatrical gathering for a large group of participants, usually held in the woods or some other isolated space during a night, a weekend, or some other short period of time, often as part of a conference in which Grotowski was participating. A beehive did not allow a participant much one-on-one time with Grotowski, if any, but did allow a greater number of people to participate and sample Paratheatre. *My Dinner with Andre*, DVD, directed by Louis Malle (1981; New York: The Criterion Collection, 2015).
[23] The names of all five phases are given in Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski ,* 11.
[24] Ibid., 40, emphasis in original.
[25] Ibid., 41, emphasis in original.

traditions' 'techniques of sources'[26] to find the active stillness at the heart of all of them.) Objective Drama was a further refinement of the Theatre of Sources. It was a search for the techniques that were most effective and reliable in bringing a performer to the 'movement which is repose'. This work took place primarily with a group of students at the University of California-Irvine, after Grotowski went into exile after the imposition of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981. Finally, Art as Vehicle (or Ritual Arts) was focused on two goals: '**transmission** and **objectivity of ritual**'.[27] Slowiak and Cuesta define 'objectivity of ritual' as 'Grotowski's attempt to create a performative structure that functions as a tool for work on oneself', a reliable tool for spiritual self-liberation and self-discovery, distilled from the different spiritual traditions' 'techniques of sources'. The other goal of Art as Vehicle was transmission, or the sharing of this tool with others, including the group of collaborators whom Grotowski had chosen to carry on his work, especially performer Thomas Richards. Grotowski passed away on January 14, 1999, in Pontedera, Italy, where his work continues through the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards.

2. Grotowski and the Eucharist

In a 1961 interview with director and collaborator Eugenio Barba, Grotowski explicitly calls for a secular *locus* for seeking the sacred, to replace the religious *locus* that previously governed Western civilization and that has lost its power in a modern era of decreasing faith:

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 53, emphasis in original.

> …the disappearance of the sacred and of its ritual function in the theatre—is a result of the obvious and probably inevitable decline of religion. What we are talking about is the possibility of creating a **secular sacrum in the theatre**…. One must contribute to its realization, for a secular consciousness in place of the religious one seems to be a psycho-social necessity for society.[28]

This section will examine Grotowski's sacramental and liturgical theology of the theatre, as described in his most well-known text, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, published during his Theatre of Productions period.[29] Grotowski's concept of a 'secular sacrum' will also be compared to the Roman Catholic conception of the Mass found in the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, especially focusing on the presence of Christ. Next, this section will suggest some ways in which Grotowski's project fell short of creating a 'new Mass', and suggest how the presence of Christ as mediator of both vertical communion between God and his people and horizontal communion of his people with each other through the eucharist provides a necessary corrective to Grotowski's conception of a theatrical communion without such a mediator. Finally, the section will end with some ways in which Grotowski's project can actually highlight the work of Christ in the eucharist, especially in his role as Grotowski's 'secure partner'.[30]

Grotowski's definition of the theatre is 'what takes place between spectator and actor'.[31] He writes that theatre 'cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion'.[32] To focus in on this horizontal relationship between the actor and the spectator, Grotowski calls for a 'poor theatre', a theatre stripped of all superfluous elements, such as set, costumes, props, and make-

[28] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 49, emphasis added.
[29] Originally published in 1968.
[30] Grotowski, 'American Encounter' (1967 interview), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre,* 203.
[31] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 32.
[32] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre' (1965 article), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 19.

up. He calls his way of proceeding a '**via negativa –** not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks' to full expression of the spirit through the body, leading to a 'trans-lumination' in performance in which 'the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses'.[33]

The pinnacle of performance is the 'total act', the moment during the actor's performance 'score' in which he completely reveals his self to the spectator. Grotowski writes, 'In the most important moment in your role, reveal your most personal and closely guarded experience'.[34] The total act is 'the act of laying oneself bare, of tearing off the mask of daily life, of exteriorizing oneself… It is a serious and solemn act of revelation'.[35] 'If the actor performs in such a way, he becomes a kind of provocation for the spectator.'[36] 'The spectator understands, consciously or unconsciously, that such an act is an invitation to him to do the same thing'.[37] As Grotowski continues, 'This act could be compared to an act of the most deeply rooted, genuine love between two human beings'.[38] '[I]t is all a question of giving oneself. One must give oneself totally, in one's deepest intimacy, with confidence, as when one gives oneself in love'.[39] 'This is both a biological and a spiritual act'.[40] This 'self-sacrifice'[41] of the actor's entire being through the medium of his body in performance is, Grotowski writes, 'the essence of [the actor's] vocation'.[42]

---

[33] Ibid., 16-17.
[34] Grotowski, 'Skara Speech' (1966 lecture), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 196.
[35] Grotowski, 'The Actor's Technique' (1967 interview), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 178.
[36] Grotowski, 'Methodical Exploration' (1967 article), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 99.
[37] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 37.
[38] Grotowski, 'Statement of Principles' (internal Laboratory Theatre document, no date), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 212.
[39] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 38.
[40] Grotowski, 'Theatre is an Encounter' (1967 interview), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 58.
[41] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 35.
[42] Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 92.

The total act is the source of the actor's holiness. When Grotowski speaks of holiness, he is very clear that he means:

> a 'secular holiness'. If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration. If he does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse, then he does not sell his body but sacrifices it. He repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness.[43]

The sacrifice of his own self, through sharing himself completely with another human being in a complete self-revelation, is an act of love that not only challenges the spectator toward an equal act of 'self-donation',[44] but is also an act which saves the actor. Grotowski writes, 'When you achieve this [total act] you will be pure, you will be purged, you will be without sin… It is a kind of redemption'.[45] This spiritual experience, this total act, is at the centre of Grotowski's theatre. It operates as the eucharistic presence in Grotowski's 'new Mass'.

Before moving on to how Grotowski's 'eucharist' operates, it may be helpful to look at how the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* understands the presence of Christ in the Mass. This document was promulgated in 1963, a few years before *Towards a Poor Theatre* was published. It is unlikely that Grotowski was aware of the contents of this document, seeing as there is no record of him engaging deeply with official documents of the Roman Catholic Church, but it is helpful to look at the view of presence stated in this document in order to understand how it differs from Grotowski's conception of the saving 'presence' at the centre of his 'Mass'.

---

[43] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 34.
[44] Ibid., 38.
[45] Grotowski, 'Skara Speech', 192.

Sacrosanctum Concilium speaks of five ways in which Christ is

> present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only *in the person of His minister*…but especially *under the Eucharistic species*. By His power He is present *in the sacraments*, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present *in His word*, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, *when the Church prays and sings*, for He promised: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18:20).[46]

Grotowski's 'new Mass' has (1) the actor as priest. It is he who offers sacrifice – the sacrifice of himself. It also has (2) the spectators as the people gathered for the sacrifice, who are challenged by it to go out and do likewise. As for (3) the Word, Grotowski, in a 1967 interview, said, '[T]he important thing is not the words but what we do with these words, what gives life to the inanimate words of the text, *what transforms them into "the Word"*'.[47] The words of the play are minimal in Grotowski's work, and are used insofar as they serve the score, which is the combination of words, physical and psychological activities, and emotional associations in which the actor engages, which climaxes in the total act. The total act itself is the equivalent of (4) the eucharist. It is the act of communion between actor and spectator. It is the closest one gets to (5) a sacramental presence in Grotowski's theatre.

Is Grotowski's secular sacrum an effective replacement for the Mass? Can this theatrical ritual provide the same kind of communion between participants that the eucharist does?

---

[46] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7. This passage is usually quoted as showing *four* ways in which Christ is present *in the Mass*: priest, people, Word, eucharist. Nonetheless, five ways appear to be listed here, and the context includes not just the Mass, but the 'Church, *especially* [but not exclusively] in her liturgical celebrations'. All italics added.

[47] Grotowski, 'Theatre is an Encounter', 58, italics added.

Before answering this question, it is helpful to examine Christopher Innes' criticism of the project of creating secular theatrical rituals. In *Holy Theatre*, he discusses both Grotowski's work and that of Grotowski's student, Eugenio Barba, both of which have had the term 'atheist mass' applied to them.[48] In regards to both, he writes that their problem 'is that the challenge to religion presupposes a climate of belief that no longer exists… [T]he spiritual pole of existence that is opposed to socially conditioned and destructive behaviour patterns can only be communicated in images derived from the very religion that has been rejected as dead'.[49] In regards to the Performance Group, another ritualizing theatre company heavily influenced by Grotowski, Innes writes that 'meaningful participation requires an established ritual familiar to all, not an alien rite', and that this participation is 'impossible in a society where cohesive religious belief has gone and its ritual forms have lost their validity'.[50]

Innes is correct to point out that religious images draw power only insofar as those who view them believe that they have meaning (whether that meaning is identical to their traditional religious meaning, or viewed as related to a more primal, pre-religious meaning, or interpreted in some other way). The image of the crucifixion, an image which recurs in Grotowski's work as well as that of other Western secular ritualizers, draws most of its meaning from its role in the self-sacrifice of Christ. The concept of sacrifice may be more culturally diffuse, and an audience completely unfamiliar with Christianity may be familiar with the concept of *self*-sacrifice, but in Western culture the concept of self-sacrifice is loaded with Christian 'baggage'.

---

[48] Innes, *Holy Theatre*, 181.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 184.

Grotowski himself understood at some level that ritual only works in a shared context. He says, 'In order that the spectator may be stimulated into self-analysis when confronted with the actor, *there must be some common ground already existing in both of them, something they can either dismiss in one gesture or jointly worship*'.[51] He identifies this common ground as 'the collective complexes of society', those 'myths which are not an invention of the mind but are, so to speak, inherited through one's blood, religion, culture and climate', such as 'the myth of Christ and Mary'.[52] Nevertheless, 'the community of the theatre cannot possibly **identify** itself with the myth, because there is no single faith. Only a **confrontation** is possible'.[53] In regards to religious myths, Grotowski states:

> In my work as a producer, I have therefore been tempted to make use of archaic situations sanctified by tradition, situations (within the realms of religion and tradition) which are taboo. I felt a need to confront myself with these values. They fascinated me, filling me with a sense of interior restlessness, while at the same time I was obeying a temptation to blaspheme: I wanted to attack them, go beyond them, or rather confront them with my own experience which is itself determined by the collective experience of our time. This element of our productions has been variously called 'collision with the roots,' 'the dialectics of mockery and apotheosis,' or even 'religion expressed through blasphemy: love speaking out through hate.'[54]

Grotowski consciously used religious images in his productions (especially in *The Constant Prince*), and used eucharistic language in his theory. Yet his purpose was to draw new meaning and power out of these images by rejecting the religious meaning that gave them their power. This 'dialectics of mockery and apotheosis' is a symptom of a larger structural problem which is deadly to Grotowski's project: the

[51] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 42, emphasis added.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 89, emphasis in original.
[54] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 22.

elimination of the vertical axis of communion, and the personal mediator who makes such communion possible.

In Grotowski's conception, communion is possible between actor and spectator directly, without a mediating presence, such as that of Christ in the eucharist. Yet Grotowski seems to be aware of the need for a third presence besides the actor and spectator, for communion to take place. This presence he calls the 'secure partner'.

He starts with the 'principle…that the actor, in order to fulfil himself, must not work for himself'. Instead, 'he must give himself totally. But there is a problem. The actor has two possibilities. Either (1) he plays for the audience…or (2) he works directly for himself'.[55] The first leads to 'narcissism', the stroking of the actor's ego, and the second leads to 'hypocrisy and hysteria', because the actor's work is no longer outwardly-focused – he is constantly judging himself and looking for meaning within himself, which can lead to manufactured and increasingly violent emotion.[56]

So if the actor must give himself totally, but cannot give himself either to the audience directly or to himself, to whom does he give himself? Grotowski says that he cannot give himself to 'God who no longer functions for our generation'. He cannot give himself to 'nature or pantheism. These are smoky mysteries. Man always needs another human being who can absolutely fulfil and understand him. But that is like loving the Absolute or the Idea, loving someone who understands you but whom you've never met'.[57]

[55] Grotowski, 'American Encounter', 201-2.
[56] Ibid., 202.
[57] Ibid.

The closest Grotowski gets to describing this 'secure partner' is calling him the '[s]omeone you are searching for', the 'partner of [one's] own biography', the product of the actor's theatrical research into 'contact'.[58] This 'secure partner' is the actor's 'point of orientation'.[59] According to Grotowski, the relationship of the actor to his secure partner leads to three rebirths. First, when the actor 'begins to live in relation to someone' through the self-revelation of his theatrical research, this contact with another (albeit projected) person generates the actor's first rebirth. Second, when the actor 'begins to use the other actors as screens for his life's partner, [when] he begins to project things on to the characters in the play', he experiences a 'second rebirth'. Finally, when 'the actor discovers…[his] "secure partner", this special being in front of whom he does everything, in front of whom he plays with the other characters and to whom he reveals his most personal problems and experiences…the third and strongest rebirth occurs'.[60] The result of this rebirth, according to Grotowski, is that the actor learns 'how to create while one is controlled by others…, how to find a security which is inevitable if we want to express **ourselves** despite the fact that theatre is a **collective** creation in which we are controlled by many people and working during hours that are imposed on us'.[61]

To summarize: communion in performance occurs when the actor sacrifices himself, by giving himself totally to another. The one he gives himself to is his secure partner, the 'partner of his own biography', a projected person. Giving himself to this person results in the actor's re-birth, his regeneration in love.

---

[58] Ibid.,202-3. This theatrical research includes research into 'his relationship with others', 'the elements of contact in the body', and 'those memories and associations which have decisively conditioned the form of contact'. Ibid., 202.
[59] Grotowski, 'The Actor's Technique', 181.
[60] Grotowski, 'American Encounter', 203.
[61] Ibid.

Insofar as Grotowski believes that communion occurs as a result of self-sacrifice in love, and that this communion is connected with re-birth, his concept of communion is similar to that found in the eucharist, in which communion between God and man, and between the individual members of God's people, is possible because of Christ's self-sacrifice in love, and the Christian's union with Christ in the death and re-birth of baptism. Despite these similarities, Grotowski's secure partner is insufficient to serve as the mediator who makes communion between actor and spectator possible. First of all, the secure partner is insufficiently personal. He is a projection of the actor's own mind, not a person in his own right, and therefore is a way in which the actor does give himself to himself, a self-donation which Grotowski rejected as leading to 'hypocrisy and hysteria'. In addition, because the secure partner is not a true person, neither the actor nor the spectator can have a relationship of mutual love with him. Finally, because the secure partner cannot be in a loving relationship with either the actor or spectator, there can be no connection of communion between the secure partner and the actor or the secure partner and the spectator. Therefore, the secure partner cannot serve as a mediator of relationship between the actor and spectator.

Grotowski intuits that he needs a mediator in his secular Mass; however, by rejecting Christ, he rejects the mediator that makes the communion of the Mass possible. If one replaces Grotowski's shadowy projected secure partner with Christ as secure partner, communion becomes possible again. Christ fits the role of secure partner, because he is a person orientated toward the communicant in an orientation of total love, and is the *telos* of the Christian's existence. Christ is the 'point of

orientation', the '[s]omeone you are searching for'.[62] When a person gives himself totally to Christ in baptism (by the power of the Holy Spirit, another missing actor in Grotowski's theatrical drama), he becomes able to receive Christ in the eucharist, thus the connection with re-birth. And in giving oneself to Christ, through baptism and through the eucharist (both sacraments being connected to each other through Christ), one becomes and acts as a member of the Body of Christ. Therefore, one is not only connected to Christ, and through Christ to the Father, but is also connected to everyone else who is in Christ. By giving oneself to Christ, one gives oneself to the other communicants, and they give themselves to one *through* Christ. Christ is the source and bond of communion between the participants in his Body. When a communicant receives Christ's Body (i.e., the eucharistic Host), he is also receives Christ's *Body* (i.e., his fellow members of the Church). But without Christ connecting communicants both vertically to the Father and horizontally to each other, eucharist is not possible. An atheist mass is no Mass at all.

In conclusion, Grotowski's attempt to create a secular sacrum in the theatre that can operate similarly to a Mass fails, because he cuts off the vertical axis of communion, and attempts to replace the person who is the mediator of communion at the centre of the eucharist, Christ, with a sub-personal 'secure partner' who is a projection of the actor's own self. In addition, he undermines his own purpose by rejecting the very religious meaning that he attempts to use for dramatic effect in his theatrical work. Grotowski was aware of the connection between re-birth, self-sacrifice, and communion in the ritual of the eucharist, even if he thought it could be

[62] See St Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), I.i.1: 'you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'.

done without Christ, the secure partner whose activity and self-sacrifice makes the re-birth of baptism and the communion of the eucharist possible.

Nevertheless, there is an argument to be made that Grotowski's theatre reaches out to the vertical to some extent. Hans Urs von Balthasar describes a 'horizon' in drama 'within which the dramatic action takes place and to which the dramatists, the actors and the audience are all related'. One purpose of drama is to seek 'insight into the nature and meaning of existence', by coming into contact through the play with 'something that transcends it'.[63] In a Christian conception, this 'something' is God, who gives meaning to the whole world and therefore also to the stories that are told within it. Christ is the actor who, in his Incarnation, bridges the verticality of God and the horizontality of the human community, unifying the members of the church with each other and with God. A Christian drama plays on this stage with Christ, relating itself to him '*in the presence of* God', who watches and 'embrace[s]' the drama.[64]

'Post-Christian' drama, such as Grotowski's, still relates to this divine horizon, even if it does not know it. It still plays before the face of God, 'even if the subject matter…is purely secular, entirely unreligious, and even if the horizon [of that drama] is cloaked in anonymity'.[65] Balthasar writes, 'Everything, in the end, must be regarded as a Christian fragment—perhaps hardly recognizable—that calls for the transformation of the hearts of individuals and of society and its conditions and structures'.[66] Grotowski's theatre calls for such transformation when it calls for its actor and spectator participants to be more open to encounter with each other and with

[63] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 1, 314.
[64] Ibid., 321.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 322.

the truth about themselves. Balthasar calls this focus on humanity's transformation of itself a '"horizontalizing" of the horizon',[67] which, insofar as it seeks to detach itself from the 'true, transcendent, vertical horizon'[68] rooted in God, risks completely flattening itself out and therefore destroying the possibility of meaning. Nevertheless, Balthasar suggests that a public gathering to explore, through drama, the question 'What is man?' can point the participants 'forward and up' to the 'universe' of the play, in the light of which they can explore possible answers to that question. In this shared theatrical search for meaning, 'something like a "communion" is brought about'.[69] On the one hand, Grotowski's theatre may not reach Balthasar's criteria for even the limited verticality of this conception of theatre, since the meaning of Grotowski's theatre was not primarily to be found in the unity which the story could provide, but in the encounter between actors and spectators, which the story was meant to facilitate. On the other hand, the process of confrontation with a story, which was a part of Grotowski's theatre, does involve some amount of asking oneself how one relates to that story, drawing a person to consider a horizon of meaning outside of him- or herself. To that extent, Grotowski's theatre included an aspect of verticality which is a part of all theatre insofar as includes a story or other context within which the encounter between actor and spectator is set.

In addition, Grotowski's desire to help his actors achieve holiness, even a 'secular holiness', through a loving self-sacrifice in relationship with the spectator opens up a possible channel of grace in Grotowski's theatre. Balthasar writes that '[a]nyone, even outside Christianity, who is willing to break out of his egoistic

[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 331.
[69] Ibid., 323.

narrowness and do the good simply for its own sake is given a light that shows him the way he can and should go; such light both uncovers truth and communicates a life that is more alive'.[70] God is free to act in whatever way he will, and can reveal himself even in a theatre which denies his existence; a theatre which seeks the good by asking its participants to open themselves up to each other in love moves towards the vertical 'horizon of meaning' which is God, even without knowing that it does so, and therefore invites God to move within its assembly.[71]

3. Theatre as Spiritual Practice[72]

It should be noted that the term 'a new Mass' was used by Peter Brook to describe Grotowski's work, and was not a term explicitly claimed by Grotowski himself. He did, however, as mentioned above, see theatre as a 'secular sacrum' that could replace religion as a spiritual way. His work moved from attempting to create new sacred theatrical rituals that would bond performers and spectators together to engaging with performance as a spiritual practice, leading to research into how to help any committed, open, and courageous individual walk the path of 'Performer'.[73] In

[70] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 3, 528-29.
[71] See James 4:8: 'Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you'. All citations from Scripture are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
[72] Richard Schechner writes that 'Grotowski himself would not use the word "spiritual," he would more probably mock the idea. But I don't know what other word encompasses his quest, his methods, his journeys, and his vocabulary in interviews and writings…. Grotowski's goal was, and is, to approach – yet not grasp, hold, possess, or in any way squeeze to death – a definite and particular kind of spiritual knowledge'. Richard Schechner, 'Exoduction: Shape-Shifter, Shaman, Trickster, Artist, Adept, Director, Leader, Grotowski', in Schechner and Wolford, *Grotowski Sourcebook,* 465.
[73] For more about Grotowski's move from theatrical ritual to performance as a personal and spiritual practice, see Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, Chapter 7, 'Performance', 128-43, and Slowiak and Cuesta's discussion of Grotowski's essay 'Performer' (1988) in Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 80-83. Slowiak and Cuesta summarize Grotowski's definitions of 'Performer' and 'ritual' found in the essay:

order to look at the theology of Grotowski, which is, to use a term from postmodern theologian Mark C. Taylor via Carl Lavery in *Sacred Theatre*, an 'a/theology'[74] – a theology which seeks union with the cosmos rather than union with a God – it is necessary first to see how he defined terms taken from Christian theology.

i. Holiness

One of Grotowski's major themes in his remarks about actors and performance is the difference between the 'courtesan actor' and the 'holy actor'.[75] The courtesan actor displays 'publicotropism', or an 'orientation towards the public'; the holy actor is oriented towards the truth.[76] The courtesan actor sells his body to the public; he displays himself in return for their applause. The holy actor freely gives himself to the public out of love for them: his performance is a '*self-sacrifice*' analogous to the giving of oneself to one's spouse in marriage. The courtesan actor paints himself with tricks and techniques in order to hide himself under the face of a character; the holy actor strips himself of every physical and psychological block that places barriers between his inner self and another person, in order to truly reveal his

---

1) '**Performer** (with a capital P) is a man of action; a state of being; a man of knowledge; a rebel who should conquer knowledge; an outsider; a warrior; a *pontifex*, a bridge-maker; a bridge between the witness [i.e., the spectator] and something else.'
2) '**Ritual** is performance, an accomplished action, an act. Plays, shows, spectacles are degenerated ritual; ritual is a time of great intensity; provoked intensity; when life becomes rhythm.'

In summary, 'ritual is action and Performer is the doer'. Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 80-81, emphasis in original.

[74] Carl Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', in *Sacred Theatre*, ed. Ralph Yarrow, Theatre and Consciousness Series (Chicago: Intellect, 2007), 35.

[75] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 35.

[76] Grotowski, 'Skara Speech', 198. Grotowski acknowledges the Polish director Juliusz Osterwa as the source of the term 'publicotropism'. The connections between Osterwa, founder of the Reduta Theatre, and Grotowski will be examined in Chapter IV of this thesis.

innermost being to another. The way of the holy actor is the way of the *via negativa* which was the essence of Grotowski's approach to performance.[77]

Total self-revelation in love, comparable to the total self-giving of the marriage act,[78] is key to Grotowski's understanding of holiness (the pinnacle of which is achieved in the 'total act', the moment in the performance when the performer most fully reveals himself).[79] Grotowski is clear that he 'speak[s] about "holiness" as an unbeliever', and refers to 'a "secular holiness"'.[80] He describes the total act, the act which brings the performer 'close to holiness', in the following way:

> If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration. If he does not exhibit his body, but annihilates it, burns it, frees it from every resistance to any psychic impulse, then he does not sell his body but sacrifices it. He repeats the atonement; he is close to holiness.[81]

Holiness is connected to total self-giving, in love, and is connected to a *sacrifice* which is an act of atonement for *sin* – terms whose use by Grotowski will be defined

---

[77] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 35.

[78] Grotowski stressed that the sexual analogy for the total act could only go so far. In a different interview, when he spoke of the 'contacts between people' that were of the essence of theatre, he added, 'Let us be quite clear that I don't mean making love to the audience – that would involve making oneself into a sort of article of sale'. The communion between actor and spectator is 'both a biological and spiritual act'. Grotowski, 'Theatre is an Encounter', 58. The core difference between the courtesan actor and the holy actor is that the courtesan actor displays his body directly to the audience, in return for their approval and applause. The holy actor reveals himself directly to his 'secure partner', and only indirectly to the audience, and always for free, out of a desire to give himself in love, not for payment. This distinction is imperfect; because Grotowski's 'secure partner' is not an actual person, there is really no one else in Grotowski's theatre for the actor to give himself to in the moment of performance, other than the audience (or another actor, or himself, neither of which are options Grotowski advocates). Again, in a Christianised Grotowskian theatre, Christ can play the role of the secure partner, because he is an actual person who is always present to the Christian, and to the Christian assembly.

[79] Grotowski writes that the total act is 'the act of laying oneself bare…. It is a serious and solemn act of revelation'. Grotowski, 'The Actor's Technique', 178.

[80] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 34.

[81] Ibid. Grotowski says later in the interview that holiness is comparable to 'movement at the speed of light': 'without ever attaining it, we can nevertheless move consciously and systematically in that direction, thus achieving practical results'. Ibid., 43.

below. Grotowski says that his use of the term 'holiness' is 'a metaphor defining a person who, through his art, climbs upon the stake and performs an act of self-sacrifice'.[82] While Grotowski admits that his use of 'holiness' is a 'metaphor', not to be understood 'in the religious sense',[83] he does claim that this pursuit of holiness gives the actor a certain amount of spiritual tranquillity:

> The actor who, in this special process of discipline and self-sacrifice, self-penetration and moulding, is not afraid to go beyond all normally acceptable limits, attains a kind of inner harmony and peace of mind. He literally becomes much sounder in mind and body, and his way of life is more normal than that of an actor in the rich [i.e., courtesan] theatre.[84]

It is to the '*poor theatre*' – the 'monastic' theatre, as Grotowski's interviewer Eugenio Barba calls the theatre of the holy actor[85] – as opposed to the 'rich theatre' that Grotowski is referring when he speaks of the need for a 'secular sacrum in the theatre'.

Grotowski identifies Antonin Artaud as an example of a theatre theorist whose work was holy. Even though Grotowski's work has been compared to Artaud's,[86] Grotowski claims that his ideas on theatre were already formed before he ever met

---

[82] Ibid., 43.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 45.
[85] Ibid., 49.
[86] Grotowski himself suggests a connection between his work and Artaud's in his own 1967 essay on Artaud, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself' (published in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 85-93). Grotowski finds two connections between his work and Artaud's: 1) the idea of *conjunctio-oppositorum*, or the necessity of both 'chaos' and 'order' co-existing; and 2) the power of the actor to communicate meaning through the complete transformation of his body, vividly suggested by Artaud's metaphor of actors as 'martyrs burnt alive, still signalling to us from their stakes'. Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 93. (Grotowski is quoting the last sentence of the preface to Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double*, 7: 'And if there is one truly infernal and damned thing left today, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like those tortured at the stake, signalling through the flames'.) Peter Brook also compares Artaud's 'cruelty' to the 'way of life' lived by Grotowski and his actors in Brook's preface to *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 11. Brook says in *The Empty Space* that 'Grotowski's theatre is as close as anyone has got to Artaud's ideal'. Brook, *The Empty Space*, 60.

Artaud's work.[87] After becoming familiar with Artaud's work, Grotowski wrote the essay 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', in which he both critiques and finds truth in Artaud's concept of a 'Theatre of Cruelty'.[88]

In this essay, Grotowski critiques Artaud's belief that indulging in violent passions in the theatre will purge the participants from those passions, keeping society safe from eruptions of uncontrolled violence:

> Artaud puts forward the idea of a great release, a great transgression of conventions, a purification by violence and cruelty; he affirms that the evocation of blind powers on stage ought to protect us from them in life itself. But how can we ask them to protect us in this way when it's obvious they do nothing of the kind? It's not in the theatre that dark powers can be controlled; more likely that these powers will turn the theatre to their own ends... The theatre in the end neither protects us nor leaves us unprotected. I don't believe that the explosive portrayal of Sodom and Gomorrah on stage calms or sublimates in any way the sinful impulses for which those two towns were punished.[89]

Grotowski brings up the total act as a corrective to Artaud's idea of sublimation:

---

[87] Raymonde Temkine, a theatre critic who knew Grotowski, writes that she was struck by the similarity between Grotowski's work and Artaud's writings on theatre, and that, if she had not been able to speak with Grotowski himself, she 'would doubtless have thought that he had had Artaud at his bedside when he elaborated his conception of theatre'. Grotowski, however, claims that:

> He learned of the existence of Artaud after his death, when Grotowski was already the director of the Laboratory Theatre, from a short excerpt of his writing published in 1960 in the Polish magazine *Dialog*. The article was pointed out to him by the dean of [Grotowski's] company, Zygmunt Molik, who was struck with the similarities of terminology used by Grotowski and Artaud—a Frenchman almost unknown in Poland. As for [Artaud's book] *The Theatre and Its Double*, he only read it in 1964.

Grotowski saw himself as more influenced by fellow Pole Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (a.k.a. Witkacy), whose theatrical ideas Temkine characterises as similar to Artaud's. Grotowski said to Temkine that 'he owed to Witkiewicz an idea that he considers essential: the theatre can be a religion without religion'. Temkine, *Grotowski*, 144-45.

[88] Artaud described his idea of a 'Theatre of Cruelty' most clearly in his essays 'No More Masterpieces', 'Theatre and Cruelty', 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto', and 'The Theatre of Cruelty: Second Manifesto', all printed in Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*. 'Cruelty', for Artaud, does not primarily mean physical violence or abuse, but the relentless of evil, which he sees as more fundamental to the universe than good is. For this reason, his theatre is a form of disciplined chaos (similar to Grotowski's idea of *conjunctio-oppositorum*, the 'conjunction of opposites'), so that this evil life-force could be channelled and penetrate the audience as forcefully as possible. Its characteristics include an onslaught of all the physical senses, an emphasis on the body and sensuality over the word and intellect, and exaggerated symbolism, in order to force 'metaphysics…to enter the mind through the body'. Artaud, 'The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto', 70.

[89] Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 92.

> We feel that an actor reaches the essence of his vocation whenever he commits an act of sincerity, when he unveils himself, opens and gives himself in an extreme, solemn gesture, and does not hold back before any obstacle set by custom and behaviour. And further, when this act of extreme sincerity is modelled in a living organism, in impulses, a way of breathing, a rhythm of thought and the circulation of blood, when it is ordered and brought to consciousness, not dissolving into chaos and formal anarchy—in a word, when this act accomplished through the theatre is **total**, then even if it doesn't protect us from the dark powers, at least it enables us to respond totally, that is, begin to exist.[90]

Grotowski admits that Artaud's 'idea of salvation through the theatre' is 'a challenge' to modern theatre-makers. He focuses on one of Artaud's key images, which Grotowski says 'holds the very foundation of the actor's art': 'Actors should be like martyrs burnt alive, still signalling to us from their stakes'.[91] This act of extreme witness describes Grotowski's total act. This image of the burning yet signalling martyr, Grotowski says, encapsulates 'the whole problem of spontaneity and discipline, this **conjunction of opposites** which gives birth to the total act'.[92] The 'conjunction of opposites', or *conjunctio-oppositorum*, was, along with the *via negativa*, one of the core principles of Grotowski's performance theory. The actor uses strict discipline to free himself of psychophysical blocks, so that the living, fiery impulses of his being are expressed both visibly and in a form that is pure, free from extraneous movement or noise. The whole being and only the true being of the actor is shared with the spectator through the vehicle of the performer's free, purified body – all signal and no noise. It is a new theatrical manner of 'incarnation'.[93]

---

[90] Ibid., 92-93, emphasis in original.
[91] Ibid., 93, quoting the last sentence of the preface to Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double*, 7: 'And if there is one truly infernal and damned thing left today, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like those tortured at the stake, signalling through the flames'.
[92] Ibid., emphasis in original.
[93] Ibid.

ii. Sacrifice

For Grotowski, sacrifice in performance is always *self*-sacrifice. The audience is never to be sacrificed to the performer's ego, but the performer is to give himself completely to his secure partner, and therefore indirectly to the spectator to whom he reveals himself in love, without seeking applause. To sacrifice is 'not to **do** something, but to **refrain** from doing something'[94] – it is to strip oneself away through the *via negativa*, instead of building up a wall of 'acting' between oneself and the spectator. The means of stripping away is *trance*, which Grotowski defines as 'the ability to concentrate in a particular theatrical way', which 'can be attained with a minimum of good-will'.[95] This sacrifice through the trance of the *via negativa* is summed up by Grotowski as 'a question of giving oneself. One must give oneself totally, in one's deepest intimacy, with confidence, as when one gives oneself in love'.[96]

The total act, the summit of the trance state, is also called a sacrifice because of the radicality of the intimacy which Grotowski expects the performer to share with the spectator.[97] In the total act, which is the climax of the actor's performance score, the actor is to 'reveal [his] most personal and closely guarded experience'.[98] It must be a 'concrete memory, so intimate, so little meant for the eyes of others that it will not be easy for you'.[99] A memory which the actor finds comfortable to share with

[94] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 37, emphasis in original.
[95] Ibid., 37-38.
[96] Ibid., 38.
[97] Grotowski's theatre was only intended for small, select audiences; it was never intended to be a theatre of mass entertainment. Grotowski writes that his company does not 'cater for the man who goes to the theatre to relax after a hard day's work', though that need is legitimate; instead, 'We are concerned with the spectator who has genuine spiritual needs and who really wishes, through confrontation with the performance, to analyse himself'. Ibid., 40.
[98] Grotowski, 'Skara Speech', 196.
[99] Ibid., 192.

others is under the actor's control, and can easily be manipulated and 'played'. A memory which is too difficult for the actor to share is not yet under the actor's control, and therefore creates an '**excess**'[100] of emotion which will come through directly from the actor's being to the spectator, without being re-shaped in a false image by the actor. The actor's job is to get out of the way, to allow these memories to shine through him without being blocked – thus the focus on acting as an 'eradication of blocks' rather than a 'collection of skills'.[101] 'When you achieve this' total act, Grotowski says to the actor, 'you will be pure, you will be purged, you will be without sin. If the memory is one of sin, afterwards you will be free of sin. It is a kind of redemption.'[102]

iii. Sin

The quote above is an example of Grotowski using the term 'sin' metaphorically. Despite his critique of Artaud's idea that indulging in passions in a theatrical performance will purge the participants of those passions, Grotowski here seems to suggest that if a performer completely commits himself to experiencing a memory of sin, and uses that memory as a means of giving himself to another person, then the sin will be purged. This concept of the purging of sin through the total act makes sense when connected to his idea of holiness, which is a state of complete psychophysical freedom in which a person fully reveals himself to another. If one has attained the fullness of self-revelation, one is holy, and therefore no longer 'sinful'. The intimate memory is no longer something precious or terrifying which one should

[100] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 38, emphasis in original.
[101] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 17.
[102] Grotowski, 'Skara Speech', 192.

hide within oneself, causing the performer to turn in and erect walls between himself and others in order to protect this memory; instead, the memory has become a means to openness, freedom, and self-giving. Therefore, the memory is no longer an 'occasion of sin', but an 'occasion of holiness'. In this sense, one can say that the sin is purged once the memory, and thus the performer's self of which it is a part, is shared fully and freely with another person. Sin, for Grotowski, is equated with self-isolation, psychophysical barriers, and a closed stance towards others. Holiness is equated with self-giving, psychophysical freedom, and an open stance of love towards others.

This sense of sin as stricture and holiness as freedom is tied to Grotowski's understanding of the ethical duty of the actor. He says:

> We cannot hide our personal, essential things – even if they are sins. On the contrary...we must open the door to the cycle of associations…. If we reveal ourselves with all these temptations, we transcend them, we master them through our consciousness.
>
> That is really the kernel of the ethical problem: do not hide that which is basic, it makes no difference whether the material is moral or immoral; our first obligation in art is to express ourselves through our own most personal motives.[103]

In other words, the duty of the actor is not to conform himself to 'a system of gestures and behaviour that serves as an ethic', such as a religious system;[104] rather, it is to free himself from any barriers to self-expression. Grotowski is clear elsewhere that such self-expression must come from a place of love; only love directed outside of himself gives the actor the freedom to express himself fully.

[103] Grotowski, 'American Encounter', 199-200.
[104] Ibid., 199.

iv. Soteriology

Holiness is key to the theatrical theology of Grotowski. Holiness is defined as psychophysical freedom of expression demonstrated in self-sacrifice, namely, self-revealing acts of love in which the performer gives himself fully to another person, the spectator, through the medium of the secure partner. Sin is the act of closing oneself off from another person by keeping oneself and one's own being barricaded inside a repressed psyche and inflexible body. Breaking through one's psychophysical barriers through the total act is therefore an atonement, a salvation from sin through an at-one-ment with one's neighbour, the spectator. This at-one-ment is communion between actor and spectator, a communion which Grotowski identifies as the essence of theatre.[105] The actor's total act 'is an invitation to [the spectator] to do the same thing',[106] and achieve his own redemption. This dynamic, communal act of atonement is the saving power of theatre; it is Grotowski's soteriology. It was this spiritual liberation which Grotowski sought for his actors through performance, and realised that he could only share with his spectators if he worked with them directly in the same way. Thus, Grotowski gave up the Theatre of Productions and moved into Paratheatre. Theatre became spiritual practice, instead of the ritual of a 'new Mass'.

4. Theatre as Ritual

It is helpful to explore thoroughly the ritual aspect of theatre which Grotowski explored before he gave up theatre for Paratheatre.

[105] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 19.
[106] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 37.

Grotowski is quite sophisticated when it comes to his understanding of ritual and its relationship to the theatre. Grotowski differentiates his theatre from the sacred theatres of both the East and West, and differentiates the essence of theatre from the essence of religious ritual. He disavows Artaud's project of creating a theatrical ritual with elements taken from Balinese sacred theatre, for example; he claims that 'the true lesson of the sacred theatre' is not how to get in touch with the spirits or possessing forces of which Artaud speaks, but is that 'spontaneity and discipline, far from weakening each other, mutually reinforce themselves'.[107] Possession is only effective when it communicates through the elaborate system of theatrical hieroglyphics that structures Balinese theatre; similarly, that system of signs only lives when the performers are possessed by the spirits. This lesson of *conjunctio-oppositorum*, the conjunction of opposites – the necessity of both chaos and discipline inhabiting the other – was one of the key lessons Grotowski took from the example of religious ritual.

Conjunctio-oppositorum was not only a theme of Grotowski's acting technique; it was also a principle guiding the material he chose as the content for his theatrical performances. This principle led him to serious engagement with both the religious and national myths of Polish Catholicism, through adaptations of texts based on Scripture, written by the Polish Romantics, or in other ways dealing with questions of God (e.g., *Dr Faustus*). Grotowski's combination of the principle of *conjunctio-oppositorum* with the sacred myths of his country and native religion led to a theatre 'variously called "collision with the roots," "the dialectics of mockery and

[107] Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 89.

apotheosis," or even "religion expressed through blasphemy: love speaking out through hate"'.[108]

Grotowski critiques Artaud's identification of 'myth as the dynamic centre of the theatre performance'.[109] He notes that Artaud 'did not...take account of the fact that, in our age...the community of the theatre cannot possibly **identify** itself with the myth, because there is no single faith. Only a **confrontation** is possible'.[110] The pluralism and increasing secularism of modern society caused a problem for anyone, like Artaud (according to Grotowski's reading), trying to create new societal myths in the theatre. Myth had power because it was believed to be true, or at least meaningful as part of a shared communal history. New, made-from-scratch myths could only work by cannibalizing the old, since only the elements of the old retained the numinous authority of history and identity.

If an artist wanted to have a spiritual impact on his audience using myth, therefore, he needed to use elements of the old myths. There must be some pre-existing framework of meaning that both the artist and the audience shared, so that they could communicate. Grotowski writes that, 'In order that the spectator may be stimulated into self-analysis when confronted with the actor, there must be some common ground already existing in both of them, something they can either dismiss in one gesture or jointly worship'.[111] In the case of a religious ritual attended by believers of that religion, it is easy for the participants to 'jointly worship' their god, because they have a shared faith. A 'theatre of communion' is possible; however, in a pluralistic and secular society, where there is no common faith, joint worship is not

[108] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 22.
[109] Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 89.
[110] Ibid., emphasis in original.
[111] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 42.

possible. If the participants are wholly secularized, they may have in common their rejection of religious faith, which they can dismiss together; yet they need a common myth *to* reject. As Grotowski continues, 'Therefore the theatre must attack what might be called the collective complexes of society...the myths which are not an invention of the mind but are, so to speak, inherited through one's blood, religion, culture and climate'[112]—in other words, collective myths, or what Grotowski calls '**representations collectives**'.[113]

In the text 'Towards a Poor Theatre', Grotowski gives an account of his examination of myth and how to use it in the theatre. He claims that

> theatre, when it was still part of religion, was already theatre: it liberated the spiritual energy of the congregation or tribe by incorporating myth and profaning or rather transcending it. The spectator thus had a renewed awareness of his personal truth in the truth of the myth, and through fright and a sense of the sacred he came to catharsis.[114]

However the experience of religion as drama could be described in times past, Grotowski claims that circumstances have changed in the modern world:

> As social groupings are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux, disappearing and being reincarnated. The spectators are more and more individuated in their relation to the myth as corporate truth or group model, and belief is often a matter of intellectual conviction. This means that it is much more difficult to elicit the sort of shock needed to get at those psychic layers behind the life-mask. Group identification with myth—the equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth—is virtually impossible today.[115]

In other words, audience members no longer view the communal myths as necessarily true for them individually; people are more likely to see religious and other belief as a matter for individual discernment and commitment, rather than as a shared framework

[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., emphasis in original.
[114] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 22-23.
[115] Ibid., 23.

for understanding the world, society, and their individual place in both, as well as their society's place in the world. One is no longer incorporated into a shared belief by receiving membership into a community through birth or nurture; one now *chooses* what one believes, what communities of belief one is a part of, and which communal myths one chooses to take upon oneself. Even if one's audience members share the same national, cultural, and religious background, one can no longer assume that they share the same beliefs, and one's certainty that they at least share the same communal myths fades as the beliefs fragment.

If audience members could no longer identify with myths presented theatrically, what could be done? Grotowski suggested two things. First, audiences could experience '**confrontation** with myth rather than identification'. Second, this confrontation could be experienced through the human body, which remained just as tangible and as much a locus of meaning as always: 'The violation of the living organism, the exposure carried to outrageous excess, returns us to a concrete mythical situation, an experience of common human truth'.[116] If myth and religious ritual were understood as those experiences in which human beings were exposed to extreme situations that burst their boundaries, then extremity in the theatre could serve the same function. Grotowski admitted, 'We are bound, consciously or unconsciously, to be influenced by the traditions, science and art, even by the superstitions and presentiments peculiar to the civilisation which has moulded us, just as we breathe the air of the particular continent which has given us life'.[117] Since those collective myths still existed, they could be used to provide a powerful experience in the theatre; however, since they were no longer believed in, the answer was not asking the

[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid., 24.

audience to find themselves in the myth. The answer, according to Grotowski, was to break the myth apart by blaspheming against it, in order to reveal whatever deeper truth it may hold. Grotowski viewed this confrontation as 'a "trying out", a testing of whatever is a traditional value. A performance...conceived as a combat against traditional and contemporary values (whence "transgression") – this seems to me the only real chance for myth to work in the theatre'.[118] It was for this reason that Grotowski chose texts which reflected the national and religious myths of Polish Catholicism, his native culture, and blasphemed against them in violent and often shocking ways. Grotowski used this technique of confrontation in his production of *The Constant Prince*, one of his most famous productions. This classic play of Polish Romanticism was used by Juliusz Osterwa and the Reduta Theatre in the early years of Polish independence to unite the nation in a shared Polish Catholic identity; Grotowski used it in the era of Polish Communism to challenge the Romantic myth of Poland as the 'Christ of Nations'.[119]

5. The Constant Prince

The Constant Prince was an 1843 translation and adaptation by Polish Romantic writer Juliusz Słowacki of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's 1628/29 play of the same name.[120] An example of the importance of this play in the Polish Romantic repertoire is John Paul II's reference to the title character to describe Adam Stefan

[118] Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 90.
[119] For the term 'Christ of Nations', see Davies, *God's Playground*, 162.
[120] '*The Constant Prince (Książę Niezłomny)*', in *Encyclopedia.Grotowski*, ed. Sylwia Fiałkiewicz and Dariusz Kosiński and trans. Paul Vickers (Instytut im. Jerzego Grotowskiego), published 8 March 2012, updated 20 November 2013, accessed 10 December 2014, http://www.grotowski.net/en/encyclopedia/constant-prince-ksiaze-niezlomny.

Sapieha, the Archbishop of Kraków during the Second World War. John Paul II called Sapieha 'an "unbroken prince"', to indicate his constancy in defence of the Polish people and the Catholic faith under the oppression of the Nazi regime during World War II.[121] This use of the title of 'unbroken' or 'constant prince' to describe the Prince Archbishop, the 'de facto *Interrex* of Poland for more than five years',[122] indicates the importance of *The Constant Prince* as a symbol of Polish Catholic resistance to foreign oppression. *The Constant Prince* was also the most famous production of the most famous Polish theatre between the two World Wars, the Reduta Theatre, which took it on tour throughout the country. The Reduta's founder, well-known actor and director Juliusz Osterwa, played the title role in this high-profile production, of which more will be written in Chapter IV below.

By the time Grotowski chose *The Constant Prince*, it had been 40 years since Osterwa's famous staging and 20 years since Archbishop Sapieha had served his country as its 'constant prince'. The play and its hero were a part of national religious and cultural mythology, and therefore a collective myth suitable for 'confrontation'.

The play itself is based on the story of Don Fernando, a Portuguese prince who was captured by the Moors in the 15th century and refused to ransom himself by handing over Christian villages to his Muslim captors. He died in captivity, and was seen by his country as a martyr. When Słowacki translated this play into Polish, he also added some of his own 'elements exploring spiritual transformation linked to the readiness for the complete sacrifice of anything sensual and corporeal for supernatural

[121] Quoted in Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 73.
[122] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 73. Weigel notes that according to 'ancient Polish custom, the Primate of Poland held the office of *Interrex* during the period between the death of one Polish king and the election of his successor'. During World War II, the Cardinal Primate of Poland, August Hlond, went into exile with the legitimate Polish government, and so Archbishop Sapieha, who remained in Poland, became the 'de facto *Interrex*'. Ibid.

values'.[123] This language strengthened the identification between Don Fernando and Poland, underscoring the essential Polish Romantic theme of Poland under partition as 'a figure of the suffering Christ'.[124]

The Constant Prince was an important play to Polish Romanticism because of its themes of *sacrificial suffering* which brings *salvation*, themes which Jennifer Kumiega notes are also key to Grotowski's approach to theatre. She identifies 'the *sacrificial act*: the individual action, founded on what is common and permanent in humanity, made on behalf of human society, involving *suffering* and ultimately *salvation*' as the 'theme, which is at the root of the entire Polish Romantic movement, [and which] has appeared in almost of all Grotowski's productions'.[125] She notes that it was in *The Constant Prince*, as well as in Grotowski's final production of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, that 'both the inner and outer aspects of the sacrificial theme were explored most fully, and the transgression and giving of self was seen as an illuminating, *apotheosizing* experience'.[126] The sacrificial theme of the play – the self-sacrifice of Don Fernando – was united with the sacrificial theme of Grotowski's acting method – the self-sacrifice of the actor. The union of the two led to the performance by Ryszard Cieślak in the role of Don Fernando, the Constant Prince, being lauded as the pinnacle of the Grotowskian approach to performance. Critic Josef Kelera, whose 1965 review in the journal *Odra*, 'Monologues of Ryszard Cieslak as the Constant Prince: steps towards his summit', was re-printed in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, writes that he has always:

retained a certain scepticism with regard to the arguments [Grotowski] uses

[123] '*The Constant Prince (Książę Niezłomny)*', n.p.
[124] Boleslaw Taborski, introduction to *Job*, in Wojtyła, *Collected Plays*, 23.
[125] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 141, emphasis added.
[126] Ibid., 141-42, emphasis added.

> which compare the work of the actor to a psychic act of transgression, an exploration, a sublimation, a displacement of deep-lying psychic substances. However, when faced with the creation of Ryszard Cieslak, this scepticism is called in question.
>
> In my profession as a theatre critic I have never yet felt the desire to use that dreadfully banal and overworked expression which, in this particular case, is quite simply true: this creation is 'inspired'…. Until now, I accepted with reserve the terms such as 'secular holiness', 'act of humility', 'purification' which Grotowski uses. Today I admit that they can be applied perfectly to the character of the Constant Prince. A sort of psychic illumination emanates from the actor. I cannot find any other definition. In the culminating moments of the role, everything that is technique is as though illuminated from within, light, literally imponderable. At any moment the actor will levitate … He is in a state of grace. And all around him this 'cruel theatre' with its blasphemies and excesses is transformed into a theatre in a state of grace.[127]

Critic Jan Błoński connects this sacrifice of the actor with the sacrifice of the character when he says: 'As the Constant Prince saves values by means of passive sacrifice, so the actor redeems the theatre...by the intense humility with which he offers himself to the public'.[128] Jennifer Kumiega claims that:

> It was in this act of sacrifice itself that Grotowski felt the Laboratory Theatre research had unconsciously rediscovered ritual, after abandoning the earlier conscious search for it.... Grotowski believed that the actor's gift of self-sacrifice had the potential to realize some of the fundamental aspects of ritual, for which he was searching in the theatrical experience: i.e. an act of revelation and communion between those present which would consequently permit deeper knowledge and experience of self and others (and hence change).[129]

The Constant Prince was the defining production of the 'total act', and was the culmination of Grotowski's Theatre of Productions.

---

[127] Josef Kelera, 'Monologues of Ryszard Cieslak as the Constant Prince: steps towards his summit', *Odra* XI (1965), re-printed in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, n.p. (printed between Figures 32 and 33 in the image plates). Kelera is applying Artaud's term 'Theatre of Cruelty' to Grotowski.
[128] Jan Błoński, 'Grotowski and His Laboratory Theatre', Special Edition, *Dialog* (1970): 142-150, 147, quoted in Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 142.
[129] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 142-43.

i. Adaptation of the Text

A key feature of Grotowski's production process was the adaptation of the texts with which he worked. He used the technique of *montage*, or 'the flow of assembled images that create an understandable whole'.[130] Grotowski almost never presented a script as-written, but adapted it, removing text, re-arranging text, and inserting text that he had either written himself or taken from other sources. Kumiega cites Raymonde Temkine's description of Grotowski's creative process as tripartite: 1) '*initial structuring*, performed by Grotowski on an original text'; 2) 'a *collective phase of elaboration*, involving a great deal of spontaneous creative work'; and 3) 'the *structured composition of the role into a "system of signs"*', also known as 'Grotowski's "acting score"'.[131] These three parts can be thought of as: 1) Grotowski's initial arrangement of the text; 2) continued arrangement of the text in collaboration with the actors in rehearsal; and 3) the fixing of the actors' performance score.[132] Grotowski describes this process:

> The initial montage is done before rehearsals begin. But during rehearsals we do additional montage all the time…. We eliminate those parts of the text which have no importance for us, those parts with which we can neither agree nor disagree. Within the montage one finds certain words that function vis-à-vis our own experiences…. It's a meeting, a confrontation. That's why there must be little interpolation. But there is rearrangement of words, scenes. We organise the event according to the logic of our cues. But the essential parts of the text—those which carry the sense of the literary work—remain intact and are treated with great respect. Otherwise there could be no meeting.[133]

---

[130] Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 92-93.
[131] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 132, citing Temkine, *Grotowski*, 111-13.
[132] The 'score' is the sequence of words, actions, and emotional associations which the actor enacts as his performance.
[133] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 132, quoting Jerzy Grotowski, 'An Interview with Grotowski' (interviewers R. Schechner and T. Hoffman), *The Drama Review* 13:1 (T41) (Fall 1968): 44-45. A fragment of this interview (not including the quoted text) is re-printed as 'American Encounter' in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 199-210.

Montage creates a text distilled to its essence, which both the performers and the spectators can 'confront' and therefore 'meet'. It also creates a text re-arranged in order to match the spiritual journeys that the actors are working out in themselves and with their director through the process of rehearsal and performance. Slowiak and Cuesta write that Grotowski's 'real innovation was to use the reworked text as a pretext for the actor's personal work'.[134] Montage therefore served the acting.

Montage also influenced the development of the scenography, the theatrical playing space, in which the audience was characteristically incorporated in a Grotowski production. Slowiak and Cuesta note that Grotowski 'makes the distinction between the seat of the montage in the perception of the spectator and in the doer'.[135] The elements of montage are not just the words of the text, but the actions that are specified in the text, as well as any other actions the performer adds to the text to 'flesh it out'. Also included in the montage by the performer are the intimate personal emotions and memories that he accesses in order to breathe life into the actions and words. This entire performance score is a montage. One can say that the first part of the creative process, the montage of the text, is the director's montage. In rehearsal, the director guides the actors in the creation of the performance score, which includes further re-assembling of the text. They are collaborators. The director also participates in the fixing of the performance score, but the act of choosing which personal associations to bring to the words and actions in order to give life to that score is the actor's own work of montage. At that point, in the actual performance of the score, both in rehearsal and especially in performance for an audience, the seat of the

[134] Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 14.
[135] Ibid., 93, citing Jerzy Grotowski, 'From the Theatre Company to Art as Vehicle', in Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (London: Routledge, 1995), 124.

montage is in the actor, who alone sees the relationship in his own being between the words, the actions, and the intimate associations of his memory. The director's montage is the assembling of the text and the guiding of the actors in rehearsal. The actor's montage is his own personal spiritual work in rehearsal towards his own total act, during which he assembles (and re-assembles) the text, the actions he is given and comes up with, and his own personal memories and feelings. Finally, in performance, a third seat of the montage comes into play, that of the spectator. The spectator cannot see directly into the actor's soul, and know the personal associations he is bringing to his score. But, if the actor succeeds in the act of self-revelation which is the total act, the spectator will experience the power of that self-revelation, which will give power and meaning to the words and actions he sees taking place.

In addition, part of the montage which the director creates is the casting of the spectators in a particular role, which Slowiak and Cuesta describe as 'directing two ensembles' – one of actors and one of spectators.[136] For example, in earlier productions, Grotowski had given the spectators the role of characters within the world of the play. In *Dr Faustus*, the audience members were dinner guests at the table of Faustus on the night his soul was to be taken to Hell. In *Kordian*, which was set in a mental hospital (a setting not indicated within the play), they were fellow mental patients with the actors. By the time of *The Constant Prince*, however, Grotowski no longer tried to get his spectators to participate in the play as partners with the actors in the play's world. Instead, spectators 'were still assigned a nominal "role", but all that was expected of them was that they be silent witnesses…. It became not so much a question of spatially orchestrating the two groups, actors and

[136] Slowiak and Cuesta, *Jerzy Grotowski*, 93.

spectators, but rather of creating the conditions for a concentration upon the process of the actor'.[137] This casting of the spectators in the role of 'witnesses' of the actor's sacrifice was reflected in the scenography of *The Constant Prince*.

ii. Scenography

The scenic design for *The Constant Prince* was simple. The action took place in the centre of a rectangular arena, surrounded by high wooden walls. The audience sat around the arena, behind the walls, so that they had to peer down on the performers from positions of power. Grotowski used the metaphors of 'watching animals in a ring, or like medical students watching an operation'. He intended this 'detached, downward viewing' to lend an air of 'moral transgression' to the proceedings.[138] The audience was a mute, acquiescent witness to the imprisonment, torture, and death of the Constant Prince.

This sense of simultaneous separation from the action by the high walls, while also looking down upon it from a height, a position of power, paralleled the position of the Constant Prince. Like the Prince, the spectators passively accepted violence – not only the violence they witnessed, which was a physical violence to the character (and, to an extent, to the actor) as well as a visual violence to them, but also the aural violence they experienced, namely, the shrieks, cries, and yelled threats of the various actors. Again like the Prince, the audience could have stopped the violence at any point, by choosing to disrupt the performance or remove themselves from it.

Yet, the performance is a challenge to the audience's passivity, which is shown to be different from the Prince's. The Prince does not react to the torture, both

[137] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 54.
[138] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 20, emphasis removed.

physical and psychological, visited upon him by his captors – offering neither fear nor anger nor condemnation. He 'opposes only passivity and kindness'.[139] As a result of the Prince's 'strangeness', his captors respond with increasing derision and physical violence. When he is finally killed, his captors raise him up as an object of 'adoration', a divine figure.[140] A caption in *Towards a Poor Theatre* to an image from the end of the performance notes: 'The Constant Prince is dead. Now is the time to apotheosize him and kill others in his name'.[141] Ludwik Flaszen, Grotowski's theatre manager, writes that the Prince is 'a living hymn in homage to human existence.... The Prince's ecstasy is his suffering which he can endure only by offering himself to the truth as if in an act of love'.[142] Grotowski's production is a confrontation with the myth of Christ, the innocent lamb silently led to the slaughter,[143] presented not in order to indict Christ, but to indict those audience members who identify themselves with the myth, and see themselves in the place of Christ – pure, innocent, and good. The scenography which casts the spectators as silent, seemingly approving witnesses of the crowds' torture and murder of the Christ figure emphasizes their parallels to the crowds chanting 'Crucify!' on Good Friday, not their parallels to the suffering Saviour. This casting was a direct challenge to the Polish Romantic identification of Poland and the Pole with the suffering Christ. It challenged the spectators to look at themselves as Poles, and therefore presumably as Catholics, who saw themselves as the unjustly suffering heirs of Christ, yet had just mutely allowed him to be killed again in the persons of both the Prince and the actor, Ryszard Cieślak, who, through

[139] Ludwik Flaszen, '*The Constant Prince*' (introduction to the production in the Polish programme), in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 81.
[140] Ibid., 82.
[141] Caption to Figure 32, in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, n.p.
[142] Flaszen, 'The Constant Prince', 82.
[143] See Isaiah 53:7.

his performance of the total act, allowed himself to be completely exposed to them. Would the spectators be brave enough to respond to Cieślak's self-revelation with their own self-revelation, their own total act, by baring themselves and their own hypocrisies to themselves and to the world? If so, they would sacrifice themselves as completely as did Cieślak and the Prince, and would therefore be able to renew their identification with the myth of Christ – healed, forgiven, and redeemed, according to Grotowski's conception, through the atonement and salvation of the total act.

6. Some Criticisms of Grotowski

Grotowski's theatre, although a major influence on the development of avant-garde experimental theatre, physical theatre, and environmental/immersive theatre, was always a minority theatre. That is, Grotowski and his company chose to separate themselves from the mainstream, 'rich theatre',[144] with its large audiences and stage spectacles, and play for only small audiences,[145] with a stage environment as stripped down to its bare elements as possible. Grotowski made grand claims for the experience for which he aimed in his 'poor theatre': the 'salvation' of the actor, who became 'holy' through a complete revelation of self in performance, a 'total act' which would provoke the spectator to a similar act of self-revelation.

[144] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 19.

[145] For example, during the Laboratory Theatre's celebrated 1969 visit to New York City to present *The Constant Prince, Akropolis*, and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, they purposely capped the number of attendees at 100 per performance (and 40 for *Apocalypsis*), even though potential spectators allegedly pounded on the doors of the church in which they were performing to try to get in. Eric Bentley, 'Dear Grotowski: An Open Letter', in Schechner and Wolford, *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, 166.

Theatre critic Eric Bentley, who witnessed all three productions of the Laboratory Theatre's 1969 tour to New York City (*The Constant Prince*, *Akropolis*, and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*), in an 'Open Letter' to Grotowski questioned the 'self-important' tone of Grotowski's writings,[146] and his assertion that theatrical ritual could 'save' the actor: '[E]ven the Church never went so far as to believe that in ritual there was salvation'.[147] Instead of seeing Cieślak's portrayal of the Constant Prince as 'inspired' (as critic Josef Kelera had),[148] Bentley described the Prince as 'the Good Boy with a Slight Case of Masochism', and wrote that the production depicted a 'snobbish' version of Christianity 'for cultivated, superior chaps only'.[149] He critiqued *Akropolis* for a 'deplorable formalism' and 'cult of personality' which foregrounded the innovative acting technique and scenography at the expense of the story, which in Grotowski's version depicted concentration camp victims dying in Auschwitz.[150]

In contrast, Bentley praised *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, and wrote that Grotowski's poor theatre was 'redeemed' by the 'intimacy' of the production. This intimacy, Bentley noted, was not due to any attempt to violate the spectators' private space or to any overly-literal manoeuvres to force an intimacy, such as Bentley had experienced elsewhere in New York: 'A man shows you his penis, a woman clouts you over the ear, while the whole acting company shouts four-letter denunciations at you – that's our intimacy, our charming "audience involvement"'.[151] Instead of experiencing this forced intimacy, Bentley experienced an intimacy born of respect:

[146] Bentley, 'Dear Grotowski', 170.
[147] Ibid., 165.
[148] Kelera, 'Monologues of Ryszard Cieslak as the Constant Prince', n.p.
[149] Bentley, 'Dear Grotowski', 165-66.
[150] Ibid., 166.
[151] Ibid., 167.

> In your [Grotowski's] theatre a spectator is a person and is allowed to keep his dignity, i.e. his individual separateness. Sometimes your actors come within inches of us, but they never lay hands on us, nor whisper in an individual ear. In the space our body occupies, we are inviolate.[152]

Bentley connected this intimacy to a peculiar experience he had during the performance, which he felt compelled to share as a public datum:

> About halfway through the play I had a quite specific illumination. A message came to me – from nowhere, as they say – about my private life and self. This message must stay private, to be true to itself, but the fact that it arrived has public relevance, I think, and I should publicly add that I don't recall this sort of thing happening to me in the theatre before….[153]

This care for the spectator, which created the intimate environment needed for this experience, can protect Grotowski's theatre from becoming an overbearing, narcissistic display in which the artist vomits up his inner turmoil as 'art'. The technique, the artifice, of Grotowski's theatre is in creating a situation in which the actor and spectator can be present to each other through the mediating structure of the play.

It is useful to keep in mind that theatre became for Grotowski more and more a spiritual practice, and less and less an art form, leading to his abandonment of the formal theatre in favour of Paratheatre shortly after this tour to New York City. Theatre was Grotowski's chosen framework to explore the possibilities of encounter between human beings; his language is poetic and metaphorical, intended to suggest associations and to inspire rather than to systematize a technique that could be applied to other forms of theatre. He did not write books to disseminate his ideas or theory; almost all of Grotowski's published material comes from transcripts or notes of talks or conversations. He preferred to work with small groups of hand-picked

[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.

collaborators, with whom he developed relationships over years. The building of these relationships, and the respect and trust they engendered, were the context of the development of his more radical ideas about self-giving, self-revelation, authenticity, openness, and sacrifice. If his statements sound extreme and unattainable, it is because he formulated them for a company totally committed to testing the boundaries of performance; extremity was essential to the quest.

Nevertheless, his claims were grand. First of all, his claim that in the total act, the centre of Grotowski's theatre, the actor could 'lay himself bare', 'tear off the mask of daily life, and 'reveal' himself[154] calls into question the very definition of acting. How well can an audience member ever really know an actor through the actor's portrayal of a character? For example, Ryszard Cieślak's performance in *The Constant Prince* was lauded as the highest achievement of Grotowski's approach to acting. The memory which Cieślak used as the basis for his 'total act', the climax of his performance score, was the memory of his first shared sexual experience,[155] but there is no way for the audience member to know that fact from the performance itself. In addition, does the actor's choice of a sexual memory guarantee that the audience member will receive an insight into a part of the actor that is more true or authentic than any other memory would provide? The fact that the actor chooses a memory at all means that the actor has already reviewed different aspects of himself and chosen one in particular to inform his actions, thereby presenting only a partial version of himself to the audience. This partial selection is similar to the work of a

[154] See Grotowski, 'The Actor's Technique', 178.

[155] Tatiana Motta Lima, 'Investigate the memory or investigate oneself through the memory: Notes on the notion of memory in the artistic journey of Jerzy Grotowski', trans. Simone Couto, in *Jerzy Grotowski: L'eredità vivente*, ed. Antonio Attisani (Torino: aAccademia University Press, 2012), 59-60, citing Jerzy Grotowski, 'Le Prince Constant de Ryszard Cieślak', in G. Banu, *Ryszard Cieślak, l'acteur-emblème des années soixante* (Paris: Actes-Sud Papiers, 1992), 17.

Stanislavskian actor, who also chooses which aspects of himself most resonate with a particular character, and which emotional associations provide the strongest 'fuel' for the role. Even an actor playing himself always plays only a version of himself, in that he must create a finite, integrated artwork out of the vast materials of his personality and life. Watching an actor play multiple roles in different productions may give an audience member the sense that he 'knows' that actor, but the audience member cannot test whether that knowledge is accurate without meeting the actor directly. In addition, if the actor has a wide range, how is the audience member to know which roles are closest to the actor's own personality? Is the real Anthony Hopkins more like the sinister, seductive Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* or the absent-minded, amiable C.S. Lewis in *Shadowlands*?[156] If Grotowski's goal was to enable a true encounter between two people, it makes sense that he would cease to do theatre and move into paratheatrical activities, in light of the barrier that the actor's role by its very nature places between himself and the spectator.

Grotowski also claimed that the total act would cleanse an actor from sin,[157] that through it he would 'repeat the atonement',[158] and that the pursuit of the total act would give an actor 'a kind of inner harmony and peace of mind'.[159] Even granting that Grotowski was speaking metaphorically, it is worth asking whether Grotowski's approach to acting did give his actors 'inner harmony and peace of mind', and whether the act of revealing one's sins in public (even transmuted through a role) does cleanse the actor of them, at least psychologically.

---

[156] *The Silence of the Lambs (2-Disc Collector's Edition)*, DVD, directed by Jonathan Demme (1991; Beverly Hills, CA: MGM, 2007) and *Shadowlands,* DVD, directed by Richard Attenborough (1993; New York, NY: HBO Home Video, 1999).
[157] Grotowski, 'Skara Speech', 192.
[158] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 43.
[159] Ibid., 45.

Grotowski critiqued Antonin Artaud's assertion that engaging in violent emotion would drain violence from the psyche, like draining pus from a boil.[160] Grotowski argued that the total act was more healing than Artaud's approach, because in the total act the actor brought a powerful emotional memory to mind and revealed it to the spectator in an 'ordered' way.[161] Grotowski also argued that it did not matter whether the memory shared was a memory of a sin – 'our first obligation in art is to express ourselves', and if the actor openly shares his 'temptations' and 'sins', he 'transcend[s] them, [he] master[s] them through [his] consciousness'.[162]

There are two questionable premises which underlie Grotowski's statements. The first is the premise that the artist's first obligation is to express himself, regardless of whether or not such expression involves sin. Not everyone agrees that self-expression is the artist's first duty, much less that the artist can ignore moral considerations in the creation of his art. For example, in *The Responsibility of the Artist*, Jacques Maritain allows that the 'first responsibility of the artist is toward his work', insofar as a person is acting as an artist.[163] Nevertheless, 'because an artist is a man before being an artist, the autonomous world of morality is simply superior to (and more inclusive than) the autonomous world of art… In other words Art is indirectly and extrinsically subordinate to morality'.[164] If there is a moral imperative not to create a particular piece of art, or not to create it in a particular way, the person's first obligation is not to engage in that immoral action, which may mean

[160] See Artaud, 'Theatre and the Plague', 9-22.
[161] See Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', 92-93.
[162] Grotowski, 'American Encounter', 199-200.
[163] Jacques Maritain, *The Responsibility of the Artist* (1960), I.2. Accessed online through the Jacques Maritain Center, University of Notre Dame, 25 February 2016: http://maritain.nd.edu/jmc/etext/resart.htm. Citations are based on chapter and section numbers.
[164] Ibid., I.4.

abandoning the piece of art if the piece's artistic integrity requires immorality. According to the same logic, if an artist's self-expression requires him to share his sins in a way that is dangerous for his audience, or which might re-involve him in sinning, his first obligation is to avoid that manner of self-expression.

The second questionable premise is that if an actor brings a sinful action to mind, he will 'transcend' or 'master' it through his 'consciousness'. On the one hand, Freudian analysis operates partly on this principle that to bring a traumatic memory out of the unconscious into the conscious mind helps decrease the power that the traumatic memory has over the person's unconscious responses.[165] On the other hand, some disciples of Stanislavski, such as Stella Adler and Sanford Meisner, rejected the use of traumatic memories in acting because of the danger that such use could 'turn into a kind of therapy without a license', forcing actors 'into emotional areas they are not equipped to handle'.[166] Grotowski's suggestion that an actor 'master' a memory of sin by using it in his acting carries with it an element of risk; the actor may achieve a cathartic performance, but he may also be 'mastered' by the memory if he is not ready to grapple with it.

Related to that concern, one can ask whether Grotowski's actors did achieve 'inner harmony and peace of mind'. One difficulty in assessing the answer to this question is that Grotowski's whole method of working encouraged reticence in discussing the work outside of the rehearsal room. Another difficulty is that the attainment of 'inner harmony' is hard to quantify. In the early years of the theatre, one of the founding members, Rena Mirecka, complained in her journals about excessive

[165] Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 23-27.
[166] Judith Weston, *Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television* (Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 1996), 154.

drinking, 'laziness', and 'arrogance' among members of the company.[167] The tone of her comments on Grotowski ranged from frustrated ('his approach is so inhuman, ruthless and spiteful…Life with Grotowski is not easy')[168] to worshipful ('When I recall this lecture, Boss, I believe it came from the experience of your body and soul').[169] Different critics have also raised questions about the psychological effect of Grotowski's performance method on his actors. For example, Paul Allain writes that 'the overall cost of this work to the actors was considerable and cannot be overlooked. Stanisław Scierski [one of the Laboratory Theatre's actors] later committed suicide and Ryszard Cieślak essentially drank himself to death'.[170] Ferdinando Taviani also refers to this belief that Cieślak 'was destroyed by a double bind: he could only be capable as an actor with Grotowski, but he had to stop being an actor if he wanted to stay with Grotowski',[171] since Grotowski largely ceased being a director after 1969. Taviani calls this belief a 'myth',[172] but he admits that Cieślak used alcohol and cigarettes to pull himself out of the psychological depths of performance. He asks:

> If dropping to your knees time and time again, day after day, risks damaging the meniscus, does repeatedly lurching from the compressed time of performance to the everyday time afterwards – the time of cigarettes and booze – risk bruising or straining something intimate and personal? We may not know anything for certain, but I do feel we should ask that question.[173]

---

[167] Zbigniew Osiński, 'The Notebooks of Rena Mirecka', *Mime Journal* 25 (2014): 16-46. References are to the entries on 28 February 1963 (p. 31); 3 March 1963 (p. 31); and 17 May 1964 (p. 41).
[168] Ibid., 3 March 1963, 31.
[169] Ibid., 22 April 1963, 37. The worshipful tone increases as time goes on. In the entry for 4 July 1963, Mirecka capitalises 'He' when referring to Grotowski (p. 40), and she ends the entry for 17-18 July 1963 with the plea, 'Guide us, Boss' (p. 41). These addresses to Grotowski in the second person, and the use of the title 'Boss' in place of his name, also increase with the passage of time.
[170] Paul Allain, preface to *Acting with Grotowski: Theatre as a Field for Experiencing Life*, by Zbigniew Cynkutis, trans. Khalid Tyabji, ed. Paul Allain and Khalid Tyabji (New York: Routledge, 2015), xiv.
[171] Ferdinando Taviani, 'In Memory of Ryszard Cieslak', trans. Susan Bassnett, in Schechner and Wolford, *Grotowski Sourcebook*, 191.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., 202.

These examples do not prove that Grotowski's approach to performance was any more likely to result in psychological damage to the actor than, for example, using a different Stanislavski-based approach, but they do suggest that Grotowski's method may not have been as conducive to the creation of 'inner harmony and peace of mind' as he would have liked.

Yet, there could be immense loyalty between Grotowski and his actors, several of whom stayed with him over decades and engaged in a clearly rigorous and all-encompassing mode of life in order to accomplish great artistic and personal achievements. Critic Jan Kott writes about Cieślak: 'Cieslak was a young man without experience when he surrendered himself to Grotowski's Method. He became one of the greatest actors in the world. Peter Brook told me that after Stanislavsky, no one knew as much about acting as Cieslak and Grotowski'.[174] Critic Josef Kelera, previously a Grotowski sceptic, wrote that Cieślak's performance was 'inspired', and Grotowski's theatre was 'a theatre in a state of grace'.[175] Even critic Eric Bentley, who was also sceptical of many of Grotowski's claims and critical of his productions of *The Constant Prince* and *Akropolis*, admired the production of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, and respected the intimacy between actor and spectator which Grotowski had been able to create, which resulted in Bentley having an unusual experience of private revelation during the performance.[176] Critical accounts such as these demonstrate that Grotowski's theatre was able to create experiences of unusual power, and, what is more, repeat them. For this reason it is difficult to dismiss Grotowski's language and

[174] Jan Kott, 'Why Should I Take Part in the Sacred Dance?', trans. E.J. Czerwinski, in Schechner and Wolford, *Grotowski Sourcebook*, 137.
[175] Kelera, 'Monologues of Ryszard Cieslak as the Constant Prince', n.p.
[176] See Bentley, 'Dear Grotowski', 167.

aims as necessarily unrealistic or unachievable; there is evidence that Grotowski and his actors achieved something real and powerful, even if it did not necessarily result in the 'salvation' he suggested.

7. Summary

Grotowski's work moved from the attempted creation of a new 'secular sacrum' in the theatre to engagement with performance as a spiritual practice, starting with his work with actors in the development of an acting method culminating in the 'total act', and continuing through his paratheatrical experiments and later research into the Theatre of Sources, Objective Drama, and Art as Vehicle. Grotowski is most known for his Theatre of Productions, his work presenting theatrical performances, which used Grotowski's style of 'poor theatre'. This theatre was famously called 'holy theatre' by Peter Brook in Brook's *The Empty Space*,[177] and Grotowski's use of eucharistic language such as communion, holiness, and sacrifice in his theatre theory, as well as his influence on modern experimental and physical theatre, make him a prime example of 20th-century 'sacred theatre'. Unlike the 'sacred theatre' of the Balinese and other polytheistic societies which influenced Artaud, for example, or the medieval liturgical drama that was the 'sacred theatre' of Western Christianity, Grotowski's 'sacred theatre' is atheistic, not having a place for a personal God either in his early experiments in theatrical ritual or in his later exploration of performance as a spiritual practice. In addition, his definition of holiness as the breaking down of one's boundaries through self-sacrifice in love in order to share one's being with

[177] For Grotowski as an example of 'holy theatre', see Brook, *The Empty Space*, 59-60.

another and therefore achieve a kind of communion is similar to the presentation of the a/theological sacred outlined by Carl Lavery in the book *Sacred Theatre*, in which Lavery points to Grotowski as an example of sacred theatre.[178]

Lavery, however, does not see Grotowski's sacred theatre, or those of Jacques Copeau,[179] Antonin Artaud, or Peter Brook, as any longer viable, because they still rely too much on shared values, a shared communal experience, and a place (the theatre) that is 'separated' from life. Lavery believes that a theatre which 'relies on the existence of shared, transcendent values' cannot speak to today's world, which is 'characterized by pluralism, rationalism and privatization'. Even though the a/theological sacred with which Lavery aligns himself 'is at the basis of all community (inasmuch as it opens to the Other)', Lavery does not believe that sacred theatre itself is 'a communal experience'; instead, 'the sacred is always singular – it explodes in and on individual consciousness, before expanding out into the world and cosmos'. While multiple people may experience sacred theatre at the same time, any experience of the sacred is inherently personal, and should not rely on a communal framework, like a ritual, which assumes that the experience is (or ought to be) shared. In addition, a theatre which takes place in a setting (like a theatre building) that is set apart from the rest of life is not a truly sacred theatre, because this localization supposedly denies the ability of the sacred to break into any part of life. Lavery's vision of the sacred theatre that is needed today is 'a more dynamic, space-based [as

[178] Carl Lavery, 'Performance and Sacred Space: A Polemic', with rejoinders by Ralph Yarrow and Franc Chamberlain, in Yarrow, *Sacred Theatre*, 187-88.

[179] Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) was the French founder of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Paris. He underwent a religious conversion to Catholicism and moved to Burgundy, where he developed a semi-monastic artistic community. Jane Baldwin, 'The Accidental Rebirth of Collective Creation: Jacques Copeau, Michel Saint-Denis, Léon Chancerel, and Improvised Theatre', in *A History of Collective Creation*, ed. Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 81-82.

opposed to 'building-based'] form of performance that located itself squarely within the parameters of everyday life', 're-sacralizing' the world.[180] Grotowski's Paratheatre is closer than Grotowski's Theatre of Productions to Lavery's vision.[181]

It is to Lavery's conception of the a/theological sacred that this thesis will now turn, to explore how it fits Grotowski, and whether Lavery is correct to critique the possibility of a theistic – including a Christian – sacred theatre.

[180] Lavery, 'Performance and Sacred Space', 188-89.
[181] Ibid., 202, note 4.

III. Sacred Theatre and the Eucharist

This chapter will expand upon the previous chapter's criticism of Grotowski's quasi-eucharistic theatre by examining theatre theorist Carl Lavery's three views of the sacred (including the 'a/theological' sacred, the view which most closely corresponds to Grotowski's) and how they relate to theology. It will then bring in the work of Alexander Schmemann to serve as a corrective to Lavery's understanding of the Christian theological sacred, and will use Schmemann's understanding of the eucharist to build a conception of a Christian sacred theatre, or *eucharistic theatre*.

1. Carl Lavery on the Sacred

In the book *Sacred Theatre*, Carl Lavery describes three 'modern views of the sacred': the secular, the theological, and the a/theological.[1] He critiques the theological for teaching that the sacred is limited to that which can be understood rationally, and excluding some experiences and people as unholy. Theology – especially the Christian theology which is his focus – is ethically problematic because its adherence to the *logos*, the word, leads to exclusion of the Other, that which does not conform to the word's boundaries. Although Lavery cites representatives of the secular and a/theological views to provide evidence for his characterization of these views, he does not cite a single theologian, allowing his characterization of theology to be supported solely by representatives of the other positions, especially the self-described 'a/theologian' Mark C. Taylor.

[1] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 33.

This failure to allow theology to speak with its own voice leads him to mischaracterize theology's understanding of the sacred as purely rational, solely based on scripture, and socially divisive. While this characterization does accurately portray many of theology's (and Christianity's) limitations and temptations, it leaves out the non-rational sources of Christian theology, such as prayer and worship, acts of charity, and the sacraments.[2] It also ignores Christian theology's own acknowledgement of itself as limited, unable to comprehend fully an incomprehensible God. Finally, it misconstrues theology's goal, which is not knowledge *about* an object, but knowledge *of* a Person.[3]

In order to supplement Lavery's characterization of Christian theology, it is helpful to bring in an actual theologian to lend his voice to a description of the sacred in Christian theology. Since Lavery's conception of theology is focused solely on the word, this voice should speak to the importance of worship and sacrament to Christian theology, and Christianity as a whole. Alexander Schmemann, an Orthodox priest and liturgical theologian, is a fitting figure to fill in the gaps and correct the errors in Lavery's presentation of the theological approach to the sacred.

---

[2] Following Rudolf Otto's usage in *The Idea of the Holy*, I am using 'non-rational' to contrast with 'rational' to refer to religious experiences and actions which are not primarily experienced or achieved through the use of the rational intellect, though the intellect may be more or less involved. These experiences may transcend the intellect, which is why Otto sometimes pairs his use of 'non-rational' with 'supra-rational', as in '"non-rational" or "supra-rational"', or uses 'supra-rational' on its own. 'Supra-rational' would be an equally appropriate term in many cases (and probably more appropriate when speaking specifically of prayer, worship, and the mystery of the sacraments), but, because 'non-rational' has a wider frame of reference (which can include the supra-rational) and because it is the term that Otto more often uses, it is the term which I will use here. It is not equivalent to 'irrational', or that which is opposed to the rational. For an example of this usage in Otto, see his foreword to the first English edition of Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), n.p. (printed between p. xix and p. 1).

[3] For Schmemann, a person must know God in order to recognise the world 'as God's world'; knowing the world as God's is both necessary for, and more important than, knowledge 'about' the world. See Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*, trans. Paul Kachur (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 176-77.

Schmemann's work of sacramental theology, *The Eucharist*, provides a different understanding of theology than the purely word- and reason-focused approach described by Lavery. Schmemann calls the eucharist 'the "sacrament of sacraments"',[4] the sacrament which is 'the very manifestation and *fulfilment* of the Church'.[5] Therefore, it is worth seeing how Schmemann's description of the Christian eucharist can correct a presentation of theology which limits a Christian experience of the sacred to reading, understanding, and enacting God's laws.

First of all, it is necessary to outline the three views of the sacred which Lavery describes in *Sacred Theatre*. The secular understanding of the sacred rejects the idea of transcendence. 'Sacred' is a label given by societies to activities and objects which define that society's identity, and the identity of the individuals within it. 'Totemic' activities and objects are those which are acceptable or commanded; 'taboo' activities and objects are those which are forbidden. Both are sacred. Transgressing the boundaries by engaging with the taboo sacred strips one of one's identity as a member of the society which has assigned that activity or object the 'taboo' label; engaging with the totemic sacred affirms one in one's identity as a member of that society. The sacred is simply that which defines a person and a society in their identity, through the shared myths which express the sacred. Representatives of this sacred usage include Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud.[6]

According to Lavery (and his source Mark C. Taylor), the theological sacred identifies a transcendent (but not immanent) God as its source. Transcendence is defined by contact with that God through intellectual understanding of his nature and

[4] Ibid., 26.
[5] Ibid., 24, italics original.
[6] See Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 33-35.

obedient following of his laws. God reveals himself through language and reason, and can be understood rationally. The sacred is that which pertains to God, especially his written scriptures and commandments. The sacred is defined by God-given boundaries (commandments, revealed in scripture) which a believer must not cross. If he remains within them, he is holy; if he violates them, he becomes unholy, and separate from the sacred. Lavery provides no representatives of this theological usage, which is presented through the criticisms of Mark C. Taylor and Rudolf Otto.[7]

[7] See Ibid., 35-37. Otto was actually a Christian and a theologian, but Lavery presents him as a critic of the theological, and uses his conception of the holy as support for an a/theological view of the sacred. As an example, Lavery says that both Otto and Taylor are critics of monotheism because it 'reduces the otherness of the sacred to an anthropocentric deity or Creator figure, whose nature or will can be understood in a rational fashion, via a study of the attributes of theism'. Ibid., 35. He then quotes Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*: 'According to Otto, the rational element inherent in Christian theology fails to "do justice to the non-rational aspect of its subject"'. Ibid., note 10, printed in Yarrow, *Sacred Theatre*, 62. This quote is found in Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 3. Lavery presents Otto as an ally of the a/theological and a critic of monotheism, including Christianity, and of Christian theology as a whole; however, Otto's quote is taken out of context. In the opening pages of *The Idea of the Holy*, Otto is not criticising Christian theology, much less Christianity or monotheism, as a whole. Instead, he is criticising 'rationalism' within Christian theology, that is, the tendency to value only those aspects of God or religious experience which can be understood rationally, and both to dismiss non-rational experiences of God such as mystical prayer as irrelevant, and to reduce God to an object who can be completely understood rationally. Insofar as Otto criticises rationalism, he is an ally to Lavery's criticism of Christian theology; but, where Lavery identifies Christian theology with rationalism, Otto understands that rationalism is a distortion of Christian theology. Otto's purpose in *The Idea of the Holy* is to correct this distortion by re-emphasizing the non-rational experience of God and to remind theologians that God is always more than what can be said of him using reason. Unlike Lavery, Otto champions the use of reason to understand God, as long as the theologian remembers that reason has its limits. Otto writes that 'so far are…"rational" attributes from exhausting the idea of deity, that they in fact *imply* a non-rational or supra-rational Subject of which they are predicates'. Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 2, emphasis added. While he emphasizes the non-rational aspects of God and religious experience in his book, he is also clear that he is opposed to 'irrationalism', or a rejection of the rational. He says explicitly that 'no one ought to concern himself with the "Numen ineffabile" who has not already devoted assiduous and serious study to the "Ratio aeterna"'. Otto, foreword to *Idea of the Holy*, n.p. (printed between xix and 1). Otto begins his text by explaining that Christianity is a 'rational religion', and why it is good that it is so:

> It is essential to every theistic conception of God, and most of all to the Christian, that it designates and precisely characterizes deity by the attributes spirit, reason, purpose, good will, supreme power, unity, selfhood…. Now all these attributes constitute clear and definite *concepts*: they can be grasped by the intellect; they can be analysed by thought; they even admit of definition. An object that can thus be thought conceptually may be termed *rational*. The nature of deity described in the attributes above mentioned is, then, a rational nature; and a religion which recognizes and maintains such a view of God is in so far a 'rational' religion. Only on such terms is *belief* possible in contrast to mere *feeling*…. [W]e count this the very mark and criterion of a religion's high rank and superior value: that it should have

The a/theological sacred is defined as the experience of transgressing and transcending boundaries, especially the boundaries of rational thought and 'sin' (i.e., forbidden behaviour or feeling). Transcendence is the experience of 'othering', of being taken outside oneself into an experience of unity with the cosmos. The cosmos is a realm in which the boundaries between good and evil, light and dark, sin and virtue dissolve – it is a realm of experience beyond these boundaries. It is experienced through transcendence, but a transcendence which is immanent to this world; to experience transcendence is to experience union with *this* world. One experiences the sacred by breaking taboos, by sinning, by doing that which is forbidden, and therefore by experiencing the non-rational reality which exists beyond the boundaries of good and evil. The sacred is the experience of transgression. It is 'a/theological' not only because it is 'a/theist', but also because it denies that the rational approach of theology provides access to the sacred. Representatives of this usage include Mircea Eliade and Georges Bataille, as well as the a/theologian Mark C. Taylor.[8]

Lavery summarizes each of these approaches as follows. In the secular view, the sacred is 'a secular [i.e., non-transcendent] construct aiming to safeguard communal and individual identity from anarchic dissolution'.[9] In the theological view, the sacred is 'the space where [a transcendent] God reveals himself through

---

> no lack of *conceptions* about God; that it should admit knowledge – the knowledge that comes by faith – of the transcendent in terms of conceptual thought…. Christianity not only possesses such conceptions but possesses them in unique clarity and abundance, and this is, though not the sole or even the chief, yet a very real sign of its superiority over religions of other forms and at other levels.

Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 1, emphasis in original. Only after making this defence of rational thought in Christian theology does Otto begin his criticism of rationalism, and his proposal for re-valuation of the non-rational. Therefore, Otto does not support Lavery's criticism of Christian theology as a whole in the way Lavery seeks to use him.

[8] See Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 37-39.

[9] Ibid., 39.

language'.[10] In the a/theological view, the sacred, which is experienced as the transcendence of boundaries, is 'an irrational cosmic truth that is prior to God'[11] (and God is himself only 'the projection of man's *understanding* of the world'[12]). These approaches are summarised in the following table:

Table #1

	Secular	**Theological**	**A/theological**
Is there a personal God/gods?	No	Yes (one God)	No
Transcendence vs. Immanence	No transcendence; only immanence (in this world)	Transcendent (not immanent) God	'Immanent transcendence' (transcendence in this world)
What is the sacred?	Societal totems/taboos which define identity	Verbal revelation by God of his nature and commandments	Non-rational, non-personal cosmic reality existing beyond good and evil
How does one experience the sacred?	Engage in totemic mythic rituals and avoid taboos	Understand God and follow his laws	Transgress boundaries of reason and sin
Ethically divisive or ethically unitive?	Ethically divisive – totems/taboos define in-group vs. out-group	Ethically divisive – God's laws separate holy from unholy	Ethically unitive – transgression changes ('others') the self, opens the self to the Other, and unites the self with the entire cosmos
Representatives	Emile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud	None given (defined by Mark C. Taylor and Rudolf Otto)[13]	Mircea Eliade, Georges Bataille, Mark C. Taylor

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Thomas Altizer, *Mircea Eliade and the Dialectic of the Sacred* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975), quoted in ibid., 37.
[13] As mentioned above on p. 100, note 7, Otto is presented by Lavery as a critic of the theological, a reading which is not borne out by Otto's use of theological language and support of Christianity in *The Idea of the Holy*.

Lavery's two main critiques of the theological approach to the sacred are: 1) its belief that the sacred can be understood rationally ignores non-rational experience of the sacred, and places the sacred under humanity's control, rather than challenging human beings to go outside of themselves to experience something Other than themselves; and 2) theology's innate tendency to separate holiness from unholiness leads to division – both within people, when parts of human experience are condemned as unholy, and between people, when people who have a different understanding of the sacred are rejected as unholy.

To answer Lavery's critiques, it is necessary to identify which of his statements about theology, and monotheistic religion in general, have merit, and which are incorrect assumptions. First of all, he assumes that theology limits itself to Scripture as a source; however, both Catholic and Orthodox theology also claim the tradition of the Church as a source of knowledge about God, and therefore a source for theology. This source includes the living practices of worship and the sacraments, which include a significant non-verbal element, as well as the verbal teaching authority of the Church. Another counter-example to Lavery's characterization is the Methodist Quadrilateral of John Wesley, with its emphasis on four sources for theology – not only Scripture and reason, which Lavery includes, but also tradition and personal experience, the latter of which is important to Lavery. So, while he is correct that Scripture is a key source for knowledge about God in Christian theology, and for some Christian theologians is the only recognized source, it is not necessarily the only source for Christian theology, as other sources are also recognized by other Christian theologians (although Scripture almost universally holds the chief place either by itself or with other sources, such as tradition).

Second, Lavery asserts that theology claims that God can be comprehended rationally, and therefore falsely limits the sacred to what man can understand intellectually. Lavery writes that, through scripture, 'the subject is able to understand the ways of the divine', and that scripture 'provid[es] a sense of certainty'.[14] God's 'nature or will can be understood in a rational fashion, via a study of the attributes of theism'.[15] Lavery is correct that theologians have claimed that reason can be applied to God, and true or false things said about him. For example, Thomas Aquinas, the exemplar of rational scholastic theology, in his *Summa Theologica* discusses whether 'names' can be applied to God, taking as his conversation partner Dionysius the Areopagite, who wrote the late 5th-century/early 6th-century text *On the Divine Names*.[16] Aquinas concludes that names can be applied to God,[17] and that 'true affirmative propositions can be formed about God';[18] yet, within the same question Aquinas also states that 'we cannot see the essence of God', which 'is above all that we understand about God, and signify in word'.[19] In addition, Scripture itself claims that God's ways are incomprehensible; witness the final response of Job to God, when God has asked Job to explain God's creation of the world:

> Then Job answered the LORD:
> 'I know that you can do all things,
> and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
> "Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?"
> Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,

[14] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 36.
[15] Ibid, 35.
[16] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd and revised ed. (1920), I.13. Online edition by Kevin Knight (2008), accessed 6 May 2015, http://www.newadvent.org/summa/index.html. Citations below from the *Summa Theologica* will be denoted by the standard format of ST (for *Summa Theologica*), followed by the part, question, and article numbers.
[17] ST I.13.i.
[18] ST I.13.xii.
[19] ST I.13.i.

things too wonderful for me, which I did not know'.[20]

And St Paul writes in the *Letter to the Romans*: 'O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!'[21] Christian theology, especially the Scripture which is its source, does not claim certain knowledge of all aspects of God, much less the idea that human beings can fully comprehend God. While the tendency to make God in its own image is an ever-present temptation for theology, to do so is a failure of its method, not an inevitable outcome. Scripture itself agrees with Lavery that the sacred – which Christian theology would identify with God – is ultimately incomprehensible, and not limited to the grasp of human reason.

A third claim that Lavery makes about theology is that theology's emphasis on reason leads theology to reject the possibility of a non-rational experience of the sacred. If the sacred is limited to the rational understanding of God and his laws – i.e., reading and thinking about scripture – then there is no room for non-rational experience. On the contrary, this assumption ignores the Christian experience of the sacred in prayer, including wordless meditative and contemplative prayer; in the sacred arts (both visual and musical); in worship and the sacraments (which have both verbal and non-verbal elements); and in the service of one's neighbour. Even though the word is without doubt important in Christian theology, the Christian theological tradition admits to a wide range of non-verbal and non-rational ways to experience the sacred presence of God. Even more importantly, the goal of all Christian theological rationality is not to provide an experience of intellectual comprehension,

[20] Job 42:1-3.
[21] Romans 11:33.

but to 'prepare the way of the Lord'[22] – to prepare the heart for a personal relationship with God. The true experience of the sacred is the direct encounter with God, insofar as a limited creature can encounter him. There may be rational elements to such an encounter, but the very essence of personal encounter is non-rational.

Fourth, Lavery critiques the priority of reason in theology for its tendency to make distinctions between holy and unholy. This distinction causes division both intra-personally, by labelling some parts of a person's self and experience as holy and others as unholy, and inter-personally, by labelling some people as holy and others as unholy. If the sacred in theology refers to that which is revealed through scripture as belonging to God, then that which scripture says does not belong to God is unholy. The concept of original sin, for example, not only labels some parts of human experience as unholy – namely, the passions due to concupiscence – but also labels some people (those washed clean of original sin via baptism) as holy, and others (the unbaptised) as unholy. There is a great deal of truth to Lavery's characterization of Christian theology here. Christian theology does draw distinctions between that which is of God, and that which is not. Different theologies draw the lines in different places; for example, some churches may forbid the drinking of alcohol as sinful, while alcohol is a necessary ingredient in the eucharistic worship of other Christian churches. One strain of Christian theology might suggest that Christians who consummate marriage remain tainted in some way by concupiscence in a way that Christians who retain their virginity are not, while another strain may celebrate marriage as a witness to Christ's marriage of his Church, at least as holy as lifelong celibacy. However different theologies draw the line, Christian theology as a whole

[22] See Isaiah 40:3, Mark 1:3, Matthew 3:3, and John 1:23.

does understand, from its sources (including Scripture), that there are some experiences and actions which lead a person closer to God, and others which lead a person further away. Theology also understands that God desires people to draw closer to him, and that therefore it is both good and right for people to engage in some experiences and actions rather than others.[23] Christian theology does also draw a distinction between good and evil – good being that which pertains to God, and evil being that which is opposed to him[24] – a distinction which Lavery rejects as contrary to the nature of the sacred, which is a mixture of good and evil, according to Georges Bataille.[25] Christian theology claims that human wholeness, both intra- and inter-personal, is inextricably tied to the good, and that evil disturbs this wholeness.[26] So, while Lavery is correct in saying that Christianity makes distinctions between good and evil, holy and unholy, which he would reject, Christianity would disagree that making such distinctions is harmful. This disagreement is a case of the a/theological view, as represented by Lavery (as it is the view which he takes up as the proper one in the rest of the book), and the theological view coming to two different conclusions about the best way to human wholeness – but sharing in that same goal.

The issue of distinctions is the key to Lavery's critique of theology. In his view, theology not only rejects and destroys what it considers evil, but also rejects and destroys that which it does not understand. Whatever cannot be fit into one's

[23] See, for example, Philippians 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 for examples of St Paul drawing distinctions between the kinds of subjects and behaviours that are appropriate and inappropriate for Christians.
[24] See 1 John 1:5: 'God is light and in him there is no darkness at all'. See also St Augustine's description of evil as 'a privation of good'. Augustine, *Confessions*, III.vii.12.
[25] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 38.
[26] See, for example, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1995): 'man lives a fully human life only if he freely lives by his bond with God' (no. 44); the effect of the original act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, humankind's first evil act, was to end the intra- and inter-personal unity of humanity and introduce death (nos. 397-400).

currently-existing framework of holiness is to be rejected as outside that framework, and therefore unholy. This rejection of that which is not understood is a symptom of the certainty which Lavery says theology claims for itself. Now, as made clear above, a proper Christian theology, governed by the humility and incomprehension in the face of God which is scripturally recommended (and felt in experience), does not make any claims of certainty for itself. It is acceptable for the frameworks of theology to be challenged; that is how believers deepen in their knowledge of God. The only certainty Christian theology claims is certainty in Christ, *not* certainty in human conceptions of him. Doing theology with the virtue of humility would go a long way toward answering the critics of Christian theology, who see the condemnations that Christians have brought down upon other people, and upon aspects of human experience which were not in themselves sinful, and conclude that such condemnations must be an inevitable consequence of theology. Since, as seen above, Christian theology does *not* claim certainty for itself, it, like any other form of knowledge, can allow itself to be challenged to grow in response to new information and new experiences, rather than reject them out-of-hand. On the other hand, Christian theology does reserve the right to make judgements about new information and experiences once it has allowed itself to be challenged by them, instead of accepting all information and experiences indiscriminately – especially when a new information or experience challenges a more vital pillar of the framework. This is not to say that those more vital pillars are not open to change if warranted, but that the threshold of evidence is that much higher in relation to the crucial nature of the pillar. And, because some of the pillars are located where they are on the authority of God, it would take an equal authority to disturb them. Therefore, they are virtually

unchangeable. This unchangeability of some of the pillars of the theological framework, and theology's commitment to 'test[ing] the spirits to see whether they are from God', [27] are not a result of an out-of-hand rejection of all new or non-rational information or experience, but a result of a fundamental commitment to the belief that there is such a thing as objective truth and falsity. This commitment can only be critiqued if the critic believes either that there are no objective truths, or that they cannot be known with a reasonable level of certainty by human beings. If that is the case, then it will seem to the critic that any holding to a framework of belief is morally indefensible, whereas those who believe in objective truth will find departing from the truth, as they understand it, to be equally indefensible. That impasse cannot be addressed here. The necessary point to make is that, when practiced with humility, theology does not automatically reject that which it does not already understand, much less condemn it as evil.

The belief that theology is inherently oriented toward the destruction of the Other is the primary reason for Lavery's ethical opposition to monotheistic theology, especially Christianity. He writes that theology, according to the conception of it which he presents,

> is pure and uncontaminated by difference or division.... The subject identifies with the divine rather than being altered by his encounter with it. One of the consequences of this interpretation of religion is to reduce existence to a search for unity and comprehensibility, as opposed to an adventure in otherness and inexplicability. From an ethical perspective...such an ontology of oneness is inherently problematic. By prioritizing homogeneity, it violates heterogeneity, both in the self and in the subject's relationship with others.[28]

Lavery has put his finger on a historical tension within Christianity: the tension between a view of the Church as made up of those who are entirely pure, and a view

[27] See 1 John 4:1.
[28] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 36.

of the Church as made up of those who are struggling to become holy, but are not yet there. This tension, for example, was at the root of the Donatist schism of the 4th century. The end vision of the Church does remain a group of people who are free of division, and free of sin, united with a God who has always been and will always be free from sin, and entirely holy. That is a vision of the good which is different from Lavery's vision, which is complete openness to a cosmos in which good and evil always remain mixed. Yet, a vision of the Kingdom of God in which all are united and all are holy does not mean that it is a kingdom in which there is no difference. Christianity does not name all difference as sin. There are a multitude of different vocations, a multitude of different ways of living holiness, shown in the individual differences of the members of the Church, which remain and are not wiped away. There is a splendour of difference. In addition, Lavery's statement that in theology '[t]he subject identifies with the divine rather than being altered by his encounter with it' misreads a Christian approach to theology. The Christian does not read the Scriptures, follow the commandments therein, and then say that he is holy. That is a pelagian approach to theology. Lavery does identify a constant temptation for churches, which is to rest comfortably in their identity as members of the people of God; act as if, due to their state of being chosen, they are above reproach; and condemn and destroy anyone who dares to criticise them. This pharisaical attitude Jesus is quick to condemn in the Gospels. A Christian does not pay membership dues in a social club which allows him to live his life as he did before. Instead, what it means to be a Christian is *precisely* to be 'altered' and 'othered',[29] to be changed from what one was before into an entirely new creation, through Christ, who, as the God-

[29] Ibid., 36 and 37.

Man, is the very exemplar of humanity coming into contact with the truly Other and becoming one with it.

Lavery writes that 'theology, particularly Christianity, [is] the antithesis of the sacred' because, according to Georges Bataille, 'authentic sacred experience...is synonymous with eroticism', and '[t]o assent to eroticism is...to assent to death'.[30] Whereas 'Christianity attempts to safeguard...the individuality and immortality of discontinuous beings', '[i]n Bataille's a/theological understanding of the sacred, we are altered: we lose the self and experience a different register of being, which, for Bataille, explains the sacred's relationship with death'.[31] When Lavery says that Christianity 'safeguard[s]...the individuality and immortality of discontinuous beings', he is contrasting that experience with the a/theologically sacred experience of 'indifferentiated oneness', in which 'the subject uncovers an alternative register of being based on silence and a mysterious and intimate kind of communication' which Bataille calls 'inner experience'. This inner experience gives the subject access to:

> Communication, through death, with our beyond…not with nothingness, still less with a supernatural being, but with an indefinite reality (which I sometimes call the impossible, that is: what can't be grasped in any way, what we can't reach without dissolving ourselves, what's slavishly called God).[32]

First of all, by contrasting the 'individuality' of Christianity with the 'oneness' of the a/theological sacred, Lavery misconstrues the concept of the Church, in which individuals are united with each other in one Body, the Body of Christ. Unlike some

---

[30] Ibid., 37.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Georges Bataille, *L'Erotisme,* in *Oeuvres Complètes,* X (1973), 388, quoted in original French in Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 38. English translation is given in Carl Lavery and Ralph Yarrow, 'Genet's Sacred Theatre: Practice and Politics', in Yarrow, *Sacred Theatre*, 128. The citation for this English translation is given as 'Bataille 1988, [p.] 59', but there is no 'Bataille 1988' source listed in the bibliography. The English passage, however, is clearly a translation of the French passage in Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 38, where the citation is given as Bataille, *L'Erotisme*, 388.

presentations of heaven in popular culture,[33] the Christian vision of the Kingdom of God is necessarily communal. It is not communitarian, erasing the differences between individuals, but it is not individualistic, either. There is no Christianity without oneness and unity. In addition, it is interesting to see him criticise Christianity for emphasizing homogeneity over heterogeneity, only to champion the 'indifferentiated oneness' of the a/theological sacred over the differences of 'individuality' in Christianity.

Second, Lavery appears to contrast the stasis of Christianity (preserving the 'immortality of discontinuous beings') with the change of a/theology, when a person, through the erotic, dies to himself and is raised to a new experience of being. This contrast again misunderstands Christianity, assuming as it does that the Christian's goal is to remain unchanged, but achieve immortality for his unchanged self. On the contrary, the language of eroticism and death works equally well, if not better, for Christianity. According to Lavery (explicating Bataille), 'In the erotic, we sacrifice discontinuity (our differentiated identity) for continuity (non-differentiation)'.[34] This language is similar to the Christian language of husband and wife becoming 'one flesh' in the consummation of their marriage.[35] A major theme of Pope John Paul II's theology of the body is the 'law of the gift', the idea that human beings are made to give themselves away to others, and that death to self brings life, both to the self and

[33] An example is the film *What Dreams May Come* (1998), in which heaven is tailored to each individual person's desires, and each person can choose whether to interact with the other denizens of heaven or to remain in his or her own fantasy world. *What Dreams May Come*, DVD, directed by Vincent Ward (1998; Universal City, CA: Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2011).
[34] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 37.
[35] See Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, and Mark 10:8.

to others.[36] John Paul II points to the erotic as the template for this law of the gift. Just as the spouses die to themselves and their own individuation in order to give themselves to their partners, becoming one undifferentiated flesh with them, so the Christian dies to himself and his own singleness in order to become one undifferentiated flesh with the Body of Christ[37] – both Christ himself, and the other members of his Body. And just as the self-gift of the spouses can bring new life in the form of a child, so the self-gift of Christ elicits the self-gift of his Church, bringing new life to the entire world and transforming it into the Kingdom of God. The goal of Christianity is to be changed into Christ, not to achieve a static immortality for one's own unchanged self.

Finally, as exemplified by Christ, at the core of Christianity is openness to the Other.[38] This openness includes openness to the true Other, God, whose Holy Spirit moves how he wills,[39] as well as openness to everyone else. In Matthew 25:31-46, a person is judged acceptable to God only if he has cared for others instead of excluding them. Openness to the stranger is a common theme throughout Scripture,

---

[36] 'Theology of the body' is the term given to the content of Pope John Paul II's Wednesday audiences from 1979-1984 discussing the religious significance of the body to Christian theology. For the collected texts of the audiences, see John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, translations, introduction, and index by Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006).

[37] 'Undifferentiated' in the sense that he no longer exists apart from this Body ontologically, but not in the sense that his personhood is erased.

[38] Trevor Hart makes this point in 'Conversation after Pentecost? Theological Musings on the Hermeneutic Motion', *Literature and Theology* 28:2 (June 2014): 164-78. See p. 177:

> This incarnation of meaning at the heart of Christian faith is kenotic in another sense, too, of course; for in giving itself in this form it also risks its own demise, eschewing the way of power and coercion, and 'triumphing' finally only by remaining true to the way of an unconditional, risky and selfless love for the other…. This is the peculiar logic of Christian logos, a distinctly Christian participation in inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary conversation ought thus to be one which is always to risk itself through imaginative strategies designed to engage unconditionally with the other as other, to empty itself of power and even risk its own loss or demise, trusting that only in doing so—paradoxically—can it fulfil itself and be true to its own particular identity.

[39] See John 3:8.

due to Israel's own experience of being 'an alien residing in a foreign land'.[40] It is a common theme in Jesus's own parables as well, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which the Samaritan's own openness to the Other, a Jew, is praised. The history of the Church is a history of tension between a desire to safeguard one's own holiness and the holiness of God, and a desire to reach out to the Other, to care for him, and to invite him into unity with oneself and with God, a unity that does not seek to destroy the Other's individuality, but rejoices in him as God's own creation, and joins together with him in bonds of love. These poles of tension are evident in James 1:27: 'Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world'. There is an emphasis here on both keeping oneself holy, and on going out to others to care for them. One can argue that the care extends only to those who are already 'holy' members of the in-group – Christian orphans and widows; however, Christianity is not insular, but evangelical, taking its posture toward the world from Christ's Great Commission: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you'.[41] The entire world is meant to be part of the 'holy in-group'; no one is to be excluded. In addition, the early Church was known for its care for members even of the non-Christian out-group. The pagan Roman emperor Julian, in his letter to a pagan priest, wrote that the 'Galilaeans [i.e., Christians] support not only their own poor but ours as well'.[42] Christian churches

[40] See Exodus 2:22.
[41] Matthew 28:19-20.
[42] Julian the Apostate, *Letter #22: To Arsacius, High-Priest of Galatia*, in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. Wilmer Cave Wright, vol. 3, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1923), 71.

today are still known for their openness to the stranger and the person in need, while at the same time debates continue about how scriptural commandments for personal behaviour should affect how people are incorporated into and remain members of the community. (For example, is it enough for a single gay person who wants to become a Christian to practice sexual continence, or does he also have to become straight? Can divorced and remarried couples continue to receive communion?) The point of Christian prayer, and the Christian stance toward God, is always one of openness to his Otherness, and a desire to be changed instead of remaining the same. That change – death to oneself and rising into the new life of a new reality in Christ – is the essence of Christianity. This experience of change has much in common with the a/theological experience of the sacred which Lavery champions.

The key difference is that theology has a *telos* – an end *toward* which a person is changed, instead of championing the experience of change itself. Lavery has a sense that it is better to change than to stay the same – but he does not explain *why* change itself is better than not changing. For example, if a person were to change into a Hitler, with a decreased openness to the Other and an increase in violence towards them, I suspect Lavery would oppose that change. Christianity agrees that change is good, but only if it is change *in a certain direction* – towards God, and not away from God; yet Lavery criticises this distinction that Christianity makes between good and evil as itself 'ethically problematic', as necessarily closed to strangeness and Otherness. In making that distinction, he himself makes a distinction between good (no distinctions – mixed good and evil) and evil (distinctions between good and evil). This position is logically incoherent. Christianity says that there is a real good and evil, and that good exists as the all-good God. It also champions change and

transformation – transformation into God, that is, transformation into a new person who is one with God, and lives with the eternal divine life of love: humanity divinised in Christ. To experience the sacred is indeed to transgress the boundaries of one's limited self, but it is to do so *in a certain direction, with a certain end, and by a certain power – towards* God, *to the end* of growing into the full image of Christ, *and by the power of* God's Holy Spirit. To experience the sacred in this way is indeed to die to oneself and be brought from one's separation into a new life of unity with the sacred, and with the Other – with God, and with all God's children, as well as with his entire created and redeemed cosmos. This fundamental openness to the true Other who is God, and the transgressing of boundaries to come to full unity with him in Christ, *is* the sacred experience of Christianity which Lavery does not understand.

This section has identified Lavery's critiques of the theological view of the sacred, and of Christianity in particular. First, he criticises a perceived limitation of the sacred to the rational, and a concomitant tendency to make distinctions between good and evil, holy and unholy, which leads members of theologically-influenced religions to exclude the Other as unholy. This tendency leads to two failures, a failure of unity and a failure of community. This theological approach is a failure of unity because it isolates followers of the religion from the world, from non-followers, and from aspects of themselves. In addition, its emphasis on personal holiness leads to an individualism which desires to maintain eternally its static, unchanged self. It is also a failure of unity because its emphasis on distinction tears the cosmos, peoples, and human experience apart. This theological approach is a failure of community because this isolation creates divisions between people, and leads followers of theological

religions to reject and destroy the Other. The failures of unity and community are therefore related.

Second, Lavery criticises the theological believer's identification of himself with the sacred, which removes any need for the believer to change. Therefore, theology leads to a failure of transformation, in that it is not open to 'altering' or 'othering', and rejects experiences outside of its already-existing, rationally-limited framework of the sacred. Since the essence of the sacred, according to Lavery, is change—the transgressing of boundaries—theology is opposed to the sacred.

2. Alexander Schmemann on the Eucharist

Schmemann's approach to the eucharist shows that, on the contrary, Christian theology contains the goods of unity, community, and transformation which Lavery assigns to a/theology.

As seen earlier, Alexander Schmemann defines the eucharist as 'the "sacrament of sacraments"',[43] the sacrament which is 'the very manifestation and *fulfilment* of the Church'.[44] Schmemann outlines twelve aspects of the eucharist as Sacrament which he then proceeds to unveil. He names the eucharist as the Sacrament of: the Assembly, the Kingdom, Entrance, the Word, the Faithful, Offering, Unity, Anaphora, Thanksgiving, Remembrance, the Holy Spirit, and Communion.[45]

The eucharist is 'the sacrament of the assembly' because it is the sacrament in which the whole Church gathers together as the people of God, and is the sacramental

[43] Schmemann, *The Eucharist*, 26.
[44] Ibid., 24, italics original.
[45] Ibid., Table of Contents, 5.

gathering which defines them in that identity. The eucharist is 'the sacrament of the kingdom' because it is the gathering in which the whole Church enters into the Kingdom of God, the eternal wedding-feast of Christ. The eucharist is 'the sacrament of entrance' for the same reason: the eucharist does not just provide a vision of the *future* Kingdom of God, but is the act through which the Church *actually enters* into that Kingdom. The eucharist is 'the sacrament of the word' because it is the expression of the Gospel, and is 'inseparably linked' to the word of Scripture;[46] Christ, the Word of God, is the '*content*' of both word and sacrament.[47] The eucharist is 'the sacrament of the faithful' because it is the expression of faith by all those who share the same faith in Christ, clergy and laity alike; Schmemann opposes the sacred-profane split which 'equate[s] the Church with the clergy, and the "laity" with the world' (as in the Russian word for the laity, '*miriane*', which comes 'from *mir*, world',[48] thus calling non-ordained baptised Christians 'worldly ones'[49]). The eucharist is 'the sacrament of offering' because it unites the Church's self-offering with the self-offering of Christ. The eucharist is 'the sacrament of unity' because a single faith in Christ unites all those who participate in Christ's sacrifice and share the bread of his Body and the cup of his Blood. The eucharist is 'the sacrament of *anaphora*' because it is the action through which the Church is lifted up and finds her fulfilment in Christ and his Kingdom. The eucharist is 'the sacrament of thanksgiving' not only because the word 'eucharist' means 'thanksgiving', but also because, according to Schmemann, by giving thanks to God, the assembly

[46] Ibid., 66.
[47] Ibid., 68.
[48] Ibid., 89.
[49] Ibid., 232.

acknowledges him 'as Father',[50] and is therefore brought into relationship with him as his children, *knowing* him as Father: '*Thanksgiving* is the "sign," or better still, the presence, joy, fulness, of knowledge of God, i.e., knowledge as meeting, knowledge as communion, knowledge as unity'.[51] The eucharist is 'the sacrament of remembrance' because the sacrament is the very *manifestation* of Christ's love and the Kingdom of God which it inaugurates; the eucharist 'remembers the last supper not as a "means" [to sanctification] but as a manifestation, and even more than a manifestation, as the presence and gift of the very *goal*: the Kingdom for which God created the world'.[52] The eucharist is 'the sacrament of the Holy Spirit' because it is by the Holy Spirit not only that the change in the eucharistic elements is accomplished, but also that the Church is assembled, enters into the Kingdom of God, springs to faith in the Word, and is enabled to offer one united offering of thanksgiving in remembrance of Christ. Finally, the eucharist is 'the sacrament of communion' because its 'essence lies in *communion*, in the distribution to the faithful of the holy gifts, the body and blood of Christ', in the reception of which the union of the Church with God and with each other is 'consummat[ed]'.[53]

Schmemann's vision of the eucharist is that of the entire Church, the entire Body of Christ, assembled to enter into the Kingdom of God through her remembrance of Christ. Christ is remembered through the preaching of his Word and through the sacramental enactment of his sacrifice. The entire assembled Church participates in Christ's self-offering through her unity of faith in him and her reception in faith of his Body and Blood in communion. In this liturgy—which is a

[50] Ibid., 183.
[51] Ibid., 176.
[52] Ibid., 203.
[53] Ibid., 227.

visible coalescence of the whole life and work of the Church, all of which is liturgy—the entire Church gives thanks to God by acknowledging him as Father and the source of all goodness, and is lifted up by the power of the Holy Spirit into the eternal loving presence of God.

The constant refrain of 'and' in the preceding paragraph may make it seem as if the eucharist were a procession of pairs: first this happens, then that. Both X and Y do Z. On the contrary, Schmemann's vision of the eucharist comprehends it as one unified action, a breaking-down of the boundaries of past, present, and future in which the Church is raised up into the eternal *now* of the Kingdom of God. A better way to put it might be to say that the eucharist is *the ascent of the assembled Church of Christ into the eternal Kingdom of God.* It is the sacrament in which the entire world is transformed through the Church, the Body of Christ, into the Kingdom of God. In it the division between what is Christ and what is not-Christ is destroyed – all is Christ, through the Holy Spirit, which is love, the redeeming power of Christ's sacrifice. When the Church remembers that sacrifice, she enters into its reality of love, which is the Kingdom of God, and joins herself in offering to it, being taken up into Christ, and in Christ, into God, experiencing already the eschatological time in which God is and will be 'all in all'.[54]

The eucharist is therefore the Church's experience of the sacred holy, a holiness which Schmemann defines as '*absolutely other*'.[55] This experience is unity, community, and transformation, and therefore meets the criteria for sacred experience that Lavery demands.

[54] See 1 Corinthians 15:28.
[55] Schmemann, *The Eucharist*, 182.

The eucharist is unity because the people who act in the liturgy are a community united by a single faith, which is not just a single *belief* – which might fall prey to Lavery's criticism that theology limits itself to that which can be rationally understood, i.e., a list of rational statements to which the believer gives assent – but is also a *relationship*, a faith *in* a Person, not just a faith *that* X, Y, or Z is true. The eucharist is community because it is dependent upon openness to the Other: to the Other who is God, to the Other who is the other members of the Body of Christ, and to the Other who is non-members of the Church, to whom the Church is sent out at the end of the eucharist. It is also an openness to the Other in that it is a self-offering to God, with the expectation of being changed by his Holy Spirit, instead of holding onto one's own static self. This openness to the Holy Spirit means that the eucharist is transformation—the entire Church, and with her the entire world, being transformed in Christ into a new creation, the Kingdom of God. This transformation qualifies as 'an alternative register of being based on...a mysterious and intimate kind of communication' which Bataille, and through him Lavery, define as the true experience of the sacred.[56] The Church, assembling together as one community, opens herself to the Other who is God, and in so doing is transformed, taken up into a new way of being and unified with God, other human beings, and the entire cosmos. This experience is not merely one of assenting to a set of beliefs and then being declared holy, though it can be conceptualized that way (to a limited extent); it is also, and to a greater extent, an experience of death to oneself through self-offering, and a transformation through transgressing the boundary of the self into a new state of being, that of unity with reality and with the Other – the Kingdom of God. This

[56] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 38.

transgression of the boundary of the self is accomplished not by the self alone; it is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who takes the individual's self-offering up and unites it with the self-offering of Christ in order to accomplish the transformation of the self. In addition, this new state of being is not a reality of mixed good and evil – it is a reality of pure good, because it is union with God, who is himself the personification of Good.[57]

3. A Comparison of Lavery and Schmemann

The following differences therefore exist between Lavery's a/theological conception of the sacred and the theological conception presented by Schmemann: Where Lavery presents sacred reality as an undifferentiated mixture of good and evil, accessible primarily through means which theology would define as 'evil' (that is, those means which break taboos and involve sin), Schmemann presents sacred reality as wholly good, and accessible only through good means. In addition, where Lavery presents sacred reality as a form of 'immanent transcendence', an entry into a new reality (transcendence) which is still nevertheless still within the realm of this world (immanent), Schmemann presents sacred reality as an ascent into transcendence, an entry into the new Kingdom of God, which enables God's children to experience and

[57] For Schmemann, the ultimate reality of both good and evil exists in *persons*. God is the personification of Good; Satan is the personification of Evil, though not in a dualistic sense – Satan always remains a creature, not the Creator, and therefore is unlike and less than God. Goodness, holiness, and love cannot exist as a 'state' – they require subsistence in a person: 'For just as there can be no love outside the "lover," i.e. a person that loves, there can be no hatred outside the "hater," i.e. a person that hates. And if the ultimate mystery of "goodness" lies in the person, the ultimate mystery of evil must also be a personal one'. Thus another distinction between Lavery's a/theological view of the sacred and Schmemann's theological view is that, for Lavery, the sacred is closer to a state of existence, whereas for Schmemann, it is a Person. Alexander Schmemann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 22.

see the eschatological portent and destiny of the immanent world. While Lavery presents a sacred change of being as without direction, Schmemann presents a change of being as necessarily *toward* the goodness of God if it is to be considered sacred. Finally, while Lavery does not admit any supernatural being, and therefore no supernatural or other personal power other than the human person, Schmemann admits the supernatural and personal existence of God, who is the touchstone for reality. Therefore, while, in Lavery's conception, a person experiences the sacred by *himself* violating the taboos of his own experience and sinning, in Schmemann's conception, it is God who transforms the person, and takes him up into a new reality.

The sequence of how to experience the sacred, and its ethical effect, is therefore different for both:

> *Lavery*
> Openness to an experience which is Other (sin/transgression/taboo) → transgression of moral and personal boundaries (by engaging in that experience) → experience of the sacred (undifferentiated union with the cosmos) →
> increased openness to the Other (the stranger)
>
> *Schmemann*
> Openness to God through self-offering in faith (inspired by the Holy Spirit) → death to self and rising to new life in Christ (by power of the Holy Spirit in baptism and eucharist) →
> experience of the sacred (union with God in his Kingdom) →
> increased openness to the Other (God, other people, and creation)

For Lavery, then, engaging in taboo experiences frees a person from his own restrictions, and opens him up to increased openness to the entire world, with all its people and its full range of experiences. This openness will lead him to receive people who are different from him with welcome, instead of condemning, rejecting, and destroying them.

For Schmemann, opening oneself up to the goodness who is God frees a person from his separation from God, transforms him into a citizen of the Kingdom of God, and sends him out to the entire world and all its people in love, to serve them and usher them into the same transformation. This love will lead the Christian to receive people who are different from him with love, and invite them into union with God, all the other members of God's Kingdom, the rest of God's creation, and himself.

Lavery's approach is better if there is no God, and if there is no distinction between good and evil. (One can argue that if there is no distinction between good and evil, it is difficult to argue that one course is any 'better' than another.) In that case, if the sacred is limited to a change of being in this world, in order to experience it it is necessary to violate one's own most powerful boundaries, in order to go beyond them to that change of being.

Schmemann's approach is better if there is a transcendent God, a distinction between good and evil, and a God who is wholly good. In that case, in order to experience that transcendence, it is necessary to experience good, rather than evil. Boundaries are a necessary means of channelling a person towards the good, and away from the evil, and are therefore necessary for an experience of the sacred.

Lavery writes that '*sacer* [the sacred] refers to what is frightening and holy, demonic and divine at the same time'.[58] While this usage may fit a conception of sacred reality as a mix of good and evil – including a divine reality which is dualistic or polytheistic – this usage does not work according to a Christian conception of the

[58] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 35.

sacred as that which refers to a good God, and is therefore wholly good. Schmemann quotes Louis Bouyer's description of the holy as:

> That religious trembling, that interior vertigo before the Pure,[59] the Inaccessible, the wholly Other, and at the same time that sense of an invisible presence, the attraction of a love so infinite and yet so personal that, having tasted it, we know only that it surpasses all that we still call love...[60]

While the first half of this quote, from '[t]hat religious trembling' to 'the wholly Other' could almost be taken from Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, to which Lavery refers,[61] the second half defines the holy by its relationship to a personal presence of love – that is, God, the 'God of Good' whom Bataille, and with him Lavery, rejects.[62] The existence of a good and loving God is the key premise which separates Lavery's theological and a/theological conceptions of the sacred, not a commitment to building boundaries rather than breaking them.

The table of different approaches to the sacred can now be completed by adding in Schmemann's view, which is theological, but which differs from the theological approach as described by Lavery:

[59] As opposed to Bataille's mix of the pure and impure: See Bataille, *L'Erotisme*, 134, as quoted in Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 38. The original French, which Lavery quotes, states that: 'L'ensemble de la sphère sacrée se composait du pur et de l'impur'. ('The whole of the sacred sphere was composed of the pure and of the impure' – my translation.)

[60] Louis Bouyer, quoted in Schmemann, *The Eucharist*, 62. Schmemann's translators note at the bottom of p. 63 that '[n]either the English nor the French translators have been able to locate the source of this passage, attributed by the author to Fr Louis Bouyer, even after consultation with the latter'. Schmemann, *The Eucharist*, 63, note 6.

[61] Lavery, 'Modern Views of the Sacred', 35-36.

[62] Lavery writes that Bataille 'divorc[es] the sacred from the "[L]e Dieu du Bien"', the 'God of Good' (my translation). Ibid., 38, quoting Bataille, *L'Erotisme*, 137.

Table #2

	Secular	**Theological (Lavery)**	**A/theological**	**Theological (Schmemann)**
Is there a personal God/gods?	No	Yes (one God)	No	Yes (one God)
Transcendence vs. Immanence	No transcendence; only immanence (in this world)	Transcendent (not immanent) God	'Immanent transcendence' (transcendence in this world)	Transcendent and immanent God (in Christ)
What is the sacred?	Societal totems/taboos which define identity	Verbal revelation by God of his nature and commandments	Non-rational, non-personal cosmic reality existing beyond good and evil	Experience of the presence of God in his Kingdom
How does one experience the sacred?	Engage in totemic mythic rituals and avoid taboos	Understand God and follow his laws	Transgress boundaries of reason and sin	Worship, especially the eucharistic liturgy (which includes word and sacrament), as well as Scripture and prayer
Ethically divisive or ethically unitive?	Ethically divisive – totems/taboos define in-group vs. out-group	Ethically divisive – God's laws separate holy from unholy	Ethically unitive – transgression changes ('others') the self, opens the self to the Other, and unites the self with the entire cosmos	Ethically unitive – world and all people united with God and each other in love
Representatives	Emile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud	None given (defined by critics Mark C. Taylor and Rudolf Otto)	Mircea Eliade, Georges Bataille, Mark C. Taylor	Alexander Schmemann

An additional chart shows how the four different approaches understand the means to unity, community, and transformation:

Table #3

	Secular	**Theological (Lavery)**	**A/theological**	**Theological (Schmemann)**
What provides *unity*?	Shared myths	Shared belief ('faith') and adherence to Law	'Inner experience' (union with cosmos)	Christ
What provides *community*?	Shared engagement with totems and avoidance of taboos	Shared scripture	Experiencing the 'Other' through breaking through boundaries	Church (as the Body of Christ)
What provides *transformation*?	Rituals (especially of initiation)	Intellectual conversion (to faith and following of Law)	Transgression	Holy Spirit

To summarize: Carl Lavery presents the theological approach to the sacred as one of drawing distinctions between holy and unholy based on reason, and experiencing the sacred through the word. The a/theological approach to the sacred, however, consists of breaking the boundaries of the self, especially moral boundaries, in order to experience union with the cosmos through union with the Other. Lavery rejects the theological approach as a means to true experience of the sacred; he locates this means in the a/theological approach. Therefore, for theatre to provide an encounter with the sacred, according to Lavery, it must take its principles from a/theology: it must break through the boundaries of the self by violating taboos, in order to provide an experience of transcendence, of 'othering'. Examples of this type

of sacred theatre are Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty[63] and Jerzy Grotowski's 'dialectics of mockery and apotheosis'.[64]

Alexander Schmemann presents an alternative conception of the theological approach to the sacred. In his conception, the sacred is located in the presence of a loving God who is known in Jesus Christ; this sacred divine presence is made manifest especially in the eucharistic liturgy, and is experienced through faith, which includes the rational component of knowledge *about* God, but which also involves the more important non-rational component of knowledge *of* God, and faith *in* him rather than faith in statements *about* him.[65] This faith is expressed not only through participation in the liturgy, but also through prayer, the finding of God in Scripture, and the performance of works of charity. The sacred is the experience of the presence of God, who is known through faith in Christ, a faith which is expressed in worship by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the gateway to the experience of the sacred.

4. A Christian Sacred Theatre – A Eucharistic Theatre

A sacred theatre taking its principles from Schmemann's theological approach to the sacred would therefore present Christ to the world – not just knowledge *about* Christ, but an actual experience of Christ. This charge is made all the more difficult by one major difference between Lavery's a/theological approach to the sacred and Schmemann's theological approach. For Lavery, there is no other personal force besides human beings, so it is human beings who must act to provide an experience of

[63] See, for example, Artaud, 'Theatre and Cruelty', 60-62.
[64] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 22.
[65] Schmemann, *The Eucharist*, 176-77.

the sacred. For Schmemann, there is a personal God, and it is he who calls his people together, gives himself to them, enables their own self-offering in return, and unites them together as one people in himself. Therefore, the Christian cannot manufacture an experience of the sacred. (Although, I suspect that Lavery would also argue that an a/theological experience of the sacred is itself difficult to manufacture, and cannot be reduced to a guaranteed formula.) The most the Christian can do is prepare the altar, and wait with expectation for the fire to come down. A sacred theatre operating according to the principles of the theological sacred outlined by Schmemann – a *eucharistic* theatre – can only address itself to the preparation of the altar. It cannot guarantee the presence of the sacred fire.

Schmemann's account of how the divine sacred is experienced in the eucharist yields some principles that can guide this preparation of the altar. Foundational to these principles is the understanding that God can make himself known anywhere and through any instrument, since he can only be known through his own self-revelation, and he has sovereign power to decide how, where, and when he reveals himself. That said, he has promised to make himself present 'where two or three are gathered in [his] name'.[66] Therefore, a theatrical community made up of Christians – Christian artists and Christian audience members – gathered together consciously in Christ's name, as an assembly of the Church, and offering up the theatrical experience as a deliberate act of worship, holds the greatest promise for providing those gathered with an experience of the sacred who is Christ. That is not to say that non-Christian audience members receiving a performance by non-Christian performers, for example, cannot experience the sacred, and therefore experience Christ, in a

[66] Matthew 18:20.

performance.[67] It is only to say that a conscious assembling of the Church in Christ's name is where Christ has promised to be present, and therefore such an assembly holds the greatest promise for an experience of him. Therefore, *gathering in the name of Christ in faith is the first principle of a eucharistic theatre.* This type of assembly, for example, was at the heart of the Rhapsodic Theatre's underground theatrical work during the Nazi occupation of Poland, when its Christian performers performed plays which deliberately spoke of Christ primarily for their fellow Christian Poles, as a way of remembering Christ and their identity as Christians amidst oppression.[68] This unity of faith on the part of both performers and audience strengthened their bonds as members of the same community.

Even when there is not unity of faith, there must still be an attitude of openness to the spectator on the part of the actor, an attitude which views actors and spectators as a community, sharing this experience together and bound together with bonds of love. This attitude of openness requires the performers to interact with the audience in ways that respect their humanity and invite them into deeper relationship with the actors and with each other. Therefore, *the second principle of a eucharistic theatre is the principle of openness to God and to the other to form one community in solidarity.* The performers will not use techniques which insult or coerce the audience; when the production requires that they unsettle the audience, they will only do so once they have earned the audience's trust, and have shown their own willingness to be unsettled in solidarity with the audience. They will not accuse the

[67] For example, God could choose to reveal himself just as easily in a Laboratory Theatre production, where Grotowski and his actors were actively confronting the 'myth of Christ', as in a Reduta or Rhapsodic Theatre production, where Osterwa or Kotlarczyk and his actors were actively identifying with and preaching Christ.

[68] The Rhapsodic Theatre will be discussed in Chapter V of this thesis.

audience of sins before first accusing themselves. Insofar as an artist's vocation is to be a prophet, he will remember that a prophet speaks God's message, and not his own, and speaks to his hearers as a member of their community, not as a judge.[69] This attitude of solidarity encourages the breaking-down of barriers between the actors and spectators in appropriate ways, which may (though does not necessarily) include the presentation of characters in a Brechtian manner by actors who remain themselves instead of inhabiting characters in a Stanislavskian manner; speaking directly to the audience; the removal of physical barriers between artists and audience, such as the use of a black box theatre or natural setting in which there is no division between playing space and observing space; direct audience participation in the performance; and the rejection of the actor-spectator dichotomy by the equal participation of everyone present as spect-actors.[70] The rule is the active participation of all present as a single community, each according to whatever role is appropriate for the performance, not the active participation of some and the passive watching of it by others. Even where some participants are defined as actors and others as spectators,

[69] The artist acting as prophet may be compelled by his commitment to justice and obedience to God's word to be stinging in his criticism, and harsh in his condemnation of acts against God's justice. That harshness, however, must always be rooted in a desire for the correction and salvation of the persons being criticised, never out of a desire for their damnation. Each artist must find the approach to which he is called, whether it is gentle love or 'tough love', but love must be its foundation. For more on this conception of the prophetic nature of the artist's vocation, see Cole Matson, 'The Artist as Prophet', *Transpositions*, accessed 12 May 2015, http://www.transpositions.co.uk/the-artist-as-prophet/; and W. David O. Taylor, 'On the Vocation of an Artist: Part III: The Artist as Prophet (I)', *Diary of an Arts Pastor*, 22 August 2012, accessed 12 May 2015, http://artspastor.blogspot.com/2012/08/on-vocation-of-artist-part-iii-artist_22.html. For the importance of an artist speaking to his community as a member of that community, and not as a (self-identified) outsider, I am indebted to Prof Scott Walters, especially his post 'Offending the Audience', *Theatre Ideas*, 15 April 2009, accessed 12 May 2015, http://theatreideas.blogspot.co.uk/2009/04/offending-audience.html.

[70] Many of these techniques were used by the Reduta and Rhapsodic Theatres, discussed in Chapters IV and V. For more on the 'spect-actor', see Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed.*

the framework of the performance should identify the spectators as active *witnesses* to the performance and its *logos*, not simply as passive viewers.

In terms of content, Schmemann points out that the eucharist consists of both word *and* sacrament, language and action. Therefore, a eucharistic theatre will not limit its meaning to that which can be understood verbally; however, it will not dismiss the word as opposed to the sacred, either. Stage pictures and music – even smells, tastes, and touch – can communicate meaning. Both the rational intellect and direct sensory experience collaborate to communicate meaning. Word and action support each other in the creation of the symbol, which is both sign and reality, according to Schmemann's usage. The symbol is therefore *sacramental*, in a broad sense.[71] This theatre is a theatre of both the word *and* body; it is a theatre which incarnates the word, and, when it communicates Christ, incarnates the Word. It is a symbolic theatre: it uses the full range of human communication to make the invisible God visible.[72] It does this by showing Christ, the visible image of God, under a multitude of forms, and showing God by showing his effects—his movement in the world and in people's lives. Therefore, *the third principle of a eucharistic theatre is*

[71] Schmemann writes that:

> It is then the 'natural' symbolism of the world—one can almost say its 'sacramentality'—that makes the sacrament *possible* and constitutes the key to its understanding and apprehension. If the Christian sacrament is *unique*, it is not in the sense of being a miraculous exception to the natural order of things created by God and 'proclaiming His glory.' Its absolute newness is not in its ontology as sacrament but in the specific 'res' which it 'symbolizes,' i.e., reveals, manifests, and communicates—which is Christ and His Kingdom…. [T]he institution of sacraments by Christ…is not the creation *ex nihilo* of the 'sacramentality' itself, of the sacrament as means of cognition and participation. In the words of Christ, 'do *this* in remembrance of me,' the *this* (meal, thanksgiving, breaking of bread) is already 'sacramental.' The institution means that by being referred to Christ, 'filled' with Christ, the symbol is fulfilled and becomes *sacrament*.

Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 139-40, emphasis in original.

[72] See Peter Brook's definition of a holy theatre as 'The Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible'. Brook, *The Empty Space*, 42.

making the invisible God visible through the symbolic and sacramental incarnation of word enfleshed in body and body revealing word. There is no limit to the ways in which the theatre can symbolically communicate Christ; one need not limit oneself to direct allusions like having a self-sacrificing character die with his arms outstretched in the shape of a cross. A certain amount of direct allusion can be very powerful, and is perhaps the single most potent method of communicating Christ. See, for example, actor Ryszard Cieślak's positioning of his body into the form of 'the Little Polish Christ', a particularly Polish piece of iconography representing the suffering Christ, to identify his character in Grotowski's production of *The Constant Prince* as a suffering innocent.[73] Another example is Juliusz Osterwa's setting of his own production of *The Constant Prince* on an altar, using stage design to identify his portrayal of the title character with Christ, and the entire production as a passion play.[74] The text of the performance can speak directly of Christ or be taken from Scripture, or neither, or both. While either direct reference or allusion to Christ at some point in the production makes it clear that the production seeks to communicate Christ, it is up to the artists to decide how Christ can be most effectively communicated to the particular audience, and what the specific *logos* (the word or message) of the production requires. For example, if the players seek to communicate the hidden activity of Christ in the world, it may be more effective for their reference to Christ to be oblique rather than direct.

In order, then, for a theatre to follow the eucharistic principles that Schmemann has laid out, it needs to 1) gather in the name of Christ, 2) open the

[73] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 82.
[74] Braun, *Concise History*, 157.

participants to Christ and to each other, and 3) be symbolic and sacramental, that is, use both word and body to make the invisible God imaginatively visible.

The Holy Spirit can make God known in a theatre which does not follow these principles, and even in a theatre that does, there can be no predicting with certainty how God may reveal himself in the hearts of the participants. Lavery's emphasis on the Otherness of the sacred is an important reminder to Christian theologians: to experience the sacred is to change, to have one's self-imposed boundaries broken and to be transformed into a new way of being. In the same way, the Christian sacred, God, is a 'God of Surprises'.[75] To take a cue from Lavery and be open to the Otherness of God, the 'God of Surprises', is to allow God to break man-made boundaries and reveal himself in ever-new and expansive ways. A eucharistic theatre company can only prepare the altar. It is up to the Holy Spirit, God's sacred fire, to come down upon that altar, reduce it to ashes, and burn with a new light that forever transforms the participants' ways of seeing.

5. Summary

Multiple versions of 'sacred theatre' can spring from the multiple ideas of the sacred which Lavery outlines. He prefers the ideal of an a/theological sacred theatre, which emphasizes the transgression of boundaries in order to provide an experience of unity with the cosmos, leading to the ethical stance of openness toward the Other, both in oneself and in society. He rejects the possibility of a theological sacred theatre, that is, a sacred theatre that operates according to the principle of adherence

[75] Gerard W. Hughes, *God of Surprises,* 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

to a law-based concept of holiness. The term 'theological sacred theatre' is oxymoronic, according to Lavery, because theology (so conceived) is essentially opposed to the sacred (conceived as a/theological).

This chapter has proposed an alternate understanding of the theological, especially the Christian theological, based on both Scripture and sacrament, word and body, and ultimately based in the experience of the living God revealed in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, which breaks down the boundaries of isolation and self-alienation that sin puts up, and unites the baptised Christian with the God who is wholly Other, with the entire universal community of the baptised 'from all tribes and peoples and languages',[76] and with himself in the healing and integrity of transformation into a son of God. The eucharist sacramentally effects this union, healing, and transformation, as does baptism; the latter initiates the Christian into this union, and the former is the living practice of it through the remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection which is the source of the sacrament's effects.[77]

Based on this alternate understanding of the theological, this chapter has proposed the idea of a *eucharistic theatre* based on the principles of: *1) gathering in the name of Christ in faith; 2) openness to God and to the other to form one community in solidarity;* and *3) making the invisible God visible through the symbolic and sacramental incarnation of word enfleshed in body and body revealing word.* This eucharistic theatre is aimed at the transformation of the participants into one community united to God and to each other; its members will then go out into the world to transform it and bring its people likewise into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, *a fourth principle can be added as a basis for a eucharistic theatre: 4)*

[76] Revelation 7:9.
[77] See Luke 22:19.

transformation into the Kingdom of God. This theatre is the Christian sacred theatre whose existence Lavery doubts. The next chapter will argue that such a eucharistic theatre existed in Poland before Grotowski's a/theological sacred theatre, and that this theatre was a major contributor to Grotowski's own theatrical development.

IV. OSTERWA'S REDUTA THEATRE – A CHRISTIAN SACRED THEATRE

Carl Lavery says that a Christian sacred theatre is impossible; yet such a Christian sacred theatre existed in Poland between the two World Wars, and had a direct influence on Grotowski's sacred theatre. This theatre was called the Reduta. It existed from 1919 until the theatre's destruction by bombing in the opening salvo of World War II in September 1939, and was founded by one of Poland's most famous actors and directors, the believing Catholic Juliusz Osterwa (1885-1947).

1. The Reduta's Influence on Grotowski

Grotowski explicitly stated that he saw himself as an heir to the tradition of the Reduta. Tadeusz Burzyński and Zbigniew Osiński note that while '[Constantin] Stanislavsky's heritage [of actor training and research] was the Theatre Laboratory's and Grotowski's key tradition in the sphere of the actor's workshop explorations, the heritage of Reduta (Redoubt) was and is their fundamental ethical tradition' – and, they argue, this inherited ethical tradition has remained the 'most durable' element of the Laboratory Theatre's legacy.[1]

The three elements of the Reduta Theatre that Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre took up were: 1) a monastic style of communal living and work by its members; 2) focused research into acting technique; and 3) a repertoire drawn largely from the

[1] Tadeusz Burzyński and Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski's Laboratory* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1979), 65. 'Redoubt', or fortress, is the English translation of the Polish word 'Reduta'. In addition, a 'reduta' is another name for a large ballroom, like the one in which the Reduta Theatre had its start. (The Reduta premiered on 29 November 1919 in the Ball Rooms of Warsaw's Grand Theatre. Ibid.) The name 'Reduta' therefore has a dual connotation: both a large, open, non-traditional performance space, and a fortress defending the national cultural and spiritual values.

Polish Romantics.[2] These elements reflected both the Reduta's and the Laboratory Theatre's commitment to theatre as a spiritual practice which is transformative both for the actors and for the spectators. The Reduta and the Laboratory Theatre diverge in their conception of the *telos* of that transformation. For Osterwa, founder of the Reduta, theatre was a spiritual service to the nation, intended to help both actors and spectators grow spiritually as Catholics, and draw closer to God and to each other as one community animated by a shared faith in Christ. Therefore, productions of Polish Romantic playwrights within the Reduta Theatre encouraged the participants to *identify* with the national religious *mythos*, especially with the Romantic idea of Poland as a Christ-like suffering saviour for Europe.[3] This shared identity as Polish

[2] The Laboratory Theatre also took up the Reduta's commitment to touring their shows throughout Poland, especially to rural areas. The Laboratory Theatre toured shows from 1959-1965. Ibid., 86. Osterwa's commitment to the full participation of the spectator was also an inspiration to Grotowski; however, he did not use audience volunteers to the extent Osterwa did. During tours, Osterwa would recruit volunteers from the local communities as supernumeraries and musicians in his large-scale productions, actually incorporating them as performers alongside the professional actors. Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa', 55. The theatre company Gardzienice is a modern-day descendant of Grotowski, and has made touring productions to rural areas the core of its theatre practice as a company; however, its touring practice is closer to Osterwa's than to Grotowski's, in that Gardzienice invites performances from the members of the communities which it visits, so that both Gardzienice and the community gift each other with performances. On the other hand, Gardzienice's practice is close to Grotowski's in that the focus of Gardzienice's visits are not the performances *per se*, but the personal encounter between the Gardzienice players and the community members. Theatre is, once again, a spiritual practice.

[3] The figure of Job – the innocent sufferer – was important to this *mythos*, especially in his role as prefigurement of Christ. In addition, Juliusz Słowacki supported the idea of Poland as a Christ-like figure who would resurrect the light of Christ in Europe with his 1849 poem which includes the verse:

> The harbinger of Slavic hopes fulfilled—
> The Papal Throne!
> This Pope will not—Italian-like—take fright
> At saber-thrust
> But brave as God himself, stand and give fight....
> Now he approaches, he whose hand constrains
> Globe-spanning forces:
> He whose word turns back along our veins
> The blood that courses....
> Our Slavic Pope, brother to all mankind,
> Is there to lead!

Juliusz Słowacki, untitled poem, trans. Noel Clark, *The Tablet* (London), 20 January 1979. Quoted in *Man of the Century: The Life and Times of Pope John Paul II*, by Jonathan Kwitny (London: Warner

followers of Christ between the actors and the spectators, and often with the characters (and their playwrights), was the basis for the 'theatre of communion' sought by Osterwa and the Reduta.

For Grotowski, on the other hand, theatre was a spiritual practice insofar as it liberated the actors and performers from psychophysical blocks keeping themselves from opening themselves fully to another person and from taking an honest look at themselves. There was no transcendent (or immanent) God to open themselves to, or whose own self-revelation they could receive. Religious national myths involving God (and his plans for Poland) needed to be confronted, not identified with, so that any truth which they held within the false religious framework could be shaken loose and experienced directly, allowing the participants, for example, to experience the power of self-sacrifice, which remained powerful despite the Christian cultural baggage with which it was loaded. Grotowski's 'theatre of communion' was not a shared experience of transcendent truth that transformed the participants through an experience of the object of their shared faith (Christ), but was a theatre in which actors and spectators found communion by opening their most intimate selves to each other, and by being willing to challenge their beliefs and communal myths together.

Despite their differing theological beliefs and resulting approaches to theatre as a spiritual practice, the Reduta and Laboratory Theatres both viewed theatre as a transformative experience, and operated with the goals of helping their actors grow spiritually and inviting their spectators to open themselves to the truth, as those theatres understood it.

Books, 1998), 74-75, as cited in Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 88. This poem was treated as a prophecy fulfilled after the 1978 election of Polish bishop (and co-founder of the Rhapsodic Theatre) Karol Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II. Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 35.

Grotowski and the Laboratory Theatre's commitment to the principles first articulated almost 50 years earlier by the Reduta Theatre was reflected in the Laboratory Theatre's choice of logo. Burzyński and Osiński note that, as of March 1966, 'the company of the Theatre Laboratory adopted the Reduta badge: a loop made up of two intersecting ellipses, the only difference being that the stylized letter "L" was superimposed, instead of the letter "R". From then up to the present day [1979] this sign...has appeared on all documents of the Laboratory'.[4] Grotowski himself spoke in a 1966 interview about the meaning of the Reduta logo for the Laboratory Theatre, and in this interview claimed the Reduta tradition as his own:

> The Reduta loop...had the letter 'R' in the middle; we have taken it over without any change, except for the substitution of this letter by the letter 'L', for Laboratory. We have done this, first of all, because of our anger at the slighting way theatre people often express themselves about the monastic habits and naïve ideas of Reduta members. To my mind, Reduta was the most essential phenomenon in the inter-war theatre, because of its attempts to initiate long-term research concerning the actor's craft and also because of its ethical premises which, as they were formulated in the language of its time, can now sound naïve, but which made excellent sense, because they tried to rid the theatre of the pretensions of the artistic *demi-monde*… I would say that Reduta is, in our aspirations, our moral tradition.[5]

Burzyński and Osiński describe the differences between the Reduta and the Laboratory Theatre in the following ways:

> Both at Reduta and at the Theatre Laboratory, work in the sphere of art was conceived as initiation to further action. At Reduta there was a tendency to leave the theatre for things of the spirit, in accordance with the conviction that man is sanctified in the spirit and through the spirit. At the Theatre Laboratory, on the other hand, the tendency was to rehabilitate the body, to sanctify man through his body. For this reason, performances of, for instance, *The Constant Prince* at Reduta and at the Theatre Laboratory meant something quite different.[6]

---

[4] Burzyński and Osiński, *Grotowski's Laboratory*, 86.
[5] Teatr Laboratorium, '13 Rzędów' ['13 Rows'], 'Jerzy Grotowski o sztuce aktora. Rozmawiał J. Budzyński (Jerzy Grotowski on the art of the actor. A conversation with J. Budzyński)', *ITD* 28 (1966), quoted in Burzyński and Osiński, *Grotowski's Laboratory*, 86.
[6] Burzyński and Osiński, *Grotowski's Laboratory*, 86.

The Reduta's production of *The Constant Prince*, which, as with the Laboratory Theatre, was their most famous production, will be described below.

It is interesting to note that Grotowski saw himself to be in the ethical and moral tradition of the Reduta, while elsewhere saying that the religious 'consciousness' out of which that tradition grew must be replaced by a 'secular consciousness'.[7] This amputation of the Reduta's ethical and moral principles from their religious root echoes the words of Innes, Brook and Lavery that, since no one believes in religion nowadays, religious beliefs and their baggage can be discarded, and the true sense of the sacred, with its ethics and principles not connected to any religious content, followed in order to create a new, living, ethical, and transformative theatre.

If Innes, Brook, Lavery and Grotowski are incorrect to dismiss religion so quickly – as I believe they are, given the continued existence of religious faith despite the oft-proclaimed 'death of God' and of religion – then it is worth asking whether a non-religious sacred theatre and a religious sacred theatre differ in their principles, and therefore in their ethics and their embodiment. On the one hand, if a religious sacred theatre is dead because religion is dead, then it follows that if religion is not dead, then a religious sacred theatre is not necessarily dead. On the other hand, if a religious sacred theatre is dead because such a theatre is not possible in the first place – because, as Lavery argues, the idea of religion and the idea of the sacred are mutually incompatible – then to find an example of such a sacred theatre undermines Lavery's argument that religion and the sacred cannot go together. Such a religious sacred theatre can be found in the Reduta.

[7] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 49.

2. Reduta in the Context of 'Polish Citizen Theatre'

At the end of the 18th century, Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia, and Austria, disappearing from the map for over a hundred years.[8] During that time, theatre, along with poetry and other forms of literature, helped build national identity. Kazimierz Braun, in his *History of Polish Theater*, writes that

> Public use of the Polish language was prohibited in territories incorporated by Russia, except in two institutions: the Catholic Church and the theater. Thus, theater was the only public, lay institution where Polish could still be heard. Church and theater became the strongholds of Polish identity and repositories of the national spirit, on both of which the nation lavished its affection.... [I]n the collective consciousness of the Poles, a link and an analogy were forged between the Roman Catholic Church and the Polish theater. This strong covenant between the Church and the theater became a primary source of the originality and distinctiveness of the Polish theater. It endowed the theater with a special dignity and placed on it responsibilities over and above purely artistic ones, giving it authority to intervene in matters of conscience, morality, and politics.[9]

During the time of the captivity,[10] Braun writes that theatre 'was regarded by the public as both an important national institution and as an artistic phenomenon belonging to the spiritual sphere of the nation's life'.[11] In the hands of some theatre

---

[8] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 2.

[9] Ibid., 5-6.

[10] Braun uses the term 'captivity' to refer both to Poland's oppression under Nazi and Soviet government from 1939-1989 (the focus of the book) and Poland's period of partition between Russia, Prussia, and Austria from 1795-1918. See, for example, ibid., ix and 1. Braun also mentions that some scholars call the 1939-1989 captivity 'the Fourth Partition'. Ibid., 2. 'Captivity' is one of the recurring themes of Braun's book, through which he links Polish theatre under partition with Polish theatre in the 20th century. Braun takes the subtitle of his book, 'Spheres of Captivity and Freedom' from Czesław Miłosz's *The Captive Mind*, connecting Miłosz's concept of 'captivity' to Polish theatre:

> Miłosz used the notion of 'captivity' to describe the situation of culture, the human condition, and the predicament of the mind and the soul of the Polish intellectual under Communism. 'Captivity' disables, destroys, and limits both the individual and the society. References to the notion of 'captivity' should alert the reader not only to the external conditioning of theater life but also to the internal bonds strangling the artists of theater. The term focuses on the prevailing circumstances in which theater developed, as well as on the complex fabric of theater life in Poland during and after World War II.

Ibid., 9.

[11] Ibid., 126.

artists, it became a potent means of 'cultural resistance' against the nation's captors.[12] During World War II, when all Polish theatre activity was prohibited, theatre companies performed secretly in people's living rooms, knowing that if they were caught, both actors and audience could face immediate execution. The words Braun writes about the Polish underground theatre during the 1980s apply also to the underground theatre under German occupation during World War II:

> [U]nderground theater activities... were based on very strong bonds between actors and spectators. The underground productions were intense, emotional, and communal. In private homes, the actors were the welcome guests at an evening event. In the churches, performing near the altar, the actors were (consciously and unconsciously) identified with priests; indeed they were virtually ministers during congregational celebrations of the free spirit.[13]

The church performances were more a factor of the 80s underground theatre rather than the WWII theatre, since churches were not subject to Soviet censorship and could be more open about hosting performances in that later time period. Nevertheless, that connection between 'actor' and 'priest' – the vision of the artist as a national spiritual leader – was a factor throughout Poland's periods of captivity, both in the 18th century and in the 20th century.

One artist who took up the prophetic mantle during Poland's existence as a free state between the two World Wars was Juliusz Osterwa, who founded the Reduta Theatre in 1919 and managed it until the theatre was bombed at the outset of the war in 1939. The Reduta was one of the most prominent theatres in Poland, and was a major theatrical model for the Laboratory Theatre, as well as other Polish theatres such as the Rhapsodic Theatre (the subject of the following chapter). According to Artur Grabowski, a theatre professor at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, 'both

[12] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 44.
[13] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 114.

Mieczysław Kotlarczyk [the founder of the Rhapsodic Theatre] and Grotowski declared themselves to be Osterwa's direct heirs';[14] however, both theatres took almost entirely different elements from Reduta.

Reduta was an explicitly Catholic theatre company, which Kazimierz Braun places within the tradition of 'Polish Citizen Theatre', that is, theatre which is 'based on the notion of service to the public and the nation'.[15] Osterwa considered theatre to be 'a holy communion, uniting actors and spectators in the service of one's brothers and sisters, one's nation, and God.'[16] Theatre was a way of life for the company members, who lived in common and devoted themselves entirely to their work – a kind of theatre monastery.[17] They were committed to the presentation of the works of the Polish Romantics, a group of 19th-century poets and playwrights who kept alive a vision of Catholic Poland during the period of Partition, and who envisioned a sacral role for Poland as a messianic figure whose suffering would bring about a resurrection of Christianity in Europe. Osterwa also used sacral language for the role of the actor at the Reduta. Braun writes that:

> 'Truth,' in Osterwa's view, was the foundation for theater work...; acting, therefore was a process of revealing the truth of a character through the revelation of the actor's own truth as a human being. Osterwa treated acting as a 'sacrifice' or an 'act of redemption.' The performance was for him a 'sacerdotal sacrifice for the congregation.' He referred to spectators as 'witnesses.' The 'communion' between the actors/priests and the public/congregation was his goal, and the 'actor-saint' was his ideal. He searched for methods to break the barriers between actors and spectators.

[14] Artur Grabowski, e-mail message to author, 24 March 2014.
[15] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 136.
[16] Ibid., 135.
[17] Taborski, introduction to *Collected Plays,* 4.

Braun identifies Osterwa's first 'commandment' of the theatre: 'Theatre is a holy communion; creating theater, you shall serve your brothers, your country, and God'.[18]

When his theatre was destroyed, and he was prohibited from participating in theatrical activity, Osterwa wrote a manifesto for a postwar Polish theatre. He prophesied that 'the Polish theater, along with the entire country, must undergo a "great transformation"' by experiencing a 'purification' through the 'sufferings of war', and proclaimed that the 'purpose of the transformed theater would be an absolute devotion to the service of the nation and of God'.[19] Osterwa's vision for a postwar Polish theatre did not come to fruition, both because of the Soviet occupation which replaced the German one, and because he died in 1947, shortly after the end of the war. Instead, Reduta served as an inspiration to postwar theatres. Kazimierz Braun writes that 'Osterwa's work in Reduta, as well as his ideas, influenced Polish theater enormously. The intense research activity of Polish theaters in the 1960s, 1970s, and even 1980s, was based generally on the whole Polish theater tradition, but especially on Osterwa and his *Reduta*'.[20] Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre was a part of this 'intense research activity'.

In the Reduta Theatre, Osterwa and his company practiced a mission of service to the nation by reminding it of its Christian identity through theatre, and by practicing Christian community as a company together.

[18] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 137.
[19] Ibid., 20.
[20] Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer', 50, emphasis in original.

3. History of the Reduta

During World War I, Juliusz Osterwa was in exile in Moscow and Kiev. In Moscow, he met Constantin Stanislavski, co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, whose pioneering research into the actor's method had probably the greatest effect on 20th-century Western acting of any acting teacher. (Grotowski saw Stanislavski as 'his first master'.)[21] After seeing the young Polish actor perform, Stanislavski invited him to join the Moscow Art Theatre. Osterwa declined, but extended conversations with Stanislavski during his time in Moscow helped him clarify his own thoughts about theatre and the role of the actor.[22] In 1918, Osterwa was in Kiev, and there

> created...a 'theater-community,' in which, for the first time, he put into practice his ideas about the reform of theater. Osterwa's group worked and lived as a community, prepared all elements of their productions together, and tried to implement a new ethical approach to theater work, based on the notion of service—service to both theater and country, and the priority of moral and national values over artistic ones.[23]

The Reduta was founded in 1919 after Osterwa was able to return to Poland, and, like Grotowski's company, it changed locations and focuses more than once. The following timeline outlines its history:

> 1919-25: 'theater and acting school', Warsaw
> 1925-1931: 'theater and touring company', Wilno
> 1931-1939: acting research 'institute and acting school', Warsaw

In addition, from 1939-1947 Juliusz Osterwa was in Kraków and, as a Pole under Nazi Germany, prohibited from participating in theatre. During this time, he wrote out

[21] Kumiega, *Theatre of Grotowski*, 109.
[22] Braun, *Concise History*, 154-55.
[23] Ibid., 155.

plans for the post-war Polish theatre, which did not come to fruition due to his death from cancer in 1947, not long after the war ended.[24]

4. Principles of the Reduta

A key ethical commitment which Osterwa and Grotowski shared, and which is at the heart of the ethical tradition that Grotowski claimed to inherit from the Reduta, was the commitment to the personal growth of the actor as a human being and not just as an artist, much less as simply a technician. Braun claims that Osterwa saw the 'individual, personal and moral development of the actor' as the most vital element in the practice of theatre.[25] In live theatre, it was the actor who most directly communicated with the spectators, and therefore the actor was the agent of communion. In order to be an agent of communion, the actor had to build a relationship with the spectator, by being in a servant role to him. It was the actor's job to be a 'servant of art and society', as part of a community, not as an individual star.[26] Theatre was an act of service, a means of pointing the participants to truth, encouraging love, strengthening faith, and buttressing courage. The actor might be the most visible servant in the theatre, but all theatre artists served the same cause. They also shared with the spectators this responsibility for the cultivation of virtue and goodness – all were united in a set of shared values, which alone made a 'theatre of communion' possible. Therefore, the Reduta was committed not only to the ethical

[24] Timeline taken from Braun, *Concise History*, 158.
[25] Kazimierz Braun, 'Modern Acting Theory and Practice', in *Beyond Brecht = Über Brecht hinaus,* ed. John Fuegi, Gisela Bahr, and John Willett, Brecht Yearbook 11, edition text+kritik (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 114, accessed 10 September 2014, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/German.BrechtYearbook011.
[26] Ibid. 'Servant' is plural in the original.

formation of actors, but also to the ethical formation of all theatre artists, as well as to the ethical formation of their audience and the wider society.[27] This formation began with the actors.

The Reduta's acting school, the Reduta Institute, which began in 1922, taught not only skills and technique, but also sought to form actors in virtues necessary both for their work as actors and for their lives as human beings and citizens. Braun lists the theatrical virtues which Osterwa aimed to inculcate in his actors: 'cooperation within a creative group, reverence for selfless work, devotion to theater, and service to the nation'. He also sought to instil in them other 'human virtues and an almost religious spirituality'.[28] In the year he started the Reduta Institute, Osterwa disseminated *An Outline of the Program of Reduta*, which served as a statement of principles for the new school. It outlined the four following core principles, as summarised in the words of Kazimierz Braun:

(1) '**The truth is the main objective of theater work.** Truth has a theatrical aspect, but most of all truth has a moral dimension. The ethics of the actor and his or her moral influence upon the public is of primary importance. The activities of all people involved in the theater's work have moral and social functions.'

(2) '**The truth of an actor should be his or her own, personal truth, based on his or her own morality.** The personal, individual morality of each actor is the foundation for the moral impact of theater, of the acting company, and of every performance. Thus, moral values are the core of theatrical creation.'

(3) '**The actor not only plays/performs – he or she rather commits an act of sacrifice or an act of redemption for the spectators, who are the witnesses of his or her sacrifice.** The reality of theater should be not "a play for an audience", but "a sacerdotal sacrifice for a congregation", co-created with the congregation. The theatrical act, the act executed on the stage during the performance, is indeed not only an artistic act, but a sacred act too.'

[27] Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer', 56.
[28] Kazimierz Braun, 'Theatre Training in Poland,' in *Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures,* ed. Ian Watson, Contemporary Theatre Studies 38 (New York: Routledge, 2001), 16.

(4) '**Theater is a deeply human art and is therefore an interhuman art.** Theater is not only an art, but also an artistic communion between actor-priests and spectator-congregation.'[29]

This statement of principles reveals the importance of truth and its communication for Osterwa, and his use of eucharistic language for the theatre (*communion, 'sacerdotal sacrifice for a congregation'*), which Grotowski took up. The second point, the necessity that a truth which an actor communicates should be 'his or her own, personal truth, based on his or her own morality', sounds like an inclination toward relativism, the idea that there is no objective truth, merely a collective of subjective 'personal truths', and that morality is something which changes from individual to individual; but relativism was not Osterwa's position. That second point rather relates to two requirements: 1) that an actor be formed morally, according to the objectively-existing moral responsibilities he has as a member of society (and as a person of faith, if such is the case – the Reduta was not necessarily limited to religious actors), and 2) that the actor's portrayal of a role should communicate something which he believes to be true. The height of the actor's potential in a theatre of communion was when his values and his character's values were the same, and, by portraying the character, he in the real world was taking the same action as the character was taking in the world of the performance. An example would be Osterwa's portrayal of the Constant Prince, in which the Prince's defence of the Christian faith of his people through his refusal to hand them over to foreign masters merged with Osterwa's defence of his country's Polish Catholic identity through the mounting of the play – both Don Fernando and Osterwa were united in a sacrificial action of confessing the faith out of love for their countrymen. Another example would be the performance of forbidden Polish

[29] Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer', 56-57, emphasis added.

Romantic texts in underground performances during the Nazi occupation of World War II – an actor reciting the words of a Polish hero to an audience, as in *Forefathers' Eve*, written by a playwright as a means of keeping alive his country's identity under oppression, is participating in the same action as his character and as that playwright – reinforcing his country's identity with and for his listening countrymen. The union of actor with character is complete. It was important, therefore, for an actor to be a true 'actor-saint':[30] even if he played a villain, his portrayal, set within the context of the play, needed to help lead the spectator closer to truth. (For example, he should not make the villain so attractive that the audience was tempted to emulate his behaviour.) Therefore, the actor needed to be a committed seeker of the truth, formed in the truth, and strengthened with the courage to express it.

5. Acting Training and Production Process

The Reduta Institute eventually focused their recruitment on young actors who had not yet been formed professionally, so that they would be open to the artistic and ethical formation process of the Reduta. There was a time of 'probation', during which the student not only took classes that related to his development as an actor, but also was expected to carry out duties that related to his development as a member of the theatre community, and his spiritual development as a person:

> [During the first year] the candidate had to strictly obey a set of rules and discipline (i.e. the curfew, the necessity to carry out technical tasks and deal with matters of routine, like cleaning), [so that] he was compelled to become devoted entirely to work. Also subsequent years were a period of probation and trials of various kinds, which were to probe not the professional, but the spiritual development of the candidate. The sign of belonging to the Reduta

[30] Ibid., 57.

> was not professional skills, but rather features of character evincing themselves in everyday work, relationships with others and the readiness to make sacrifices. From this point of view the Reduta had rather a character of an association based on the idea of initiation or a parareligious artistic sect in which individual values and aims had to give way to collective ones. The Reduta was a troupe in which the principles of sacrifice and equality were to be followed, which was expressed in calling each other only by their first name, the giving up (at least partly) of the traditional professional hierarchy, making collective artistic decisions, the obligation to do the cleaning. As a consequence a theatrical community was gradually to come into being, which was intended as an organic and harmoniously connected whole, reflecting the harmony of the world, a microcosm.[31]

A symbol of this 'monastic' commitment to theatre work were the 'habits' designed for Reduta members by Iwo Gall: 'They were long, loose garments similar to [a] monk's frock, under which a training suit was worn'.[32]

Institute students committed to living in community, not only sharing living quarters but also sharing a common purse. Students took courses in 'acting, movement, voice, history of drama and theater, and theater ethics', as well as engaging in physical conditioning work such as 'gymnastics, body expression, rhythmical movement, fencing, and horse-riding'.[33] They were also involved in Reduta productions.

Acting training was the core of the programme, as was concomitant experimentation in acting method. Osterwa's primary precept regarding acting was: 'do not play a role, but be on stage and live'.[34] A key term for the Reduta approach to acting was *przeżywanie*, or 'experiencing', a parallel with the Russian term *perezhyvanye*, a term that Osterwa, his Reduta co-founder Mieczysław Limanowski,

---

[31] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 10.
[32] Ibid., 11.
[33] Braun, *Concise History*, 156.
[34] Kosiński , 'A Holistic Actor', 6, quoting Zbigniew Osiński, *Pamięć Reduty. Osterwa, Limanowski, Grotowski* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, 2003), 32. (All translations into English of Polish sources quoted in 'A Holistic Actor' appear to be Kosiński's own.)

and Constantin Stanislavski also employed.[35] The Osterwan approach to 'experiencing', however, was not limited to the 'psychological realism' which became a legacy of the Stanislavski method,[36] but was focused on the spiritual and ethical union between the character and the actor – the 'experiencing' of the character's spiritual life and a harmonious convergence of the truth of the character with the truth of the actor. It was more of a 'spiritual realism' – Reduta scholar Dariusz Kosiński notes that 'Limanowski and Osterwa regarded ['the forces which drive the creative process'] as spiritual and transcendental forces, according to the [Polish] Romantic tradition' out of which they worked.[37]

'Experiencing', according to Limanowski, does not mean, in the context of theatrical performance, the Stanislavskian concept of 'affective memory', in which one calls to mind or repeats memories or action one has already experienced in order to bring up the emotions associated with them, emotions which the actor will then re-experience in order to give life to the role. It is, rather, 'a creative process of learning the truth and reacting to it',[38] closer to the Stanislavski-influenced Sanford Meisner's definition of acting as 'living truthfully under imaginary circumstances',[39] i.e., in the moment, asking yourself, 'What is true?', and responding accordingly. In order to break out of the boundaries of naturalism, Limanowski makes acting 'analogous to the Dionisian frenzy and mystical ecstasy' when he says regarding his actors: 'I am looking for pure souls, which would not act, but live in ecstasy'.[40] The parallels with Grotowski should be clear: there is a *conjunctio-oppositorum* of spontaneity and

[35] Kosiński , 'A Holistic Actor', 6.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Sanford Meisner, *On Acting* (New York: Random House, 1987), 15.
[40] Kosiński , 'A Holistic Actor', 7, citing Limanowski as quoted in Osiński, *Pamięć Reduty*, 224.

chaos, of given circumstances (what is true) and ecstatic life within them – the natural, unplanned reactions of a spiritually-formed person reacting to the truth as he understands and experiences it. Kosiński notes that the Reduta also used the notion of *trance*, as did Grotowski. For the Reduta, trance (or 'ecstasy, elation, frenzy, "magic spell"')[41] was

> connected with conceiving and experiencing a state of heightened intensity of being, which at the same time implied the highest level of appropriating and going beyond one's everyday self. Osterwa...described theatrical trance as a state in which the control of consciousness is suspended, which puts one in a state similar to dreaming. However, this trance should not lead to spontaneous, random and uncontrollable actions, but, on the contrary, to actions carried out with utmost precision.[42]

This paragraph could almost be taken straight from Grotowski, with its description of trance as an altered state of consciousness in which the spontaneity of inner energetic impulses is expressed in precise, intelligible, meaningful actions.

Transgression, another key term for Grotowski (and for Lavery's conception of a sacred theatre), was also a term used by Osterwa to describe this state of trance, a desired state for the actor. It was not *moral* transgression, to be clear – the actor's job was to be obedient to truth, which included the truth of his duty as a servant-citizen. Trance, in Osterwa's conception (though not in Grotowski's), was an act which transgressed the boundaries of everyday experience to initiate the actor into a state of spiritual ecstasy. 'Transgression', after all, only means 'movement across' a boundary; it does not necessarily involve the modern connotation of movement across the boundary of right into the domain of wrong. Kosiński defines Osterwa's conception of trance as 'a sacred state of transgressing the limits of earthly life and

[41] Kosiński , 'A Holistic Actor', 7.
[42] Ibid.

gaining access to transcendence',[43] which, for Osterwa, working out of the Polish Romantic tradition, was a particularly religious transcendence. Kosiński writes that Osterwa, like Grotowski, saw theatre as a privileged means of access to the spiritual. He visualized theatrical trance, in its fullness, as a form of mystical prayer, in which the actor was entirely caught up in God;[44] it was not the trance described by Artaud in which a performer is possessed by spirits. There are parallels – one could say that in mystical prayer, and in Osterwa's trance, one is 'possessed by the Holy Spirit' – but the idea of spirit possession, in which the god or another spirit takes over a person's body and suppresses his personality, completely controlling his actions and speech, is not part of the Christian understanding of how God relates to humanity.[45] Rather, when the Holy Spirit 'overshadows'[46] a person, entering into their heart, that person's personality remains intact, but their action and the action of the Holy Spirit is united, sharing the same will in a divine cooperation – similar to an Osterwan actor whose union with his character is so complete that character and actor carry out the same action. This is the form of 'experiencing' which Osterwa sought in his Reduta actors. Kosiński writes that Osterwa 'believed that by preserving and perfecting the ability to evoke and maintain this state it will become possible to renew the tradition of

---

[43] Ibid.

[44] This level of trance was an ideal; Osterwa never claimed to have achieved it. If possible, it would be part of the 'fourth level' of acting, 'Rite' (described below, pp. 163-64), in which the actor as a distinct person supposedly disappeared and became a mouthpiece for God. See 'Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 9-10.

[45] See Harris, *Theatre and Incarnation*, 128:

> …for the Christian, the theater will not move beyond likeness to rival, claiming to emulate the Incarnation by summoning spirit or universal will to inhabit its material signs. […T]he theater will not aspire to speak into flesh the word of the universal mind or to summon from an unseen realm 'gods' able 'to make our demons FLOW.' The proclamation that 'all the fullness of God' became flesh once for all in Christ and continues incarnate in the members of his body, the Church, sets limits, for the Christian, to the theatrical evocation of spirits.

For a more complete discussion of Harris' reservations regarding Christians using the language of 'spirit possession' in the theatre, see *Theatre and Incarnation*, Chapter 7, pp. 112-28.

[46] See Luke 1:35.

mysteries, which ceased to exist in the Western world'.[47] The experiencing of the spiritual reality of a character committed to the truth by an actor equally committed to the same truth could yield a mystical experience of union with Truth Himself, God. A whole theatre of actors and spectators focused on union with God through the search for and expressing of truth could be a true holy mystery, which was the ideal of the Reduta's eucharistic conception of theatre.

In a 1944 letter Osterwa describes St Genesius as 'a model of actor's work and actor's experience'.[48] According to legend, St Genesius was a 3rd-century Roman actor who prepared a play mocking baptism, to be performed before the Emperor. He became a catechumen in order to research Christian rituals, so that he could more effectively satirise them. When he finally performed the play, as the water was being poured on him during the mock baptism, he saw Christ flanked by angels, and realised that Christ was the true God. He declared himself a Christian, and when the Emperor realised his confession of faith was not part of the play, he cut Genesius' head off. Genesius is now the patron saint of actors, and his mock baptism on stage was counted for him as his real baptism, because it was used by God to initiate a saving faith. For Osterwa, Genesius' research into Christianity as an actor prepared him to receive this act of grace, which turned his fake ritual into a real, effective one.

In addition, because that act of grace and conversion took place on stage, it was witnessed by others, and Genesius was therefore a witness (that is, a martyr) of Christ to his audience. For Limanowski, the vision of God which was inherent in a text could be incarnated by the actor, who could become, as he put it, 'a living

[47] Kosiński, 'The Holistic Actor', 7.
[48] Ibid.

testimony to...the vision itself, opening access to it for the spectators-witnesses'.[49] In the Reduta's acting technique, the actor prepares himself to receive the vision of the text by actually living the spiritual life of the character he portrays to the extent possible, just as St Genesius prepared to play a catechumen by becoming one himself. By analysing the text and the character in order to enter into the character's spiritual journey within the text, the actor prepares himself to receive the same grace the character receives – *if* that is the will of God. The actor enters into this spiritual journey by, for example, visiting places associated with the character, taking up the character's spiritual practices, or becoming familiar with the character's diaries and writings (if he is based upon an actual person). By preparing himself in this way, the actor readies himself to receive the same experience of grace that his character receives during the climax of the play. If he receives this grace, the audience can witness it and potentially share in it, making the actor a 'priestly' bridge between God and the audience. This goal of openness to God for the purpose of sharing his grace with the audience led to the Reduta's development of a 'theatrical method of consciously attaining metaphysical [and specifically 'religious'] experiences',[50] so as to create a 'theatre of transformation'.[51]

Osterwa's use of St Genesius, the actor who, through experiencing the sacred mysteries during his process of developing his character – through *experiencing life as a Christian* – actually *became* a Christian in performance, illustrated what Kosiński identifies as 'Osterwa's basic idea...: if actors can turn into another persons

[49] Ibid., 9.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 1.

[*sic*], then they can by dint of this ability attain the level of a revelation, the embodiment of a religious vision'.[52]

This claim raises several questions. For example, what if an actor is cast as the villain of a play? One can say that he can attain the same transformation by expressing the truth *of the villain*, namely that he *is* a villain, and not a virtuous character; however, that assertion would go against the premise that, in order to experience this transforming union, both the *character* and the *actor* need to believe in and support the same truth. If the character is a villain, opposed to the hero's cause, then there is likely some truth that is key to the plot regarding which the villain disagrees with the hero, and regarding which, according to the playwright, the hero is right and the villain wrong. In this case, if the play is being mounted by a particular company, it is likely that the producer and director believe that the playwright is correct, and support the truth of the hero, not the villain. In that case, what is the villain actor supposed to do? Assuming he is part of this company, or even if he is just hired for this production, it is logical to assume that he agrees with the aims of the production – otherwise he would have a moral obligation not to be involved. In that case, if he believes the character whom he plays to be wrong, how can he experience the union of truth and action which is meant to lead to this mystical experience of union with truth? One possibility is to do as Karol Wojtyła did when, as a young actor, he played the villainous Bolesław the Bold in a production of Juliusz Słowacki's *King-Spirit*. Bolesław murders the hero, St Stanisław. In this production, Wojtyła made the decision to play the role 'as if he were a man preparing himself for

[52] Ibid., 8.

confession years after his crime'.[53] The character who was a villain at one point in the play later repents and becomes a heroic figure, based on Wojtyła's choice. But how about when such a switch is not possible – when the villain remains villainous? There is no answer to be found in Osterwa's technique as to how this actor is meant to achieve the same level of trance – the same level of union with God – as the actor playing the hero. This gap might be due to Osterwa's tendency throughout his career to play the hero – or at least a villain who repents. He did not have to face this question in the same way that an actor who is always typecast as 'the heavy' would.

In addition, Kosiński points to Osterwa's discussion of St Genesius as evidence that Osterwa believed that Genesius 'experienced religious ecstasy, a vision of God and the consequent conversion *not because of divine faith and grace*, but *because of his own solidity as a craftsman and an artist*'.[54] Attributing Genesius' religious experience solely to his craftsmanship, and not to God's action, suggests that God can be 'summoned' like a servant, to make magic on cue, if only the priestly figure of the actor is skilled enough at his priestcraft. This belief treats God as a tool of the theatre, instead of theatre as a means of seeking God (who is able to reveal himself or not as he chooses), and therefore does not adequately respect God's sovereignty. One can believe that the actor's craft is a factor in whether or not God reveals himself, but still believe that the final determination of whether or not God reveals himself is up to God. For example, St Teresa of Ávila writes about silent and meditative prayer and the practice of good works being necessary in order to create a heart open and receptive to God. God, of course, can overpower the heart, reveal himself, and make the person wholly his however and whenever he wants, but in the

[53] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 64.
[54] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 8, emphasis added.

ordinary scheme of things, God chooses to allow the person to lay the groundwork seemingly themselves, before he chooses (if he ever does) to infuse his Holy Spirit into the person's soul in the mystical union of which Teresa writes, an infusion which is entirely due to grace and cannot be commanded or brought about by the person's efforts. (In addition, the person's own efforts of prayer and good works are only made possible by God's grace, acting in the person in a different form.) Inspiration – the 'breathing in' of the Spirit – is a gift which is outside a person's direct control.

Kosiński also cites Limanowski as putting an emphasis on the incarnational aspect of theatre. He writes that Limanowski argued that 'the basic obligation of art is to get embodied in a vision' – since it is necessary for the artwork to be embodied, and thus perceivable by the senses, if it is to be communicated – and that 'acting fulfils this postulate in the most perfect manner, and at the same time it does something even more important: it becomes a living testimony to the authenticity of both the act of embodiment and the vision itself, opening access to it for the spectators-witnesses'.[55] Kosiński writes that Osterwa and Limanowski 'regarded the fulfilment of this sacred function of theatre as the most noble aim of theatre'.[56] The vision of truth inherent in the play is incarnated in the body of the actor, and therefore made present to the spectator to whom the actor is made present. The spectators become witnesses of the incarnation of truth, highlighting again the priestly role of the actor in the Reduta's approach to acting. (In a way analogous to the priest's actions *in persona Christi*, the actor is meant to incarnate the theatrical presentation of Truth, God's *Logos*.) The spectators who witness this incarnation of truth are then challenged to go out and witness to the truth in society once they leave the theatre,

[55] Kosiński, 'The Holistic Actor', 8-9.
[56] Ibid.

incarnating the truth in their own lives. They take on the priestly role of the actor in their own contexts, in a way analogous to the way the congregation participating in the eucharist also bears the presence of Christ through the priesthood of all believers, and is sent out at the end of worship to incarnate Christ in the world. Kosiński notes, however, that 'Limanowski and Osterwa did not understand "the priesthood of the actor" as a metaphor';[57] for them, since theatre was a means of accessing true spiritual reality, the actor truly was a priest – not in the same way a Catholic priest was a priest, but performing an analogous action. Their 'aim was to gradually educate an actor of a new type and create the methods of creative work which would allow [that actor] to reach "the state of mystery" independently of any accidental and involuntary factors'.[58] In this case, as in others, Osterwa and Limanowski come very close to visualizing their theatre in a way which makes theatre almost, if not as important, as the eucharistic liturgy.

It is therefore important to question the aims of the Reduta at this point. It seems unlikely that theatre artists will ever be able to find a technique which will induct the actor into a 'state of mystery' consistently and reliably, without any 'involuntary factors' intervening. First of all, such a technique has not been found for the actor in millennia of research and experimentation. (There is a popular tale among actors about a night in which Laurence Olivier gave the performance of his life. Afterwards, his friend came backstage to congratulate him, and found him sobbing in his dress room. 'What's wrong?' the friend asked. 'Your performance was magnificent!' Olivier replied, 'I know, but I don't know how I did it!') Second, the search for such a technique becomes much more problematic if, as seems to be the

[57] Ibid., 9.
[58] Ibid.

case, Osterwa and Limanowski were searching for a way that an actor could enter a particular spiritual state by his own effort. As St Teresa of Ávila explains, spiritual states are the work of God's Holy Spirit. While a person can till the soil, it is God who provides the harvest.[59] Teresa of Ávila's writings contain two distinctive images of prayer. In the first, different ways of prayer are compared to different ways of watering a garden: drawing water from a well using a hand-held bucket, drawing water from a well using a pulley and irrigation system, watering the garden from a stream, and allowing the rain to water the garden directly.[60] In the second image, the soul's transformation in Christ is compared to a silkworm spinning its cocoon and emerging as a butterfly.[61] In these examples, God is the source of the garden's produce and the cause of the silkworm's transformation; he not only provides the physical materials necessary, but also the inspiration to water the garden or build the cocoon. The message of both metaphors is that there is work that the person of prayer can do to help prepare the ground within herself for the fruit of prayer, but it is up to God to produce the fruit. It is also God who inspires the initial preparation. God can even produce prayer in the person without any work at all, according to his will.

Shannon Craigo-Snell uses Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* to help explain why giving the Spirit room to move is equally important to both church and theatre. If a theatre company clings too closely to a specific spiritual experience in the theatre, it will keep trying to re-create that experience through the particular techniques which seemed to create it. Because the Spirit cannot be controlled, these techniques will not

[59] 1 Corinthians 3:6.
[60] Teresa of Ávila, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila*, trans. with introduction by J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1957), 78.
[61] St Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle*, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers from the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, CD (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 90-92.

consistently succeed in producing it, leading to a system of intermittent and not consistent reward. This intermittent reward only further entrenches the techniques, leading finally to a theatre obsessed with technique – Brook's 'Deadly Theatre'.[62] Instead of creating techniques to produce spiritual experiences, Craigo-Snell suggests, the church should focus its actions on techniques of emptying. By emptying themselves of everything that competes with God, the church's members leave room for the Holy Spirit to work, paradoxically increasing the chances of such positive spiritual experiences happening (and increasing the benefit of those experiences, because the experiences themselves are no longer the goal). This 'discipline of emptiness might contribute to the conditions in which the invisible-made-visible could be perceived (by others and by ourselves)'.[63]

There are two major risks with the Reduta's goal of helping an actor achieve a '"state of mystery" independently of any accidental and involuntary factors'.[64] First of all, there is the risk that the actor will come to believe that he himself can achieve a particular spiritual state, and does not need the help of God's grace. Such spiritual self-sufficiency is deadly to a relationship with God. Second, there is the risk that the actor, in his desire to achieve a particular spiritual state, will engage in whatever activities he believes are most effective for its achievement, and will no longer be open to the actual activity of the Spirit, who might have other plans. As Craigo-Snell argues, a person or community who is seeking to perceive the invisible must leave room for that invisible actor to reveal himself. That requirement must be kept in mind when evaluating the feasibility and wisdom of the Reduta's goals. Osterwa, and his

[62] See Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church*, 128 and Brook, *The Empty Space*, 9.
[63] Craigo-Snell, *The Empty Church*, 141.
[64] Kosiński, 'The Holistic Actor', 9.

co-founder Limanowski, appeared at times to give too much credit to the power of the actor's craft, and not sufficiently to respect the primacy and necessity of the Spirit's action for the spiritual experience they sought.

The Reduta's acting technique was built upon 'a four-level hierarchy of the craft of acting put forward by Osterwa, which corresponded to a four-level scale of repertoire', a hierarchy which 'resulted from their strong conviction that one cannot methodically and with positive result reach spiritual heights without going through the entire process of spiritual development, analogous to a multi-stage initiation process'[65] (comparable, for example, to the four stages of adult initiation into the Catholic Church: 'pre-catechumenate', 'catechumenate', 'purification and enlightenment', and 'post-baptismal catechesis or mystagogy'[66]).

The four levels, according to a 1940 document written by Osterwa a year after the Reduta Theatre ended (and thus reflecting on a mature stage in the development of their acting method), are:

1) **'Miming by pretending'** – The actor 'should copy the received, conventional methods of acting, for example acting in Moliere's comedies, especially those which drew on the tradition of commedia dell'arte'.

2) **'Experiencing'** – The actor engages with 'psychological repertoire and acting based on empathy, on the evoking of affective memory, etc.'.

3) **'Transformation'** – The actor's work 'should result in [a] complete transformation into the enacted character, possible or even necessary in the case of the [P]olish Romantic drama'.

4) **'Rite'** – The actor 'should not transform into a character, but should remain subjected to "higher creatures" and expresses their will "through

[65] Ibid.
[66] Liturgy Office of England and Wales, *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (London: Burns & Oates, 1985), no. 7, accessed 12 May 2015, http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RCIA.pdf.

> his mouth, as an envoy, deputy, proxy"'; this level is 'regarded as genuinely "priestly" and "mystery-like"'.[67]

Kosiński writes that 'Osterwa claimed that he sometimes managed to reach the third level. However, he believed in the possibility of reaching also the fourth one and he wanted to work on this in [*Genezja*]—a kind of a theatrical monastery'.[68] If Osterwa had been able to carry out his *Genezja* theatre monastery experiment, he would have had to wrestle with the relative positions of this fourth-level theatrical liturgy ('rite') and the eucharistic liturgy which is meant to be at the centre of Christian worship and the monastic cycle of prayer. This same challenge confronts anyone inspired by the idea of such a theatre monastery; in order for such a community to be truly Christian, its first object of desire must be God. Any artistic exploration which displaces the eucharist as the central rite of the community's worship is not in keeping with a Christian or monastic commitment.

Despite the difficulties associated with reaching these higher levels of acting, the Reduta Institute's 'basic aim was to work out methods of transition from craft and convention [the first level] through psychological experience [the second level] towards transformation [the third level]'.[69] Kosiński notes two further key elements of Reduta training: musical education and text analysis, both led by Limanowski. According to Kosiński, 'Limanowski regarded music as a force encompassing all elements of the world and linking them into cosmic harmony (in this respect he represented the esoteric traditions dating back [to] the [Pythagoreans])'.[70] Music was

---

[67] Juliusz Osterwa, *Przez teatr – poza teatr*, ed. Ireneusz Guszpit and Dariusz Kosiński (Kraków: Towarzystwo Naukowe Societas Vistulana, 2004), 196, 201, quoted in Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 9-10, emphasis added.
[68] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 10. More about *Genezja* later in this chapter.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 11.

linked to the physical aspect of the education so that the actors' bodies would be responsive to the changing emotional states and physical sensations created by music.[71]

Students also engaged in text analysis under Limanowski's direction. This analysis was based on 'the idea of drama as a pararitual script',[72] an idea similar to Grotowski's early use of scripts as a framework to be adapted for the needs of a theatrical ritual. Kosiński describes the Reduta's Romantic approach to a script, which

> traced back to the typically Romantic and modernist cult of art, which regarded works of art as effects of a special spiritual force—inspiration. In this Romantic and quasi-mystical vision, at the moment of creating the poet came under the influence of the Spirit, which enabled him to reach 'the great mystery'. For Limanowski the aim of each actor and the entire troupe working on a particular performance was to collectively 'repeat the same process which the author had to go through' (Limanowski 1987: 163 and 165).[73] To work on 'masterpieces of great inspiration' did not mean to put them on stage, but to discover and bring closer to the audience the script inscribed in them. This should open the way to the key moment of artistic creativity—the moment of elation and an instantaneous meeting with the Spirit. True, this act could be repeated, but because of its directness, sublime character and extreme power it ceases to be only a repetition of someone else's activity. It becomes a personal act, one's own experience, revealed in front of witnesses. In this context special dramatic texts seem to be the scripts for actions that can put the actor in a state of trance.[74]

For the Catholic Reduta Theatre, the Spirit mentioned here is not some pantheistic life-spirit, a spirit of the cosmos, which acts as a muse; it is God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals the hidden Word at the heart of all creation, again, not in a pantheistic

[71] Ibid., 11-12.
[72] Ibid., 12.
[73] This reference is to Mieczysław Limanowski, 'O duchu i zamierzeniach Polskiego Studio Sztuki Teatru im. Adama Mickiewicza', in *Listy*, by M. Limanowski and J. Osterwa (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1987).
[74] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 12.

sense, but in the sense of being the cause and source of all creation's being – the Word which governs all creation.

Kosiński writes that the purpose 'of esoteric theatre planned and practiced in the Reduta was to reach the deep structure of reality' by understanding what 'archetypes' were at work in the play, and the 'essential drama' which they revealed.[75] This 'essential drama', or the true 'action' of the play, 'was an event/experience that established or renewed the contact with the most profound level of collective and individual consciousness, the level usually regarded as transcendent and sacral'.[76] In other words, the hidden dynamics of the play were understood as expressing something true about the hidden dynamics of the world and God's action within it; by experiencing those hidden play-dynamics, the actor, and the witnessing spectators, could experience God acting in the world, similar to the way he acted in religious ritual.

Kosiński and Braun both describe the Reduta's five-stage rehearsal process, which included the analysis of the text through both table work and rehearsals 'on their feet'; however, they break down and name the stages slightly differently. Kosiński's description includes:

1) **Table work** – the 'thorough discussion of a given text'

2) **'[M]illing', or 'analytic rehearsals'** – 'psychological relationships ("contacts") were built, together with particular sequences of stage actions, situations and characters'

3) **'[M]aking a sketch'** – 'the stage of movement improvisations, which were to develop "contacts" into concrete, collectively generated situations'

[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

4) **‘[E]laborating to perfection’** – ‘all actors’ tasks were orchestrated into a kind of chorus (therefore the term “phrasing” was often used in this context)’[77]

5) **Public performance** – ‘if the need occurred, in the last phase of editing, a comprehensible spectacle came into being, which could be shown to the public’[78]

Braun breaks ‘analytic rehearsals’ into both ‘analytical rehearsals’, focused on intellectual analysis of the play, and ‘contact rehearsals’, focused on developing emotional associations. Both of these rehearsals included ‘table work’. Braun’s ‘blocking rehearsals’ are equivalent to Kosiński’s ‘making a sketch’, Braun’s ‘building the structure’ is equivalent to Kosiński’s ‘elaborating to perfection’, and Braun’s ‘dress rehearsal’ phase is equivalent to Kosiński’s ‘public performance’ phase. (Braun focuses on the dress rehearsal instead of public performance as the final phase because not all Reduta productions were opened to the public; some were only rehearsed as a training or research exercise.)

The Reduta rehearsal phases as Braun describes them include:

1) **‘“Analytical” rehearsals’** – These rehearsals focused on the thorough breakdown of the play’s themes, context, and meaning: ‘Not only was the play in question put under a close and detailed scrutiny, but the broad historical, cultural, social, artistic, and psychological context of it was discussed. All the characters were examined thoroughly from all possible points of view’.

2) **‘“Contact” rehearsals’** – These rehearsals combined table work with field trips outside the rehearsal studio, in order to help the cast develop personal connections between themselves and the material, and with each other. The text was explored on its feet, playing with different ways of speaking the words (such as whispering, yelling, or singing them), or playing the scene without any words (such as through mime, dance, or exaggerated movements).

[77] One can see in the descriptions of stages 3 and 4 the importance of musical analogies to the Reduta’s theatre development process, analogies shared by Grotowski (in the use of the terms ‘improvisation’ and ‘performance score’) and the Rhapsodic Theatre, another descendant of the Reduta.

[78] All quotes in this list from ibid., 13, with bold added.

3) **'"Blocking" rehearsals'** – These rehearsals took place in the rehearsal room or the performance space, and were the time when the actual movement of the actors and other aspects of getting the play 'on its feet' for performance were defined. The actors' exploration of the scene continued under the direction of Osterwa and in response to their fellow actors' choices.

4) **'Building the structure'** – These rehearsals served as a bridge between blocking rehearsals and full dress rehearsals. They further solidified the actors' performances, and introduced the incorporation of costumes, lighting, and effects.

5) **'"[D]ress" rehearsals'** – These rehearsals included the full incorporation of scenic, costume, and other design elements and effects, and were presented to members of the Reduta company and Institute students, faculty, and staff, as well as to special invited guests, for critique, before possibly being opened to the public.[79]

Both descriptions show a progression from table work analysing the play, to analytical and inter-personal exercises both in and out of the rehearsal room designed to help the actors identify with the material and build their relationships, to 'putting the text on its feet' through exploring possible blocking choices, to perfecting the communication of the acting choices and solidifying the presentation, to finally incorporating production elements and presenting the production to private and possibly public audiences.

Osterwa also invited special guests to come to rehearsals: experts on psychology or literature, for example, or students from outside the Institute. Productions could also include pre-show lectures or post-show talkbacks. The work of the Reduta was not meant to be isolated from the public, but operating in tandem with

[79] All quotes in this list from Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer', 53-54, with bold added.

them. Osterwa viewed the final public performance of a play as only one part of the wider 'interhuman process' which was theatre.[80]

Kosiński notes that many scripts did not proceed to performance, or even to the later phases of rehearsal. In the Reduta's later years, it focused primarily on actor formation, and less on being a producing company. Therefore, plays only proceeded to production if production was necessary as a learning experience for the students; if the necessary formation could be achieved simply by analysing a text through the earlier stages of rehearsal, then there was no need to perform the text for the public. By the last decade of the Reduta's existence, the public presentations of the studio work were no longer open, public productions to which tickets were sold. Instead, audience members attended by invitation and without charge, though they could offer donations towards the company's work.[81]

The text analysis process 'consisted of a sequence of practical exercises developing the sensitivity and creativity of the actors, as well as a series of pre-arranged experiences, close to the key situations described in the play'.[82] Kosiński includes as an example a blueprint for an actor's work on the role of Hamlet, written by Osterwa. The actor's process shall proceed as follows:[83]

1) 'reading, analysis and acting in the masterpieces of Polish authors, whose protagonists have been regarded as Hamlet-like characters, as well as the reading of Shakespeare's plays and scholarly works devoted to them, including Wyspiański's book'[84] (time for completion: 'a few months')

2) 'a series of travels to venues connected with Hamlet', such as 'Denmark, London, Stratford and the Wawel castle, where Wyspiański wanted to set

[80] Ibid., 56.
[81] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 18.
[82] Ibid., 13.
[83] Quotes taken from ibid., 14.
[84] This book was most likely Polish Romantic author Stanisław Wyspiański's *Studium o Hamlecie (Study of Hamlet*) (1904).

> the action of *Hamlet*', plus 'a search for experiences which could bring the experience of the actor closer to the experience of the character, such as a visit in "one of the still living magnate's mansions", taking part in a "serious spiritualist séance (once or twice)", visiting "empty battlements of the (Wawel) castle on a dark and on a moonlit night", or going "to a cemetery (…) by daylight, in the night, in the spring, summer and autumn"'[85] (time for completion: approximately two years)

The entire development of the character should last about 'two and a half years'.[86] Kosiński writes that 'Osterwa wanted to put in motion the process of living a character, and lead the actor through a series of spiritual experiences, for which the character is merely a pretext'.[87] The final performance of the role for an audience is almost incidental to this process.[88]

This focus on the actor rather than the audience naturally arises out of Osterwa's fear of 'publicotropia' (the term Grotowski quotes as 'publicotropism'), which Kosiński defines as 'the drive to confirm to the needs and expectations of the audience, and particularly the need to show off in front of the spectators'.[89] Osterwa's focus on the actor did not arise out of any kind of contempt or disdain for the spectator, but rather a desire to form an actor who could *serve* the spectator, which the actor would do best by serving truth and sharing that truth with the spectator, rather

[85] Quotes are from Juliusz Osterwa, *Antygona, Hamlet, Tobiasz dla Teatru Społecznego*, ed. Ireneusz Guszpit and Dariusz Kosiński (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2007), 120, quoted in Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 14.
[86] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor, 14.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Part of this emphasis on the actor rather than the audience is due to the Reduta's life as a training studio and research laboratory. The actors could be free to experiment with different methods of developing a character without the pressure of preparing for a public performance of that character. ('Scene study' classes at acting studios today serve a similar function, allowing a student to develop their technique by working on a variety of different characters in the classroom, and ceasing work on the character as soon as the learning objective has been reached.) Another reason for this emphasis on the actor was the developing role of the Reduta has a semi-monastic spiritual community, an *ethos* which Grotowski later emulated with the Laboratory Theatre. After the Reduta's wartime destruction in 1939, Osterwa started planning a new phase of theatrical activity involving the creation of two theatrical religious communities, one explicitly organised as a monastic community. These plans ended with Osterwa's death in 1947.
[89] Ibid.

than trying to please the spectator directly, an orientation which generally leads to the actor 'pulling focus' onto himself and not onto the story or the truth which he is meant to serve and communicate. Osterwa's conception of theatre as an 'interhuman process' led him to take pioneering scenographical and blocking decisions that aimed at eliminating the customary theatrical boundaries between performers and audience, in order to make the spectators and the performers one community focused on a shared pursuit of truth. The removal of these boundaries also served to help the performers not think of the spectators as a separate body whom they needed to impress. Osterwa used techniques such as 'placing the stage on the same level with the audience,...eliminati[ng]...the prompter's box [the first company to do so in Poland]...[and] eliminat[ing] intermissions, by locating sequences of the performance in the entire theatre building and for the entire period of the audience's presence in [the] theatre'.[90] He also removed the footlights separating the first row of audience from the actors, and used site-specific staging as often as possible – for example, setting a play in Kraków's Wawel Castle, with torches and bonfires as the lighting, or producing a play set on a boat on an actual boat, as part of a river cruise.[91]

This unity of space between the action of the play and the world of the audience was further meant to break down the boundaries between actor and spectator. The spiritual identity between character and actor which was a goal of Osterwa's 'theatre of communion' was also meant to help provide a unity of time between the time of the character, the time of the playwright, and the time of the actor and spectators. As in the eucharist, where the same sacrifice that Christ offered on Calvary is also the same sacrifice that is offered on the altar, bringing the entire Body

[90] Ibid.
[91] Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer', 55.

of Christ through space and time to the one unified space-time of the eternal heavenly Kingdom of God, so too could the shared action of the actor and character, and the shared space of the actor and spectator, create a unified space-time, a ritualistic *anamnesis* that united character, playwright, actor and spectator in one shared reality, one *hic et nunc*.[92] The actor whose performance incarnated the character, and therefore acted as a uniting bridge between the reality of the play and the reality of the world in which the theatre sat, could in effect become a 'high priest'. The audience members, through their very presence, could silently (or not-so-silently) witness to the transformation of reality and person taking place on stage, and become a 'congregation of spectators/believers'. This transformation of actors and spectators (and characters and playwright) into one body, and the transformation of the play-reality and the 'real world'-reality into one united moment in time and location in space, is Osterwa's ideal of a 'theatre of communion'. In this ideal, theatre ceases being only an entertainment and becomes 'a theater-ritual, theater-celebration, theater-mystery'.[93]

According to this ideal, the actor's sacrifice of his own self to take on the reality of the character could incarnate a new eternal reality for the spectators, which could transform their reality and, if they would allow it, themselves, into the true

[92] This shared reality could be especially vivid if the character being played by the actor was a historical human being, as, for example, in *Forefathers' Eve*, in which the statues of saints and Polish national heroes in Wawel Cathedral come alive as they await the Resurrection of Christ. Since the playwright, actors, and spectators were also, in real life, living in that in-between time between Christ's Ascension and Christ's *Parousia*, the conceit of the play itself would do much of the work in placing all the participants in the theatrical performance (both alive and dead) in the same moment in time – and reminding them that, even outside the theatrical moment, they always exist in the same adventual time, united with the entire communion of saints. If the character being played was entirely fictional, the intensity of communion would be lessened somewhat, but the fictional character could still function as a 'stand-in' for all real human beings whose lives share elements with that of the character.

[93] Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer', 56. Braun normally uses the spelling 'theater' instead of 'theatre'; direct quotations from Braun maintain his spelling.

reality, the eternal truth, revealed by the words, actions, and entire performance of the play. Truth is at the centre of Osterwa's theatre, and not just truth: Truth, the Truth that is Christ, the eternal Truth, the eternal true *Logos*, of God. When the character was a Christian, and the playwright was a Christian, and the actor was a Christian, the union of action in service of Christ between character, playwright, and actor could become a mystical union, a sacred sacrifice to God, offered to the spectator because offered first to God – a true priestly action effected by the actor. In this way,

> according to Osterwa, the 'service' transforms into 'sacrifice.' The actor sacrifices himself/herself for spectators during the show, and thus, he/she performs a sacred act of salvation and redemption. The core of 'sacrificial' acting is, therefore, not performance, but sacrifice. The spectator, being a beneficiary of the actor's sacrifice, becomes the witness to it, and in turn is compelled to testify to the truth and proclaim it. If so, the production is a holy act in which the actor-priest offers sacrifice for the spectator-witness. Theater is not only a work of art, but also a holy act. Only this approach to theater gives it sense and dignity. Osterwa's ideal model of an actor was an 'actor-saint' or an 'actor-sacrificer.' He wanted to treat the spectators as 'witnesses' to the 'holy act of the sacrifice of the actor.' He wanted to implement spiritual and religious values in theater work. He stressed the spiritual dimension of the art of theater.[94]

This goal of forming actors and spectators into one community united and transformed by the incarnate Truth who is Christ qualifies the Reduta as a Christian sacred theatre.

6. The Reduta as Christian Sacred Theatre

Osterwa said that 'God created theatre for those for whom church is not enough'.[95] Grotowski's theatre is a replacement for a service that church previously provided – the experience of meaningful communion with another. For the believing

[94] Braun, *Concise History*, 159-60.
[95] Osterwa, *Przez teatr – poza teatr*, 109, quoted in Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 2.

Catholic director Osterwa, however, church still provided that 'service', and theatre existed *by the grace of God* as a 'supplement' to church,[96] even though theatre sometimes appeared to rival church in his language. The ritual was still alive, and its meaning could be deepened by the creation of a theatre inspired by that ritual, which could provide the gathered participants with a transcendent experience of God.

For Osterwa, theatre was a way of mysticism, a practice of deliberate prayer that prepared the ground for God's free gift of union with him. Osterwa tried to describe this experience of transcendence in the same 1944 letter in which he lauded St Genesius. He writes:

> ...sometimes it became possible to be moved by the fate of the enacted character to such a degree that we gave it our own body and soul, that we lose sight of not only the reality of the surroundings, but one's own [reality]... [This experience's] mysterious character can be compared only with the mystery of experiences of conceiving the body for a new human being. We imagine that the highest degree of our agitation must be similar to the peak of rapture which Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross mention....[97]

Osterwa goes on explicitly to connect these kinds of transcendent experiences to the eucharist, when he writes that they 'are also numerous in religious rituals...[such as in the] everyday Holy Feast in the church, when a sacred communion with Christ's flesh and blood takes place'.[98] He suggests that the eucharist is a 'sure' locus for these 'mystery experiences', but that they can also be experienced in the theatre by a 'gift' of 'Grace'.[99]

Peter Brook says in *The Empty Space* that a 'holy theatre not only presents the invisible but also offers conditions that make its perception possible'.[100] The Reduta

[96] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 2.
[97] Juliusz Osterwa, 1944 letter to Stefan Jaracz, quoted in ibid., 8.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Brook, *The Empty Space*, 56.

was a Catholic theatre company, and therefore believed that there *was* something invisible *to* make visible – namely, God, and his workings of grace. They also believed that invisible reality *could* be made visible – through the body of the actor. Therefore, they sought the conditions that best prepared the actor to make the invisible visible – the conditions that made the actor receptive to the grace of God, so that the audience could perceive God through his actions in the actor. Theirs was a theatre in which the playwright planted and the actor watered, but God provided the increase.[101]

Their warrant for believing that God could 'show up' to a performance was their own experience of moments of transcendence in the theatre. The Reduta attributed these moments to the Holy Spirit, and an actor who was a vehicle for these moments was literally 'inspired' – filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Reduta's beliefs about the power of the Spirit to raise art to transcendence are echoed in Pope John Paul II's *Letter to Artists*. John Paul worked with Osterwa as a student, when John Paul, then known as Karol Wojtyła, and several other actors co-founded in 1941 their own Catholic theatre company in the vein of Reduta, called the Rhapsodic Theatre. In Pope John Paul II's letter, he writes:

> Every genuine inspiration...contains some tremor of that 'breath' with which the Creator Spirit suffused the work of creation from the very beginning. Overseeing the mysterious laws governing the universe, the divine breath of the Creator Spirit reaches out to human genius and stirs its creative power. He touches it with a kind of inner illumination which brings together the sense of the good and the beautiful, and he awakens energies of mind and heart which enable it to conceive an idea and give it form in a work of art. *It is right then to speak, even if only analogically, of 'moments of grace'*, because the human being is able to experience in some way the Absolute who is utterly beyond.[102]

[101] See 1 Corinthians 3:6-7.

[102] John Paul II, *Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists,* 4 April 1999, 15, emphasis added, accessed 6 May 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.html.

John Paul II here echoes the Reduta's language of 'grace' as well as 'Spirit', even if 'grace' has to be used 'only analogically'.

But one could argue that the term 'grace' does not necessarily need to be used only analogically in the case of a specifically Christian 'holy theatre', especially one which has the potential to become a type of sacred art in the tradition of medieval liturgical drama. John Paul II asks artists to 'pass on to generations still to come' the 'beauty [that] will save the world', quoting Dostoevsky's famous phrase.[103] John Paul says, 'Beauty is a key to the mystery and a call to transcendence'.[104] What is this mystery? To continue with the Pope's words, it is 'the mystery of the Incarnation', in which 'the Son of God becomes visible in person'.[105] He continues:

> This prime epiphany of 'God who is Mystery' is both an encouragement and a challenge to Christians, also at the level of artistic creativity. From it has come a flowering of beauty which has drawn its sap precisely from the mystery of the Incarnation.[106]

Christ, then, *is* the 'beauty that will save the world', and it is the artist's job to communicate this Beauty through his work.

Peter Brook defined holy theatre as 'The Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible'.[107] If Christ, in the Incarnation, has made the invisible God visible,[108] then a Christian holy theatre will be a theatre of the Incarnation. As John Paul II writes, the Incarnation was the key to the Church's justification of art in the response to iconoclasm at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. John Paul says, '[I]f the Son of God had come into the world of visible realities—*his humanity building a bridge*

[103] Ibid., 16. Quote from Dostoevsky is from *The Idiot*, Part III, ch. 5.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 5.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Brook, *The Empty Space*, 42.
[108] John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, 5.

between the visible and the invisible—then, by analogy, a representation of the mystery could be used, within the logic of signs, as a sensory evocation of the mystery'.[109]

John Paul II goes further than explaining how the Incarnation justifies art. In regards to the icon – a specifically sacred art form – he writes that 'in a sense, the icon is a sacrament. By analogy with what occurs in the sacraments, the icon makes present the mystery of the Incarnation in one or other of its aspects'.[110] Now, as previously stated, a holy theatre is a 'Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible'. A *Christian* holy theatre takes its inspiration from the Incarnation of Christ, who makes the Invisible visible. If, as John Paul II suggests here, the act of 'making present the mystery of the Incarnation' is analogous to 'what occurs in the sacraments', then a Christian holy theatre which 'makes present the mystery of the Incarnation' through incarnate performance can also be analogous to the making-present of Christ which happens in the sacraments. The communal assembly which is an essential element of the eucharist is also an essential element of theatre, which makes the eucharist the specific sacrament to which the theatre is most analogous.

John Paul II connects the eucharist to art in his 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia.*[111] At the beginning of the encyclical, he quotes from *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, which says that the eucharist is 'the source and summit of the Christian life'.[112] Therefore, all

[109] Ibid., 7, emphasis added.
[110] Ibid., 8. He is speaking specifically of the icon's role in Eastern Christianity.
[111] John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia,* 17 April 2003, accessed 6 May 2015, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html.
[112] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 21 November 1964, 11, accessed 6 May 2015,

Christians ought to make their lives 'completely "Eucharistic"' – that is, 'transfigured' by Christ and in turn going out to 'transform...the world in accordance with the Gospel', [113] just as at Mass Christ is received and the congregation is then sent out to 'announce the Gospel of the Lord'.[114]

John Paul II goes on to focus specifically on the relation between the eucharist and the arts, when he writes that the arts, especially the sacred arts, 'moved by the Christian mystery, have found in the Eucharist, both directly and indirectly, a source of great inspiration.... It can be said that the Eucharist, while shaping the Church and her spirituality, has also powerfully affected "culture", and the arts in particular'.[115] One example he gives is Andrei Rublev's Trinity icon, which links the Trinity to the eucharist via the chalice which lies between the three figures, and therefore opens out to remind the Christian viewer of his union with the Trinity through that same sacrament.[116] John Paul II calls for similar artistic creations that are, in his words, 'aimed at expressing, in all its elements, the meaning of the Eucharist'.[117]

The transformative element of the eucharist mentioned earlier is a primary theme of a 2002 lecture by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on 'Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity', three years before he became Pope Benedict XVI. In this lecture,

---

http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. The translation is that found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, rather than that found in the official English translation of *Lumen Gentium* on the Vatican website, which translates the Latin original's 'fontem et culmen' as 'font and apex' instead of 'source and summit'. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1324. The *Catechism*'s copyright notice indicates that its quotations of the Vatican II documents are taken from Austin Flannery, OP, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, new revised ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1992).

[113] John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 20.

[114] Dismissal, second option, Order of Mass, §144, in *The Roman Missal*, trans. International Commission on English in the Liturgy, amended 3rd typical edition (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011), 673.

[115] John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 49.

[116] Ibid., 50.

[117] Ibid.

Ratzinger calls the eucharist 'the Sacrament of Transformation',[118] and identifies five transformations related to it. First, by willingly going to the cross for humanity's sins, Christ 'transforms...the act of violent men against him into an act of giving on behalf of these men – into an act of love'.[119] Ratzinger says that '[t]his is the fundamental transformation upon which all the rest is based'.[120] The second transformation is the Resurrection, in which, through the first transformation of love, death is defeated and turned into everlasting life. The third transformation is the eucharist itself, the transubstantiation of the consecrated bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This transformation was also chronologically the first transformation, in that Christ instituted the eucharist, the Lord's Supper, the night before he suffered on the cross. As Ratzinger says, 'At the Last Supper the cross is already present, accepted and transformed by Jesus'.[121] Even now, when the eucharist is celebrated after Christ's Passion has taken place, it is not a separate, repeated event which points to a past event, but is that event itself, in which the gathered assembly is brought through space and time to stand at the foot of the cross and witness the sacrifice on Calvary. As the *Catechism* states, 'The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*'.[122]

The fourth transformation is the transformation of all those who receive the eucharist in faith into the one Body of Christ, putting them into communion both with God and with one another. The fifth and final transformation is the transformation of

[118] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, 'Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity', lecture at the Bishops' Conference of the Region of Campania, Benevento, Italy, 2 June 2002, n.p., accessed 7 April 2014, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020602_ratzinger-eucharistic-congress_en.html.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1367, quoted in John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 12.

creation into the Kingdom of God, by means of the Body of Christ. It is the Church's job to achieve this transformation, empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the transformed members of Christ's Body in the world.[123] Ratzinger concludes by saying that 'the Eucharist is a process of transformations, drawing on God's power to transform hatred and violence, on his power to transform the world'.[124]

The fullness of a eucharistic theatre, then, is a theatre in which the participants are transformed by Christ, and then go out to transform the world into the image of Christ. Such a theatre is a true 'theatre of communion', and a true Christian sacred theatre.

7. The Constant Prince

The Constant Prince was the most well-known production of the Reduta. Juliusz Osterwa himself played the lead of Don Fernando, a Portuguese prince who allows himself to die in captivity rather than surrender Christian villages to his Muslim captors. He was viewed as a martyr figure, a symbol of steadfastness under suffering, a suffering Job-Christ figure that matched the Polish Romantics' conception of Poland as the suffering Christ-figure of Europe. The Polish Romantic poet Juliusz Słowacki translated and adapted the Spanish play by Calderón, and it became an important part of the dramatic legacy of Polish Romanticism. It also became the most famous production of Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre, forty years after Osterwa mounted it with the Reduta.

[123] See 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Romans 12:4-5.
[124] Ratzinger, 'Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity'.

The Constant Prince was the Reduta's most popular play, and they performed it more than any other. Osterwa directed the play in 1918 when he was in Kiev, and then re-mounted it the same year once he returned to Warsaw. He directed it as a Reduta production in Wilno in 1926, set on a large scale outdoors, using a sizeable ensemble, dozens of mounted supernumeraries (in order to provide spectacular court and battle scenes), and a live orchestra.[125] He toured it to 50 different locations that first year, and continued touring it through 1928.

Performance locations were always outdoors, if possible, and included sites in front of major buildings (like a 'city hall, church or castle'), as well as 'in the courtyard of a palace', 'on a meadow', or on 'a parade ground in a military base'.[126] Braun describes the use of set, costumes, and supernumeraries to create the production's grand spectacle:

> Sitting in the center of the natural environment was a huge, white platform with white stairs ascending to it, crowned by a stylized organ. The platform represented the altar…. In the first scene [Osterwa] was on horseback in silver armor with a gorget representing Mary, Mother of God; then, as a prisoner, he put on a long white shirt. The show ended with a ceremonial cortège of knights on horseback departing with the body of the prince on a stretcher.[127]

This was the very opposite of Grotowski's 'poor theatre', which eschewed the use of elaborate sets, costumes, or spectacle.

Braun notes that 'in the press and in private accounts [*The Constant Prince*] was described as a "mystery play," or a "theater liturgy"'. In addition, 'Reduta's tours with *The Constant Prince* and other shows were a major factor in the nation's effort to culturally unify different regions of Poland divided not long ago by the

[125] Braun, *Concise History*, 156.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

partitions'.[128] Because of the historical spiritual importance of the theatre in Poland, and the links between Roman Catholicism, Polish Romanticism, and Polish national identity, Reduta's approach in *The Constant Prince* was to *identify* with the national myths, not *confront* them. The Reduta was founded in the historical context of re-building a country after long oppression, and with a mission to help in that re-building of national identity through culture. One might have thought Grotowski was in a similar situation, working under Soviet oppression; however, he had bought in to the Soviet system through his education, even though he was not a 'true believer' in Communism. He believed neither the national religious mythology nor the Soviet mythology, so his efforts were to confront 'mythology', in order to find the truth of direct human experience.

This difference between 'identity' and 'confrontation' was the biggest difference between the Reduta's and Grotowski's productions of *The Constant Prince*. In Grotowski's production, the audience was above the actors, looking down upon them passively, allowing the oppression and torture of an innocent to continue in their name. The Constant Prince was like a bull being speared by a matador, or a patient being dissected in an 'operating-theatre'[129] – both objects of someone else's action, whose only choice is to remain passive or fight back. In Osterwa's production, on the other hand, the audience was often on the same level as the playing area, and spectators were not only part of the same outdoor environment, but some of them were also actors, whether as mounted or other supernumeraries – participating fully in the stage action. The stage was an altar, emphasizing the Constant Prince's *active* giving of himself in an act of martyrdom. Where Grotowski separated the actors and

[128] Ibid.
[129] Flaszen, '*The Constant Prince*', 82. See also Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 20.

the spectators, Osterwa united them. Where Grotowski praised the Constant Prince's steadfastness under suffering, Osterwa praised the Prince's active defence of the faith. And where Grotowski challenged the audience members' identification with this national and spiritual hero by casting them in the roles of willing accomplices in the hero's persecution – as Christ's crucifiers instead of as Christ – Osterwa encouraged the audience members' identification with the Constant Prince, to encourage them to active defence of their faith and national identity through self-sacrifice in the 'real world'. Osterwa believed the myth; Grotowski did not. That is the key to their different interpretations.

Yet they both shared a desire for their productions to be transformative for the actors involved, as well as for the spectators. And for both lead actors – Osterwa himself and Grotowski's Ryszard Cieślak – the performance was seen as the pinnacle of their acting achievement, and as a truly spiritual experience. In giving oneself completely to the role of a martyr, it seems, one cannot help but sacrifice oneself as well, and in so doing challenge one's witnesses (spectators) to become witnesses (martyrs) themselves.

The key question to ask about both Osterwa's Reduta and Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre is: To whom, or what, ought one sacrifice oneself? Osterwa's answer is: To the Truth, in order to serve one's neighbours and strengthen them in their search for and service of truth. And the ultimate Truth is Christ. Grotowski's answer is: To the truth of one's own being and the being of the universe, in order to challenge one's neighbours to open themselves to their own truth. Both of them are seeking truth, and seeking to help others discover it and live by it. The difference is the truth they believe to exist: one is an objective, personal Truth, which is true for all

people, and which is the source of love and an authority commanding obedience – a Truth known most fully as Christ; the other is a subjective truth which is personal in another sense, in that it is a true expression of one's experience of the world and of oneself. The Reduta believed they had a truth to which they needed to conform, and which they could share with others. For Grotowski, truth was something of which one was always in pursuit; and the most important truth was the truth about oneself, and the freedom to authentically face oneself and reveal that truth to another – which is important, but which is not enough.

8. Dal and Genezja

During World War II, when Osterwa was not allowed to participate openly in Polish theatre, he wrote out plans for two theatrical religious communities, plans which were to be implemented after the end of the war. He was not able to implement them due to his death in 1947 from cancer, but they are worth visiting as models for potential communities in the future, who could resurrect Osterwa's plan for theatre as an explicit spiritual practice. The plans for these communities differed from the practice of the Reduta, in that they would be 'first of all religious, secondly theatrical', instead of the Reduta's approach which was *vice versa*.[130] In both of the new religious communities, 'artistic work would be strictly connected with prayer'.[131] Their two main goals would be: 1) to 'develop the individual virtues of the actors-monks and actress-nuns through common religious practices, as well as common physical and artistic work on the preparation of the productions', in order to form

[130] Braun, 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer', 57.
[131] Ibid.

'actor-saints'; and 2) to 'serve society and the nation on both social and spiritual levels' by forming spectator-saints – encouraging members of society toward the practice of virtue and the following of truth.[132] This approach is parallel to the goals of a religious order, whose members seek their own holiness through prayer and works of charity, and share in the Church's evangelical mission of forming disciples of Christ, whether through preaching the Gospel, serving the poor, providing spiritual guidance and retreats, or just through being a 'powerhouse of prayer', which is the form of service of an enclosed monastic community.

These communities would participate in 'a "great transformation"' of Polish theatre, Polish culture, and Polish society as a whole, which Osterwa prophesied in his war-time writings must take place in order for Poland to rise again as a light to the world after her '"purification" by the sufferings of war'.[133] This transformation should result in a theatre, culture and society completely 'devot[ed] to the service of the nation and to God'.[134]

Osterwa devised two different communities, *Dal* ('Faraway'[135] or 'Distance'[136]) and *Genezja* ('Fraternity of St Genesius'[137]). Their different lives are described by Kazimierz Braun:

> *Dal* was to be a community of theater artists oriented toward service to society through service to art. A personal vocation to devote one's entire life to theater would be a precondition for membership. Besides training, rehearsing, and performing in the productions, members would supervise community groups, teach acting, lecture, preach, and publish theater manuals. They would work within a cooperative structure, and their way of life would approach the monastic. *Genezja* would be an artistic-religious order, a brotherhood of

[132] Ibid.
[133] Braun, *Concise History*, 209-210.
[134] Ibid, 210.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Burzyński and Osiński, *Grotowski's Laboratory*, 65.
[137] Braun, *Concise History*, 210.

> theater people, representing the next step up beyond *Dal*. Service to God, within the Roman Catholic Church, would be the first priority in *Genezja* and the basis of service to society, through the medium of theater. The monk-members would lead a monastic life, observing religious practice, training as actors, preparing performances with religious themes, and organizing church ceremonies in which they would participate as lectors, vocalists, and preachers.[138]

From these descriptions, it appears that *Dal* was what would be termed in today's canon law terms as a 'lay association of the faithful', a theatrical ensemble who would work and live together out of a shared mission of service, and might make some sort of promised commitment to the community, but which would primarily function as a type of religious artists' guild, rather than a strict religious order or religious institute.[139] It seems that Osterwa intended *Genezja*, on the other hand, to be a true monastic religious institute, with prayer and direct service to the Church as its primary purpose, and theatre as its particular means of ministry (or 'apostolate'). Both *Dal* and *Genezja* were united in their 'call for total sacrifice to theater and for the subordination of theater itself to higher values'.[140]

---

[138] Braun, *History of Polish Theater*, 20, emphasis on names added.

[139] In the most recent *Code of Canon Law* (1983) of the Roman Catholic Church, a religious institute is an association in which members take perpetual public vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and live in community. *The Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition* (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), c. 607, §2, accessed 12 May 2015, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM. (All following references in this note to canon and section numbers refer to this *Code of Canon Law*.) A lay association of the faithful (which can be either public or private, depending upon whether it is 'erected by competent ecclesiastical authority' [c. 301, §3, and see also c. 299]) is governed by its own statues and constitutions (c. 304, §1), which can include the taking of temporary or perpetual vows or promises (see c. 1191, §2). These vows are considered private, in that they are not received by a 'legitimate superior…in the name of the Church' (c. 1192, §1). Associations of the faithful also do not require communal living, and most do not include this aspect (except for those associations which are in the process of becoming religious institutes). Members of the faithful have the right to associate in order to form groups for their mutual support, for the purpose of works of charity, for evangelisation, and for other legitimate purposes (c. 299, §1, and c. 298, §1). Religious institutes require erection and supervision by the local bishop (in the case of diocesan institutes) or by the pope (in the case of pontifical institutes) (see cc. 608-16 for the canons governing the erection and suppression of institutes and individual houses of institutes).

[140] Braun, *Concise History*, 210.

Both planned communities have potential for a Christian sacred theatre. Not only could both present productions with a 'theatre of communion' approach, expanding upon the research into new acting and production techniques begun by the Reduta, but they could help their members engage in theatre as a spiritual practice. In addition, *Dal* members would have more freedom to go out into the world and help form theatre artists who would not be *Dal* members, but would be professionals or amateurs who would go out and make more theatre on their own. They would also be able to bring a religious point-of-view into the wider theatre community. *Genezja* members would be a bit more limited in their participation in secular theatre, both because of their commitment as religious, which would make them public representatives of the Church, but also because of their monastic commitment, which would limit their time available.[141] Their work might be more suited to creating a revival in liturgical theatre. It would also be interesting to see the type of theatre that might be shaped by monastic life, and which could be shared with the public outside the context of public worship. Just as Grotowski took his Laboratory's productions to international festivals, *Genezja* actor-monks could devise productions that come out of their life of prayer, and tour them to international theatre festivals, as well as touring them to international places of worship. Their dramatic training could also help them devise new ways of worship that could complement the liturgy, much as the Iona Community and Taizé have contributed new forms of music to worship.

[141] The *Rule of St Benedict*, the main rule used by monasteries in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church, requires monks to prioritise 'the Work of God', or prayer (including the Divine Office and daily Mass), above all other activities. There is therefore a heavy round of prayer in common that limits the time available for work. See Chapter 43.3 of the *Rule* ('nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God') as well as Chapters 8-19, which regulate the length, times, and content of the Divine Office. St Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict: In Latin and English with Notes*, ed. Timothy Fry, OSB (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981).

They could devise ways of deepening the emotional impact of the Christmas and Easter liturgies, for example – liturgies which are already highly dramatic. These developments would not be added-on 'gimmicks', but ways of focusing attention on the meaning and action of the liturgy, and thus deeply organic to the Church's worship. Such a community could thereby participate in the growth of the liturgical reform, helping Christians to experience the beauty, goodness and truth of Christ.

9. Summary

For the Reduta members, one's entire life in the theatre was unified with one's spiritual and moral development, such that there was no separation between one's identity and growth as a theatre artist and one's identity and growth as a human being (and as a Christian, for those who held that religious identity). One's commitment was almost as all-inclusive as one's commitment to a monastery.

The Reduta's acting method was not a part of their lasting legacy. It was neither codified nor disseminated as thoroughly as that of Constantin Stanislavski, for example. Nevertheless, the Reduta 'created a set of basic ethical principles, as well as ideas and concepts, which became a cornerstone for subsequent experimentation carried out independently by outstanding artists of the Polish theatre such as Jerzy Grotowski and Włodzimierz Staniewski', as Kosiński concludes.[142] These principles include: 1) an idea of a 'theatre of communion' between the actor and spectator; 2) an emphasis on theatre as a spiritual practice, and performance as a means to spiritual development for the actor; and 3) a belief in the transformative power of theatre, a

[142] Kosiński, 'A Holistic Actor', 18.

power through which the actor invites the spectator to transformation, and which completes the 'theatre of communion' when the spectator accepts that challenge and allows himself to be a witness to the actor's transformation and be transformed in turn. Through its rooting of these principles in Christ, the Reduta Theatre was a true Christian sacred theatre, seeking to provide both actors and spectators with a transformative experience through creating one shared community by means of the word and incarnate presence of the actor, and helping that community break through the boundaries of everyday life in order to share an experience of the transcendent God. In addition, Osterwa's plans for religious theatre communities provide a framework for a new approach to Christian sacred theatre which could be resurrected today, and could incorporate the best of the Reduta, the best of Grotowski, and the best of ancient and modern theatre in order to form a new sacred theatre that seeks the Truth which is God, the Creator and Source of all truth.

The ethic of the spiritual formation of the actor, and performance as an experimental activity, was the ethic that Grotowski took up in his own company. Grotowski did not consider himself an heir to Osterwa's religious beliefs and identification with the religious aspects of Polish national myth; however, Grotowski was not the only descendant of the Reduta.

In 1941, an underground Catholic theatre company called the Rhapsodic Theatre was formed as a means of 'cultural resistance'[143] against Nazi oppression of the Polish people during World War II. This theatre was supported by Osterwa, and shared his commitment to theatre as a way of service and the strengthening of Polish national and religious identity through the presentation of the Polish Romantic

[143] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 66.

repertoire. The founder of this theatre, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, had his own approach to theatre, the 'Theatre of the Word', which focused very little on spectacle (in contrast to Osterwa) and entirely on the word spoken by the actor. Any use of the other elements of theatre (such as set, costumes, lighting and sound) served only to support and heighten the impact of the word. It was a sacred theatre ruled by the Word, and thus seems to be a fair target for Lavery's critique of the concept of a theological (i.e., text-based) sacred theatre. Therefore, the next chapter shall compare it to Grotowski's theatre, and see whether a sacred theatre which seems to hew more closely to Lavery's conception of the theological can actually provide an experience of the sacred. The chapter shall also compare the Rhapsodic Theatre's focus on the intellect with Grotowski's focus on the body, and see if there is anything the two theatres can learn from each other.

V. THE RHAPSODIC THEATRE – A THEATRE OF THE EMBODIED WORD?

This chapter will focus on the Rhapsodic Theatre, whose style was known as 'Theatre of the Word', and which was partially inspired by the Reduta Theatre and the wider 'Polish Citizen Theatre' tradition. After examining its theatre theory and its theological underpinnings, its 'Theatre of the Word' will be compared to Grotowski's 'theatre of the body' in order to explore the necessity of both word and body to a eucharistic theatre.

1. Background

The Rhapsodic Theatre was founded on 22 August 1941 in Kraków, Poland, by Mieczysław Kotlarczyk (1908-1978) and a group of young actors, some of whom, including Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, had been his students in Wadowice. Its first performance was on 1 November 1941, when the company presented the Polish Romantic poet Juliusz Słowacki's epic *King-Spirit*. The company took its repertoire primarily from the Polish Romantics of the 19th century, who had presented a vision of Poland as a nation of sacrificial suffering, and from whose suffering a resurrection of Christian glory would arise and spread throughout Europe. Standard productions from the Romantic repertoire included *King-Spirit* and *Samuel Zborowski* by Juliusz Słowacki, *Pan Tadeusz* and *Forefathers' Eve* by Adam Mickiewicz, and collections of material by Cyprian Norwid and

Stanisław Wyspiański.[1] The Rhapsodists also described their style as a 'theater of the word',[2] which likewise shows the influence of Słowacki, 'who sought to remake Poland through the power of *Słowo*, "the word"'.[3] The company was forced to operate clandestinely from 1941-1945, due to the restrictions on theatre and other cultural activities in place in Kraków during the Nazi occupation. Their mission during those first few years of their existence was 'cultural resistance':[4] the presentation of an alternative vision of Polish reality, in which Poland was a Catholic nation that would be resurrected through suffering to become a new visible national body that would give Christ's light to the world. They would accomplish this cultural resistance through the word – by using the words of Poland's national poets, presented directly and forcefully through intimate live performances (held, out of necessity, in private homes), to bring about an encounter of the audience with the living Word of Christ, mediated through the words of the performers. The performer, in the Rhapsodic Theatre, operated in the role of a priest,[5] proclaiming the Word of God and his Truth to his suffering people, through the words of their Polish brothers.[6] The proclamation of the Word would bring the audience closer together, in union with each other, with the performers, and with God, both as a nation, and as the Body of Christ. In this way, the Rhapsodic Theatre was attempting a eucharistic theatre that would create vertical communion with God and horizontal communion with other people through performance. In the Rhapsodic Theatre, the centre of that performance was Christ as Word – he was the agent of communion, and its object. This centrality of Christ is in

[1] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', Appendix E, 245-48.
[2] Karol Wojtyła, 'Drama of Word and Gesture', in Wojtyła, *Collected Plays*, 379.
[3] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 65.
[4] Ibid., 44.
[5] Ibid., 37.
[6] Ibid., 66.

opposition to the 'eucharistic' theatre of Jerzy Grotowski, who saw theatre as a replacement for religious ritual, not as a supplement to it.[7] The purpose of the following section is to describe the theory of the Rhapsodic Theatre, and the theology behind it, in order to bring the Rhapsodists into dialogue with Grotowski and his conception of the Poor Theatre.

2. Rhapsodic Theory

Mieczysław Kotlarczyk was the founder and driving force of the Rhapsodic Theatre, and Rhapsodism as an approach to theatre. What did he understand as the purpose of theatre in general, as opposed to the specific cultural resistance purpose which the Rhapsodic Theatre served in its beginnings? Why did Kotlarczyk choose to use theatre as a medium, rather than music or written literature? And why this specific style of 'theatre of the word'? It is necessary to examine Kotlarczyk's purposes first in order to understand the theory and its practical outworkings.

In the English-speaking world, the main primary source that scholars have that outlines the theory and purposes of the Rhapsodic Theatre is the English translation of Karol Wojtyła's *Collected Plays and Writings on Theatre*, which contains six essays on the Rhapsodic Theatre written by Wojtyła after he had left the company to enter the priesthood, but while he was still living in Poland and maintaining close connections with his friends in the company. Unfortunately, neither of Kotlarczyk's two major works, *Sztuka żywego słowa (The Art of the Living Word)* nor *Reduta słowa* (roughly, *Redoubt of the Word*), have been published in English. Likewise, the

[7] See Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 49.

theatre's archival materials also remain in Polish. Therefore, a more comprehensive account of Rhapsodist theory in English awaits their full translation.

Sztuka żywego słowa, or *The Art of the Living Word*, was first published in 1965 as *Podstawy sztuki żywego słowa (Rudiments of the Art of the Living Word)*; Kotlarczyk revised and expanded the book, and published it in 1975 as *Sztuka żywego słowa*. It was re-issued by the Archdiocese of Lublin's publishing house, Gaudium, in 2010.[8] The book is primarily a technical and historical manual for voice and speech, divided into three sections: Diction, Expression, and Magic. The first section is focused on the physicality of speech: the relationship between the brain and the production of sound, the anatomy required for speech, proper maintenance of the actor's physical instrument, voice and speech exercises, and the rules for proper pronunciation that Kotlarczyk had developed over decades of research. (One of his jobs throughout his career, in addition to directing, was working as a voice and speech teacher for drama students and seminarians.) The second section focuses on the artistry of speech, including subsections on the use of the chorus (one of the Rhapsodic Theatre's trademark elements) and on 'masters of the living word'[9] such as Helen Modjeska, Mieczysław Frenkel, Stefan Jaracz, and Juliusz Osterwa. The final section focuses on the spiritual power of the word. One subsection explores different mystical conceptions of the word, including the use of *Logos* in Scripture, especially in the Gospels; Jewish Kabbalah; the 'magical idealism' of Novalis; the 'magnetism' of Franz Mesmer; and Rudolf Steiner's 'esoterics of the word'. Kotlarczyk continues with a historical overview of the power of the word as viewed in Eastern philosophy

[8] Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, *Sztuka żywego słowa* (Lublin: Gaudium, 2010). My thanks to Sr Nicholas Marie Polkowska, OP, for her help with translation.
[9] Ibid., 260.

and religion, in Christianity, and specifically in Polish writers and theatre artists such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Osterwa, and Osterwa's collaborator in the Reduta, Mieczysław Limanowski. Finally, he explores concepts such as 'inspiration', 'trance', 'ecstasy', and 'transfiguration'; examines the use of different 'spiritual tones of the word' to affect the listener in particular ways;[10] and meditates on the relevance of the word today.

Reduta słowa (roughly, *Redoubt of the Word*) is Kotlarczyk's own history of the Rhapsodic Theatre, which was posthumously published in London in 1980.[11] The only English-language history of the Rhapsodic Theatre is Linda Nadolny Smith's 2003 PhD dissertation from the University of Kansas, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny: The Theatre of the Living Word', a thorough history which quotes extensively from *Reduta słowa* and provides English translations of passages from that work as well as from Kotlarczyk's other published and archival writings.

Smith's dissertation, Kazimierz Braun's histories of Polish theatre (*A History of Polish Theater, 1939-1989: Spheres of Captivity and Freedom* [1996] and *A Concise History of Polish Theater from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Centuries* [2003]), and Karol Wojtyła's essays on the Rhapsodic Theatre (published with his plays as *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, edited by Boleslaw Taborski [1987]), sufficiently address the spiritual foundations, theory, and history of the Rhapsodic Theatre to allow English-speaking scholars to begin to study the theatre. Wojtyła was a founding member of the theatre; Braun knew Wojtyła personally, and his uncle, Jerzy Braun, was a supporter of the Rhapsodic Theatre at its beginnings;[12]

[10] Ibid., 407.
[11] Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, *Reduta słowa* (Londyn: Odnowa, 1980).
[12] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 64.

and Smith interviewed both Braun and Joanna Lechowska, Kotlarczyk's daughter, and uses both of Kotlarczyk's books, as well as multiple other Polish-language published and archival material written by him and by other members of the theatre, as sources for her dissertation.[13]

Karol Wojtyła's essays on the Rhapsodic Theatre are invaluable, as Wojtyła was one of Kotlarczyk's closest students and friends and trained with him as an actor when Wojtyła was in secondary school and university. One of the key essays, 'On the Theater of the Word', is Wojtyła's review of the Rhapsodists' 1951[14] production of *Actors in Elsinore*, a Shakespearean collage involving texts from *Hamlet, Henry IV, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Romeo and Juliet*, and *Macbeth*.[15] Wojtyła described this production – which used an atypical source in Shakespeare as opposed to their normal Polish Romantic poetry – as an attempt by the Rhapsodists to 'define their mission, to communicate it to others, and to confess their faith in their own art'.[16] The production used a line from *Hamlet*, in which Hamlet claims that acting's purpose is 'to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'.[17] Wojtyła focuses on these words as words which 'define the idea of the theater [in general] and its mission'.[18] In other words, the Rhapsodists use theatre because, being live action by persons before other persons, it can more directly image life than just words written on a page, which have to be imagined in the mind.

[13] I have also discussed the Rhapsodic Theatre with Kazimierz Braun, both in person and via e-mail.
[14] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 151.
[15] Boleslaw Taborski, editorial note 1, in Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 371.
[16] Karol Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 371.
[17] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* III.2, quoted in ibid., 371-2.
[18] Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 372.

Nevertheless, the purpose of theatre is not simply the imaging of life. It is imaging with a purpose – the purpose of directing right action. In that way, for Kotlarczyk, theatre is both religious and political – and indeed, right political action is a result of right religion. Wojtyła writes that the 'problem of theater and its artistic and ethical mission forms, as it were, the deepest and most fundamental level of the performance [of *Actors in Elsinore*]. Those Shakespearian actors in Elsinore, performing at the court of Claudius and Gertrude, express the highest ambitions of the Rhapsodic Theater'.[19] Hamlet orders the travelling Players to perform *The Murder of Gonzago,* portraying the death of a king through poison being poured into his ear, in order to determine, by watching his uncle Claudius' reaction, whether or not the Ghost of Hamlet's father was telling the truth when he accused Claudius of murdering him in the same way. Hamlet is hoping for Claudius to be convicted (and visibly so). It is that conviction of conscience which is key, and upon which the Rhapsodic Theatre builds. Wojtyła writes that 'Shakespeare only wishes art to be life's conscience and mirror'; however, 'Kotlarczyk's version [of *Hamlet*] rearranges the structure of the drama so that the case of Hamlet is played out on the margin of the problem of theater and the actor'. In the Rhapsodists' version, the 'juxtaposition' of the 'problem of theater' and Hamlet's predicament is designed to imply that 'the world and life are simply horrible and hard and, above all, full of deceit; *art, however, particularly the art of the theater, carries within itself the right measure of purity, truth, and greatness*'. Wojtyła points to this portrayal of art's power as a 'certain absolutization of art' which 'seems to go beyond Shakespeare's idea'.[20] The proclaimed word not only has the power to convict, but it also has the power to

[19] Ibid., 375-6.
[20] Ibid., 376, emphasis added.

present an alternate vision of the world which points the audience to the Word, the source and icon of Purity, Truth, and Greatness.

Wojtyła writes that 'the word—the living Polish word—always remained the focus of Mieczysław Kotlarczyk's theater', and was 'its peak achievement.... Kotlarczyk always wandered around the peaks, rightly thinking that only there did words have durable power in creating culture and educating the young generation'.[21] This quest to bring the word of the 'peaks' – the great mountains of literature lit by the light of Heaven – into the culture through its effective proclamation in the theatre, transforming and re-making the culture in the image of Christ, was Kotlarczyk's spiritual and artistic purpose in the theatre. His own formulation of his goal was simple: 'to revolutionize theater through the *word*'.[22]

This revolution, though on the surface political in its early years, is both spiritual and moral, and moral because spiritual. It is a revolution of thought, and therefore a revolution of action through thought's priority over action, represented *and performed* by the Rhapsodic Theatre.

Wojtyła, in his defence of the Rhapsodic Theatre after it had been shut down for the first time, describes its particular mission when he writes, 'A theater whose primary element is the word requires thinking. Thinking, unavoidable for the listener-spectator who participates in rhapsodic performances, is also, in a particular and pioneering sense, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk's task'.[23] The priority of thought over action is one of the key commitments of the Rhapsodic Theatre.

---

[21] Karol Wojtyła, 'Foreword to Mieczysław Kotlarczyk's *The Art of the Living Word*', in Wojtyła, *Collected Plays*, 395.
[22] Kotlarczyk, *XXV lat Teatru Rapsodycznego w Krakowie,* 23, quoted in Boleslaw Taborski, introduction to *Collected Plays*, 7, emphasis in original.
[23] Wojtyła, 'Drama of Word and Gesture', 382.

Wojtyła goes on to describe how this commitment to thought over action is simultaneously a moral commitment in his review 'Rhapsodies of the Millennium', which was written on the occasion of the Rhapsodic Theatre's first performance after its initial closure. He delineates two 'basic principles' of Rhapsodism.[24] The first basic principle is 'a particular reverence for great poetry, for the word', and the 'mission of proclaiming it'. This mission leads the Rhapsodists to their second basic principle, which is moral: 'The Rhapsodic Theater asks young actors to subordinate themselves to the great poetic word'. This moral principle of submission to the word, submission to reason and thought, which includes and finds its origin in the company's submission to the Word who is Christ, is the 'moral principle [on which] the work of the young rhapsodic company is based', according to Wojtyła.

This moral commitment is expressed through the distinctive Rhapsodic style. Wojtyła writes that in the Rhapsodists' style of performance 'it is important to approach verse with great caution so that its rhythm is not destroyed and the listener can grasp both its factual content and emotional import...so that *one follows the verse instead of asking it to follow one*'.[25] In the Rhapsodic Theatre, the actor 'does not become a character but carries a problem';[26] like the work of Bertolt Brecht, who spoke with the Rhapsodic Theatre about their work,[27] a rhapsodic actor presents an

[24] The quotes in this paragraph are taken from Karol Wojtyła, 'Rhapsodies of the Millennium', in Wojtyła, *Collected Plays*, 385-86.
[25] Ibid., emphasis added.
[26] Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 374.
[27] '[I]n December [1952], Bertold [*sic*] Brecht and Berliner Ensemble were in Kraków and were often guests of Teatr Rapsodyczny. "They had several discussions about the new form of theatre which had some correlations to their own ideas and searches in the road to 'epic theatre'"'. Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 157-8, quoting Jan Ciechowicz, 'Życie i Śmierć Teatru Rapsodycznego', *Dom opowieści: ze studiów nad Teatrem Rapsodycznym Mieczysława Kotlarczyka* (Gdańsk: U Gdańsk, 1992), 50, first printed as 'Żywot Teatru Rapsodycznego 1941-1967'. Smith notes: 'Reference to the original discussion can be found in Teatr Rapsodyczny Program – Portrety i astronomia, 31 December 1952'. Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 158, note 280.

intellectual problem to the audience, and invites them to think it out, although the Rhapsodists' problems were more likely to be philosophical and theological and less directly political than Brecht's. The actor serves the problem, instead of being asked to go within himself and create out of his own psycho-physical makeup an enfleshed character (as in the Stanislavski-based acting methods which were being disseminated from Moscow to the rest of Europe and the U.S.). Therefore, the actor is taken out of himself to conform to the needs of the word and the needs of his audience, who rely on him to transmit the word to them in a form which they can both understand and be moved by.

Wojtyła points to the Rhapsodic Theatre's use of choruses as a specific technique which reflects their commitment to shaping a community by the word: 'A group of people collectively, somehow unanimously, subordinated to the great poetic word, evoke ethical associations; this *solidarity of people in the word* reveals particularly strongly and accentuates the reverence that is the point of departure for the rhapsodists' work and the secret of their style'.[28] Such a community of people connected through the word also evokes ecclesial associations.

Therefore, in answer to the questions above about Kotlarczyk's view of theatre, his purpose in choosing this medium over others, and his reasons for developing the rhapsodic style, one can answer the following: Kotlarczyk understood the theatre's purpose to be the reflection of life, but a reflection of life that provokes to right understanding, and therefore right action. He chose the theatre because of its ability to perform the word – to bring the word directly to a community through its performance live among them, directly inviting them to think and work through ideas

[28] Wojtyła, 'Rhapsodies of the Millennium', 386, emphasis added.

'from the peaks', bringing them together as one communal body through this live process, which would form them according to the word and therefore affect their actions when they left the theatre. The live, communal nature of theatre is a means of proclaiming and transmitting the word more powerful than any other, according to Kotlarczyk's understanding. Kotlarczyk was described by Danuta Michałowska, one of the co-founders of the theatre, as '"a man of one idea, the theater," for whom the drama was the most important thing in life because it was a "way of perfection," a means of "transmitting the Word of God," the truth about life'.[29] For Kotlarczyk, theatre was a spiritual path, as well as an artistic one – the two were aligned.

He developed the Rhapsodic style as an expression of his theology, especially his understanding of the precedence of the Word which creates communion. The theatre's style of performance, requiring actors to conform themselves to the text, demonstrated the theatre's philosophical commitment to the necessity of the government of reason (*Logos*, the 'word') over action, and to the moral imperative of service rather than self-centredness. The use of choruses imaged the theatre's mission of creating a *community* conformed to the word. Finally, the choice of texts revealed the words to which Kotlarczyk thought it necessary to conform, namely, words presenting an ennobling and empowering spiritual vision of Poland as a Catholic nation.

[29] Interview with George Weigel, 22 April 1997, quoted in Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 37.

3. Rhapsodic Style and Techniques

This section will explore in greater detail the specific techniques and artistic choices of the Rhapsodic style, and how they follow from its theological and philosophical commitments. Wojtyła's essay 'On the Theater of the Word' is the key English source for Rhapsodic theory.

Wojtyła begins to explain what is meant by a 'theater of the word':

> The rhapsodic company has accustomed us to a theater of the word. What does this mean? Is not every theater a theater of the word? Does not the word constitute an essential, primary element of every theater? Undoubtedly it does.[30]

Already, Wojtyła's statement that the word is 'essential' to theatre draws a line between the Rhapsodic understanding of theatre and that of Grotowski, whose definition of theatre was 'what takes place between spectator and actor',[31] without any mention of words being necessary to that encounter. It also draws a line between Rhapsodic theory and this statement of Peter Brook: 'A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged'.[32] In Rhapsodic theory, theatre is not just an encounter between actor and spectator – it requires words.

Wojtyła goes on:

> Nonetheless the position of the word in a theater is not always the same. As in life, the word can appear as an integral part of action, movement, and gesture, inseparable from all human practical activity; or it can appear as 'song'—separate, independent, intended only to contain and express thought, to embrace and transmit a vision of the mind. In the latter aspect, or position, the word becomes 'rhapsodic,' and a theater based on such a concept of the word becomes a rhapsodic theater.

[30] Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 372.
[31] Grotowski, 'The Theatre's New Testament', 32.
[32] Brook, *The Empty Space*, 9.

For the Rhapsodists, the word as 'song' is lifted out of its everyday behavioural context and is presented on its own, almost as a jewel, which reflects a particular intellectual vision when studied. The idea, the *Logos*, of the performance is not hidden within or expressed by a narrative plot, but is seen as itself, even when different characters participate in its presentation. The Rhapsodic 'word' is, in a way, Truth expressed as Beauty. The 'song' is integrated, harmonious, and brilliant, embodying Aquinas' three characteristics of Beauty.[33]

This understanding of the Rhapsodic 'song' as a presentation of Truth through Beauty can be seen more clearly through the text of Wojtyła's early play *Job*, written during Lent 1940 when he was 19, before the foundation of the Rhapsodic Theatre, but after Wojtyła had already been tutored in the developing Rhapsodic style by Kotlarczyk during his high school years.

In this play, Wojtyła makes two references to 'song', one implicit, one explicit. First, in the opening speech by the narrator Prologos, the actor invites the audience to 'enter the sacrificial circle, where an offering is made of he-goats...'[34] As Michael Ward points out in his essay 'The Tragedy is in the Pity: C.S. Lewis and the Song of the Goat', the 'etymology of the word "tragedy" is "goat song"',[35] taken from 'the Greek *tragos* (goat) and *ōdē* (ode, song)'.[36] The actor is inviting the audience into a ritual performance of a tragedy – the story of Job, a seemingly just man who appears to lose everything he has because of his refusal to admit his unrighteousness

[33] ST I.39.viii.
[34] Karol Wojtyła, *Job*, in Wojtyła, *Collected Plays*, 29.
[35] Michael Ward, 'The Tragedy is in the Pity: C.S. Lewis and the Song of the Goat', in, *Christian Theology and Tragedy: Theologians, Tragic Literature and Tragic Theory,* ed. Kevin Taylor and Giles Waller, Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 160.
[36] Ibid., note 54.

before God. At least, that is the fatal flaw which the chorus of Job's friends identify for him (a conviction which, as in the biblical text, will turn out to be mistaken). Wojtyła here sets up the play as a ritually performed 'song'.

The second, explicit reference to song is in the closing speech of the play, spoken by the narrator Epilogos. The references to song therefore bookend the story of the play. Epilogos proclaims:

> The sacrificial circle is closed.
> The chorus sang, sometimes lamenting,
> the story of Job....
> This is a tragedy of suffering—
> the sacrificial circle is closed.
> Depart—
> with a song on your lips....
> And whomsoever you will meet…
> tell them
> how
> the Lord restored to Job his fortune
> and gave him twice as much as he had had before.[37]

These words end the play. The audience is asked to share the 'goat-song' they have heard, and share its Gospel with others – for in Wojtyła's play, the prophet Elihu communicates to Job a vision of Christ, who will redeem his and all men's suffering by suffering himself on the Cross. Therefore, this 'tragedy of suffering' is actually Good News. The audience has received this Good News, has received the Gospel, through hearing the vision of Christ communicated through Elihu, and they are now to take the whole story, of the tragedy of Job redeemed and transformed by the vision of Christ contained within it, out into the world beyond the theatre, to share it with others. Epilogos' charge is the *Ita, missa est* – the charge to go out and bring Christ to others at the end of the eucharistic liturgy.

[37] Wojtyła, *Job*, 72-74.

The vision of Christ that Elihu shares with both Job and with the audience is the answer to the question which Job puts to his friends earlier in the play. When they accuse him of unrighteousness, he points out that both righteous and unrighteous people experience suffering in the world, and asks:

> How will it balance, as it must?
> I look and see: He [God] is Harmony.
> I look and see: He balances all.
> Nothing will mar the Harmony of tone;
> nothing will overthrow eternal laws.
> I look and see: He is the Truth.
> I look and see: He is Beauty.
> How will it balance, as it must?
> Can you see it? Can you see it?[38]

In this appeal, Job asserts that there must be 'conservation of suffering' – there cannot be any suffering which is meaningless and outside of God's plan. It must all 'balance out'. The vision of Christ presented by Elihu is the vision of 'Harmony' which shows both Job and the audience that Job's suffering (and theirs) is taken up into the suffering of Christ, who transforms it into the Harmony of redemption. Suffering is taken up to be transformed into Truth and Beauty, the Truth and Beauty which are Christ the Word. Just as that harmonious vision of redemption is a 'song', so the audience of *Job* is presented with a song-within-a-song – the song which is Elihu's vision of Christ, at the heart of the song which is the story of Job as told in the play (and the whole play is itself another song which contains the first two). In Wojtyła's play *Job*, Christ *is* the Rhapsodic Word, the Song who is presented both to Job and to the audience, through the prophet Elihu (and the actor who performs him), as the Harmony who takes up all suffering and uses it as material to sing his own Song of

[38] Ibid., 53.

Truth and Beauty. By taking on the suffering of the world, he becomes both the Singer, and the Song.

These few sections from *Job* reflect the importance of the name 'Rhapsodic' for this theatre. The Rhapsodic Theatre is the singing of a song, through words (generally in verse), which brings time, space and character together into a harmony of meaning which shows forth Christ, the Meaning and the Song and the Word at the heart of the world. The Rhapsodic Theatre aims to reveal this divine Meaning of the world to the world, just as Shakespeare used theatre to reveal the world to itself.

So this 'separate, independent' word which aims to 'transmit a vision of the mind' – this rhapsodic word, this 'word-as-song' – is at the heart of the Rhapsodic Theatre. Wojtyła continues 'On the Theater of the Word' by saying:

> And so without entering into deliberations on the primacy of word or movement in the art of the theater, we can safely assume that according to the rhapsodic principle, *the word is a pre-element of theater*.[39]

The word is a 'pre-element of theater' because, for the Rhapsodists, theatre is a means of presenting a vision of Christ to the intellect; acceptance of that vision and assent to it will form the reason in the image of Christ, and then the Christ-shaped reason will be able to govern the person's behaviour to act in Christ-like ways, which will bring Christ into society. Assent to the Word, presented through the word, conceives the Word in the audience's heart and mind, which then bears the Word forth into action. But the shaping of the mind must come first before the action can take place.

The Rhapsodic Theatre is therefore an 'intellectual' theatre, rather than a sensory theatre (like Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty) or a plot-based theatre (like classical tragedy according to Aristotle's *Poetics*). Wojtyła writes that

[39] Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 372, emphasis added.

'[a]ccepting the word as a pre-element of theatre art results consistently in a significant rhapsodic intellectualism'.[40] This theatre is about ideas, not stories. Wojtyła describes the target audience member of the Rhapsodic Theatre as that person who, when reading a story, 'is thrilled by intellectual vision, the abstract elements of the work', as opposed to the events of the plot or even the atmosphere of the story's setting.[41] (One can see why such a theatre would appeal to a philosopher like Wojtyła.) This emphasis on revealing the author's 'intellectual vision' is why the Rhapsodic Theatre generally 'has reached for works not designed for the stage', and even when it has done so, it has rearranged them to create 'specific and authentic uncoverings of the very essence of the works, their thought and ideas, their authors' intellectual vision'.[42] For example, the Rhapsodists' performance of Shakespeare did not present *Hamlet* as an exciting story of ghosts, courtly intrigue, possible madness, and swordfights, but instead focused on the *idea* of theatre presented within Act III. Because of this focus on the ideas of a text versus its events, 'rhapsodic performances have an ideological rather than a narrative character'.[43] In place of a story, there is a 'problem', which 'acts' – 'is posed directly and bluntly', as opposed to being a theme only 'indirectly' posed by the themes of a narrative.[44] This 'problem itself acts, rouses interest, disturbs, evokes the audience's participation, demands understanding and a solution'.[45]

So, for example, in Wojtyła's play *Job*, one could say that the problem is, 'Can a just man suffer, and if so, how can his suffering have any meaning?' Job's

[40] Ibid., 373.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

friends insist that a just man cannot suffer, and that in the face of suffering one must admit that one is guilty and repent. Job's wife knows her husband's righteousness, and therefore insists that Job must 'praise [God] and die' (in a twist from the biblical text's 'curse God, and die')[46] – his suffering makes no sense, so he should just surrender to God's inscrutable authority. In a major change from the biblical text, however, Elihu the prophet presents the answer which is the answer of the play – that the suffering of both the unjust and the just is taken up into Christ, and that the suffering borne by the just is an even fuller participation in the suffering and redemption of Christ.

As seen in *Job*, the problem of the play is presented by the actors, working individually or in chorus, to present the arguments and help the audience think through the solution. Therefore, the actor does not 'become a character' in order to immerse himself into a story, but, while remaining himself, 'he carries the problem', which can involve performing different roles which stand for different elements of the argument, but which does not involve psychologically 'putting on' another personality, or acting 'as if' he really were that person acting within the 'imaginary circumstances' of the play.[47] The Rhapsodic Theatre chooses not 'to "act" characters', but chooses instead 'to suggest, delineate, or even symbolize them', a choice which Wojtyła acknowledges is controversial, but which 'has its thorough justification' in the Rhapsodists' approach, which is to present an intellectual problem, not a story driven by characters.[48]

---

[46] Wojtyła, *Job*, 60. See Job 2:9.
[47] Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 374. For more about the 'magic if' and imaginary 'given circumstances' of the Stanislavski acting method, see Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, especially Chapter 4, 'Imagination'.
[48] Wojtyła, 'Rhapsodies of the Millennium', 387.

This emphasis on the intellect can provide a misleading picture of the Rhapsodic Theatre. It is important to understand that it was not meant to be an emotionless theatre, like the stereotype of Brecht's intellectual epic theatre, a theatre in which audience members were purposely discouraged from emotionally bonding with the characters so that they could more objectively think through the political problems the characters were facing.[49] In order for the word to have its most powerful impact on others, it needed to be a *living* word, that is, it needed to be *incarnate* in concrete specificity. As Wojtyła writes in 'Rhapsodies of the Millennium', 'the poetic word cannot remain purely abstract but must look for a *transposition into representation*, which appeals not only to the mind but also to the senses and *the heart*'.[50]

[49] Brecht first uses his term *Verfremdungseffekt*, commonly translated as 'alienation effect', in his 1936 essay 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting', as John Willett points out in his editorial note on this essay. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre,* 99. Brecht connects this technique to 'plays of a non-aristotelian (not dependent on empathy type)'. Ibid., 91. Then, later in the essay, he says that in the alienation effect 'the spectator's empathy was not entirely rejected'. The difference between the use of empathy in the alienation effect and the use of empathy in Stanislavskian acting is that in the former, the spectator 'identifies itself with the actor as being an observer' of the stage action, 'and accordingly develops his attitude of observing or looking on', while in the latter, the spectator is meant to identify with the actor *as a character*. Ibid., 93. In Brechtian acting, the audience is meant to share the actor's experience of dispassionately observing and thinking about the events taking place, so as to make their own judgements and draw their own conclusions. (The actor is an observer because he shows a character on stage, but does not attempt to *become* a character.) In Stanislavskian acting, the actor is meant to become a character so that the audience is able, through the actor, to experience and identify with that character, sharing his feelings and empathising with him directly. It was this emotional partiality that Brecht was trying to avoid. Paul Woodruff writes that Brecht 'did not try to disengage the emotions of the audience; rather, he tried to engage their emotions in a specific way. He wanted the audience to feel emotions that would drive them to try to change situations like the one represented on stage. He did not want the audience to share the emotions of any of the characters represented', while retaining enough empathy for the characters that they would care to change the social situations that led to disaster for those characters. Paul Woodruff, 'Engaging Emotion in Theater: A Brechtian Model in Theater History', *The Monist*, 71:2, Aesthetics and the Histories of the Arts (April 1988), 237.

[50] Wojtyła, 'Rhapsodies of the Millennium', 383, emphasis added.

The 'heart' is an important term for Wojtyła. In his theology of the body, the heart is defined as '*man's innermost [being]*',[51] '*the inner man*',[52] and 'human interiority'.[53] (In these cases, Wojtyła is using 'man' to mean 'humanity' or 'human', not 'male'.) The heart is 'the dimension of the inner man proper to ethics' because the heart is 'called to the good'.[54] It is in the heart that human beings are called 'to what is true, good, and beautiful'.[55] Wojtyła draws from Plato's *Symposium* in his theology of the body to name 'eros' firstly as that 'inner power that "attracts" man to the true, the good, and the beautiful'.[56] He also points out that 'in the common meaning...this *"attraction" seems to be above all of a sensual nature*'.[57] Erotic attraction is the desire of two to become one, and its second meaning is 'the perennial call of the human person—through masculinity and femininity—to that "unity of flesh," which at the same time should realize the union-communion of persons'.[58] The union-communion of persons in *eros* can be disrupted by 'concupiscence';[59] however, in a redeemed humanity, these two senses of *eros* can be brought together, such that if *eros* is the desire for the true, the good, and the beautiful, as well as the desire for the other person, then a redeemed *eros* becomes the desire for the other person in a way that is true, good, and beautiful, or, from another angle, the desire for the true, good, and beautiful in the person – indeed, the desire for the person *as* one who is true, good, and beautiful *because she is a person created by God*. This desire for the true,

[51] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 16.3, 192, emphasis in original. (The published Wednesday addresses are identified below by address number and section number, as well as page number in this specific published edition.)
[52] Ibid., 31.5, 255, emphasis in original.
[53] Ibid., 44.1, 302.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 47.5, 318.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 47.2, 316, emphasis in original.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

the good, and the beautiful in the other person leads one to ethical action toward that other person, which, in Wojtyła's theology of the body, is summed up in the concept of '*the gift*',[60] namely, the idea that 'man cannot "fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self"'.[61] The theology of 'the gift' – the idea from Scripture that one only finds oneself by giving oneself away[62] – is written into humanity through 'the "spousal" meaning of the body',[63] indicated most clearly by the biological fact that when a man and a woman give themselves to each other, new life can spring. Just as Christ's death for humanity brought about new life, both for him and for humanity, so when a man and a woman give themselves away to each other, their love and self-giving can bring about new life. The 'law of the gift', that giving oneself away in love brings life, meets erotic love – the desire for the other as true, good, and beautiful – '*in the human heart and...bear[s] fruit in this meeting*', so that 'the form of the "erotic" is at the same time the form of ethos, that is, of that which is "ethical"'.[64] The erotic desire of the heart for the other as true, good, and beautiful unites with the 'law of the gift' to create an 'ethics of the gift' – a desire to give oneself away in love as one ought, as one is made to do. This 'ethics of the gift' is called a 'living morality' by Wojtyła, because it springs from the desires of the heart formed according to the Gospel's 'law of the gift'. It is not a morality of simple intellectual acceptance of and assent to an externally-imposed set of rules. Rather, it is a morality of interior desire adhering to its proper object, God as the spouse of one's soul, as the true partner of one's heart, as seen in the truth, goodness, and beauty of the other human being. This

[60] Ibid., 15.1, 185, emphasis in original.
[61] Ibid., 15.1, 186, quoting the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 7 December 1965, 24.3.
[62] See Matthew 10:39, Matthew 16:25, and John 15:13.
[63] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 15.1, 185.
[64] Ibid., 47.5, 318, emphasis in original.

participation of a married couple in the marriage between the human being and God – this *imaging* of God's indissoluble self-gift to humanity in the indissoluble self-gift to each other of the two spouses – is why marriage is a sacrament, according to the tradition out of which Wojtyła is writing.[65] A sacrament is a source of grace. This giving of oneself to God through the giving of oneself to one's spouse not only brings spiritual life to both members of the couple, but can also bring new physical life into the world. Any child born of this union is an icon of the couple's love for each other, and of God's love for his people. An ethics of self-giving love in the heart for the proper object – God – is therefore called 'living', because it brings life.

Similarly, a theatre of the word which wants to be a theatre of the *living* word needs to be a theatre of the heart, in which the heart is formed in self-giving love for God. It needs to present a word which is desirable, which presents an 'intellectual vision' of what is desirable, namely, God, the proper object of the human heart's desire. But how can one present an 'intellectual vision' of God? In the same way that God himself presented his own 'intellectual vision' of himself, his own *Logos* – through incarnation. As Wojtyła suggests in his theology of the body, attraction (at least erotic attraction) operates through the senses, which desire a physical union with the beloved, not as an idea, but as a physical person, both soul *and body*. A redeemed *eros* desires the other person *as a person*, that is, as an embodiment of goodness,

[65] The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: 'Since God created [humanity] man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man' (no. 1604). Because the union of a man and a woman images God's love for humanity, 'Christian marriage in its turn becomes an efficacious sign, the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church. Since it signifies and communicates grace, marriage between baptized persons is a true sacrament of the New Covenant' (no. 1617).

truth, and beauty, made in the image of God.[66] This is all the more the case when *eros* is shared by two Christians in the sacrament of marriage, because they have both been re-made in the image of Christ through baptism, so that, as members of the Body of Christ, they bear within them *his* embodiment of the Goodness, Truth, and Beauty of God. One may believe, enjoy, or even rejoice in an idea; however, at least according to Wojtyła's personalism, one cannot *love* an idea, only a person. Therefore, if the audience is going to *love* the person of Christ, as communicated through the 'intellectual vision', the rhapsody, of a Rhapsodic Theatre performance, they must receive him as *embodied* in that performance – that is, as incarnate and present to the senses, most notably through the embodied presence of the actors. The word must be *represented* to the senses, so that it can be grasped by the mind and loved by the heart as a concrete person (the Word). The word must be incarnate in the Rhapsodic Theatre so that Christ can be incarnate to the audience through the words, so that he can be loved as a full person, not as an intellectual concept.

For this reason, the Rhapsodic Theatre is not a theatre of disembodied words, but of words embodied through actors, of words connected to the senses. Even though

---

[66] C.S. Lewis offers an illuminating illustration of how the desire for beauty moves to a desire for a personified Beauty, as well as a desire for union, in his sermon 'The Weight of Glory':

> We do not want merely to *see* beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. That is why we have peopled air and earth and water with gods and goddesses and nymphs and elves—that, though we cannot, yet these projections can enjoy in themselves that beauty, grace, and power of which Nature is the image.

C.S. Lewis, 'The Weight of Glory', in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, by C.S. Lewis (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 42-43, emphasis in original. Wojtyła moves beyond Lewis in suggesting a possibility of being united with beauty *through* being united with a person, in a primary way by being united to Christ in baptism and eucharist, but secondarily through being united with a person made in the image of God, especially when that union is sacramental through being the union of two people who both bear the image of Christ. Human beings do not have to create fantastic beings who can be united with beauty as the humans' substitute. They can be united with beauty sacramentally.

the Rhapsodic Theatre's theoretical approach was also known as the 'theatre of the living word', Wojtyła states, this 'theater has never been only the word brought to life. In fact, if the word is to be alive, it cannot be conceived without movement'.[67] Instead, the rhapsodic word 'matures in gesture...in spare, simple, rhythmic gesture, which acquires its rhythmic pattern from the rhythm of the words.... Thus the movement that best complements rhapsodic speech is dance movement, stylized, nonnaturalistic'.[68] The movement is not that which portrays a character in a naturalistic way – acting 'as if' under imaginary circumstances. It is symbolic movement, which helps incarnate the idea expressed by the words – making the meaning of the words present to the senses.

This focus on supporting the word governs the use of other elements of theatre which appeal to the senses, such as music and the various elements of visual spectacle (including set design, costumes, props, and makeup). Wojtyła writes that the 'stylized movement' suited to the Rhapsodic Theatre 'calls for music, which plays a mediating role between word and movement'.[69] Music does not provide an 'illustration' of the word, as a story about a thunderstorm might be accompanied by ominous rumblings or thunderous crashing. Instead, music 'complements the word, often exhausting the rhythmic pattern hidden in the word and *transposing* that pattern into a gesture, a movement'.[70] The word 'transposing' hints that music is helping the word to be incarnated – 'transposed into representation'. As a 'mediator', music provides the bond between the word and the movement that expresses it, governing the

[67] Wojtyła, 'On the Theater of the Word', 374.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 375.
[70] Ibid., emphasis added.

movement's stylization. 'Music involves itself in the problem', such as by helping thematically to distinguish between different arguments which recur.[71]

For example, in Wojtyła's play *Our God's Brother*, different characters in the play express different arguments for why the main character, Adam, should live his life in a certain way – such as becoming a revolutionary or focusing professionally on his painting. To what cause should he give himself? One could use a musical theme to embody the idea of 'giving oneself away', and underscore the different characters' words with elements of that theme as long as they are arguing for a form of self-giving. Once, however, a selfish or mis-guided element comes into the argument (as it does for all the other characters but one), the theme could become discordant. During one key scene, in which Adam receives the advice which finally enables him to discern how to answer God's call to become one with the poor, the theme could grow stronger than ever before, finally reaching its full expression when Adam becomes Brother Albert. Following that theme in an auditory manner could help the audience follow the thread of the argument, and notice where it turns from its proper course, and where it leads to the correct solution.

Wojtyła points to the chorus as a 'particular achievement of the Rhapsodic Theatre'.[72] The chorus consisted of 'parts spoken collectively, usually supported by music'.[73] In the use of the chorus, Wojtyła writes, 'the word reaches a peak...it ceases to be a means and becomes a self-contained element'.[74] In the chorus, the Rhapsodic Theatre's understanding of the word as 'song' becomes fully realized.

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

Due to the importance of the word and its embodiment through actors and music (especially when both are combined in chorus to create 'song'), the scenic elements of the Rhapsodic Theatre are minimal. At first, the reason was primarily practical – theatrical performances by Poles were prohibited under the Nazis, so all theatre had to take place 'underground'. The Rhapsodic Theatre's performances mainly took place in their audiences' living rooms. There might be a piano for musical accompaniment, a rug to denote the stage space, and possibly one set piece or prop as the primary visual symbol of the performance (e.g., a candelabra representing the light of faith kept alive even amidst the darkness of suffering). Performers would be dressed in street clothes, so that if interrupted, the gathering would not raise suspicion.

The use of minimal visual spectacle was also an aesthetic choice on the part of the Rhapsodic Theatre, based on their desire not to draw any attention from the spoken word. As Wojtyła writes, when the word is the 'pre-element' of the theatre, 'the arrangement of [visual] representational elements seems to be strictly limited. Sound effects must predominate', as the word is primarily experienced aurally;[75] however, 'visual effects are employed' to the extent that they 'serve the word'.[76] The stage set 'uses symbols', and is '[a]lways abstract'. This abstract symbolism is a constant on stage during the entire performance, 'requiring neither changes nor a curtain'. Wojtyła notes that it is not 'decor' but is 'plasticity—a plastic background for the rhapsodic vision' of the performance.[77] Even when the Rhapsodic Theatre received its own purpose-built theatre after the war and began using constructed sets

[75] Ibid., 373-4.
[76] Ibid., 374.
[77] Ibid., 375.

and costumes, the sets remained largely static, abstract and symbolic, and the costumes remained similar to street clothes. A common Rhapsodic Theatre 'uniform' was the dressing of the performers in dark trousers or skirts and white shirts or blouses, with pieces such as scarves or cloaks being used to differentiate between characters. At all points the visual spectacle was meant solely to serve the word by making it more present to the senses through embodiment in visual symbols. It was never meant to compete with the spoken word at any point. As Wojtyła writes, 'the gestures employed in the Rhapsodic Theater, mime elements, music and scenery, static and dynamic means—all these develop from the word, flow from it, complement and enhance it'.[78] The physical, embodied elements always serve the controlling intellectual idea.

This aesthetic choice relates to the key commitment of the Rhapsodic Theatre mentioned earlier, the priority of thought over action. In Wojtyła's essay 'Drama of Word and Gesture', he describes the particular spiritual 'catharsis' which the Rhapsodic Theatre was attempting to produce in its audience.

> Wojtyła notes that when the theatre began during the Nazi occupation, it
>
> began to call itself the theater of the word. The name was born out of the realities of life.... Of all the complex resources of theatrical art, there remained only the living word, spoken by people in extrascenic conditions, in a room with a piano. That unheard-of scarcity of the means of expression *turned into* a creative experiment. The company discovered, *or rather confirmed its earlier belief*, that the fundamental element of dramatic art is the living word.[79]

Wojtyła here indicates that beliefs about the importance of the word pre-dated the company's founding (which is consistent with his statements in earlier essays that the primary founder, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, had been developing his theories about the

[78] Ibid., 374.
[79] Wojtyła, 'Drama of Word and Gesture', 379, emphasis added.

art of the spoken word before the war, while he was working with Wojtyła and other young actors), but also that the necessities of war turned accidental properties of the theatre into essential ones. The spoken word was served best when the other elements of theatre were limited, serving only as a setting in which to place the jewel and to enable its colours to be reflected more brilliantly. This limitation included movement, music and scenery – every element was to be brought into direct service to the word.

Wojtyła continues:

> Discovering the relation between word and action provided a point of departure for Mieczysław Kotlarczyk and his group.... The new proportions between word and movement, between word and gesture, doubtless reach even further [than 'theatrical style'], in a sense beyond theater and into the philosophical concept of man and the world. *The supremacy of word over gesture indirectly restores the supremacy of thought over movement and impulse in man*.[80]

This last sentence, in italics, is one of the key philosophical axioms of the Rhapsodic Theatre. Just as it is a moral commitment for the actor to conform himself to the word and its rhythms in performance, it can be a healing experience for the audience member to receive the word communicated both orally and through gestures which are obedient to it. To focus on the word itself, and not be distracted by competing sensory phenomena, is to enable one's thoughts to take control over one's inner impulses. This control will, hopefully, continue, at least for a time, when one leaves the theatre, so that one is able to direct one's actions in conformity with the word which one has received, which, in the Rhapsodic Theatre, is Christ.

This understanding of the audience's catharsis was completely opposite to that proposed by Antonin Artaud, whose collection of writings *The Theatre and Its Double* had been published in 1938, shortly before the foundation of the Rhapsodic

[80] Ibid., 379-80, emphasis added.

Theatre. In Artaud's concept of the Theatre of Cruelty, the catharsis the audience experienced was an intense emotional violence – almost a revelling in fear and rage – brought on by a total immersion in sensory onslaught. The images the performers created with their bodies were images of violence, and the sounds were equally violent – yells, screams, curse words, and nonsense syllables meant to penetrate into the soul through the body – a total theatre of violence. The idea was that, by experiencing to their fullest extent these negative emotions in the theatre, they would erupt to the surface and be purged, so that they would not erupt into violence elsewhere in society. The theatre was a vent that allowed the human being to become a murderer in the theatre, so that he did not become a murderer in real life. It allowed humanity's impulses free expression to revolt against the intellect, as they inevitably would. Artaud's theatre assumed the supremacy of impulse over thought in man, always threatening to burst from the temporary restraints put on it by society and by the intellect. This supremacy of impulse over intellect, key to Artaudian anthropology and theatre theory, has remained extremely influential in theatre theory and training into the 21st century.

The Rhapsodic Theatre was based upon an opposed anthropology, upon the supremacy of intellect over impulse, and both the right, the possibility, and the desirability of the word's governing of impulse in order to guide impulses toward their proper object in God. In the following passage from 'Drama of Word and Gesture', worth quoting at length, Wojtyła outlines the specific rhapsodic understanding of theatrical catharsis, which is based upon this anthropology. In the Rhapsodic Theatre:

> Man, actor and listener-spectator alike, frees himself from the obtrusive exaggeration of gesture, from the activism that overwhelms his inner, spiritual nature instead of developing it. Thus freed, he grasps those proportions that he cannot reach and grasp in everyday life. Participation in a theatrical performance, almost in spite of him, becomes festive as it reconstructs in him the proportions between thought and gesture that man, at least subconsciously, sometimes longs for. In all this too is the catharsis, the psychological purification, that the theater can bring about. Mieczysław Kotlarczyk is convinced that it ought to bring it about. It is conceivable that the ancient concept of catharsis addressed to the art of theater and that of drama crystallized itself in the very concept of the Rhapsodic Theater and found its resonance in the social demand for this kind of theater. Within this concept drama fulfills its social function not so much by demonstrating action as by demonstrating it slowed down, by demonstrating the paths on which it matures in human thought and down which it departs from that thought to express itself externally.[81]

There is a lot to examine here. First of all, there is a connection between spirituality and stillness – the idea that frenetic activity can 'overwhelm' one's 'spiritual nature', but that its growth depends upon stillness, or at least more measured activity that arises from considered thought and not from immediate impulse. (One might note the importance for Wojtyła of Carmelite mysticism,[82] in which spiritual growth occurs through increased stillness, darkness, and interiority – a stripping away, even of the intellectual faculties, to rest in Christ alone.) Spectacle is anathema to this theatre. Instead, this theatre strips away the sensory aspects of theatre except those which are absolutely necessary to help the word achieve its full impact.

Once the non-essential sensory elements are stripped away, the actor and audience member are both able to see how movement, sound, and visual images can be borne out of and support the word of thought. They are able to see meaning crystallized into the smallest elements. It is as if, by the very action of using the

[81] Ibid., 380.

[82] Wojtyła met St John of the Cross' writings through his spiritual mentor, Jan Tyranowski. Wojtyła went on to write his doctoral dissertation on St John of the Cross: *The Doctrine of Faith according to St John of the Cross*. Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 61 and 85.

intellect to see the intellectual connections between the ideas of the text and the sensory vehicles through which it is expressed, the intellect is restored to its proper place as governor of action. The almost involuntary nature of this balance-restoring movement is indicated by Wojtyła's statement that the recreation of these proper 'proportions between thought and gesture' happens 'almost in spite of' the audience member.[83] The audience member does not choose to conform his actions to his intellect as a result of hearing the play; the very act of hearing the play puts his intellect back in the driver's seat.

There is also a difference of anthropology here in that, while Artaud's theory assumes that man's natural state is that of impulse, and that reason is experienced somewhat like an alien dominator, the Rhapsodic theory assumes that man's natural state – at least the natural state that he was meant to have by his Creator – is one in which action is the willing servant of thought, and there is no rebellion of the body against the spirit. This state of order is a state which fallen humanity still 'longs for'.[84] The purpose of the Rhapsodic Theatre's style is to restore its human audience to this state through the Word, insofar as possible.

This 'psychological purification' – this purging of the inner conflict between impulse and intellect so that impulse is obedient to correctly-formed intellect – is the 'catharsis' of the Rhapsodic Theatre, a catharsis which, Wojtyła states, Kotlarczyk believed was the theatre's duty.[85] Wojtyła even suggests that the Rhapsodic conception of catharsis is the fulfilment of the Aristotelian idea of catharsis, by making the principles of action and the reasons behind them more visible to the

[83] Wojtyła, 'Drama of Word and Gesture', 380.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

audience; however, this Rhapsodic understanding of catharsis noticeably leaves out discussion of the emotions, including those of pity and fear which are part of Aristotle's conception of catharsis. One might say that in the Rhapsodic Theatre, one has a primarily intellectual experience, whereas in tragedy as outlined by Aristotle, one has a primarily emotional experience, although both theatres will still engage both the intellect and the emotions.

Wojtyła responds to objections that, according to the Aristotelian conception, theatre is 'based on action, on movement' – that is, on plot, on the events of the play caused by the character's choices, and not simply on ideas.[86] Wojtyła replies that the Rhapsodic Theatre focuses on 'the inner base of human action, the very fulcrum of human movement'.[87] It takes an endoscopic view, so to speak – it looks inside a particular character or characters, like Job in *Job,* Adam in *Our God's Brother*, or the romantic couples in Wojtyła's play *The Jeweller's Shop*, to see how a particular intellectual vision comes to fruition in them through thought and argument. By making the inner movement of thought visible, the audience member is able to go through the same journey of thought, which forms the same intellectual vision in his mind. Greek tragedy, on the other hand, is exoscopic, looking at the external effects of choices made by the characters. Any judgement about the characters' inner state can only be seen by their external actions. Wojtyła also argues that because Greek tragedy focuses on the external world in which the characters move, it is more difficult for audience members to enter into catharsis, because they are constantly having to 'suspend their disbelief' (to use Coleridge's term), and forget they are watching actors. Because the Rhapsodic Theatre focused on taking the audience on an

[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

intellectual journey, the symbolic nature of their scenic design and stylised movement was easier to accept: 'Suspicions regarding the stage and the performance no longer come into consideration, especially suspicions of a theatrical lie that often make it difficult for the art of drama to accomplish its task of psychological purification'.[88] The Rhapsodic audience could more easily experience a catharsis of their intellect because their intellect was not constantly engaged in ignoring the reality of the actors before them and replacing them with the characters they represented in a fictional world.

The Rhapsodic Theatre operated according to an anthropology in which it was both possible and desirable for the intellect to govern impulse. The Rhapsodic Theatre aimed to restore the intellect to its place of governance within its audience, to enable them to better direct their actions. The element which would both restore this proper priority of intellect over action, and would form the intellect in its will (as well as the heart in its desires), was the Word of Christ, communicated in the theatre through the words of the actors, supported by the physical sensory elements of theatre such as movement, music, and visual images. The aim was to form both actors and audience into a single community in Christ, so that they would go out and act both politically and socially as Christ for others. This Christian goal was united to the Rhapsodic Theatre's original purpose during its early years, that of cultural resistance against the Nazis by the restoration of Poland's identity as a Catholic nation. Because of its goal of creating a single community united in Christ that would go out and transform the world for Christ, the Rhapsodic Theatre can be called *eucharistic*. Its emphasis on the

[88] Ibid., 381.

word over the body, however, suggests that it was less fully incarnational than a eucharistic theatre ought to be.

4. Word vs. Body

The Rhapsodic Theatre was a theatre of the word. Grotowski's theatre was a theatre of the body. Grotowski's training technique focused on intense physical exercises, so that the actor's body would be almost superhumanly flexible, under his control, and without physical tensions or blockages. Grotowski's ideal was the transcendence of the body, and its complete invisibility to reveal the psyche of the actor beneath. He wrote that the goal of his training was

> to eliminate [the actor's] organism's resistance to this psychic process [of trance]. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: *the body vanishes*, *burns*, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses.[89]

This statement, combined with Grotowski's other statements about the necessity of the body as a locus for the actor's work and the only essential tool of a poor theatre (which just needs an actor's body and a spectator's body in the same place and time), suggests an ambivalence towards the body: on the one hand, it is a revealer of meaning, and on the other, it can block meaning. Even when it reveals meaning, it only does so by disappearing, 'vanishing', so that it becomes merely a vehicle for communicating the psychological.

The Rhapsodic Theatre similarly appears to have had an ambivalent relationship to the body. The Word of Christ which they preached is incarnate,

[89] Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', 16, emphasis added.

embodied. They also engaged in theatre, an embodied art, rather than just writing literature; however, their emphasis on allowing the word to speak for itself, supported by a minimal amount of sensory input, suggests a prioritization of the intellect over the body. The actor's body, and the set, costumes, etc., do not distract from the spoken word. Such a prioritisation of the mind over the body, and the intellectual over the physical, risks a devaluation of the body and its importance in the communication of God's word.

Both the eucharist and Christ's Incarnation demonstrate that God chooses to reveal himself as an embodied word. Max Harris writes that, 'in the central act of divine self-revelation, word is made manifest to the senses'.[90] Christ himself is the embodied Word, who 'became flesh' among his people.[91] The evangelists found it important not only to share what Jesus said, but also what he did – his actions, such as healings, exorcisms, and other miracles, communicated meaning just as powerfully as did his words. They were 'signs'.[92] John Paul II, in his theology of the body, identifies the very image of God embodied in mankind[93] as sacramental – as 'a *sign that* efficaciously *transmits in the visible world the invisible mystery hidden in God from eternity*'.[94] The body itself is revelatory of God's intentions toward humanity; John Paul II's theology of the body focuses primarily on the '"spousal" meaning of the human body', and how the mutual complementary of masculinity and femininity and the 'law of the gift'[95] which they signify (that new life comes from a complete

[90] Harris, *Theater and Incarnation*, 2.
[91] See John 1:14.
[92] See the multiple usages of 'sign' in the Gospel of John to refer to Christ's miracles, and what they meant about his identity as the Messiah.
[93] See Genesis 1:27.
[94] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 19:4, 203, italics in original.
[95] See ibid., 15.1, 185-86.

donation of self to another) reveal the 'law of the gift' which governs humanity's relationship to God, and which characterises his own self-giving relationship to his Church in his Son Jesus Christ.[96] John Paul II writes that the body 'has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God [namely, the 'law of the gift'], and thus to be a sign of it'.[97] A Christian sacred theatre that wants to make the invisible visible must value the body because 'only the body…is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine'.[98]

As Trevor Hart points out, words by their very nature involve the senses – not just by virtue of the fact that they require the use of the senses to be understood (either through hearing or reading), but also by virtue of the fact that using language necessarily involves images: 'even concepts and precisely honed logical abstractions…involve us in an act of "imagining" something, holding something in our mind's eye'.[99] For example, people talk about someone 'pointing' something out (a phrase which references the image of an actual finger pointing at something), or talk about a concept being 'in' someone's mind (as if the mind were an actual location, a box that something could be put in – and also incarnating the idea of 'concept' as a physical object). Hart connects such verbal imagery to Christ's Incarnation through Janet Soskice's description of the metaphor, which 'conjoin[s] a plurality of associative networks (ones typically held to be wholly distinct and even mutually exclusive, so that the conjunction is always striking and surprising) through

[96] This signification is transformed by Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection, such that the eschatological meaning of masculinity and femininity will be different: see ibid., 66:1-4, 387-89.
[97] Ibid., 19:4, 203.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Hart, *Between the Image and the Word*, 35. Hart notes that a 'mental "image" (if we take this now to refer to any product of acts of imagination) may not be visual at all, but aural, or related to others of our five senses'. Ibid., note 77.

the unity of a common grammatical subject'.[100] Hart compares this description of the metaphor to the Church's Chalcedonian understanding of the union between the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, 'where God, for all his overwhelming otherness, is nonetheless conjoined strikingly and surprisingly with our humanity through the posited unity of a common grammatical subject'.[101] The Incarnation, then, appears to be God's use of metaphor in order to reveal himself to the world. God's use of metaphor therefore legitimates the study of metaphor as a means of God's self-communication, wherever else it may be found. As Hart says, it is God's choice to reveal himself as an '*enfleshed* Word…when he deals with us most centrally and decisively…[that] encourages faith to take more seriously the presence (indeed the proliferation) of other "enfleshed words" within the wider economy of Christ and the Spirit'.[102]

Words are and must be fully embodied. If one makes words the primary focus of one's theatre performance, while limiting the means of communication that physical embodiment by actors provides – why do a theatre performance? There is evidence that words spoken to a person by someone else in the same room have more authority than do words spoken by someone separated by a barrier: Stanley Milgram's experimental subjects were more likely to obey a command to shock a man seemingly to death if the command giver was in the same room than if he was in a different

[100] Trevor Hart, 'Lectio Divina?', in *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Taylor Worley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 237, citing Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985): 49–51, 64–66.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 239.

room.[103] So, one could suggest that hearing words proclaimed by people in the same room with as an audience might make those words have a greater effect on that audience. That finding might be reason enough to do theatre. But such an approach does not use the full palette available to theatre-makers – namely, the entire sensory canvas of production elements such as the set, music, costumes, etc., as well as, more importantly (especially to a poor or minimalist theatre), the entire revelatory body of the actor.

Antonin Artaud challenged the prevalence of the text in contemporary theatre by going to the opposite extreme, wanting actors to use nonsense noises (like 'fafafafa') or cries, screams and shouts in order to use their vocal instrument in every way possible other than speaking words. He also wanted actors to use their bodies in animalistic, ritualistic, and symbolic ways – anything other than naturalistic, everyday behaviour. He realised that a body doing something in a room with an audience can

[103] Milgram writes that '[o]bedience dropped sharply when the experimenter was physically removed from the laboratory'. Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1975), 59. In Milgram's obedience experiments, an experimental subject (the 'Teacher') was instructed by an experimenter to give an experimental confederate (the 'Learner', disguised as a fellow experimental subject) a series of electric shocks in response to the Learner's errors in memorisation, ostensibly to study the relationship between punishment and learning. In reality, the experiments were designed to test the subjects' obedience to the experimenter, and discover which variables affected obedience. The Teacher was instructed by the experimenter to administer shocks of increasing voltage to the Learner, located (in most experimental conditions) in a different room, every time the Learner failed to remember correctly a memorised word-pair. Once the shocks reached a certain voltage level, the Learner became unresponsive, leading the Teacher to believe that the Learner might be seriously injured or dead. The experimenters were instructed to encourage resistant Teachers to continue administering shocks. Experimenters were instructed not to end the experiment until the Teacher had administered the largest possible shock three subsequent times, or until the experimenter had exhausted his set script of increasingly firm commands and the Teacher still refused to continue administering shocks. Out of the 40 subjects in the original condition of the experiment, 26, or 65%, continued administering shocks up to three subsequent shocks at the highest level. In later conditions, Milgram varied the experimental conditions. In Experiment 7, Milgram placed the experimenter in a different room, and the instructions were given via telephone. In this condition, only 9 out of 40, or 20.5% of the subjects, remained obedient to the experimenter's instructions. See ibid., 59-62, for a description of Experiment 7's conditions and results; ibid., Chapter 2, 13-26 for a description of the core experimental conditions; and ibid., Chapter 4, 32-43, for a description of the original four experimental conditions and their results.

have a direct sensory effect on that audience, making its members feel discomfort, nausea, or fear, as well as joy, excitement, or giddiness. There can be a communication of a kind of non-verbal meaning, shared through completely non-verbal means.[104]

I recall a movement teacher I had as a first-year university student in an acting training programme. When he would try to explain something to his students, often he would have to move his body first—stepping to the side, motioning with his hands, or swivelling his torso. We joked that his first language was 'body', his second language English. People speak about 'body language'. One version of body language is the simple adjustment of the body to give off social cues. For example, the space between two bodies in a room communicates something of the relationship between them – do they sit directly side-by-side, or maintain a polite distance? If facing each other, does Person A lean forward in his chair, hands on his knees, legs spread in a wide stance, indicating interest and attention? Or does he lean back, arms and legs crossed, gazing off to the side, indicating hostility or boredom? (And how does the *energy* with which he sits in this position indicate whether it is hostility or boredom?) Human beings usually make these adjustments automatically, without awareness, revealing their invisible emotional states through the visible movements and positions of their bodies. A second version of body language is even more subtle. In acting training, there are several systems which seek to categorize movement in order to break down the elements of a physical 'language', such as Laban movement analysis (with its oppositions such as 'flexible' vs. 'direct', 'light' vs. 'strong', 'sustained' vs. 'quick',

[104] For Artaud's enumeration of the specific techniques characteristic of his Theatre of Cruelty, and the reasoning behind them, see especially his two 'Theatre of Cruelty' manifestoes in Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*.

and ‘freeing’ vs. ‘binding’ movement).[105] Others, such as Richard Schechner’s rasaboxes, use physical exercises to engage and express particular feelings which are intrinsically connected to those expressions of physicality.[106] This use of the term ‘body language’ refers to the idea that physicality can communicate emotion viscerally, without needing to be translated into words (indeed, such translation cannot be fully accomplished), and that human beings can naturally sense what a particular physical expression ‘means’. A third understanding of body language is that demonstrated by John Paul II in his theology of the body, as described above: the body, made by God in his image, is a source of revelation, and a site of theological meaning. The fruitful complementarity of male and female, for example, reveals the ‘law of the gift’, that the ‘death’ of complete self-donation brings life. To fully appreciate the incarnate nature of the word, it is helpful to realize that the body and bodies bear meaning themselves, and can communicate that meaning to the senses and bodies directly, at a level which does not need to be and cannot be processed fully into words.

On the other hand, it is also helpful to understand that humans are not only body, but they are also spirit. And God chose not just to send a body, but a Word. The word spoken has always had a privileged place in Christianity (from the beginning of Genesis to Christ’s words in the Gospels, to the ecclesial concept of the preaching of the Gospel and proclamation of Scripture). And the Rhapsodic Theatre is correct when its members speak about the body serving reason, and submitting itself to the word. It is possible to lead where one’s physical impulses follow, without

[105] Eden Davies, *Beyond Dance: Laban’s Legacy of Movement Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 48.
[106] See Richard Schechner, ‘Rasaesthetics’, *TDR: The Drama Review* 45:3 (Fall 2001): 27-50, especially the description of Rasaboxes on pp. 39-44.

remembering that, due to the Fall, one's physical impulses are not infallible (and either is one's intellect.) There is a lengthy tradition in Christianity of placing the spirit in a superior rank to the body, and, while that prioritisation can lead to Manichaeism, it can also signal that humans are the only members of creation with the gift of language, and that the word is a treasured vehicle for God's revelation to his people and to his people's understanding of him.

The word and the body cannot be separated. The word is embodied, and embodiment can give meaning to words. It is enough to look at the structure of the Mass as an example – one part of the liturgy is focused on the physical preaching of the Word in Scripture, and the other part of the liturgy is focused on an action which results in the embodied Word of the eucharist. Words and physical embodiment are woven throughout both parts of the Mass. In addition, all the sacraments involve the use of both physical elements and actions and words. The two can never be separated in human experience.

A Christian sacred theatre which prioritises only the word (or the word over the body, such as the Rhapsodic Theatre), risks confirming Carl Lavery's criticism that the theological sacred is interested only in intellectual knowledge about God. A theatre which fully prioritises both the word *and* the body recognises that the body can also reveal the sacred, and that both word and body, mind and physicality, are redeemed and used by God to reveal himself in the incarnate Christ, the heart and source of Christian theology.

Therefore, a fully Christian sacred theatre will fully value both word and body. It will neither attempt to separate the two, nor attempt to devalue one element

in favour of the other. It will recognise that the two *always* go together in Christianity, the religion of the embodied Word.

5. Inheritance from Reduta

Juliusz Osterwa first took an interest in a young Karol Wojtyła after Osterwa attended a 1939 production of *The Moonlight Cavalier*, put on by a company called Studio 39. George Weigel writes that Osterwa was '[i]mpressed' by the actors' work, and 'invited the student actors to his apartment afterward and told them to keep in touch'.[107] This contact led to a relationship during the first part of the war, in which

> Wojtyła and his friends met in one another's homes and tried to put on meaningful plays. Once Osterwa even watched them perform an act of *The Quail*, a play by Żeromski that Osterwa himself had premiered and acted the lead in. Osterwa...took Wojtyła and his friends into his confidence [regarding Osterwa's plans for Poland's post-war theatre].... He and his young friends undertook the task [of creating new translations of non-Polish plays that Osterwa thought had not been translated in a simple enough style]. Osterwa himself translated Sophocles' *Antigone* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Karol Wojtyła, an excellent Greek scholar, translated Sophocles' *Oedipus* more or less to Osterwa's satisfaction.[108]

After the Rhapsodic Theatre began its performances in 1941, Osterwa attended at least one of its performances, a production called *Wyspiański's Hour*, which was an adaptation combining elements of Stanisław Wyspiański's *Wedding*, *Acropolis*, and *Study of Hamlet*. The production opened on 22 May 1942. It was the first time Osterwa had attended a Rhapsodic production (this was the company's fourth show), and the first time he met the Rhapsodic Theatre proper. Bolesław Taborski writes that, after he saw this show, Osterwa 'gave [the Rhapsodists] his wholehearted

[107] Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 40.
[108] Taborski, introduction to *Collected Plays*, 4-5.

support'.[109] His support for the company eventually faded, however, as did the Rhapsodists' founders' admiration for Osterwa. Taborski writes that Wojtyła and the primary Rhapsodic Theatre founder, Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, 'were fascinated by Osterwa and his ideas but were critical of a certain showmanship in him (albeit showmanship in the best sense of the word)'.[110] Osterwa had made heavy use of spectacle in his productions, including major crowd scenes containing mounted actors in full court and military attire. The Rhapsodic Theatre, however, was committed to rejecting any spectacle that would distract from the purity of the spoken word, and was also committed to minimalism in all aspects of production design. Thus, there was a fundamental difference in their respective approaches to theatre. Kotlarczyk, in a document written for the 25th anniversary of the theatre, wrote that the Rhapsodic Theatre's style was intended to repudiate grand-scale theatrical spectacles, represented both by Osterwa's productions and by the productions of director Max Reinhardt, whose *Faust* by Goethe and *Jedermann* by Hofmannsthal Kotlarczyk saw in Salzburg:

> In spite of superlatives about the craft of Reinhardt's actors, I brought back to Poland from the Salzburg Festival of 1937 a quiet protest against over-theatricality in theater, against the operatic element, against the preponderance of technical effects.... In opposition, I conceived even then a different theater, listened to rather than watched for its spectacle, a theater of the *word*.[111]

In Kotlarczyk's view, the audience should not be distracted by spectacle from the challenge the word presented to take up one's role as a moral agent in the re-building of Polish society through obedience to the Word who was Christ.

---

[109] Ibid., 8.
[110] Ibid., 6.
[111] Kotlarczyk, *XXV lat Teatru Rapsodycznego*, 7, quoted in Taborski, introduction to *Collected Plays,* 6.

But despite the complete difference in style and acting technique (with the Rhapsodists' intense focus on diction and non-naturalistic acting, in which the actors presented rather than portrayed characters), the Rhapsodists shared with the Reduta a commitment to theatre as a form of spiritual practice and national and religious service, as well as a commitment to the revivification of Polish society through the presentation of the Polish Romantic repertoire. Kotlarczyk chose the same stories to serve his people as Osterwa did.

The Rhapsodic Theatre also has a small connection to Grotowski, though there is no evidence that its work had any major influence on him. In 1955, while Grotowski was studying directing in Moscow, he sent a letter to Kotlarczyk 'expressing an interest in having a conversation...regarding the perspectives of Kotlarczyk's artistic work'.[112] There is no evidence that Grotowski received a reply, or that this meeting took place; however, it does indicate that Grotowski was aware of and interested in Kotlarczyk's work.

The Rhapsodic Theatre was the heir to the ethical tradition of the Reduta in that its founding members shared Osterwa's Catholic faith and a commitment to theatre as a spiritual practice through the practice of theatre as a spiritual service to the nation. Kotlarczyk was also committed to creating a new style of acting and teaching it to others; this style, however, focused on speaking the poetic word, and not on inhabiting or experiencing the life of a character. Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre was another heir to the ethical tradition of the Reduta in that he shared the Reduta's commitment to theatre as a spiritual practice which helped the actor grow

[112] Smith, 'Teatr Rapsodyczny', 172. Smith gives the source of this letter as the Archiwum Mieczyslawa Kotlarczyka, Korespondencja Mieczyslawa Kotlarczyka, 1. Listy od nastepujacych, Grotowski, Jerzy 1955 /1/k.6.

spiritually through performance and especially through rehearsal, and that thereby challenged the spectator to the same spiritual transformation. Grotowski and his company also shared the Reduta's commitment to acting research, and to an almost monastic commitment to life and work together, without any separation between the actor's work and the actor's life as a human being. The Rhapsodic Theatre inherited the Reduta's faith and commitment to doing theatre as a means of service to society. The Laboratory Theatre inherited the Reduta's commitment to theatrical and performance experimentation, focused community life, and the spiritual growth of the actor through performance, though they had a different conception of the *telos* of that growth than did the Reduta.

Prof Artur Grabowski writes that:

> both Kotlarczyk and Grotowski declared themselves to be Osterwa's direct heirs; Kotlarczyk more by his [C]atholic connections and semi-religious approach to the theatre group as a community devoted to spiritual [life], and Grotowski through Reduta's ritual practices in performance; but first of all they both continued Osterwa's tradition of Polish romantic poetry.[113]

Despite these similarities, the Rhapsodic Theatre 'is now totally forgotten in Poland, and [as] it...never, even at its peak time, was popular and respected [due to its theatrically unsophisticated and idiosyncratic, almost 'readers'-theatre' style of performance, and its 'church-like' atmosphere], it has practically no serious continuation'. In contrast, 'Grotowski's influence shaped and influenced most of the Polish alternative groups beginning from [the] late [1970s]', such as Gardzienice.[114] One must ask why the Rhapsodic Theatre is now almost wholly forgotten, except for the revival in interest among scholars of Pope John Paul II and a few Catholic theatre companies, while Grotowski remains the father of modern experimental physical

[113] Artur Grabowski, e-mail message to author, 24 March 2014.
[114] Ibid.

theatre and probably the most influential Polish theatre artist of the 20th century. Can the power of Grotowski's theatre be combined with the religious faith of the Rhapsodic Theatre? Can the two branches of the Reduta's descendants be brought together again, to create a new Christian sacred theatre – a *eucharistic theatre* – for the 21st century? This question will be discussed in the next and final chapter.

6. Summary

The Rhapsodic Theatre was an heir to the Reduta in terms of its commitment to religious faith and service of the community, whereas Grotowski was an heir to the Reduta in terms of his commitment to experimentation with acting technique and monastic living. Both theatres, however, inherited the Reduta's conception of theatre as a spiritual activity, and were also united in their rejection of the spectacle which often characterised Reduta productions. The simplicity of the Rhapsodic style focused on the spoken word, while the simplicity of Grotowski's 'poor theatre' focused on the actor's body.

The Rhapsodic Theatre prioritised the word and intellectual thought over the body and sensuous experience. To that extent, they can validly be criticised as an example of a theological theatre based on Carl Lavery's theological conception of the sacred, which prioritises a rational understanding of the sacred over non-rational experience. Nevertheless, they do not completely fall afoul of such criticism, as their use of visual symbolism and other physical elements to help reveal the meaning of the spoken word through materiality suggests a valuing of the senses and the creation of a sensory 'atmosphere' in which the word could live. Therefore, while their style of

theatre may not as fully testify to the value of materiality, and thus the Incarnation, as some other styles of theatre, it does aim at being a theatre of the embodied, and not completely disembodied, word. In addition, its primary goal is to unite actors and spectators in one community, bound together by mutual submission to and identity in the Word who is Christ, whose members then go out to bring Christ to the world. The Rhapsodic Theatre therefore qualifies as a eucharistic theatre.

VI. Conclusion: Towards a Eucharistic Theatre

This thesis has proposed the idea of a *eucharistic theatre* based on the principles of: 1) gathering in the name of Christ in faith; 2) openness to God and to the other to form one community in solidarity; 3) making the invisible God visible through the symbolic and sacramental incarnation of word enfleshed in body and body revealing word; and 4) transformation into the Kingdom of God.

This theatre is a Christian sacred theatre, in contrast to the a/theological sacred theatre proposed by Carl Lavery and exemplified by Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre. Grotowski's theatre was a quasi-eucharistic theatre, in that it sought to bring actors and spectators together for a spiritual purpose; break down the boundaries between them and inspire mutual openness and self-revelation; incarnate the spiritual through the physical manifestation of the actor's spiritual journey through performance training which made the actor's inner impulses immediately visible in his body; and transform the participants into more open and authentic beings, able to live and encounter each other without masks. Despite these qualities, Grotowski's theatre does not qualify as a fully eucharistic theatre because he denied the existence of God, and therefore did not seek contact for himself, his actors, or his spectators with a personal divine Being, or entry into a sacred reality outside the boundaries of the created world. In his idea of the 'secure partner', he intuited the need for a mediator to unite actor and spectator in a shared sacred reality and relationship, but did not posit that secure partner's actual reality as Christ. Though his theatre sought a form of transcendence, it was an 'immanent transcendence', limited to the created

world; his theatre was primarily horizontal, without aiming in a vertical direction. That 'verticality'—that reaching to God—is essential to a eucharistic theatre.

The Reduta and Rhapsodic Theatres, on the other hand, were true eucharistic theatres. They found their highest purpose in being gatherings of Christian believers assembling to remember the works of God among them, and be strengthened in their mission of service to their people in cooperation with those works. The Reduta's experimentation with the removal of boundaries between actors and spectators, and the Rhapsodic Theatre's original intimacy of performance and continued simplicity of style to focus on the words being shared with the gathered assembly, witness to their commitment to community and solidarity with their audiences. The Rhapsodic Theatre's theological commitment to the word over the body made their theatre less fully incarnational than that of the Reduta's, which more thoroughly integrated word and body; however, both theatres valued the incarnational presence of the actor as the embodied communicator of the word. Finally, their common root in the heritage of 'Polish Citizen Theatre' and understanding of theatre as a means of service to the community and instrument for the moral and spiritual transformation of the nation makes their theatres 'theatres of transformation', intended to strengthen the Polish people in their identity as a nation in Christ.

1. Techniques of Eucharistic Theatre

The eucharistic theatre principles of: 1) gathering in the name of Christ in faith, 2) openness to God and to the other to form one community in solidarity, 3) making the invisible God visible through the symbolic and sacramental incarnation of

word enfleshed in body and body revealing word, and 4) transformation into the Kingdom of God, can be shortened into four words or phrases which distil the goals of eucharistic theatre: 1) an *experience of Christ,* 2) *community*, 3) *incarnation*, and 4) *transformation*.

There are specific techniques which the three theatres use to accomplish the goals of community, incarnation, transformation, and, in the case of the Reduta and Rhapsodic Theatres, an experience of Christ:[1]

- *Community*: casting the audience in 'roles' within the story by placing them in certain positions within the stage design; purposely limiting the number of audience members so as to create a greater sense of intimacy; incorporating volunteers from the local community into the production as supernumeraries; removing physical barriers between the actors and audience, such as footlights, a raised stage, or a proscenium; again, simplicity of design and costume elements, to remove the metaphorical 'mask' of a character from interposing itself between an actor and a spectator; similarly, using an approach to acting in which the actor plays himself, instead of a character; taking into account the local community when choosing material to perform, and selecting stories which speak specifically to them

- *Incarnation*: minimizing use of set, costumes/props/makeup, and light/sound so that the focus is on the body of the actor, or the words he speaks; alternately, the use of symbolic design elements (such as the altar) and/or environmental theatre (such as setting the production in a castle) to make the spiritual meaning of the production more immediately visible

- *Transformation:* choosing stories which challenge the audience to patriotic or spiritual action, especially when those stories speak to that community's specific social context (e.g., presenting plays about maintaining national identity under foreign oppression when a community is suffering from similar oppression); using direct address to challenge the audience to action, whether as the actor or in the guise of a character; uniting an

[1] In *Performing the Sacred*, Todd Johnson and Dale Savidge identify 'three theological categories that define the nature of human and divine interaction' which are present in theatre: 'incarnation, community, and presence'. Todd Johnson and Dale Savidge, *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue*, Engaging Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 56. 'Presence' leads to a 'transformative encounter'. Ibid., 65. I am using the triumvirate of 'incarnation, community, and transformation' instead because 'transformation' connotes action more than 'presence' does, and I want to emphasise the transforming action that these theatres are doing through their performances, and hope that their audiences will continue. This triumvirate is added to the fourth goal of 'an experience of Christ' to indicate that Christ is at the centre of a eucharistic theatre.

actor's work on a character with work on his spiritual life, so that he is open to his performance being a means through which God transforms him and allows the audience to be witnesses to that transformation

- *Experience of Christ:* using text taken directly from Scripture, including Christ's own words; referring to Christ directly within the play, especially as someone to whom the characters are in relation; presenting characters who are 'Christ-figures' (such as the Constant Prince); portraying saints or other characters who in some way reveal Christ-like behaviour, or reveal the power of grace working in and through them; choosing repertoire from within a Christian tradition of drama, especially that which directly explores how Christ is caring for and challenging the community which hears the play; modernising and/or otherwise adapting the context to show how Scripture and other Christian literature written during an earlier time period speaks to the contemporary situation of the audience

Theatre companies who seek to create eucharistic theatre today can take inspiration from these three companies, and experiment with and build upon their techniques in order to create such a eucharistic theatre.

2. The Legacy of the Reduta

There are a few companies today which place themselves in the Catholic tradition of the Reduta via the Rhapsodic Theatre, and aim at a form of eucharistic theatre. Chief among them in the UK is the Oxford-based Divine Comedy Productions, founded by Léonie and Teresa Caldecott.[2] In the USA, Rhapsodic Theatre-influenced companies include Epiphany Studio Productions in St Paul,

[2] Their most recent production, *The Quality of Mercy*, ends with the image of a priest holding the consecrated Host above his head for adoration. In the context of the play, that image is an invitation for the audience to join the young people in the play in adoration of Christ in the eucharist. Just as Charlie (i.e., 'Karol' anglicised) brings several youths safely through the mountains to Christ in the play, so the actors bring us to Christ through the journey of the play. I attended the play's world premiere production at the Oxford University Catholic Chaplaincy in April 2011, in honour of the beatification of John Paul II. *The Quality of Mercy*, by Léonie Caldecott, directed by Teresa Caldecott, Oxford University Catholic Chaplaincy, Oxford, UK, 28 April 2011. Léonie Caldecott writes about her creation of the play and its meaning in 'A Creative Intuition: Two Experiments in Amateur Drama', *Second Spring: A Journal of Faith and Culture*, 18, Sacred Drama (June 2014): 51-60.

Minnesota, and the touring companies Theophany Catholic Theatre Company and Theater of the Word, the latter of which can be seen in the EWTN television series of the same title.[3]

Grotowski is commonly taught in contemporary drama programmes, and his work continues under his chosen successor, Thomas Richards, in the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Pontedera, Italy.[4] Włodzimierz Staniewski, the founder of Gardzienice Theatre Association, is another heir to Grotowski's work, as well as that of Juliusz Osterwa.[5] Gardzienice has made touring productions to rural areas the core of its theatre practice as a company; however, its touring practice is closer to Osterwa's than to Grotowski's, in that Gardzienice invites performances from the members of the communities which it visits, so that both Gardzienice and the community gift each other with performances. On the other hand, Gardzienice's practice is close to Grotowski's in that the focus of Gardzienice's visits are not the performances *per se*, but the personal encounter between the Gardzienice players and the community members. Staniewski is an heir to the Reduta tradition via Grotowski, as opposed to via the Rhapsodic Theatre.

[3] More information about these companies, along with a more comprehensive overview of contemporary Christian theatre initiatives in the UK and North America, can be found in my article '"Stir Them to Wonder": Contemporary Christian Theatre Initiatives', *Second Spring: A Journal of Faith and Culture*, 18, Sacred Drama (June 2014): 29-46.

[4] For more information about Grotowski's and Richards' collaboration, see Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions.*

[5] Paul Allain writes that the 'history of laboratory groups with an emphasis on process rather than product…can be traced from Osterwa through Grotowski to Gardzienice', and that Osterwa 'could be called the grandfather of experimental Polish practice' (with Grotowski as its father). Paul Allain, *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition* (London: Routledge, 1997), 20, 12. Allain's *Gardzienice* is the key text on Staniewski's theatre.

3. Final Thoughts on a Eucharistic Theatre

To speak of a eucharistic theatre is not to speak of an art form which takes the place of the sacrament of the eucharist, or to suggest that the eucharist needs to be supplemented in any way by theatre. Similarly, it is not to suggest that theatre is an inherently more 'holy' or sacred art than any other. On the other hand, to speak of a eucharistic theatre is to acknowledge the resonances between theatre and liturgy that both Christians and non-Christians, theologians and theatre theorists, have sensed. It is also to speak of a type of theatre in which the values of community, incarnation, and transformation are deliberately sought and rooted in Christ. A eucharistic theatre seeks to communicate Christ to its participants through the physical incarnation of signs which point to him, with the aim of joining the participants into one community united in faith in him, and transforming them into one body in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit to go out into the world as Christ-bearers, to establish his Kingdom in the hearts of men.

To speak of a eucharistic theatre is to propose that Christian theatre-makers see their lives as liturgy, fed by and responding to God's own self-giving in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, especially as received and returned by his people in the eucharist. The artist's creative work can be a building of the Kingdom which flows out of public worship and private prayer and makes symbols which point others back to the love and adoration of Christ in which public worship and private prayer consist. It is a contemplative vocation: to seek Christ, and to share him with others. For a Christian, all action is born in prayer, and leads back to prayer. A eucharistic theatre is therefore part of that spiritual breathing process, and seeks to cling more closely to

the action of prayer than, perhaps, do other forms of theatre. In its purest form, it can become performed public prayer, which invites others into the prayer.

This conception of theatre as potential prayer leads to an essential element of eucharistic theatre: in this theatre, something is not merely portrayed – something is *done*. Richard Schechner differentiates theatre from ritual by locating theatre at the 'entertainment' end of a entertainment-efficacy spectrum, and ritual at the 'efficacy' end: 'If the performance's purpose is to effect transformations – to be efficacious – then…the performance is a ritual'. If, however, the performance's purpose is for 'fun', then the performance is theatre.[6] A eucharistic theatre takes a particular spiritual action. For example, in August Wilson's play *The Gem of the Ocean*, the character Aunt Ester imaginatively takes Citizen Barlow to the City of Bones, an underwater graveyard made up of the bones of slaves who did not survive the crossing from Africa. In the production I witnessed in 2008 at Everyman Theatre in Baltimore, the chanting of Aunt Ester, combined with eerie blue lighting and the foot-stamping and playing of percussive instruments by the other characters, cast a powerful spell, bringing not only Citizen Barlow but also the audience down to the City of Bones. For Citizen Barlow, this face-to-face encounter with his ancestors functions for him as a baptism, initiating a conversion which culminates in an act of penance for his crimes. This sequence, however, also operates as a challenge to the audience, especially the African-American audience members: being brought face-to-face with your own ancestors, are you living a life worthy of their sacrifice? The 'City of Bones' sequence is the heart of the play's action. (The 'Gem of the Ocean' is the

[6] Schechner acknowledges that a performance may have characteristics of both activities: 'No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment'. Schechner, 'From Ritual to Theater and Back', 120, including Fig. 4.4.

slave ship carrying these bodies.) It is a very real call to repentance, directed at each individual audience member as well as to Citizen Barlow, and that moment makes the play a prophetic play.[7] Such moments within the theatre that, directly or indirectly, call a person to Christ qualify as eucharistic theatre as well. This 'efficacy' – this something *done*, not just something portrayed – places eucharistic theatre closer to the ritual end of the spectrum than many other forms of theatre, and gives ritualistic theatre the potential to become eucharistic, insofar as it confronts a person with Christ, offers grace, and demands a response in faith.

A eucharistic theatre is a theatre of mystery and symbol, born out of prayer, and inviting to worship. Its highest peak is when the theatre, even for a moment, reveals the face of Christ – loving, challenging, inviting to come and follow him. When a participant, whether actor or spectator, responds to this revelation with an act of faith, the effect may be sacramental, functioning as a baptism or a communion by desire. St Genesius saw Christ in the theatre, was immediately converted to faith in him, and was baptised in the blood of his martyrdom. I myself have had experiences of hearing Christ call me to follow him more deeply in some particular way through moments in the theatre. It is my prayer that, through a commitment to serve Christ as incarnate symbol-makers in the theatre, and to be open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, theatre-makers may make Christ visible to many, so that they may join in his eternal eucharist.

[7] *Gem of the Ocean*, by August Wilson, directed by Jennifer L. Nelson, Everyman Theatre, Baltimore, MD, 19 March – 27 April 2008 (exact date I saw the show unknown).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allain, Paul. Preface to *Acting with Grotowski: Theatre as a Field for Experiencing Life*, by Zbigniew Cynkutis, xii-xxvii. Translated by Khalid Tyabji. Edited by Paul Allain and Khalid Tyabji. New York: Routledge, 2015.

—. *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Allfree, Claire. 'Peter Brook Still on a Quest for Transient Truth'. *Metro*, 8 February 2010. Accessed 2 October 2012. http://www.metro.co.uk/metrolife/812267-peter-brook-still-on-a-quest-for-transient-truth.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. 2nd and revised edition. Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 1920. Online edition by Kevin Knight. 2008. Accessed 6 May 2015. http://www.newadvent.org/summa/index.html.

Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and Its Double*. Translated by Victor Corti. Richmond, UK: Oneworld Classics, 2011.

Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Baldwin, Jane. 'The Accidental Rebirth of Collective Creation: Jacques Copeau, Michel Saint-Denis, Léon Chancerel, and Improvised Theatre'. In *A History of Collective Creation*, edited by Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and Scott Proudfit, 71-96. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. Translated by Graham Harrison. 5 vols. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988-1998.

Barish, Jonas. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Benedict of Nursia. *The Rule of St. Benedict: In Latin and English with Notes*. Edited by Timothy Fry, OSB. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981.

Bentley, Eric. 'Dear Grotowski: An Open Letter'. In *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, edited by Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, 165-70. Worlds of Performance. London: Routledge, 2001.

Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Translated by Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1979.

Braun, Kazimierz. *A Concise History of Polish Theater from the Eleventh to the Twentieth Centuries*. Studies in Theater Arts 21. Lampeter, Wales: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

—. *A History of Polish Theater, 1939-1989: Spheres of Captivity and Freedom*. Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies #64. London: Greenwood Press, 1996.

—. 'Juliusz Osterwa – Polish Theater Reformer'. *Balagan: Slavisches Drama, Theater und Kino* 1:2 (1995): 49-59.

—. 'Modern Acting Theory and Practice'. In *Beyond Brecht = Über Brecht hinaus*, edited by John Fuegi, Gisela Bahr, and John Willett, 108-21. Brecht Yearbook 11. Edition text+kritik. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983. Accessed 10 September 2014. http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/German.BrechtYearbook011.

—. ‘Theatre Training in Poland’. In *Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures*, edited by Ian Watson, 13-32. Contemporary Theatre Studies 38. New York: Routledge, 2001.
Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Edited and translated by John Willett. New York: Hill & Wang, 1964.
The Brig, DVD, directed by Jonas Mekas (1964; Paris: Potemkine, 2012).
Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York: Touchstone, 1996.
—. Preface to *Towards a Poor Theatre*, by Jerzy Grotowski, 11-13. Edited by Eugenio Barba. London: Methuen Drama, 1991.
Brown, David. *Discipleship and Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
—. *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
—. *God and Grace of Body: Sacrament in Ordinary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
—. *God and Mystery in Words: Experience through Metaphor and Drama*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
—. *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
Burzyński, Tadeusz, and Zbigniew Osiński. *Grotowski’s Laboratory*. Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1979.
Caldecott, Léonie. ‘A Creative Intuition: Two Experiments in Amateur Drama’. *Second Spring: A Journal of Faith and Culture* 18, Sacred Drama (June 2014): 51-60.
Catechism of the Catholic Church. 2nd ed. New York: Doubleday, 1995.
The Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition. Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983. Accessed 12 May 2015. http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM.
‘*The Constant Prince (Książę Niezłomny)*’. In *Encyclopedia.Grotowski*, edited by Sylwia Fiałkiewicz and Dariusz Kosiński and translated by Paul Vickers. Instytut im. Jerzego Grotowskiego. Published 8 March 2012. Updated 20 November 2013. Accessed 10 December 2014. http://www.grotowski.net/en/encyclopedia/constant-prince-ksiaze-niezlomny.
Craigo-Snell, Shannon. *The Empty Church: Theater, Theology, and Bodily Hope*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
Davies, Eden. *Beyond Dance: Laban’s Legacy of Movement Analysis*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
Davies, Norman. *God’s Playground: A History of Poland*. Vol. 2: 1795 to the Present. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
Edelman, Joshua. ‘Can an Act be True? – The Possibilities of the Dramatic Metaphor for Theology within a Post-Stanislavskian Theatre’. In *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition*, edited by Trevor Hart and Steven Guthrie, 51-72. Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. 3rd ed. London: Methuen Drama, 2001.
Flaszen, Ludwik. ‘*The Constant Prince*’. In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, by Jerzy Grotowski, 81-83. Edited by Eugenio Barba. London: Methuen Drama, 1991.

Freud, Sigmund. *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Translated and edited by James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961.
Gem of the Ocean. By August Wilson. Directed by Jennifer L. Nelson. Everyman Theatre, Baltimore, MD, 19 March – 27 April 2008.
Grotowski, Jerzy. 'Theatre of Sources'. In *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, edited by Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, 252-70. Worlds of Performance. London: Routledge, 2001.
—. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Edited by Eugenio Barba. London: Methuen Drama, 1991.
Harris, Max. *Theater and Incarnation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
Hart, Trevor. *Between the Image and the Word: Theological Engagements with Imagination, Language and Literature*. Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013.
—. 'Conversation after Pentecost? Theological Musings on the Hermeneutic Motion'. *Literature and Theology* 28:2 (June 2014): 164-78.
—. 'Lectio Divina?' In *Theology, Aesthetics, and Culture: Responses to the Work of David Brown*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Taylor Worley, 226-40. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
—. *Making Good: Creation, Creativity and Artistry.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014.
— and Steven Guthrie, eds. *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition*. Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
— and Wesley Vander Lugt, eds. *Theatrical Theology: Explorations in Performing the Faith*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014.
Hughes, Gerard W. *God of Surprises*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
Innes, Christopher. *Avant Garde Theatre: 1892-1992*. London: Routledge, 1996.
—. *Holy Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
Jelavich, Peter. *Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, Playwriting, and Performance, 1890-1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
John Paul II. *Encyclical Letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. 17 April 2003. Accessed 6 May 2015. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html.
—. *Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists*. 4 April 1999. Accessed 6 May 2015. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists.html.
—. *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*. Translated with introduction and index by Michael Waldstein. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006.
Johnson, Todd, and Dale Savidge. *Performing the Sacred: Theology and Theatre in Dialogue*. Engaging Culture Series. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.
Julian the Apostate. *Letter #22: To Arsacius, High-Priest of Galacia*. In *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, translated by Wilmer Cave Wright, vol. 3, 67-73. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1923.
Keil, Marta. 'Under Pressure: Polish Theater and the Crisis of Public Theater Institutions'. Translated by Joanna Kurek. Edited by Bartosz Wójcik. *HowlRound*

Journal. 15 December 2014. Accessed 28 January 2016. http://howlround.com/under-pressure-polish-theater-and-the-crisis-of-public-theater-institutions.
Kelera, Josef. 'Monologues of Ryszard Cieslak as the Constant Prince: steps towards his summit'. *Odra* XI (1965). In *Towards a Poor Theatre*, by Jerzy Grotowski, n.p. Edited by Eugenio Barba. London: Methuen Drama, 1991.
Khovacs, Ivan Patricio. 'A Cautionary Note on the Use of Theatre in Theology'. In *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition*, edited by Trevor Hart and Steven Guthrie, 33-50. Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007.
Kosiński, Dariusz. 'A Holistic Actor: Juliusz Osterwa, Mieczysław Limanowski and the Reduta'. Introduction to manuscript in progress – untitled edited collection of Juliusz Osterwa's articles translated into English, to be published by Richard Gough. Received from author, 1 April 2014.
Kotlarczyk, Mieczysław. *Reduta słowa*. Londyn: Odnowa, 1980.
—. *Sztuka żywego słowa.* Lublin: Gaudium, 2010.
Kott, Jan. 'Why Should I Take Part in the Sacred Dance?' Translated by E.J. Czerwinski. In *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, edited by Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, 134-40. Worlds of Performance. London: Routledge, 2001.
Kumiega, Jennifer. *The Theatre of Grotowski*. London: Methuen, 1987.
Kwitny, Jonathan. *Man of the Century: The Life and Times of Pope John Paul II*. London: Warner Books, 1998.
Lavery, Carl. 'Modern Views of the Sacred'. In *Sacred Theatre*, edited by Ralph Yarrow, 33-39. Theatre and Consciousness Series. Chicago: Intellect, 2007.
—. 'Performance and Sacred Space: A Polemic'. With rejoinders by Ralph Yarrow and Franc Chamberlain. In *Sacred Theatre*, edited by Ralph Yarrow, 185-91. Theatre and Consciousness Series. Chicago: Intellect, 2007.
— and Ralph Yarrow. 'Genet's Sacred Theatre: Practice and Politics'. In *Sacred Theatre*, edited by Ralph Yarrow, 127-43. Theatre and Consciousness Series. Chicago: Intellect, 2007.
Lewis, C.S. *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001.
Liturgy Office of England and Wales. *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. London: Burns & Oates, 1985. Accessed 12 May 2015. http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/RCIA.pdf.
Maritain, Jacques. *The Responsibility of the Artist*. 1960. Jacques Maritain Center, University of Notre Dame. Accessed 25 February 2016. http://maritain.nd.edu/jmc/etext/resart.htm.
Matson, Cole. 'The Artist as Prophet'. *Transpositions*. Accessed 12 May 2015. http://www.transpositions.co.uk/the-artist-as-prophet/.
—. '"Stir Them to Wonder": Contemporary Christian Theatre Initiatives'. *Second Spring: A Journal of Faith and Culture* 18, Sacred Drama (June 2014): 29-46.
Meisner, Sanford. *On Acting*. New York: Random House, 1987.
Milgram, Stanley. *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1975.
Motta Lima, Tatiana. 'Investigate the memory or investigate oneself through the memory: Notes on the notion of memory in the artistic journey of Jerzy

Grotowski'. Translated by Simone Couto. In *Jerzy Grotowski: L'eredità vivente*, edited by Antonio Attisani, 55-70. Torino: aAccademia University Press, 2012.
My Dinner with Andre. DVD. Directed by Louis Malle. 1981; New York: The Criterion Collection, 2015.
Nichols, Aidan. *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness and Truth*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2011.
Osiński, Zbigniew. 'The Notebooks of Rena Mirecka'. *Mime Journal* 25 (2014): 16-46.
Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*. Translated by John W. Harvey. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.
Polish Cultural Institute New York. 'Theatre of the Eighth Day'. Accessed 27 February 2016. http://www.polishculture-nyc.org/?itemcategory=30817&personDetailId=549.
The Quality of Mercy. By Léonie Caldecott. Directed by Teresa Caldecott. Oxford University Catholic Chaplaincy, Oxford, UK, 28 April 2011.
Ratzinger, Joseph. 'Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity'. Lecture, Bishops' Conference of the Region of Campania, Benevento, Italy. 2 June 2002. Accessed 7 April 2014. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020602_ratzinger-eucharistic-congress_en.html.
Richards, Thomas. *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*. London: Routledge, 1995.
The Roman Missal. Translated by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. Amended 3rd typical edition. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2011.
Schechner, Richard. 'Actuals'. In *Performance Theory*, by Richard Schechner, 35-67. Revised and expanded edition. New York: Routledge, 1988.
—. 'Exoduction: Shape-Shifter, Shaman, Trickster, Artist, Adept, Director, Leader, Grotowski'. In *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, edited by Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, 460-94. Worlds of Performance. London: Routledge, 2001.
—. 'Rasaesthetics'. *TDR: The Drama Review* 45:3 (Fall 2001): 27-50.
—. 'From Ritual to Theater and Back'. In *Performance Theory*, by Richard Schechner, 106-52. Revised and expanded edition. New York: Routledge, 1988.
— and Lisa Wolford, eds. *The Grotowski Sourcebook*. Worlds of Performance. London: Routledge, 2001.
Schmemann, Alexander. *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom*. Translated by Paul Kachur. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003.
—. *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973.
—. *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995.
Shadowlands. DVD. Directed by Richard Attenborough. 1993; New York, NY: HBO Home Video, 1999.
The Silence of the Lambs (2-Disc Collector's Edition). DVD. Directed by Jonathan Demme. 1991; Beverly Hills, CA: MGM, 2007.

Slowiak, James, and Jairo Cuesta. *Jerzy Grotowski*. Routledge Performance Practitioners. New York: Routledge, 2007.
Smith, Linda Nadolny. 'Teatr Rapsodyczny: The Theatre of the Living Word'. PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2003.
Stanislavski, Constantin. *An Actor Prepares*. Translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 2003.
—. *Building a Character*. Translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 2003.
—. *Creating a Role*. Translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. New York: Routledge, 2003.
—. *My Life in Art*. Translated by J.J. Robbins. New York: Routledge, 2012.
Taborski, Boleslaw. Introduction to *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, by Karol Wojtyła, 1-16. Translated and with introductions by Boleslaw Taborski. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
—. Introduction to *Job*. In *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*, by Karol Wojtyła, 19-24. Translated and with introductions by Boleslaw Taborski. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
Taviani, Ferdinando. 'In Memory of Ryszard Cieslak'. Translated by Susan Bassnett. In *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, edited by Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, 189-204. Worlds of Performance. London: Routledge, 2001.
Taylor, W. David O. 'On the Vocation of an Artist: Part III: The Artist as Prophet (I)'. *Diary of an Arts Pastor*. 22 August 2012. Accessed 12 May 2015. http://artspastor.blogspot.com/2012/08/on-vocation-of-artist-part-iii-artist_22.html.
Temkine, Raymonde. *Grotowski*. Translated by Alex Szogyi. New York: Avon, 1972.
Teresa of Ávila. *The Interior Castle*. Translated and edited by E. Allison Peers from the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, CD. New York: Doubleday, 2004.
—. *The Life of Saint Teresa of Ávila*. Translated with an introduction by J.M. Cohen. London: Penguin, 1957.
Vander Lugt, Wesley. *Living Theodrama: Reimagining Theological Ethics*. Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014.
Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.
—. *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.
Vatican Council II. *Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. 21 November 1964. Accessed 6 May 2015. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.
—. *Sacrosanctum Concilium: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. 4 December 1963. Accessed 18 October 2012. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.
Walters, Scott. 'Offending the Audience'. *Theatre Ideas*. 15 April 2009. Accessed 12 May 2015. http://theatreideas.blogspot.co.uk/2009/04/offending-audience.html.

Ward, Michael. ‘The Tragedy is in the Pity: C.S. Lewis and the Song of the Goat’. In *Christian Theology and Tragedy: Theologians, Tragic Literature and Tragic Theory*, edited by Kevin Taylor and Giles Waller, 149-66. Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011.
Warner, David T. ‘The Ethical Thought of Jerzy Grotowski as Illuminated by Martin Buber’. PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2003.
Weigel, George. *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.
Wells, Samuel. *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004.
Weston, Judith. *Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television.* Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 1996.
What Dreams May Come. DVD. Directed by Vincent Ward. 1998; Universal City, CA: Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2011.
Wojtyła, Karol. *The Collected Plays and Writings on Theater*. Translated and with introductions by Boleslaw Taborski. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
Wolford, Lisa. ‘Introduction to Part III: Objective Drama, 1983-86’. *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, edited by Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford, 283-93. Worlds of Performance. London: Routledge, 2001.
Woodruff, Paul. ‘Engaging Emotion in Theater: A Brechtian Model in Theater History’. *The Monist* 71:2, Aesthetics and the Histories of the Arts (April 1988): 235-57.
Yarrow, Ralph, ed. *Sacred Theatre*. Theatre and Consciousness Series. Chicago: Intellect, 2007.
Zamoyski, Adam. *Poland: A History*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 2015.